

Using Burns Institute Data Methods

“If you can’t measure it, you can’t manage it!” That’s especially true for the tough work of reducing Disproportionate Minority Contact (DMC) in juvenile justice systems. To succeed, localities must **regularly and accurately collect, report, and analyze their data**. It is a challenging process, and sites often must improve their data systems before they can make progress in DMC reduction.

Timely, accurate and relevant data sets **drive the creation of strategic reforms and initiatives and measure the effectiveness of the resulting strategic changes**.

DMC Action Network sites are using an adaptation of the [W. Haywood Burns Institute \(BI\)](#) method for collecting and analyzing data. The BI has created a [data template](#) to help jurisdictions identify **whether and to what extent racial and ethnic disparities exist** at critical decision making points: arrests, referrals to detention, detention admissions decisions — including overrides — detention utilization, and detention alternative successes and failures. The BI method includes [annual and quarterly measures](#) of disparities by **race, ethnicity, gender, geography and offense**.

Using the BI approach to collecting and analyzing data enables stakeholders to **identify disparities and the decision points** where they occur. Teams then **dig deeper** into the factors contributing to the disparities and **create data-driven, strategic changes in policy, practice and/or programming** to address those factors.

Once a jurisdiction has adopted specific strategies to reduce disparities, **ongoing data collection, reporting, and analysis** enables the site to **track the effectiveness** of their strategies. In addition to data collection recommended by BI, DMC Action Network sites and the [Center for Children’s Law and Policy](#) are piloting a new set of [DMC performance measures](#) to monitor and report their progress.

Resources

The [Fall 2008 issue of The Future of Children](#) focuses on Juvenile Justice, and includes a [chapter on Disproportionate Minority Contact \[pdf\]](#).

[Adoration of the Question: Reflections on the Failure to Reduce Racial & Ethnic Disparities in the Juvenile Justice System \[pdf\]](#) is the first in a series of reports from the [W. Haywood Burns Institute \(BI\)](#) on the tools, insights and strategies that the BI uses to help sites reduce racial and ethnic disparities in their juvenile justice systems.

Profile: Sedgwick County, Kansas

Sedgwick County (Wichita), Kansas, has conducted DMC reduction activities for more than 10 years, led by system practitioners. They have successfully reduced juvenile detention admissions, length of stay, and population. Sedgwick is focusing on overrepresentation at the point of arrest and increasing community voice in their juvenile justice system. Their community engagement efforts include collaborating with the African American Coalition, which provides advocacy on DMC reduction. This work is expanding with the help of the [Burns Institute](#) and the [Center for Children’s Law and Policy](#).

At the state level, in November 2008, Kansas Governor Kathleen Sebelius announced **a new state initiative to address disproportionality in the child welfare and juvenile justice systems**. The initiative will include agency officials, community leaders, experts and advocates. Mark Soler, CCLP’s Executive Director, will discuss the DMC Action Network at the statewide juvenile justice conference in June, 2009.

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 \(www.cclp.org\)](#) manages the network and publishes this newsletter. Contact us at DMCeNews@cclp.org or 202-637-0377 x108.



Prof. Francisco Villarruel makes a point.

DMC Story Bank

Cultural Competency Training

The DMC committee in Benton-Franklin Counties in Washington state has committed to community engagement as one of our strategies to reduce DMC. Franklin County’s population is 70% Latino, and system stakeholders recognize that we need increased cultural competence in order to engage the community effectively.

We brought in Professor Francisco Villarruel from Michigan State University to conduct cultural competence training. About 200 people attended the session, including judges, law enforcement, school counselors, Boys and Girls Clubs staff, and all probation officers. Local newspapers covered the event, and we videotaped it so that it can be distributed on DVD.

What advice (110 words or fewer) would you give about starting DMC reduction work? Send it to DMCeNews@cclp.org