

DMC 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.

The Center for Children's Law and Policy, manages the DMC Action Network. For more information on the DMC Action Network, [visit our website](#).

Taking DMC Reduction Strategies Statewide in North Carolina

During the past six months, juvenile justice in North Carolina has undergone some significant changes. For one, the state's juvenile justice agency, formerly known as the Department of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, was relocated to the Department of Public Safety as the Division of Juvenile Justice (DJJ). Additionally, a bipartisan committee in the state legislature endorsed a proposal to raise the age of juvenile court jurisdiction from 16 to 18 for certain offenses - a first in the state's ongoing dialogue on the issue.

One thing has not changed, though: a commitment to spreading innovations from the Models for Change initiative throughout the state. North Carolina's involvement in Models for Change began in 2007, when Union County joined the DMC Action Network. Union County officials embraced a range of strategies to reduce racial and ethnic disparities, such as improved data collection, the implementation of a detention assessment instrument, and the development of a system of graduated responses to youth compliance and noncompliance with probation. These reforms contributed to a 67% decline in the number of youth admitted to detention for violations of probation in Union County over a nine month period, with a 50% drop in admissions of youth of color for that reason.

State officials took notice, and with the support of the MacArthur Foundation, they have been able to spread successful strategies throughout the state. According to DJJ's Assistant Director for Court Services, Michael Rieder, "We were so appreciative of the opportunities that the Models for Change initiative gave us, in part because one of the only things we were hearing during the past few years was 'cut, cut, cut.'"

DJJ began laying the groundwork for effective DMC reduction by educating juvenile justice professionals and other stakeholders on racial and ethnic disparities and data-driven decisionmaking. The agency hosted four regional conferences in August 2011, followed by smaller community forums in each of the state's 30 judicial districts this past spring. The meetings included approximately 3,600 attendees, exposing individuals to strategies and best practices from Union County and other places around the country.

Through the gatherings, the agency rolled out two new tools. The first, a district data report, generates information on how a jurisdiction compares to other areas of the state in terms of referrals, detention admissions, and other indicators. According to Rieder, the reports generated discussions about current policies and practices and alternatives to formal processing.

Core States

Pennsylvania
Berks County
Philadelphia
Lancaster County

Illinois
Peoria County

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
Cabarrus County

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The second tool is a detention assessment instrument. As Rieder notes, the tool “minimizes the emotional content of decision making and puts the emphasis on identifying those youth who do require detention for public safety reasons.” DJJ piloted the tool in four districts from January through June of 2012. The result? A 22% reduction in detention admissions when compared with the same time period the previous year. This included a 24% reduction for African American youth and a 16% reduction for Latino youth, meaning that 125 fewer youth of color entered detention in those four counties over a six-month period. Although Rieder notes that detention admissions have generally been on the decline throughout the state, he emphasized the importance of formalizing objective decisionmaking.

DJJ is also incorporating objective decisionmaking in probation services in each district by building upon Union County’s work on graduated responses to probation violations. Graduated responses encourage fair, consistent, and appropriate responses to youth under supervision. Sanctions take into account the seriousness of a specific probation violation and its risk to public safety when determining how to hold youth accountable for misbehavior. The strategy also emphasizes the importance of rewarding youth as they work toward building the skills that will help them stay out of trouble in the future.

The push to implement graduated responses has sparked creative thinking about how to serve children throughout the state. For example, in North Carolina’s first judicial district, Coast Guard members are establishing a mentoring program that will link youth with supportive adults and give them the opportunity to learn about the Coast Guard’s work. In Wake County, which is home to the state’s capital, a partnership with the Caldwell Fellowship program at North Carolina State University aims to bring together service-oriented college students and youth involved in the court system to brainstorm new ways of supporting juvenile justice-involved youth in the community. “We always talk about identifying ‘consequences,’ but we should be talking about identifying learning experiences that will expose youth to things that they didn’t know existed,” says Rieder. With the help of the Center for Children’s Law and Policy, DJJ will begin training and working with officials this fall to help districts develop their own continuum of options to promote positive youth behaviors.

For Rieder, the goal is to link individual youth with the types of people and experiences that keep them out of the justice system. In his line of work, he has many examples of such success stories. However, he also recognizes the value of these reforms to the juvenile justice system as a whole. “Thanks to the opportunity to share these approaches throughout the state, we’re getting a big result from the MacArthur Foundation’s investment. When you’re making change on that level and getting results, it’s something to be very proud of.”

Department of Justice Issues New Standards to Protect Youth From Sexual Victimization in Juvenile and Adult Facilities, Seeks Comment on Minimum Staffing Ratios

On June 20, 2012, the Department of Justice published national standards aimed at preventing, detecting, and responding to sexual misconduct in confinement facilities as part of the Prison Rape Elimination Act (PREA).

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Passed in 2003, PREA is the first federal civil statute focused specifically on addressing sexual violence in juvenile facilities, jails, prisons, lockups, and other facilities. In addition to supporting research, data collection, and technical assistance, PREA required the Justice Department to issue regulations for certain public and privately operated juvenile facilities. States must ensure that those facilities comply with the PREA standards or risk losing a portion of the state's federal prison funds.

The Center for Children's Law and Policy has developed a number of resources to help officials understand their obligations under PREA, including:

- [A quick reference guide](#) that provides a summary of the key requirements for youth in juvenile and adult facilities. It is intended for individuals who wish to understand the new standards but who do not have responsibility for implementing the details of the requirements.
- [A summary and checklist](#) designed to help agency officials and facility administrators understand the scope of the PREA standards for facilities and the individual requirements contained in the standards.
- [A list of best practices](#) that agencies can adopt to go above and beyond the minimum floor set by the PREA standards.

The Department of Justice is currently seeking comments on the standards' proposed minimum staffing ratios for secure juvenile facilities. For more information on the staffing ratio requirement and instructions on how to submit comments by the August 20, 2012 deadline, [follow this link](#).

New OJJDP Funding Opportunity for Local Juvenile Justice Reform

The Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (OJJDP) has announced a funding opportunity designed to help juvenile justice agencies develop and implement a set of evidence-based and cost-measurement tools that will improve outcomes for justice-involved youth and help agencies save money.

Through the new Juvenile Justice Reform and Reinvestment Demonstration Program, OJJDP will provide up to \$750,000 in funding, training, and technical assistance to as many as three applicants. OJJDP will also provide separate funding for a comprehensive process and outcome evaluation of the program.

Applications for both funding opportunities are due by 11:59 p.m. EST on August 23, 2012. [Follow this link for a list of frequently asked questions](#) about the program, or [click here to read the full solicitation](#).

The Newest DMC and Juvenile Justice Information

- The National Juvenile Justice Network has published a new edition of *Advances in Juvenile Justice Reform*, a publication that captures a wide array of youth justice reforms that took place between 2009 and 2011. The report outlines new laws, administrative rule and practice changes, positive court decisions, and promising commissions and studies from across the country.
- On June 25, 2012, the Supreme Court issued its decision in *Jackson v. Hobbs* and *Miller v. Alabama*, two cases where 14-year-olds were automatically sentenced to life without parole for homicide. The Court held that mandatory sentences of life without parole for crimes committed under the age of 18 violate the Eighth Amendment's prohibition on cruel and unusual punishment. To learn more about the cases and the implications for justice systems around the country, [visit the Campaign for the Fair Sentencing of Youth's website](#).
- This month, the Coalition for Juvenile Justice released a new report entitled *Positive Power: Exercising Judicial Leadership to Prevent Court Involvement and Incarceration of Non-Delinquent Youth*. The publication highlights nine judges across the nation who are using their statutory and inherent judicial powers to divert youth away from incarceration and toward community and family-based supports that more effectively meet their needs.
- The Research and Evaluation Center at John Jay College of Criminal Justice recently released a comprehensive report that discusses state juvenile justice reforms. *Pioneers of Youth Justice Reform: Achieving System Change Using Resolution, Reinvestment and Realignment Strategies* explores various reform initiatives that have reduced states' reliance on confinement facilities for youth.
- The Office of Justice Programs (OJP), in collaboration with the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, the National Institute of Justice, and the Bureau of Justice Assistance, has released a new fact sheet on drug courts. The publication examines adult and juvenile drug court program models and OJP's support of those programs. It also provides facts, research findings, and additional resources. [Click here to download the fact sheet](#).
- The Human Rights Campaign (HRC) has released the results of its survey of more than 10,000 lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender youth in a new report, *Growing up LGBT in America*. HRC asked youth about their experiences at home, at school, and in their communities. A major finding from the survey is that LGBT youth are twice as likely as their non-LGBT peers to say they had been physically assaulted, kicked, or shoved at school. [Click here to view the full results](#).

The *DMC eNews* reports on efforts to reduce disproportionate minority contact in juvenile justice systems in the [DMC Action Network](#). 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 202-637-03 77 x108.