

House Select Committee on Youth Health & Safety HB 2638: Multisystemic Therapy

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Overview of Multisystemic Therapy

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Multisystemic Therapy (MST) is a proven, community-based treatment for at-risk youth (ages 12 to 17) with intensive needs and their families.

- **Primary goals of MST:** (1) reduce **severe criminal activity, including violence**; (2) reduce other types of **antisocial behavior**; and (3) **save taxpayer dollars** by reducing incarceration and out-of-home placement.
- **MST reduces delinquent and antisocial behavior** by addressing the core causes of such conduct, expanding the focus of treatment beyond the youth to include **the network of systems responsible for caring for them** (family, peers, school, church, neighborhood).
- Proven to **reduce violent crimes by 75%** compared to routine congregate and other care as usual, with a **long-term impact**, lasting **two decades post-treatment**. Group homes and incarceration *increase criminal activity*.

Why Support HB 2638?

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- MST is the **only evidence-based treatment proven to reduce violent crime** and is the treatment of choice for **youth who are repeat violent offenders**. This is why MST was a critical component of the Uvalde response.
- HB 1, the 2024-25 General Appropriations Act, includes **\$30.45 million in general revenue** for MST. HB 2638 can offset this investment with federal funding.
- The success of efforts like **HB 16 (Closer to Home)**, **juvenile justice system reform** and **child welfare system stability** require **intensive, community-based capacity** that Texas currently lacks.
- 17 states, including Louisiana, Ohio, Arizona, and South Carolina, currently cover MST in their Medicaid programs.

MST in Practice: Treatment for Youth & Families

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MST is delivered in the youth and family's natural environment – home, school, and community.

- **MST professionals work with the family throughout the week and are on call and available 24 hours a day, seven (7) days a week.**
- **Helps youth develop skills to cope with family, school, and neighborhood issues and supports parents.**
- **Mobilizes individual, family, and community resources to support and maintain treatment gains.**
- **Structured supervision and quality assurance processes are integral.**
- **MST requires the full participation of parents or caregivers.**
- **Average length of treatment is three to five months.**

MST Capacity in Texas

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Until 2022, Texas only had seven total teams (Harris, El Paso, Nueces counties), funded primarily through juvenile justice dollars.

- The 87th Legislature appropriated **\$2 million** to add a front-end MST team in both Harris County and El Paso County.
 - For the first time, Texas youth and adolescents were able to access MST *before juvenile justice system involvement*.
- In response to the **Uvalde tragedy**, the June 2022 budget execution order provided **\$4,725,000** to expand MST capacity across the state by funding **seven (7) additional MST teams**.
- Texas needs approximately **140 teams** to meet statewide need.
 - We do not want to fully fund expansion with general revenue, alone.

Success in Harris County

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Harris County MST teams began serving clients in August 2020. As of June 2022, 137 families had been served:

- 84% had **completed treatment**
- 96% of youth **remained in their home** (no out-of-home placements)
- 88% of youth had **no new arrests** by closure of treatment
- 100% **reduction of substance abuse** in cases labeled as substance issues
- 88% of youth were **in school or working** at closure of treatment

In FY 2022, the new TJJJ-grant funded team **served 22 families with no new arrests and no subsequent involvement** with the **juvenile justice system** or the **child welfare system** after the youth started the MST program.

HB 2638 Fiscal Note

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The fiscal note for HB 2638 is \$8 million for the biennium, which could be covered by the general revenue for MST already in HB 1. However, we believe the fiscal note should have a net positive impact:

- The fiscal note does not include cost savings for the **Texas Juvenile Justice Department** or the **Department of Family and Protective Services**.
- For an upper range of cost effectiveness, an evaluation of MST services in New Mexico showed an average savings of **\$71,000 per youth**, beyond the cost of treatment, through **posttreatment reductions in juvenile crimes and Medicaid behavioral health treatment claims**.
- MST is a cost-effective alternative to residential and other placements. The Harris County Juvenile Probation Department found that it cost about \$1,443,000 to place 40 youth in its custody in residential treatment facilities (**\$36,000 per youth**).

Thank You!

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