



Brief Strategic Family Therapy® (BSFT®)
Specialized Engagement Techniques
for
Engaging and Retaining
Troubled Youth in Family Therapy

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Brief Strategic Family Therapy Institute

BSFT™
An Evidence-Based Practice

UNIVERSITY OF MIAMI
MILLER SCHOOL
of MEDICINE



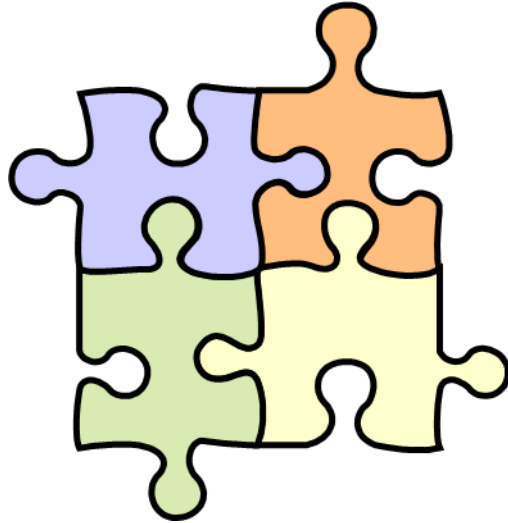


**It is difficult to engage and
retain troubled youth and
their families in family
treatment**



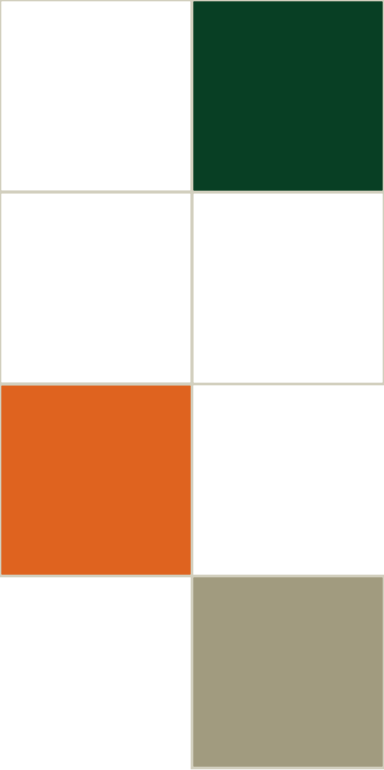
**BSFT specialized
engagement techniques
were developed to meet
this challenge**

Systems Theory



**Family is a set of
interlocking puzzle
pieces**

**Family members are
interrelated and
interdependent**



For one person to behave in a certain way others in the family must facilitate or allow that person's behavior.

CIRCULAR CAUSALITY



Mom and son
are over-involved

Dad is distant





BSFT-Engagement builds on two important principles:

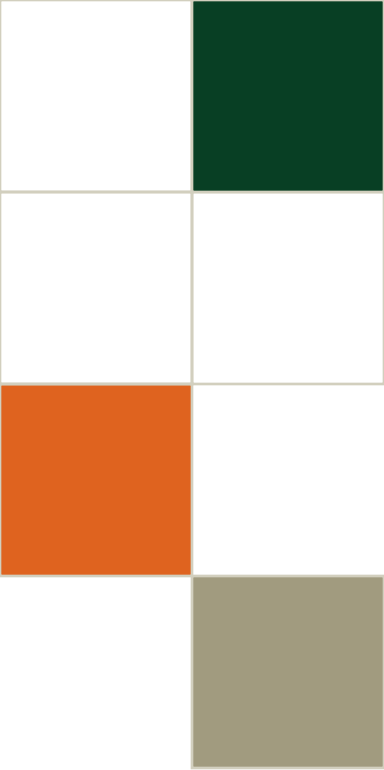
- The same family behaviors that are associated with the symptom (e.g. drug use, delinquency), also causes “resistance to engagement.”
- Clinicians behaviors also contribute to the family’s “resistance” to enter treatment. Clinicians behaviors can facilitate family engagement into treatment.

Changing therapist behaviors increases engagement and retention



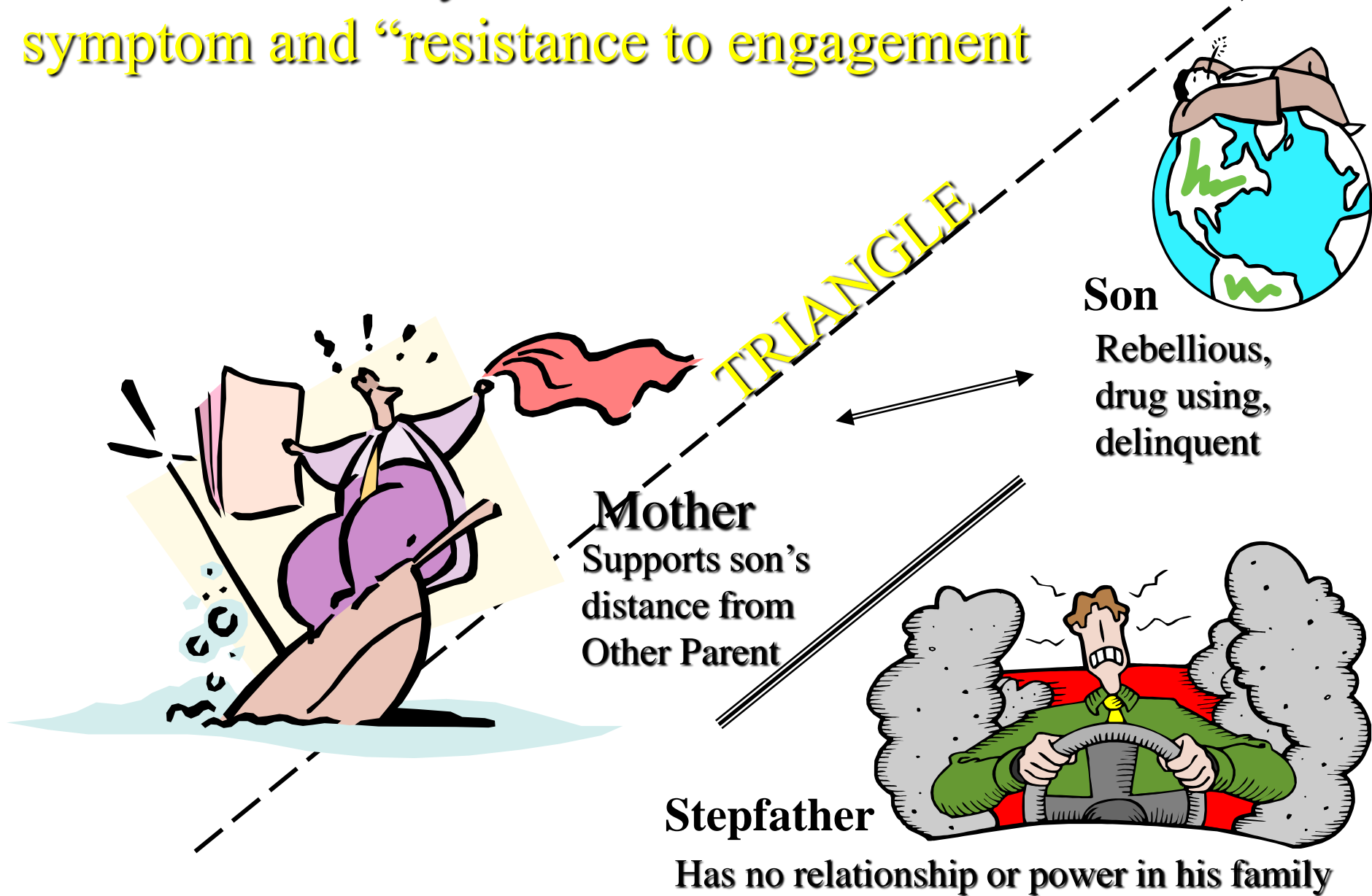
Resistant Patterns of Interactions are diagnosed at two levels:

- Identify the patterns of interactions that maintain the “resistance”
- Interface between the family and the therapist



Common Patterns Found in Resistant Families

Patterns of family interactions linked to adolescent symptom and “resistance to engagement”





Powerful Adolescent

High in the family hierarchy

Cannot demote

Cannot ask others to control behavior

- Must recognize position and contact directly –Early
- “Reframe” therapy in a way that “suits” the adolescents: what “works for her/him”
- 3) Encourage use of her/his power in a positive way

Power I.P.

Presentation $\begin{matrix} // \\ // \end{matrix}$ I.P.
M — // — F

Move: $\begin{matrix} \text{Th}_2 \longrightarrow \text{I.P.} \\ \swarrow \\ \text{Th}_1 \longrightarrow \text{M} \end{matrix}$ — // — F

Becomes: $\text{Th}_3 = \text{I.P.}$
M — Th_4 — F



Disengaged Parent

(Can also refer to other parental figures)

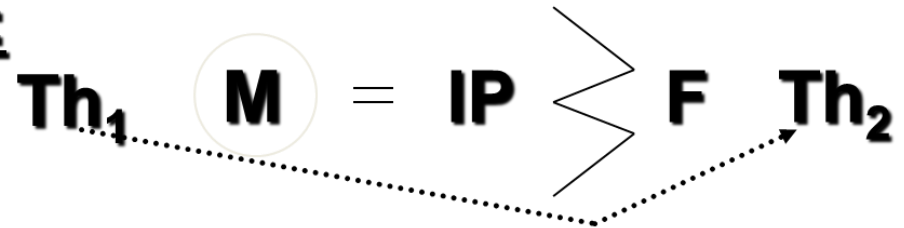
- Caller, usually mother, can bring child and herself to treatment, but “the child’s stepfather does not really care” or “he is not really involved”

Disengaged Parent

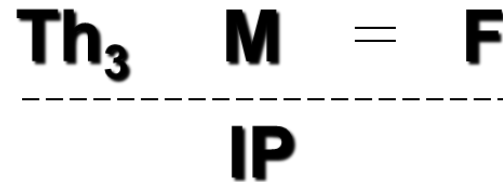
Presentation



MOVE:



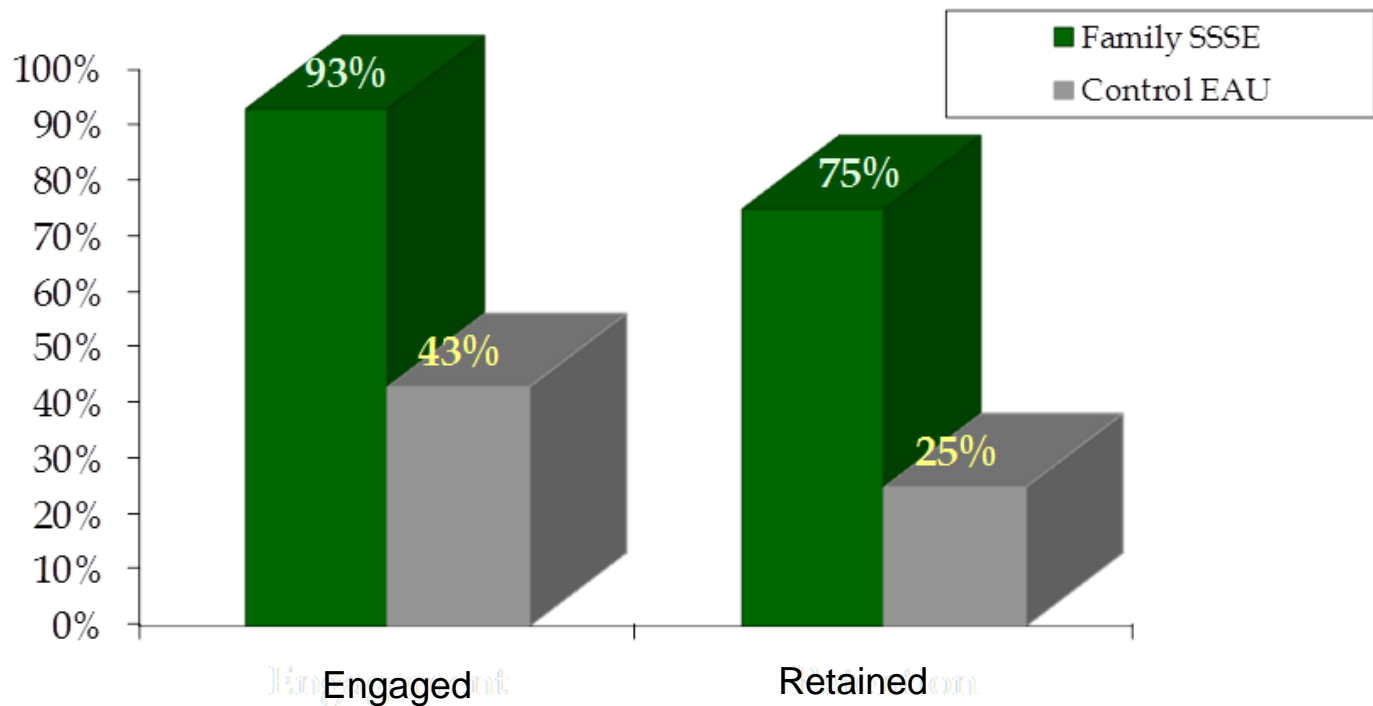
BECOMES:





**Engagement
techniques were
developed and tested
across four randomized
clinical trials**

Engaging and Retaining Difficult Hispanic Youth and Family Members

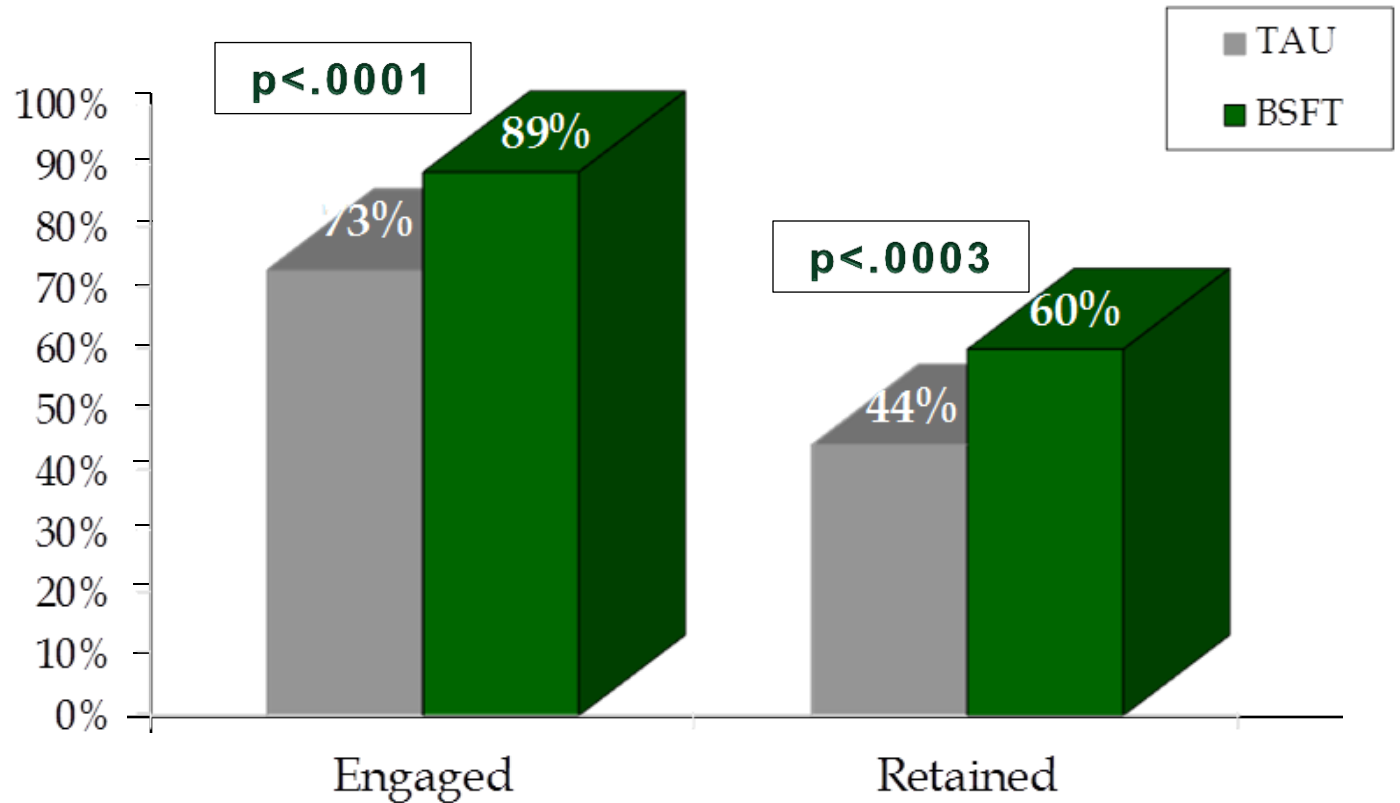




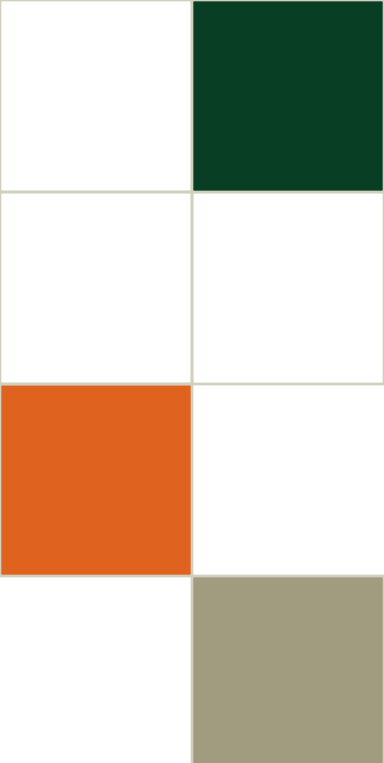
National Drug Abuse Treatment Clinical Trials Network

- 8 sites around the nation
- Multi-racial/ethnic study
- 480 Families Randomized

Engagement and Retention: Full Sample



(Robbins, et al, 2011)



The same interactive patterns that prevented the family from getting rid of the youth's symptoms also prevent the family from getting help



Resistance is:

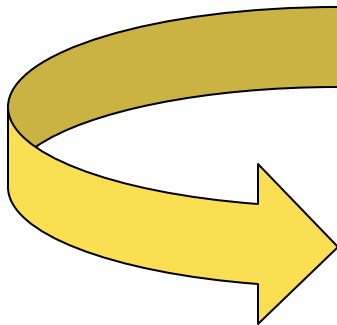
- The family's display of its inability to adapt effectively to a situation i.e. coming into treatment
- The therapist's inability to behave in ways that get around the family's maladaptive behaviors long enough to bring the family into treatment

BSFT-Engagement PREMISE

Resistance

A symptom of the system's
maladaptive interactions

The system's attempt to
maintain its status quo



...therefore... the same diagnostic and
intervention techniques apply in therapy
and in engaging families into Treatment



**The BSFT therapist will
use intervention
techniques such as
joining and creating a
motivational context for
change to get around the
maladaptive patterns and
get the family into
treatment**



To engage families the therapist must:

- Diagnose the patterns of interactions that cause the family as a whole not to come into treatment.
- Get around “resistance” patterns
- Change them *later* during treatment



Crosswinds BSFT® *Engagement*

***Brief Strategic Family Therapy® and BSFT® are
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Crosswinds Youth Services

- Crosswinds began in 1974, and currently serves over 2,200 children annually across Brevard County, Florida.
- Crosswinds runs a homeless/runaway shelter, and has a spectrum of programs including independent living, in-home family therapy, and diversionary programs.
- In 2007, Crosswinds was selected by Evidence Based Associates' Redirections Program to provide BSFT services.



BSFT Program at Crosswinds

- Crosswinds BSFT program provides in-home family therapy to 12-18 year old children on probation and their families
- BSFT works with the family system to improve support, communication, and family structure, therefore reducing the likelihood that the child will later be committed to a residential program.
- The BSFT™ program began in November, 2007 with a team of 4 therapists.

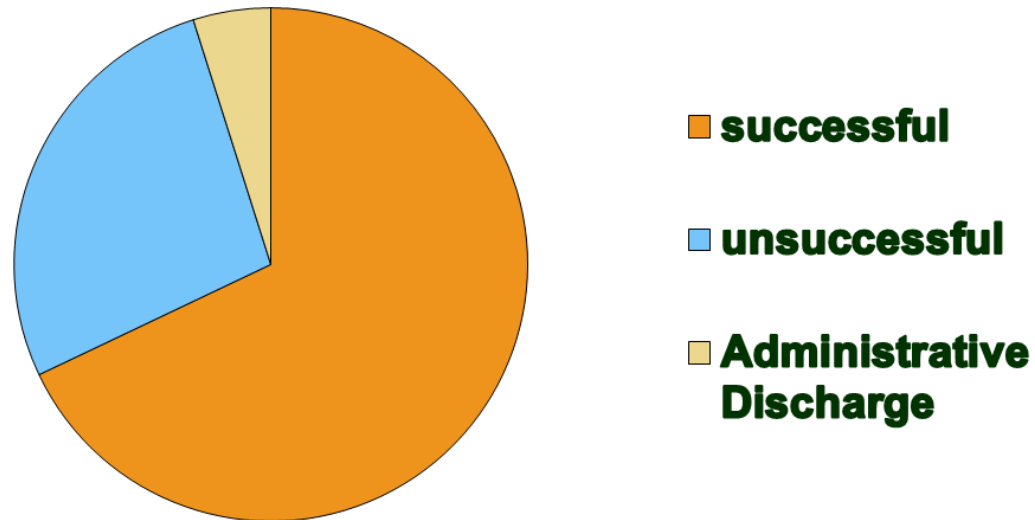
Treatment Success

- Referral problem
- Engagement and retention
- Substance abuse

Results

- **298 clients have been seen since inception (November, 2007)**

Cases closed



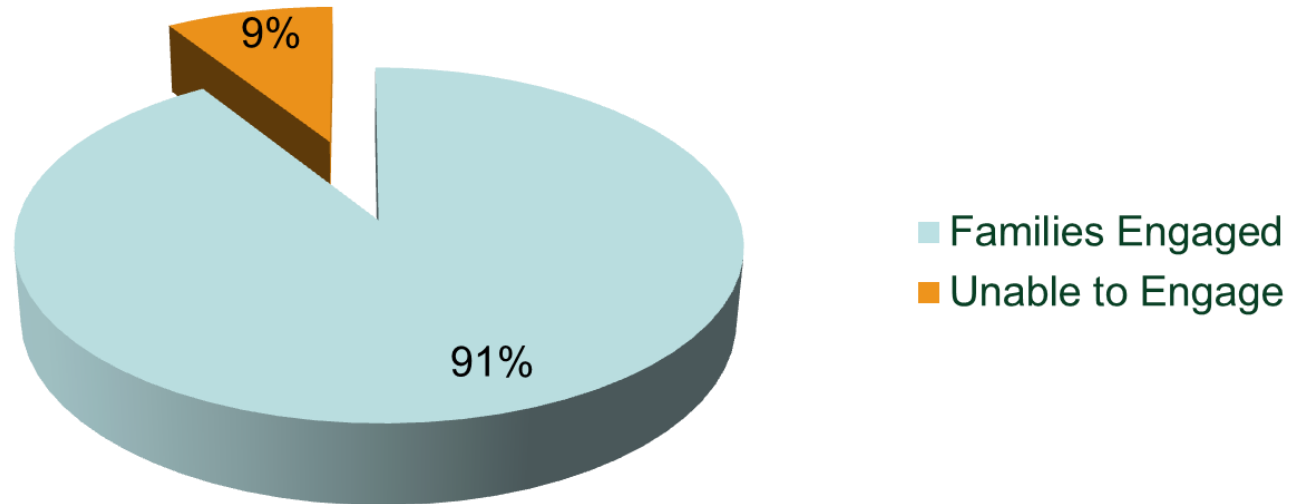


Results

- Since inception, 73% of clients have been closed successfully
- For 2009-2010, 22% of successful discharges have been adjudicated for a new charge during the one year post treatment.
- For 2010-2011, 16% of successful discharges have been adjudicated for a new charge, with 2% of cases still pending 1 year post treatment.
- Contract requirements are that 70% of youth are closed successfully (we closed 73%), and that 60% of youth do not recidivate (in 2010-2011, 84% did not recidivate).

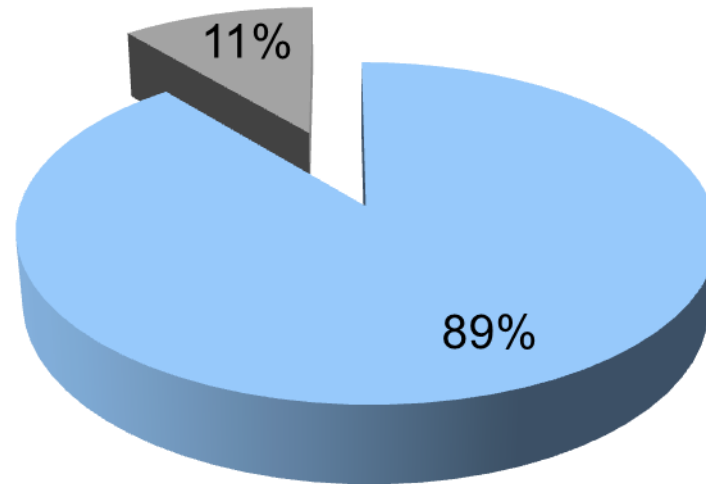
Results: Engagement and Retention

Engagement



Treatment Retained

Retention



- Retained Once Opened
- Drop Out Due to Engagement

Challenges to Engagement

- Size of Brevard County
- Population experiences with the “system”
- Family Diagnostics
 - Unbalanced Hierarchy
 - Protection of IPhood
 - Family does not have a decision making subsystem



Engagement at Crosswinds

Reaching out to families

- **First contact**
- **Meeting the family where they are at**
- **Persistent attempts**





Engagement at Crosswinds

Identifying Obstacles

- Helping to overcome obstacles as a joining technique
 - Helping the family to meet basic needs
 - Supporting the present hierarchy
 - Identifying early gains for family
- Resistance due to Homeostasis



Engagement at Crosswinds

Assigning tasks:

The first task we assign a family is to ask them to come together for the first therapy session

Engagement at Crosswinds

Sequential Alliances

- First contact with a family member
- Working with the first contact to engage the family
- Specialized engagement to pull in other family members





Engagement at Crosswinds

Using the Diagnostic Map

- *The same maladaptive patterns that are present in a family system are the same patterns that will interfere with the family getting help*
- *Asking Process focused questions*
- *Assigning exploratory tasks*
- *Using BSFT techniques to overcome obstacles and homeostasis*