

# Caring for Youth with Behavioral Health Needs in the Juvenile Justice System: Improving Knowledge and Skills of the Professionals Who Supervise Them

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The prevalence of behavioral health conditions is disproportionately high among youth involved in the juvenile justice system as compared with the general adolescent population. To effectively meet the goals of public safety and youth care and rehabilitation, juvenile justice practitioners must be prepared with the knowledge and skills required to meet the range of complex needs presented by the young people in their care. The Mental Health Training for Juvenile Justice (MHT-JJ) curriculum provides juvenile probation, detention, and corrections staff with critical information to improve their knowledge and skills related to working with as well as supervising youth. Outcome data for the MHT-JJ show that participants achieve significant knowledge-gain in critical areas addressed by the training and that this learning directly impacts their interactions with youth with behavioral health conditions.

**800,000** youth under the age of 18 were arrested in 2017

**45,000** were being held in residential placement facilities

**70%** of justice-involved youth have at least one diagnosable mental illness,

**75%** have experienced traumatic victimization

**UNTREATED MENTAL ILLNESS AND TRAUMATIC STRESS CAN HAVE SIGNIFICANT NEGATIVE EFFECTS ON LIFETIME HEALTH AND WELL-BEING**

## THE MHT-JJ

The MHT-JJ is a specialized curriculum that provides juvenile justice staff with skills for working with and supervising youth. The curriculum is an eight-hour, interactive training that covers adolescent development, childhood trauma, mental and substance use disorders, effective interventions, practical strategies for working with youth and their families, and self-care approaches to mitigate the harmful effects of secondary traumatic stress in staff. It allows for the inclusion of local data, case studies, and real-life examples that are relevant to the training audience and reflect the unique challenges faced by staff in juvenile justice systems.

The results indicate that 70 percent of staff who participated in the MHT-JJ made changes in how they interacted with youth with mental health needs in the month following participation in the MHT-JJ training (n=94).

**70%**

In 2018, NCYOJ launched the MHT-JJ Trainer Network, a virtual support network for certified trainers to ensure they are prepared to deliver the curriculum with fidelity. The Network gives certified trainers access to the annually updated training curriculum, ongoing continuing education opportunities, and a virtual forum to connect with master trainers and other certified trainers.

## Average Train-the-Trainer Program Ratings

Based on 4-point scale with 4 being best (n=833)

I have a better understanding of my role as a trainer in facilitating the use of this curriculum.	3.40
I feel confident using this curriculum to train others on ways to achieve better outcomes for youth with mental health needs in the juvenile justice system.	3.37
The Train-the-Trainer program was organized in a way that was conducive to learning.	3.50
I am confident delivering the activities in the training.	3.32
The trainers provided helpful answers to my questions.	3.64
The Train-the-Trainer program improved my understanding of how to train adults.	3.28
The trainer guide covers everything I need to know to deliver the training.	3.37

## Train-the-Trainer Program Satisfaction

Based on 4-point scale with 4 being best (n=833)

Overall satisfaction with information provided during the Train-the-Trainer program	3.56
Overall satisfaction with organization and presentation of the Train-the-Trainer program	3.55