

What DMC Reduction Is — and Is Not

In [Models for Change](#), efforts to reduce **Disproportionate Minority Contact (DMC)** have **three goals**: to **reduce over-representation of youth of color** in the justice system, to **reduce racial and ethnic disparities**, and to **prevent youth of color from entering and moving deeper into the juvenile justice system**.

Reducing DMC **does not** require solving racism, poverty and all of the systemic inequities in society. DMC reduction is not an exercise in finger-pointing and blame, either toward public officials or parents of troubled youth. It is not simply a research project, focused on endlessly gathering data to demonstrate the problem. DMC reduction efforts do not excuse delinquent behaviors or give kids of color just a slap on the wrist. **DMC reduction is about changing policies and practices to ensure racial fairness in the justice system.**

How can DMC be reduced? Successful sites adopt specific strategies to reduce DMC over time, including the following:

- 1. Convening a governing body** comprised of key system decision makers and community members to drive strategy and monitor outcomes.
- 2. Conducting a thorough analysis of how decisions are made and who makes them** at key decision points in the juvenile justice system (“system mapping”).
- 3. Collecting and analyzing data** at key decision points to determine where and how DMC occurs in the system, which populations of youth are most at risk for DMC, and what policy and practice reforms could be effective to reduce the risk.
- 4. Identifying specific decision points** to target reform efforts where over-representation or disparities exist or youth are inappropriately and unnecessarily incarcerated (e.g., for misdemeanors or technical violations of probation).
- 5. Creating interventions, policies, and programs** that reduce DMC at those decision points, such as arrest diversion policies and community-based alternatives to incarceration.
- 6. Monitoring implementation and reporting results** to the governing body and the public.

Resource

[The Sentencing Project](#) has published a new edition of [Reducing Racial Disparity in the Criminal Justice System](#), a manual for practitioners, policymakers, and community organizers. Although it focuses on the adult system, the manual’s workable solutions and best practices also apply to juvenile justice systems.

Profile: Rapides Parish, Louisiana

Note: An earlier version of this story contained incorrect data. We regret the error.

In Rapides Parish (Alexandria, LA), representatives from Juvenile Court, the Assistant District Attorney, Indigent Defense Counsel, all law enforcement agencies, and juvenile probation services met over a 5-month period to develop their **Detention Screening Instrument (DSI)**. They discussed the purpose of detention, the alleged offense(s), prior offenses, prior or current probation supervision, prior failure to appear in court and runaway behavior. The group assigned numerical points to each of those factors in order to create a uniform and unbiased tool.

Since July 1, 2008, the DSI has guided decisions about whether a juvenile is placed in a secure facility, a detention alternative, or released to a parent or guardian. The parish holds monthly DSI meetings to go over the data, analyze it, and discuss any problems or concerns.

DMC eNews reports on efforts to reduce Disproportionate Minority Contact in juvenile justice systems in the [DMC Action Network](#). The network is a project of the John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation’s [Models for Change](#) initiative. The [Center for Children’s Law and Policy](#) manages the network and publishes this newsletter. Contact us at DMCeNews@cclp.org or 202-637-0377 x108.



Computer lab in Baltimore’s PACT Center.
Photo: Joe Smith

DMC Story Bank

Detention Alternative Succeeds

In Baltimore City, 60% of youth in detention scored low- and medium-risk on the detention screening tool, but were detained due to concerns about flight risk and prior failures in a community detention program.

In response, our DMC Advisory Board worked with the city’s Office of Employment Development to create the Pre-Adjudication Coordination and Training (PACT) Center, a community-based evening reporting center where youth receive intensive supervision, comprehensive needs assessments, and resource planning.

In the PACT Center’s first year, **95% of the youth appeared for their court hearings, and 93% remained free of additional charges** while in the program. Youth response was overwhelmingly positive.

Share a story (110 words or fewer) about a surprise you found in your data. Email it to DMCeNews@cclp.org