



## **Mental Health Training Curriculum for Juvenile Justice (MHTC-JJ)**

Each year, approximately 2 million youth are arrested. Over 600,000 of them are processed through juvenile detention centers and more than 93,000 are placed in secure juvenile correctional facilities<sup>1</sup>. Many of these youth have significant mental health problems, with almost one third of youth experiencing disorders so severe that their ability to function is highly impaired<sup>2</sup>.

Youth are often placed in the juvenile justice system as a means of accessing mental health and other services that are otherwise unavailable or inaccessible in the community. However, this practice can exacerbate a youth's mental health condition and create a dangerous situation for both the youth and the juvenile justice staff responsible for supervising those youth<sup>3</sup>. Even when mental health services are available to justice-involved youth, it is the juvenile justice staff who interact with these youth and supervise them on a day-to-day basis. From probation intake to secure corrections, juvenile justice staff are responsible for the day-to-day management of a large population of youth, the majority of whom have mental health problems. As a result, juvenile justice staff must deal not only with the risks of working with a juvenile offender population, but face the added challenge of working with a group of youth whose mental health problems they don't understand and are not trained to deal with.

Recognizing the need for comprehensive mental health training for juvenile justice staff, the National Center for Mental Health and Juvenile Justice (NCMHJJ) through the Mental Health/Juvenile Justice Action Network supported by the John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation, created the ***Mental Health Training Curriculum for Juvenile (MHTC-JJ)***. The ***MHTC-JJ*** provides juvenile justice staff with basic information about adolescent development and mental health disorders commonly seen among youth in the juvenile justice system, the treatment services often used with justice-involved youth, and the important role of the family. In addition, the ***MHTC-JJ*** seeks to provide participants with practical strategies for better interacting and communicating with youth in their care who have mental health problems.

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<sup>1</sup> Snyder, H.N. & Sickmund, M. (2006). Juvenile offenders and victims: 2006 National Report. Washington, DC: US Department of Justice, Office of Justice Programs, Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention.

<sup>2</sup> Shufelt, J.L. & Cocozza, J.J. (2006). Youth with mental health disorders in the juvenile justice system: Results from a multi-state prevalence study, Delmar, NY: National Center for Mental Health and Juvenile Justice.

<sup>3</sup> Skowrya, K. & Davidson-Powell, S. (2006). Juvenile diversion: Programs for justice-involved youth with mental health disorders. Delmar, NY: National Center for Mental Health and Juvenile Justice.



The **MHTC-JJ** is a one day training and includes the following modules:

**Module 1:** This module provides an Introduction to the training, and includes warm-up exercises and a review of the training goals, objectives and module content.

**Module 2:** This module addresses the Interface between the Juvenile Justice and Mental Health Systems and provides a brief review of the history and purpose of both of these systems, a description of the resulting relationship, and examples of local/state mental health/juvenile justice collaboration

**Module 3:** This module, Understanding Adolescent Development, describes the developmental processes that take place during adolescence as well as examples of normative adolescent behavior. It also describes recent adolescent brain research and how this has changed our understanding of adolescent behavior.

**Module 4a:** This module identifies and describes common Mental Health and Substance Use Disorders found among youth involved with the juvenile justice system.

**Module 4b:** This module addresses Child Trauma, its prevalence among youth involved with the juvenile justice system, and how traumatic experiences can impact youth development, behavior and delinquency.

**Module 5:** This module describes Treatment for Youth with Mental Health Disorders and includes how disorders are identified, as well as recent treatment innovations including the use of evidence-based treatments.

**Module 6:** This module, Working with Youth- What You Can Do is a skill building segment that focuses on practical communication and intervention strategies that juvenile justice staff can use with youth to build skills, model positive behaviors and foster helping relationships.

**Module 7:** The Family Engagement module describes the experience of the juvenile justice system from a family's perspective. It focuses on why family engagement is essential and provides examples of what staff can do to help support families.

The curriculum includes an Instructor's Manual with detailed delivery notes, Power Point materials and a Participant Manual. The **MHTC-JJ** allows for the inclusion of site-specific information or data, case studies and real-life examples that are relevant to the target audience and can be modified as needed to reflect the unique issues and challenges of a local jurisdiction or an individual training audience. The training is provided in a classroom setting and is intended to be highly interactive. It includes a mix of didactic presentation, interactive exercises, videos and opportunities for discussion.

**For additional information about the MHTC-JJ and training opportunities, please contact the National Center for Mental Health and Juvenile Justice at:**

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