

DMC Action Network eNews

Issue #13 | June 2010

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DMC Action Network

The DMC Action Network is a project of the John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation's [Models for Change](#) initiative.

The Network aims to share knowledge and accelerate progress in the reduction of racial and ethnic disparities in the juvenile justice system.

[Lisa Garry](#), DMC Policy Director for the Center for Children's Law and Policy, manages the DMC Action Network. [Travis Long](#), Project Coordinator, provides administrative and technical support to the Network.

The MIMIC Model: Turning Around the Lives of North Philadelphia Youth

At the age of sixteen, Edwin Desamour was convicted as an adult for third-degree murder. He spent eight years in an adult penitentiary and eleven and a half years on parole. Now, twenty years later, the North Philadelphia native is working with other concerned adults as part of an organization called Men in Motion in the Community (MIMIC) to build relationships with at-risk youth and break the cycle of violence and poverty that contributes to DMC. Through the Latino Juvenile Justice Network, a component of the MacArthur Foundation's Models for Change initiative, Edwin is also raising awareness of racial and ethnic disparities in the city's juvenile justice system.

For Edwin Desamour, working with youth in North Philadelphia is intensely personal. Having grown up in the neighborhood, he has experienced firsthand many of the challenges that kids currently face, including neighborhood violence, inadequate schools, and poverty. Edwin relies on that common ground to help youth avoid sharing another experience with him: being incarcerated as an adult at the age of sixteen.



After serving time in prison, Edwin returned to North Philadelphia to transition back into the neighborhood and lead a productive life. Yet, when Edwin began listening closely to the conversations in his community, he did not like what he heard. "I would be out in the community and would stop by the barbershop and stay for about an hour to get a sense of who's who and what was going on. I heard young guys talking about gangsters and drug dealers as if they were legends, and I realized that we had really messed up if our kids were looking to follow in their footsteps. Something had to give."

That night, something did give. Edwin (fourth from left) started calling other men in the community, including those who had turned their lives around after being incarcerated, stressing that they needed to take action. That group co-founded the organization known as MIMIC. The program, [which has been mentioned by CNN](#) and a number of other news outlets, provides mentorship, crisis intervention, and educational enrichment to the most at-risk youth in the community, who are primarily African American and Latino. Currently, a core group of seven mentors volunteer their time and energy to serve as resources to youth in the program. Many more volunteers lend other forms of support to the organization, such as fundraising or cooking meals for youth. Edwin, MIMIC's president, oversees the entire operation.

A MIMIC mentor's role in the program is diverse. It can mean anything from being on-call 24 hours a day to speak with kids, connecting youth to community- and

Core States

Pennsylvania
Berks County
Philadelphia
Lancaster County

Illinois
Peoria

Louisiana
Jefferson Parish
Rapides Parish

Washington
Benton/Franklin Counties
Pierce County

Partner States

Maryland
Baltimore City
Baltimore County
Montgomery County
Prince George's County

Wisconsin
Rock County
Outagamie County
Kenosha County

Kansas
Sedgwick County
Seward County
Lyon-Chase County

North Carolina
Union County
Carrabus County

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faith-based organizations, or helping youth develop employment and social skills by identifying promising opportunities in the community.

Since the program's inception in 2007, MIMIC mentors have recruited youth by approaching local schools and requesting that administrators "give them their worst." As Edwin notes, MIMIC works with youth who individuals describe as "likely to end up in prison" or "not going to make it." The process is wholly voluntary, yet almost all youth who are referred engage with the program. According to Edwin, youth get involved because MIMIC "doesn't promise youth a program, it promises them a relationship with a successful male role model" - something that almost all of them lack before their involvement with MIMIC.



When asked how he knows that MIMIC is making a difference in the lives of youth, Edwin notes that a number of children involved with the program, who were in danger of dropping out, have successfully completed eighth grade. Additionally, many of these students continue to volunteer with

the program as "Junior MIMIC" mentors for younger children. "The goal is to get youth to mimic us in how we live our lives now, not how we did before." In addition to altering the trajectory of at-risk youth, MIMIC also helps its adult mentors with their own reentry into the community as successful, productive individuals following incarceration.

Edwin also serves as the Latino Juvenile Justice Coordinator for [Congreso de Latinos Unidos in Philadelphia](#), where he engages in outreach to youth, service providers, and community members, on DMC, cultural and linguistic competence, and language access. As a result of his involvement with the Models for Change initiative, Edwin now integrates statistics on DMC in his conversations with community members. Those numbers "wake folks up" and get them involved with helping children in the community. Edwin is also thinking of the best ways to reach out to the faith-based community in order to raise awareness among a broader group of people.

As a result of his role with Congreso, Edwin is now thinking of ways to refine the program by serving more youth while also staying true to the program's roots. Edwin notes that at Congreso, he has surrounded himself "with people who are supporting MIMIC in better serving kids in the community." For example, by working with other individuals in the office, he is learning how to better document outcomes associated with his program and refine his recruitment process.

For those who read about MIMIC for the first time, they may see a one-of-a-kind program built around a one-of-a-kind life story. Yet, Edwin insists that his individual experience is not what makes his program successful. "If you can find that one individual who is out there who has been down that road and has turned it around, you're on the right track. Beyond that, it's about meeting people, listening, and becoming a familiar face, even in rough areas. Sometimes, we get caught up with so much behind a desk that we forget how to walk across the street."

You can read more about MIMIC by [clicking here](#), [following it on Twitter](#), or [visiting its Facebook page](#).

Let us know how you're reaching out to youth in your community: email jszanyj@cclp.org.

We Want Your Feedback!

We want to hear from you about how we can improve the DMC Action Network eNews.

Help us ensure that the eNews is a valuable resource for your work by [clicking here and completing a short online survey](#).

You can also contact us anytime with comments or suggestions at jszanyi@cclp.org or 202-637-0377 x108.



MIMIC mentors and youth at a weekend "MIMIC Challenge" event.

DMC Announcements: Employment and Presentation Opportunities

Rock County, WI seeks Juvenile Justice Services Division Manager

The Human Services Department of Rock County, Wisconsin, is seeking its next Juvenile Justice Services (JJS) Division Manager. Rock County, a DMC Action Network partner site, is a leader in systems reform and DMC reduction. The County has made great strides in improving services for youth by capitalizing on its strong data capacity, and it is looking forward to additional reforms in the coming years. [Click here to view the full job posting for additional details](#). If you have any questions regarding the position or have a candidate to recommend, contact Jason Witt, Deputy Director of the Rock County Human Services Department (608-757-5204; witt@co.rock.wi.us).

National Council of La Raza seeks new Juvenile Justice Fellow

The National Council of La Raza (NCLR) - the largest national Latino civil rights and advocacy organization in the United States - [is seeking a new Juvenile Justice Fellow for its Washington, DC office](#). The Fellow will develop and implement strategies to advance policy and legislative reforms in juvenile justice at state and federal levels, including policies aimed at reducing DMC.

Coalition for Juvenile Justice seeks proposals for national DMC conference

The Coalition for Juvenile Justice (CJJ) is now accepting presentation proposals for its national DMC conference, [Fundamental Fairness: Eliminating Racial and Ethnic Disparities in Juvenile Justice](#). The conference, which will take place October 23-25 just outside of New York City, will highlight practical and proven solutions for reducing and eliminating racial and ethnic disparities in juvenile justice. The deadline for submissions is July 22.

TA Tips: Practical Advice for Successful DMC Reduction

This section of our newsletter focuses on sharing strategies and insights that can help jurisdictions effectively and sustainably eliminate DMC in their juvenile justice systems.



This month's tip is to **explore new ways to get the word out about racial and ethnic disparities in juvenile justice**. By opening non-traditional channels of communication, jurisdictions can raise the profile of DMC and other important issues related to youth in the system. That may mean [reaching out to the local media](#) or, like MIMIC, using social networking sites such as Twitter and Facebook. New forms of outreach can help bring non-traditional stakeholders to the table and build greater support for reform.

If you have a tip you would like to share, or if you would like to hear more about a particular topic, let us know: email jszanyi@cclp.org.

The Newest DMC & Juvenile Justice Resources

- A new book, entitled [Homeroom Security: School Discipline in an Age of Fear](#), argues that harsh discipline policies in America's schools are not only counterproductive, but also have a disproportionately negative impact on at-risk youth. Author Aaron Kupchik, an associate professor of sociology and criminal justice at the University of Delaware, conducted years of field research to illustrate how current trends in school discipline fail to make schools safer. The book also offers suggestions on how to bring policies in line with best practices.
- Crime fell in 2009 as prison growth rates decreased in the United States, [according to a Justice Policy Institute \(JPI\) analysis of the FBI's Preliminary Annual Uniform Crime Report](#). JPI indicated that reported violent crime fell by 5.5 percent and property crime by 4.9 percent in 2009, supporting the argument that states can save money, promote alternatives to incarceration, and maintain public safety. JPI also released a new fact sheet entitled [How to Safely Reduce Prison Populations and Support People Returning to Their Communities](#), which outlines methods for reducing incarceration rates.
- In June 2010, the Georgetown Public Policy Institute's Center for Juvenile Justice Reform released a new report that reviews the educational barriers encountered by youth involved in the juvenile justice and child welfare systems. The publication, entitled [Addressing the Unmet Educational Needs of Children and Youth in the Juvenile Justice and Child Welfare Systems](#), describes legislation, policy initiatives, and evidence-based practices that can guide the development of more effective services for these youth.

The DMC eNews reports on efforts to reduce disproportionate minority contact in juvenile justice systems in the [DMC Action Network](#). [Lisa Garry](#), DMC Policy Director for the Center for Children's Law and Policy, manages the DMC Action Network. For a PDF version of this newsletter, [click here](#). You can also contact us anytime with comments or suggestions at jszanyi@cclp.org or 202-637-0377 x108.