

# Taking Multisystemic Therapy® to the Country of Chile

Gain helpful insights on how to implement Multisystemic Therapy (MST) by learning about Chile's path to success. This guide will share the history of MST in Chile, what makes MST work in Chile under the leadership of the Undersecretary of Crime Prevention, and some of the wonderful success stories from the country.



**MST**®  
Services

**Proven Results**  
for Families and Communities

## Chile Chooses MST to Reduce Crime and Transform the Lives of Children and Families

Under the leadership of President Sebastián Piñera, the government is intent on advancing programs to help its citizens. The Lazos program was born in 2012 during the first administration of President Sebastián Piñera, with the aim of making a radical change in terms of quality, intensity and rigor of the public offer on prevention and social reintegration. It aimed to coordinate the efforts of all sectors and state agencies that deal with reduction of crime and the fear it invokes. Under the commitment and remarkable work of the Undersecretary of Crime Prevention, its execution constitutes an innovation in terms of intensity and quality of psychosocial intervention in Latin America.



“A primary objective of our government’s social policy will be to support and strengthen families. The mission is to enhance their abilities and reduce their fears, giving them the necessary tools to have opportunities and safety, pursue and reach their goals, and achieve a fuller and happier life.”

-President Sebastián Piñera

As part of this push, the government looked for interventions that would get children and adolescents who already had contact with police off the path to further crime. Little wonder then that in trying to deal with youth crime, the country turned to Multisystemic Therapy (MST<sup>®</sup>) in 2012, choosing it over other options. In 2014, Chile became an MST Network Partner, joining 23 other prominent youth services organizations around the world. Since 1996, the police have tracked children who committed offenses or were the victims, and early detection teams were set up under “Chile Seguro.” Once at-risk youth are identified, evidence-based interventions are put in place that create lasting change in the children and their families, and MST is the evidence-based intervention offered to those children with the highest level of criminal risk.

### Proven Results for the Children and Families of Chile

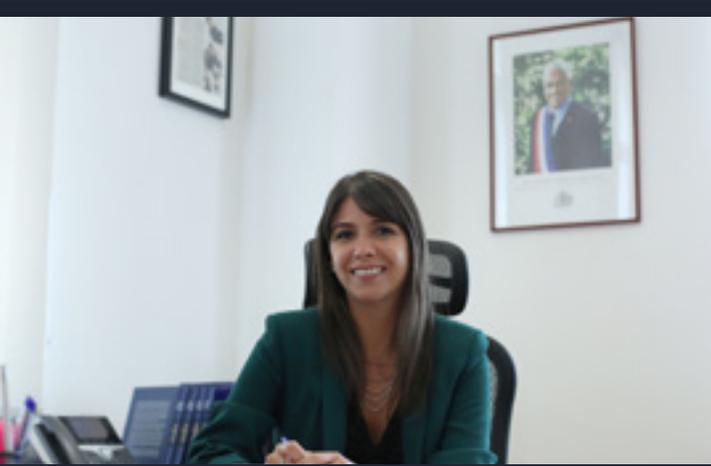


\* AT THE CLOSE OF TREATMENT\*

## The Alliance Between the Government of Chile and MST Services

The national government provides funding to and contracts with various municipalities to implement MST. The annual funding covers professional fees and operational costs. The municipalities involved are chosen by the Chilean government based on social vulnerability and the number of youth involved in criminal behavior.

**Since the beginning of the program in 2012,  
over 7,300 families have received MST treatment**



“The Lazos Program is an initiative that makes me proud as Undersecretary. The alliance that was established with MST Services in 2012, and the installation of MST in Chile has been carried out successfully. The challenge and commitment of President Sebastián Piñera, and his government is to promote this program for children and families in order to boost their quality of life.”

-Katherine Martorell Awad, Undersecretary of Crime Prevention

## Why is MST so effective in Chile?

**There are several reasons given for such positive outcomes:**

- The commitment and support of government officials
- MST focuses on treating the causes of crime: family and peer relationships, school performance, community factors
- High-quality treatment is intensive and provided in the adolescents' home, school and community
- MST teams are committed to developing positive relationships with other community agencies and stakeholders
- MST teams receive quality support and training
- Dedicated MST professionals undergo a rigid evaluation and accountability process

**Currently, there are nearly 40 clinical MST teams operating in Chile.**

### He owned pistols at age 12, but with MST, was able to get a fresh start

“El Retiro de un Joven Pistolero,” the story of Sebastian\*, is an example of the serious kind of behaviors MST therapists have worked with in Chile and throughout the world. Sebastian was born to a drug-addicted mother who used pasta base, a cocaine derivative, throughout her pregnancy. He grew up in a neighborhood filled with crime where his childhood was lost to adults who used him to commit petty theft. By 12, Sebastian owned pistols and was expected to use them. When asked about his own childhood, Sebastian said, “I didn’t have one.” He was in and out of youth detention centers before the age of 13, and his negative behavior only increased after the death of his mother as a result of a drug deal.

By the time Sebastian turned 17, he was one of the leaders of a gang in Cerro Navia and was responsible for assaults and attempted homicides. He also took part in a string of robberies on other drug dealers. Sebastian was referred to Multisystemic Therapy after he had been shot nine times. There were still numerous hits out on his life. He had been through many therapeutic intervention programs that had all failed. Sebastian’s MST therapist was asked to do what many would have deemed impossible, work with Sebastian and his grandmother to transform him from a gangbanger to a normal kid who could expect to see adulthood.

Given the intensity of Sebastian’s behavior, the process was not easy and involved a host of dedicated professionals beyond the MST therapist. Through MST’s analytical process, the therapist, Sebastian and his grandmother worked to understand the reasons for the boy’s behavior



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“Through MST’s analytical process, the therapist, Sebastian and his grandmother worked to understand the reasons for the boy’s behavior and started to address them together with specific and action-oriented interventions.”

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and started to address them together with specific and action-oriented interventions. The therapist was able to see both Sebastian’s strengths and those of his grandmother, and used these positive characteristics to instill hope for change. In MST, barriers are anticipated, and Sebastian did return to criminal activities. His therapist and grandmother then evaluated the reasons for the relapse and worked

to intensify the interventions. Ultimately, the boy’s relapses proved so dangerous that the court took over and detained him again. However, this time they consulted with the MST therapist and the grandmother to determine the best way to help Sebastian choose a different path. The entire team working with him agreed that an extreme intervention was needed to help the teenager sustain the changes he had started in MST. Sebastian and his grandmother decided to move to the south of Chile where he had no friends and could have a new start.

Not everything went smoothly in the new environment, but Sebastian’s grandmother and therapist developed extensive behavior plans to support the transition to a new home and community. They also made sure that Sebastian had the additional drug treatment and educational services that he would need to further his progress. Although the direct intervention of an MST therapist is only three to five months in most cases, Sebastian is a good example of the process continuing after the MST treatment ends.

Sebastian has lived to see his 18th birthday. He is getting an education and is working with his grandmother and other professionals to address the temptations of his old lifestyle as soon as they arise. Sebastian is still walking the long road to change, but he is a powerful success story.

*\*Names have been changed for confidentiality*

### Finding the right work-life balance, MST helps a mom regain her son



I am an MST therapist on a mission to transform the lives of youth and families. Take Mateo\*, for example, a teen who spent a great deal of time on the streets of Chile when no one was home. He is the son of a struggling mother who works long hours as a construction foreman, where thanks to her physical strength, she learned to live in a “tough man’s world” in which she had to defend herself constantly.

#### A demanding job makes parenting tougher than usual

I still remember the afternoon when this mother, Fresia, sobbed after recalling her son at a young age crying out of hunger and asking for bread from their

neighbor. At that time, Fresia was unable to meet the needs of her son, and she said to herself “never again.” To keep that vow, she devoted more time and effort in getting a better job. However, over the years, this brought other consequences and complications. The more effort, time and dedication she gave to her job, the more her children strayed. Mateo stopped going to school, spent more time with negative peers and started stealing. The fights at home increased to the point where mom and son stopped speaking to each other.

Then the long journey of 123 days of MST treatment began, where there were moments of concern, hopelessness and confusion. Fresia thought she was a bad mother because she felt she had tried everything. Work had become her life while she let go of Mateo’s hand. Fresia tried to protect her son and to control his behavior, but despite all her efforts, Mateo only went out more and became involved in even bigger problems.

#### With MST, both mother and son find balance and strength

In one of our therapy sessions, we looked for a metaphor to explain symbolically what was happening in Fresia’s relationship with Mateo, and the mother explained how she identified with a “lioness” who shows her claws to protect her son without realizing these claws were hurting Mateo’s heart. With this realization, Mateo’s mother changed her response toward the boy, increasing her signs of affection, giving a kiss in the morning, sharing, understanding and listening. This was how she began to recover her son. She recognized it wasn’t enough to just yell and kick him out. She replaced this with listening to him, taking him in and helping him to change.

By showing more affection, lots of things were achieved. However, not everything came easy. Mateo kept going out, getting into trouble and using marijuana when the mother could not monitor him. Various action steps were taken in efforts to set limits, and there was lots of practice with trial and error. A breakthrough came when Fresia realized she couldn’t do it alone. With the support of her MST therapist, she became stronger and more self-confident. She enlisted the help of family members who spent time during the day with the youth. The family also offered her new ideas on how to care for him, learning and demonstrating actions with firmness and perseverance, making Mateo as her top family priority.

At the end, Fresia was very grateful and proud of the process she had made with Multisystemic Therapy. It showed her how she could manage and regain her son—and her life. Fresia shared with me that she was the protagonist, the one responsible for changing the story of her life and that of her family. She had regained her strength, eliminating guilt to go in a new direction that would lead her and her children to learn new things where she would be able to face new challenges. Just like she said, “The lioness is not asleep. Instead she has learned to use her strength and claws to love and protect her children.”

*\*Names have been changed for confidentiality*

To learn more about how Multisystemic  
Therapy is changing the lives of youth  
and families in other countries across  
the globe, visit

[www.mstservices.com](http://www.mstservices.com)



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