

June 21, 2007

Dear Colleague:

We are writing to invite you to apply for membership in an exciting new endeavor sponsored by the John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation, the Disproportionate Minority Contact (DMC) Action Network. The Network is coordinated by the Center for Children's Law and Policy (CCLP).

The DMC Action Network is a component of the Foundation's *Models for Change: Systems Reform in Juvenile Justice* initiative. *Models for Change* is an effort to create successful and replicable models of juvenile justice system reform through targeted investments in key states. With substantial long-term funding and support from the Foundation, *Models for Change* seeks to accelerate progress toward a more rational, fair, effective, and developmentally appropriate juvenile justice system. *Models for Change* partners with selected states -- Pennsylvania, Illinois, Louisiana, Washington -- to advance reforms that effectively hold young people accountable for their actions, provide for their rehabilitation, protect them from harm, increase their life chances, and manage the risk they pose to themselves and to public safety. The Foundation chose four "bellwether" states that have very different histories, cultures and political landscapes. By examining change in states that are at different starting points for juvenile justice reform, *Models for Change* aims to broaden understanding of success in different regions, making it easier to generalize the lessons learned and replicate progress nationwide. The mission of the initiative is clear: to create model juvenile justice system that can stimulate a national wave of juvenile justice reform.

Within *Models for Change*, the Foundation has chosen DMC as a critical Targeted Area of Improvement for the four states. As a result, each of the states has several sites that are working to reduce DMC, with a goal of modeling practices that can be adopted statewide and nationally. Each of these DMC sites in the four states is a member of the Action Network.

The Foundation is now seeking four additional states or local sites (e.g., counties or cities) across the country to join the *Models for Change* sites to provide leadership in reduction of DMC. A key criterion for selection of the additional states or local sites is that the jurisdiction has already achieved measurable success in reducing DMC in some way. The success may be in reducing overrepresentation or racial or ethnic disparities affecting youth of color in the juvenile justice system, or in adopting measures that reduce the entry or penetration of youth of color into the system. The success may be demonstrated in a variety of ways, such as actually reducing the index of overrepresentation at one or more key decision points in the system, developing a new data system that collects information on race and ethnicity of youth in the juvenile justice system, compiling and issuing regular reports on race and ethnicity of youth at key decision points in the system, adopting a Risk Assessment Instrument (RAI) to reduce the number of

1701 K Street, NW
Suite 600
Washington, DC 20006

tel: 202.637.0377
fax: 202.379.1603

www.cclp.org

subjective detention decisions, establishing new alternatives to detention or commitment to prevent youth of color from being unnecessarily incarcerated, or creating new culturally competent community-based programs for youth of color. This list is not meant to be exhaustive.

Participation in the DMC Action Network will bring significant benefits to the new sites, including:

- Funding of up to \$100,000 per year for up to three years to support DMC reduction efforts;
- Collaboration with eleven other states or local sites working on DMC reduction;
- Access to the latest developments in the DMC reduction arena via a monthly electronic newsletter, listserv access, website, and technical assistance;
- Attendance at annual meetings of the Network which will be organized by CCLP;
- Recognition as a participant in *Models for Change*;
- Recognition of leadership in DMC reduction by the MacArthur Foundation.

A key requirement for all Network members is participation with other sites in developing and implementing a "Strategic Innovation" to reduce DMC. A Strategic Innovation is a specific effort that will lead to measurable outcomes to reduce DMC. Examples of Strategic Innovations include:

- Innovations in data collection and reporting methods to improve site data capacity and ensure the disaggregating of data by race and/or ethnicity;
- Innovations in data analyses to help drive policy/practice reforms, and thus decrease entry and penetration of youth of color in the juvenile justice system (e.g., utilization studies);
- Innovations in decision point admissions to facilitate objective decision making (e.g., development of a detention Risk Assessment Instrument, police booking criteria);
- Innovations in cultural competence and responsiveness (e.g., translation of court documents into Spanish or other language spoken by significant number of youth and families in the juvenile justice system, cultural competency training for staffs of key stakeholder agencies); and
- Innovations in programs and services to increase community-based alternatives and service options for youth who would otherwise be detained (e.g., Evening Reporting Center or other Alternative to Detention programs/services).

All Network members will be required to work on Strategic Innovations, which will be selected by representatives of all of the sites at the first annual meeting of the sites in October, 2007, in Washington, DC.

In addition to work on a Strategic Innovation, each Network site will be required to:

- Identify one key stakeholder to lead DMC reduction efforts in the jurisdiction;
- Demonstrate buy-in and support at the state level for its efforts, at a minimum by obtaining a letter from the state DMC Committee or State Advisory Group that distributes funds under the Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention Act;
- Commit to identify and work to achieve measurable goals for improvement;
- Attend annual conferences of Network members;
- Participate in quarterly conference calls involving all Network sites;

- Write one article during the year on its DMC reduction efforts, to be published in the monthly DMC Action Network e-newsletter; and
- Submit semi-annual reports on progress in implementing the Strategic Intervention.

The site selection criteria will be as follows:

- Availability of DMC data in the site
- Evidence of racial or ethnic disparities at one or more key decision-points in the system
- Effectiveness of current efforts to reduce DMC
- Availability of committed leadership toward reducing racial and ethnic disparities in the site by public officials and community leaders
- Capacity of key stakeholders to make necessary changes
- Evidence of state-level support for the work and interest in its expansion, if successful
- Value of site's experience to other Network members, and to the field
- Value of participation in the Network for the site
- Capacity to monitor progress
- Sustainability of reforms
- Geographic diversity of the sites.

To express the interest of your jurisdiction to participate in the DMC Action Network, please contact CCLP:

Lisa Garry, DMC Policy Director
Center for Children's Law and Policy
1701 K Street, NW Suite 600 Washington DC 20006
Tel: (202) 637-0377, ext. 103 / Fax (202) 379-1600
Email: lgarry@cclp.org

In response to your interest, we will send you an extensive questionnaire on DMC in your jurisdiction and your DMC reduction efforts to date. **All responses will be due at CCLP by 5:00 p.m. EDT on Tuesday, July 31, 2007.** Your questionnaire responses will then be used in the site selection process.

We look forward to contact from jurisdictions that are addressing one of the most difficult issues facing the juvenile justice system.

Sincerely,

Mark Soler , Executive Director
Lisa Garry, DMC Policy Director

MS/lmg