

MULTISYSTEMIC THERAPY ACROSS THE LIFESPAN:
A 21.9-YEAR FOLLOW-UP TO A RANDOMIZED CLINICAL TRIAL
WITH SERIOUS AND VIOLENT JUVENILE OFFENDERS

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ABSTRACT

In this study, we examined the long-term criminal and civil court outcomes of 176 serious and violent juvenile offenders who had participated in either multisystemic therapy (MST) or individual therapy (IT) in a randomized clinical trial (Borduin et al., 1995). Data on criminal arrests, incarceration, and civil court involvement were obtained on average 21.9 years (range 18.3– 23.8) after treatment completion when participants were on average 37.3 years old. Results showed that MST participants had significantly lower recidivism rates than IT participants for violent crimes (23.2% vs. 39.2%, respectively) and for all felony class crimes (39.5% vs. 58.2%, respectively). Additionally, MST participants were involved in fewer civil court suits related to family instability (e.g., divorces, paternity suits). The present study represents the longest and most comprehensive follow-up to date of a MST clinical trial and suggests that MST is relatively effective in reducing long-term criminal activity among serious and violent juvenile offenders.