

**For MST program information,
please contact:**

Stephanie Parmely, Ph.D.

Division Director

Phone: (916) 609-5100

Email: sparmely@riveroak.org

Christine Zehner, MA

MST Clinical Program Manager

Phone: (916) 609-5100

Email: czehner@riveroak.org



River Oak
Center for Children



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Established in 1966. Awarded Gold Seal of Approval™ by the
Joint Commission on Accreditation of Healthcare Organizations.

A Place for Children and
Families
to Grow

Mission Statement

River Oak Center for Children is committed to helping children and families successfully manage life's challenges through a wide range of behavioral health and social services by providing prevention, treatment, and caring support.

River Oak advocates to bring outstanding and innovative programs to children and families in need.

Administrative Offices

5030 El Camino Avenue

Carmichael, CA 95608

Phone: (916) 609-5100

Fax: (916) 609-5160

www.riveroak.org

**Multisystemic Therapy
(MST)**

*In collaboration with Sacramento County Department of Health
and Human Services Division of Mental Health.*

What is MST?

Multisystemic Therapy (MST) is a specialized treatment Approach to providing services to children and youth through the Intensive In-Home Program.

The MST approach views individuals as being nested within a complex network of interconnected systems that encompass individual, family, and extra-familial (peer, school, neighborhood) factors.

In MST, this “ecology” of interconnected systems is viewed as the client.

Who should receive MST?

MST has been shown to be effective with chronic, violent delinquents and youth characterized by serious emotional disturbance (SED). The tolls on society due to the behavior of these youth include the costs to victims of crime and the monetary and social costs associated with housing youth in institutional settings (jails, residential treatment centers, boot camps, and psychiatric hospitals), none of which have been shown to reduce future criminal activity or social costs.

What makes MST work?

Findings from cross-sectional and longitudinal research studies of youth who break the law repeatedly and/or abuse illegal substances are clear. The causes or “determinants” of juvenile offending are difficulties in the following areas:

- family relations
- School performance
- Peer relations
- Neighborhood and community relations

MST interventions focus on key aspects of these areas in each youth’s life. All interventions are designed in full collaboration with family members and key figures in each system– parents or legal guardians, school teachers and principals, etc.

What does MST do?

- ⇒ A complete functional assessment of youth in the context of their families
- ⇒ Seek to understand the “fit” between the child’s problems and the factors which contribute to them
- ⇒ Focus on helping parents build supportive social networks
- ⇒ Empower parents to address the needs of the youth more effectively
- ⇒ Emphasize long-term change families can maintain after the program ends

Key Features of MST

- ⇒ The goal is to prevent out-of-home placements by empowering the youth’s primary caregivers with the skills and resources needed to independently address difficulties that arise in raising a child with behavioral problems.
- ⇒ MST empowers the youth and family to cope with problems that arise in multisystems such as peer, school, and neighborhood problems.
- ⇒ Treatment duration is about 3-5 months, with multiple meetings of the family and therapist each week.
- ⇒ MST places an extremely strong focus on provider accountability.
- ⇒ Therapists use interventions with immediate and powerful impact on the problem behavior by building on the strengths of the family and other indigenous systems.
- ⇒ Staff is available 24/7.

What can I expect from my MST therapist?

Any combination of the following services could be provided to the youth and her/his family, as needed, within the MST program:

Family therapy

Marital therapy

Individual sessions with youth

Individual sessions with parents

Chemical dependency assessment and treatment

Evaluation of peer network and arranging alternative activities

Consultation with schools

Liaison activities with school systems, court and/or other social service Agencies

Arranging a psychiatric consultation

Where can I get MST services in my community?

River Oak Center for Children is the only MST provider in Sacramento County. Our therapists are diverse in age, gender, and cultural background and are thoroughly trained and supported in the MST model.

For more information about MST, contact the MST program director, Stephanie Parmely, Ph.D. At (916) 609-5100