

## DMC Action Network eNews

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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

### Berks County, Pennsylvania, Wins Community-Based Program of the Year for Evening Reporting Center

*Generally, juvenile justice practitioners don't enter the field expecting the glitz and glamor that accompany some other professions -- it's the desire to help youth in trouble that provides the necessary motivation. So when others acknowledge those on the ground who are working hard to improve the lives of kids in their community, it's cause for celebration.*



What does it feel like to have developed the best community-based program in your state for juvenile justice-involved youth? Just ask stakeholders in Berks County, Pennsylvania, a DMC Action Network core site. On November 4th, the Pennsylvania Juvenile Court Judges' Commission (JCJC) and the Pennsylvania Council of Chief Juvenile Probation Officers honored Berks County's Evening Reporting Center and its provider, the Children's Home of Reading, at its 30th annual awards program in Harrisburg.

When presenting the award for community-based program of the year, JCJC Awards Committee Chairperson David Mueller highlighted the fact that the Berks pre-adjudication evening reporting center (ERC), which was the first of its kind in Pennsylvania, rapidly became a model for other counties throughout the Commonwealth, with five jurisdictions now operating or developing similar programs. Why? The ERC, along with other changes such as increased frontloading of services like multisystemic therapy, helped Berks save over \$2 million in its budget for out-of-home placements in 2009. Not only that, the program has helped to combat DMC by keeping many youth of color out of detention while preserving public safety. In 2009, the Berks ERC served 68 youth, over 90% of whom were youth of color, and 96% of whom did not commit a new offense while participating in the program.

The MacArthur Foundation provided start-up funding that allowed Berks to open the pre-adjudication ERC in December 2008, until it became a part of the County's and Commonwealth's budget in July 2009. Operated by the Children's Home of Reading, the program serves between 8 and 13 youth for an average of 30 days. Staff pick up youth every weekday at 3 p.m. and return them to their homes at 9:30 p.m., using those hours to provide a mix of life skills development, educational assistance, group counseling, recreational activities, and meals. In addition, ERC staff have forged partnerships with surrounding organizations,

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

## Core States

**Pennsylvania**  
Berks County  
Philadelphia  
Lancaster County

**Illinois**  
Peoria

**Louisiana**  
Jefferson Parish  
Rapides Parish

**Washington**  
Benton/Franklin Counties

## Partner States

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

**Wisconsin**  
Rock County  
Outagamie County  
Kenosha County

**Kansas**  
Sedgwick County  
Lyon-Chase County

**North Carolina**  
Union County  
Carrabus County

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including a local college, which bring community members to the ERC and provide youth with opportunities to reach out to the surrounding neighborhood. You can [view a short video about the ERC by clicking this link.](#)



Rob Askew (photo left), who accepted the award on behalf of the program, attributed the ERC's success to the way that stakeholders came together to develop the program. Askew, who serves as the Director of Business Development at the Children's Home of Reading, described the ERC as "the most collaborative and transparent project" that he had been a part of during his career working with children and families in crisis. Given the popularity of the program with youth and its success rates, Berks is working to expand the ERC to serve post-adjudication youth through similar programming and an added treatment component.

The JCJC awards ceremony capped off the Commonwealth's annual conference on juvenile justice. Over the course of three days, practitioners and public officials from across Pennsylvania discussed promising practices and achievements at the state and local level. Berks County Juvenile Probation Chief Bob Williams described one such innovation from his jurisdiction: a detention risk assessment instrument. As with the ERC, Berks was the first jurisdiction to adopt the instrument, which has now spread to other jurisdictions throughout Pennsylvania. Williams noted that the instrument "not only allowed us to make decisions more fairly, consistently, and objectively, it helped guide us in developing alternatives to secure detention."

Williams, along with other juvenile justice professionals, also laid out Pennsylvania's achievements over the previous five years, which benefitted from the support of the MacArthur Foundation and the Pennsylvania Commission on Crime and Delinquency. However, the presentation focused primarily on outlining the Commonwealth's ambitious juvenile justice reform agenda for the coming years, which the panel described as "Pennsylvania's Juvenile Justice Enhancement Strategy."

The MacArthur Foundation's Model for Change Initiative is officially drawing to a close in Pennsylvania, but jurisdictions are gearing up for additional system improvements. In Berks, officials recently completed a file review of youth alleged to have violated the terms of their probation. The county's DMC Steering Committee requested the review to help identify ways of helping youth avoid out-of-home placement for probation violations. The analysis will help support the county's work to develop and implement standardized graduated responses to youth compliance and noncompliance with probation in the coming weeks.

Berks County is a jurisdiction that could rest on its laurels, given its many accomplishments over the past few years. It's clear, though, that officials there and throughout Pennsylvania have exciting plans to carry their reform work even further in the years ahead.

*Tell us if you're recognized for your work to reduce racial and ethnic disparities: email [jszanyj@cclp.org](mailto:jszanyj@cclp.org).*

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**The Center for Children's Law and Policy Is Now on**

## 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](mailto:jszanyi@cclp.org) or 202-637-0377 x108.

## Facebook!



What happens when juvenile justice meets social media? Find out by visiting the Center for Children's Law and Policy on Facebook. Plug into a continuously updated stream of the latest juvenile justice news and resources by pointing your browser to [www.facebook.com/cclp.org](http://www.facebook.com/cclp.org) and clicking the "Like" button at the top of the page.

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## 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 **pursue new opportunities to educate practitioners about DMC**. In Pennsylvania, individuals working on DMC reform have shared their work throughout the Commonwealth using active organizations, including the Pennsylvania Juvenile Court Judges' Commission, the Pennsylvania Council of Chief Juvenile Probation Officers, and the DMC Subcommittee of the Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention Committee of the Pennsylvania Council on Crime and Delinquency,

Pennsylvania's state advisory group on juvenile justice. By spreading the word about successful reform efforts at these organizations' meetings, counties such as Berks, Lancaster, and Philadelphia have inspired individuals to adapt those strategies to reduce racial and ethnic disparities in neighboring jurisdictions.

In states that do not have such active bodies, officials should think creatively about other presentation and networking opportunities that could help build interest in DMC reduction. Consider sending out a short write-up that outlines what DMC is and what your jurisdiction is doing about it to other agencies or organizations that work with youth, along with a request to include that information in their next newsletter or publication. Additionally, offer to do a presentation at their next meeting or conference on your DMC reduction efforts and how the organizations can help move those efforts forward.

Small outreach efforts such as this can yield big results in building new partnerships and educating others about the importance of work to reduce racial and ethnic disparities.

*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](mailto:jszanyi@cclp.org).*

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## The Newest DMC and Juvenile Justice Resources

- In a new article from the Louisiana Law Review, CCLP Executive Director Mark Soler examines the research on waiver of youth to adult court and racial disparities in the juvenile justice system. The article, entitled [Missed Opportunity: Waiver, Race, Data, and Policy Reform](#), argues that the failure to gather and analyze waiver data by race and ethnicity is a missed opportunity, and it proposes new collection and analysis techniques that would enable jurisdictions to change waiver policies and practices to reduce DMC.
- A new blog post from the Reclaiming Futures Initiative helps outline the financial savings associated with evidence-based practices in juvenile justice. The post, entitled [How Much Are Evidence-Based Practices Worth?](#), concisely presents several arguments supporting the development and implementation of these programs as a way of improving outcomes for youth and cutting costs in the delinquency system.
- The National Center for Family and Community Connections with Schools has released a new guide on the effectiveness of family engagement in schools. The guide, [A New Wave of Evidence: The Impact of School, Family, and Community Connections on Student Achievement](#), reviews 51 research studies published between 1995 and 2002 that focus on the influence of family and community involvement on student academic achievement and other outcomes. The report provides practical guidance for individuals and organizations attempting to connect families from diverse backgrounds with their schools.
- The Pretrial Justice Institute, in partnership with the Casey Foundation's Juvenile Detention Alternatives Initiative, has published a [special edition of its Pretrial Reporter](#) that spotlights reform efforts in the juvenile justice system. The issue covers recent legislation, policy, and court rulings, as well as information on girls in the juvenile justice system.
- The Pennsylvania Juvenile Defense Indigent Action Network has published a new guide on the collateral consequences of delinquency adjudications. The publication, entitled [The Pennsylvania Juvenile Collateral Consequences Checklist](#), provides attorneys, judges, and other juvenile justice professionals with the most up-to-date information available on the short- and long-term consequences of delinquency adjudications, ranging from public housing to immigration status.

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](mailto:jszanyi@cclp.org) or 202-637-0377 x108.