



FUNCTIONAL FAMILY THERAPY (FFT)

Blueprints Program Rating: Model

A short-term family therapy intervention and juvenile diversion program helping at-risk children and delinquent youth to overcome adolescent behavior problems, conduct disorder, substance abuse and delinquency. Therapists work with families to assess family behaviors that maintain delinquent behavior, modify dysfunctional family communication, train family members to negotiate effectively, set clear rules about privileges and responsibilities, and generalize changes to community contexts and relationships.

FACT SHEET

PROGRAM OUTCOMES

Delinquency and Criminal Behavior
Illicit Drug Use

PROGRAM TYPE

Family Therapy
Juvenile Justice, Other

PROGRAM SETTING

Juvenile Justice Setting
Mental Health/Treatment Center
Social Services
Transitional Between Contexts

CONTINUUM OF INTERVENTION

Selective Prevention (Elevated Risk)
Indicated Prevention (Early
Symptoms of Problem)

AGE

Early Adolescence (12-14) - Middle
School
Late Adolescence (15-18) - High
School

GENDER

Male and Female

RACE/ETHNICITY

All Race/Ethnicity

ENDORSEMENTS

Crime Solutions: Effective
Blueprints: Model
OJJDP Model Programs: Effective

PROGRAM INFORMATION CONTACT

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PROGRAM DEVELOPER/OWNER

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BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE PROGRAM

Functional Family Therapy (FFT) is a short-term (approximately 30 hours), family-based therapeutic intervention for delinquent youth at risk for institutionalization and their families. FFT is designed to improve within-family attributions, family communication and supportiveness while decreasing intense negativity and dysfunctional patterns of behavior. Parenting skills, youth compliance, and the complete range of behaviors (cognitive, emotional, and behavioral) domains are targeted for change based on the specific risk and protective factor profile of each family. FFT should be implemented with a team of 3-8 master's level therapists, with caseloads of 10-12 families, with oversight by a licensed clinical therapist.

See: [Full Description](#)

OUTCOMES

Studies across several locations demonstrated program benefits for recidivism among juveniles:

- In a Utah study, FFT families showed significant improvement compared to no treatment and alternative treatment groups in rates of reoffense (26% versus 47%-73%), juvenile court records of siblings of targeted youth (20% versus 40%-63%), and recidivism among serious delinquent youth (60% versus 89%-93).
- In an Ohio study, FFT families showed significant improvement compared to usual services in recidivism after 28 months (11% versus 67%) and after 60 months (9% versus 41%).
- In a Swedish study with a 2-year follow-up, FFT families showed improvement compared to a usual-treatment group in recidivism (41% versus 82%) and in youth and parent reports of externalizing and internalizing symptoms.
- In a Washington State study, FFT families who worked with a competent therapist showed significant improvement in 18-month recidivism (44% versus 50%-54%) compared to families in control groups or working with not competent therapists.
- A meta-analysis of effect size for eight evaluations of FFT (Aos et al., 2011) reported an adjusted mean effect size of -.32.

One study done in Albuquerque examined outcomes relating to marijuana use:

- FFT youth (either alone or in combination with another therapy) showed significant reductions at four months in marijuana use (55% to 25% and 57% to 38%, respectively), while the other therapy and control groups did not.
- FFT youth showed significant reductions in heavy to minimal marijuana use at four months (87% to 55%), as did the other therapy and the combined FFT and therapy groups, while the control group did not.

Program effects on Risk and Protective Factors:

- Improvements in family interaction patterns (Alexander & Parsons, 1973)

RACE/ETHNICITY/GENDER DETAILS

FFT has been applied with a wide range of population demographics, with non-White youth representing 10-60 percent of the sample.

RISK AND PROTECTIVE FACTORS

TRAINING AND TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE

BRIEF EVALUATION METHODOLOGY

REFERENCES

Blueprints for Healthy Youth Development
In partnership with the Annie E. Casey Foundation

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