

UNODC Family-based Treatment Training Package (UNFT) for adolescents with drug and other substance use disorders including those in contact or at risk of contact with the criminal justice system

AUTHORS: Anja Busse¹, Giovanna Campello², Gilberto Gerra¹, Wataru Kashino¹, Fred Piercy², Elizabeth Saenz¹, Natasha Slesnick³, Sanita Suhartono¹.

¹ United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, Drug Prevention and Health Branch, Vienna.
² The Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University, Human Development and Family Science, United States.
³ The Ohio State University, Department of Human Sciences, Ohio, United States.

BACKGROUND

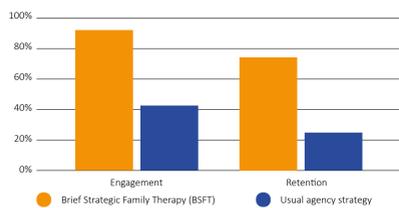
The United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), in close collaboration with the World Health Organization (WHO), developed the UNODC Family-based Treatment Training Package (UNFT) after a technical consultation in 2018 on "Elements of Family-based Treatment and Family Therapy for Youth with Drug Use Disorders: Creating Societies Resilient to Drugs and Crime". Current data on the extent of drug use disorders among youth who are arrested for drug-related offences are not easily available. In low- and middle-income countries, adolescents with drug and other substance use disorders and their families are facing grave challenges without access to effective treatment and rehabilitation services. However, family therapy has rarely been scaled up at the community level in low- and middle-income countries.

Several policy documents provide a framework for UNFT, including the Commission on Narcotic Drugs resolution 58/2,² are policies that mandated UNODC to "consider implementing scientific evidence-based treatment and sustained recovery programmes, such as psychosocial care, for children and young people, that may involve the inclusion of family".

The training package – being developed as part of the UNODC Treatnet training strategy³ – was piloted in three regions in Asia, and will be further tailored to meet the needs and cultural contexts of the countries implementing it.

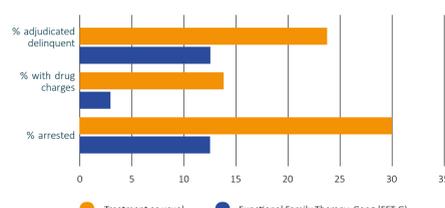
There is strong evidence that family therapy supports families and adolescents affected by a range of challenges including adolescent substance use disorders and other behavioural problems. As a form of psychotherapy, family therapy seeks to reduce distress and conflict by improving interactions between family members, and sometimes the wider community, in a systemic way. Family distress is one of the risk factors for drug initiation and continuation, as well as a risk factor for other behavioural problems such as violence. Family therapy has been developed in different schools of psychotherapy, such as more behavioural or more systemic approaches. Family involvement in the treatment of drug use disorders also varies in its "dosage". Family interventions and common elements in family therapy, such as family engagement techniques, relational reframes, family skills teaching and using family as a positive reward can be found in many evidence-based programmes like the Adolescent Community Reinforcement Approach (A-CRA),⁴ Brief Strategic Family Therapy (BSFT),⁵ Functional Family Therapy (FFT),⁶ Multidimensional Family Therapy (MDFT),⁷ Multisystemic Family Therapy (MST),⁸ These have proved effective for substance use reduction and delinquency reduction. Common elements in family therapy – such as family engagement techniques, relational reframes, family skills teaching and using family as a positive reward – can be found in many evidence-based programmes, and UNFT has been developed around these common elements.⁹

Engaging and retaining difficult youth and family members



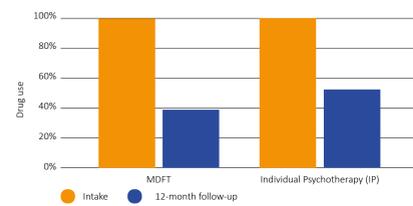
Szapocznik et al. 1988 in BSFT Program Effectiveness. <http://bsft.org/evidence-for-the-bsft-program/program-effectiveness>

Reducing high gang risk



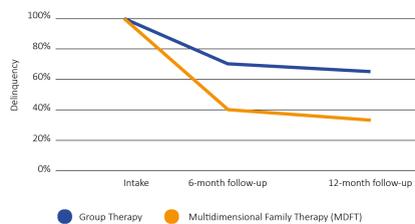
Thornberry, Terence P., Kearley, Brook, Gottfredson, Denise C., Slothower, Molly P., Devlin, Deanna N., and Fader, Jamie J. 2018. Reducing crime among youth at risk for gang involvement: A randomized trial. *Criminology & Public Policy*, 17: 953-989.

Drug use reduction



MDFT in randomized clinical trials (RCTs). <http://www.mdft.org/Effectiveness/Substance-abuse>

Delinquency reduction



MDFT in randomized clinical trials (RCTs). <http://www.mdft.org/Effectiveness/Substance-abuse>

The main goal of UNFT is to make elements of evidence-based and scalable family therapy available to increase the accessibility, quality and diversity of drug use disorder treatment for youth, including youth at risk of or already in contact with the criminal justice system. Another goal for UNFT is to reduce drug-related criminal behaviours among young people who use drugs, and prevent drug use among family members.

UNFT aims at supporting health and those in criminal justice settings. Family-based treatment can address risk factors. Further, UNFT intends to explore outcomes that include preventing crime and recruitment into violent extremist groups. Violent extremism is the product of historical, political, economic, social and individual factors. Currently there is little evidence available about effective strategies for the prevention of violent extremism, and many interventions focus on behavioural change regarding the use of violence as well as reintegration into society.

¹ UNFT Training Package: https://www.unodc.org/documents/drug-prevention-and-treatment/Updated_Final_UNFT_to_share.pdf
² Commission of Narcotic Drugs (CND) Resolution 58/2: https://www.unodc.org/documents/commission/CND/CND_Sessions/CND_58/2013_Resolutions/Resolution_58_2.pdf
³ UNODC Treatnet training package: <http://www.unodc.org/treatnet/treatment-and-care/treatnet-training-package.html>
⁴ Adolescent Community Reinforcement Approach (A-CRA): <http://www.a-cra.org/adolescent-community-reinforcement-approach-cra>
⁵ Brief Strategic Family Therapy (BSFT): <http://www.bsft.org/about/what-is-bsft/>
⁶ Functional Family Therapy (FFT): <http://www.fft.org/>
⁷ Multidimensional Family Therapy (MDFT): <http://www.mdft.org/>
⁸ Multisystemic Therapy (MST): <http://www.mstak.org/multisystemic-therapy-mst>
⁹ Hoque A., Bobek M., Dauber S., Henderson C.E., McLeod B.D., Southam-Gerow M.A. (2019). Core Elements of Family Therapy for Adolescent Behaviour Problems: Empirical Distillation of Three Manualized Treatments. *Journal of Clinical Child & Adolescent Psychology*, 48(1), 29-41.

POTENTIAL RISK FACTORS FOR RADICALIZING TO VIOLENT EXTREMISM

Risk factor	Radicalization	Violence
Experiencing identity conflict/being a loner	•	
Feeling there is lack of meaning in life	•	
Wanting status	•	
Failing to achieve aspirations		•
Wanting to belong/trouble with platonic relationships	•	•
Trouble in romantic relationships		•
Desiring action or adventure/military experience	•	•
Having experienced trauma/abuse	•	•
Having mental health issues or being emotionally unstable/troubled	•	•
Being naïve or having little knowledge of religion and ideology	•	
Having strong religious beliefs/extremist ideology	•	
Having grievances	•	
Feeling under threat	•	
Having an "us versus them" world view	•	
Justifying violence or illegal activity as a solution to problems	•	
Having engaged in previous criminal activity	•	•
Involvement with a gang or delinquent peers		•
Stressors (e.g., a family crisis, being fired from a job)	•	•
Societal discrimination or injustice	•	
Exposure to violent extremist groups or individuals	•	•
Exposure to violent extremist belief systems or narratives	•	•
Family members or friends in violent extremist network	•	•

RTI International (2018). Countering Violent Extremism: The Application of Risk Assessment Tools in the Criminal Justice and Rehabilitation Process. Literature Review, Department of Homeland Security, p. 5-6

Overall, the roll-out of UNFT targets the following Sustainable Development Goals:



ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

UNODC would like to thank the people and Government of Japan for their financial support, and the experts who provided their knowledge and skills to the UNFT development.

CONTACT

For further information on the initiative and for countries interested in joining with their own resources, please contact:

United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) Prevention, Treatment and Rehabilitation Section, Drug Prevention and Health Branch, Vienna International Centre, P.O. Box 500, 1400 Vienna, Austria
Tel: +43-1 26060-0, Fax: +43-1 263-3389
www.unodc.org
email: unodc-ptrs@un.org

METHOD

After an initial literature review to identify evidence-based family therapy programmes, UNODC brought together 25 experts from 13 countries – including some of the leading researchers and practitioners in the field of family therapy – to identify key elements of effective approaches for the treatment of youth with drug use disorders, and to provide guidance for the development of UNFT.

The draft training materials were enhanced through a peer review process and piloted in three Asian regions in 2018, where 82 people from 16 countries were trained, and lessons learned were integrated into the final version of the UNFT training materials.



The results from focus group discussions from the pilot training sessions indicated the usefulness of the information and techniques. The most popular contents were the genogram, positive reframing, self-care and role play. Implementation barriers included lack of human and financial resources and supervision.

UNFT was globally launched at the 62nd Commission on Narcotic Drugs in 2019 and is now available to all interested. The training package has been translated into Bahasa (Indonesian), French, Russian and Spanish. Moreover, UNFT was presented at the 28th Commission on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice in 2019, especially highlighting its potential in the field of crime prevention and prevention of violent extremism.

UNODC is planning to conduct a feasibility study on UNFT implementation in low- and middle-income countries and will continue exploring opportunities and funding sources for an effectiveness and impact measurement study for UNFT in the future.



UNFT CONTENT INCLUDES:

- Theoretical foundations of family therapy
- Core assumptions of family therapy
- Cultural characteristics between therapist and family/adolescents
- Drug use in specific/own cultural context
- Treatment phases, interventions and assessment methods such as positive reframing, relational reframing, perspective taking, relational questions, going with resistance
- Additional issues such as community engagement, safety and self-care of service providers, when adolescents do not come to treatment, how to approach adolescents and their families etc.
- Problem solving skills
- Micro-teaching practice
- Video clips demonstrating Family Therapy skills provided by the Centre on Addiction

UNFT: CHANCE TO PRACTISE SKILLS



CONCLUSIONS

The UNODC-WHO International Standards for the Treatment of Drug Use Disorders recommend evidence-based, comprehensive, multi-sectorial and multi-disciplinary drug treatment approaches tailored to specific needs of a variety of populations. In response to the Commission on Narcotic Drugs resolution 58/2 on "Supporting treatment and care for children and young people with substance use disorders" and in line with the Standards, UNODC, in close coordination with WHO, has developed a UNFT training package that is scalable, skills-based, evidence-based, comprehensive, and is specifically tailored for adolescents and their families who are affected by drugs and other substance use disorders. UNFT provides additional skills for health, social and criminal justice workers working with families. UNFT skills can be used in outpatient or inpatient settings, as well as social service settings around the world as part of a continuum of care.

To explore the potential of UNFT for the treatment of adolescent substance use disorders and as a strategy to prevent recruitment into violent extremist groups, UNODC is planning an implementation and feasibility study regarding training on UNFT and its integration in daily practice in a low-resource setting. Common elements in family therapy are not only being used in the treatment of drug use disorders but also applied to the prevention of recruitment into violent extremist groups. Finally, UNODC is also developing a therapist manual to provide detailed guidance on how to apply UNFT in practice with families in a formalized and structured way.

REFERENCES

- United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime. Training Package for family-based treatment of youth with drug use disorders (UNFT) (2019). Available at: https://www.unodc.org/documents/drug-prevention-and-treatment/Updated_Final_UNFT_to_share.pdf
- United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime/World Health Organization (UNODC/WHO). International Standards for the Treatment of Drug Use Disorders (2016). Available at: https://www.unodc.org/documents/International_Standards_2016_for_CND.pdf