

DMC Action Network eNews

Issue #23 | May 2011

In This Issue

[Changing Cultures to Improve Outcomes for Youth of Color](#)

[Trends and Challenges in Juvenile Justice Reform: Experiences of Three States](#)

[The Newest DMC and Juvenile Justice Resources](#)

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.

Changing Cultures to Improve Outcomes for Youth of Color

Culture change. For many juvenile justice administrators, these two words represent an important goal, but one that often seems impossible to reach. This month, Rock County, Wisconsin, explains how it overhauled its juvenile justice agency's mission, vision, and values to create a fairer system for all youth - and how those reforms benefit youth of color in its community.

Ten years ago, Rock County looked very different than it does today. According to Lance Horozewski, Juvenile Justice Division Administrator for the County's Human Services Department, the juvenile justice system was highly punitive. Back then, data analysis, risk management, and racial and ethnic fairness did not play a significant role in work with at-risk youth. The County's detention center operated at or near its capacity, and youth of color represented a disproportionate share of detained youth.

Today, Rock County leads Wisconsin's local DMC reduction efforts. A mixed urban and rural county of 160,000 residents, Rock County locks up 35% fewer youth of color for probation violations than it did in 2002. More youth remain in the community while under agency supervision, thanks to a broader range of community-based alternatives to detention. And Rock County now serves as a model for other jurisdictions throughout the state.

So what makes Rock County such a different place today? Horozewski can point to many adjustments to individual policies and practices. But, he says, all of those reforms serve a broader goal: changing the way his agency views and works with children. "We're using what we know about adolescent development to

By the Numbers

- **6** new community-based supervision programs
- **35%** reduction in the number of youth of color locked up for probation violations
- **30%** reduction in the average daily population of African-American youth in secure detention

*Figures represent changes from 2002 to 2010

[Lisa Garry](#), DMC Policy Director for the Center for Children's Law and Policy, manages the DMC Action 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
Cabarrus County

Not a DMC eNews Subscriber?

Ensure that you receive the latest news and resources on DMC reduction. [Click here to sign up.](#)

establish more effective and appropriate ways of supervising youth in the system.”

Rock County's first step toward that goal was reworking the agency's mission, vision, and values to reflect this new approach, as well as its day-to-day operations. The agency now prioritizes strength-based assessments of youth and regular data collection and analysis. Administrators even changed how they describe their work: the agency uses the term “supervision” instead of “probation.” And instead of hiring “probation officers,” the County employs “juvenile justice specialists.” These are more than just cosmetic changes, notes Horozewski; they are necessary to break with past practices when introducing new approaches to juvenile justice-involved youth.

As part of its work as a DMC Action Network site, Rock County introduced an objective assessment tool for youth under the agency's supervision in 2008. The tool, known as the YASI, identifies a youth's strengths and weaknesses, allowing probation officers to focus on specific factors underlying risky behavior. Horozewski gives the following example of how the YASI transformed case planning: “Previously, all youth would receive substance abuse services regardless of whether they had demonstrated any need for them. Now, we're looking at each youth and developing plans that put resources where they are needed most. Staff target the underlying factors driving delinquent behavior, such as antisocial thinking or anger management problems, instead of just trying to correct the delinquent behavior itself.”

The YASI benefits youth of color by ensuring that kids receive the appropriate level of supervision at the beginning of their involvement with the juvenile justice system. However, Rock County also adopted graduated responses to youth compliance and noncompliance with probation to help youth succeed *throughout* their time under agency supervision.

Under the new system of graduated responses, case managers cannot sanction youth to secure detention without securing the approval of a sanctions committee. However, they can draw upon a broader range of new community-based services and programs, including aggression replacement therapy, substance abuse services, and a weekend and evening reporting center that has an 84% successful completion rate. “By restricting the kind of sanctions that can be used for low- and medium-risk youth, you stop driving those kids deeper into the system unnecessarily,” says Horozewski. To reward positive behavior, case managers employ a range of incentives, such as credits for snacks at the Boys and Girls Club and extended curfews.

These reforms benefit youth in Rock County every day. In addition, county officials have also taken critical steps to improve services for children throughout Wisconsin. Back in 2008, Rock County faced a significant hurdle when attempting to introduce a detention screening instrument. Because of juvenile confidentiality laws, county officials could not access data on previous adjudications from the state's Department of Children and Families. That information is an important component of detention screening. Determined to overcome the challenge, Rock County pressed the issue with executive and legislative officials. That advocacy helped lead to the passage last year of Act 338, which allows intake workers access to prior adjudication histories in order to make appropriate detention decisions.

Officials such as Horozewski and Jason Witt, the former director of the Rock County Human Services Department, continue to see the impact of these reforms. And while agency officials may use charts and statistics to illustrate the benefits of these changes to other stakeholders and juvenile justice professionals, they know that the most important benefit is the positive impact on the lives of individual children of color.

Tell us how you've changed the culture of your agency: email jszanyi@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.

Trends and Challenges in Juvenile Justice Reform: Experiences of Three States

During the past decade, Connecticut, Texas, and California engaged in major juvenile justice reforms. These reforms helped to reduce the number of youth held in long-term juvenile and adult facilities, implement broad community-based reforms, and mobilize the public around the need for change. On Friday, June 3rd from 12:30 to 2pm EST, the Children's Law Center of Kentucky will host a free webcast exploring the conditions and factors that contributed to reforms in these states.

Presenters include Abby Anderson, Executive Director of the Connecticut Juvenile Justice Alliance; Sue Burrell, Staff Attorney at the Youth Law Center; and Ana Yáñez-Correa, Executive Director of the Texas Criminal Justice Coalition. The panel will share lessons learned and the strategies used to facilitate reforms, such as the use of community and legislative advocacy, impact litigation, public education, and engagement of, and collaboration among, juvenile system professionals. Dana Shoenberg, Deputy Director of the Center for Children's Law and Policy, will moderate a discussion of the successes, challenges, and unintended consequences of the reforms.

Space is limited and registration is required. [Click here to register and to find out more.](#)

The Newest DMC News and Resources

- This month, the MacArthur Foundation released a new video featuring work to reduce school-based arrests as part of the Models for Change initiative. A peer jury at Manual High School in Peoria, Illinois, has helped dramatically reduce the number of teens entering the juvenile justice system for alleged misconduct at school. [Click here to view the video.](#)
- The NAACP recently released a report that examines escalating levels of prison spending and its impact on state budgets and the nation's children. [Misplaced Priorities: Under Educate, Over Incarcerate](#) describes the connection between high incarceration rates and poorly performing schools. It also tracks the shift of state funds away from education and toward the criminal justice system.
- The National Center for Juvenile Justice, the research division of the National Council of Juvenile and Family Court judges, recently launched the Quality Improvement Initiative (Qii) website, designed to support juvenile justice providers embarking on quality improvement efforts with their intervention programs for youth. This site contains information about the Qii framework, training and implementation curricula, assessment tools and support materials. [Click here to learn more.](#)
- Today, the United States incarcerates nearly 2.4 million people. According to the Justice Policy Institute (JPI), U.S. policymakers should look outside our borders for examples of criminal justice policies that can save money while improving the well-being of both individuals and communities. [Finding Direction: Expanding Criminal Justice Options by Considering Policies of Other Nations](#), a newly released report from JPI, examines the criminal justice policies of five nations - Australia, Canada, England, and Wales, Finland, and Germany - to inform policy decisions in the United States.

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.