

DMC / Juvenile Justice

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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.

Three's Company: How Kenosha, Outagamie, and Rock County, WI Are Working Together on DMC Reform

In December 2009, [we introduced nine new sites to the DMC Action Network](#). Those sites are working closely with the Network's eleven original sites to build their data collection capacity, implement the Network's strategies for DMC reduction, and share successes and challenges. This month, two Wisconsin counties show how their relationship with Rock County, WI is improving outcomes for youth of color and changing the way that they do business in their juvenile justice systems.

In Wisconsin, counties bear almost total responsibility for serving youth in the juvenile justice system. Given that the state has 72 unique county-based systems, meaningful reform could look very different from one jurisdiction to another. When Outagamie and Kenosha County signed on to work with Rock County as DMC Action Network replication sites, they weren't looking for a quick, one-size-fits-all solution to racial and ethnic disparities. They wanted an approach to DMC reduction that would lead to meaningful and lasting change.

Mark Mertens, Manager of the Youth and Family Services Division of the Outagamie County Health and Human Services Department, notes that his county's participation in the DMC Action Network has led to a "real transformation" in its approach to reducing racial and ethnic disparities. For Mr. Mertens, that means "using data, not individual incidents, to guide systemic change."

Outagamie and Kenosha County are engaged in foundational work to help them do just that. Both jurisdictions are currently integrating the Youth Assessment and Screening Instrument (YASI) into their case planning process. Nancy Ramsey, Supervisor of Juvenile Court Services for the Kenosha County Division of Children & Family Services, notes that the MacArthur Foundation's support allowed her jurisdiction to adapt the instrument when budget cuts prevented the state from being able to do so. Incorporating the YASI is particularly important in a jurisdiction like Kenosha, where case managers have the authority to securely detain a youth for 72 hours. According to Ms. Ramsey, "it helps guarantee equity in the system by ensuring that we're making decisions that are race-, culture-, and gender-neutral."

Both counties are actively responding to the increasing diversity of their communities. In Outagamie County, Latinos are the fastest growing segment of the youth population in the county of about 175,000. Outagamie is also home to part of a reservation for the Oneida Nation, and officials have worked closely

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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

with tribal representatives to share information and evidence-based practices, such as [Aggression Replacement Training](#). In Kenosha County, officials also expect increasing diversity in their youth population in the coming years, where African-American youth currently represent about 17% of that population, Latino youth represent about 20%, and White youth represent about 61%. The county’s total population is about 140,000 residents.

Mr. Mertens and Ms. Ramsey know that stating a clear commitment to reducing racial and ethnic disparities is important, but that building the partnerships that are necessary to implement and sustain reform is critical. That’s why both counties have ensured they have broad and ongoing support for their DMC reduction efforts. In Kenosha, that stakeholder group includes the school district, the public defender, and a chief judge who actively promotes the county’s work. In Outagamie, juvenile justice officials have formed strong relationships with tribal officials, law enforcement, and the county’s deputy district attorney, who serves as the co-chair of the county’s DMC committee.

Participation in the DMC Action Network has brought new ideas to jurisdictions that had been receiving state support for DMC reduction since 2002. “In the short time that we’ve been a part of the Network, we’ve had a chance to work with sites that are doing absolutely eye-opening work, which has been invaluable,” said Mr. Mertens. In Kenosha, Ms. Ramsey is now incorporating principles of positive youth development into her grant applications, after hearing Dr. Jeffrey Butts present at the [February 2010 seminar on DMC reduction strategies for post-disposition youth](#). Bringing new ideas back to her staff is helping her to “elevate the level of professionalism” of her colleagues and “give them confidence in doing the right thing for youth in the county.”

Those ideas are also helping to spark partnerships that may benefit youth throughout the state. Officials in Rock, Kenosha, and Outagamie have partnered with the Fox Valley Technical College, which trains most of Wisconsin’s school resource officers, to develop a two-day training on alternative strategies for handling incidents at school and reducing the number of referrals to juvenile court. That would mean more time in the classroom and fewer suspensions, expulsions, and arrests.

Although Outagamie and Kenosha County can already point to a number of successes since joining the Network, they are looking ahead to next steps that will improve outcomes for youth of color. Outagamie County plans to build on [Rock County’s success in reducing the number of youth in secure detention with its Detention Assessment Instrument, adapting and validating that tool for use in its own community](#). In Kenosha, Ms. Ramsey is introducing her staff to the concept of graduated responses to probation violations, which she hopes her county will implement in the near future.

These individual programs and initiatives reflect a clear commitment to reform. Yet Ms. Ramsey notes that the commitment doesn’t necessarily carry a big price tag: “People think that the only way to attack DMC is to throw money at programs. We’re showing that you can do many things that cost little or nothing, but that still have a significant impact. That’s because DMC reform is not just a program - it’s a totally different way of thinking and doing business.”

Let us know how you’re working with other jurisdictions to reduce racial and ethnic disparities: email jszanyi@cclp.org.

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TA Tips: Practical Advice for Successful DMC Reduction

This month, we introduce a new section of our newsletter devoted to sharing strategies and insights that can help jurisdictions effectively and sustainably eliminate DMC in their juvenile justice systems.



Successful reform means more than just implementing a particular program that officials think might have an impact on DMC. It also means more than believing in a one-size-fits-all approach to reducing racial and ethnic disparities. Instead, jurisdictions that are committed to reducing and eliminating DMC must embrace [a data-driven process aimed at developing solutions that meet the needs of their individual communities.](#)

Although meaningful DMC reform can look different from one jurisdiction to another, there are a number of common strategies and techniques that can help all communities ensure that they are on the right track. This new section of the newsletter is aimed at highlighting those tips and explaining how they can benefit work to reduce racial and ethnic disparities.

This month's tip is to **consider having meetings early in the morning or in the evening to give all relevant stakeholders the chance to participate in the DMC dialogue.** Ensuring broad initial support for and ongoing engagement in reform is the first step to reducing racial and ethnic disparities. That means including relevant stakeholders, such as parents, community members, and other agency officials, in discussions about DMC. However, those individuals may not have time to participate if critical discussions occur during normal business hours. Flexibility in scheduling ensures that a broader group of individuals can participate in and offer their support for DMC reforms.

If you have a tip that 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

- The Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (OJJDP) has released a number of new resources. The first is a [new website on Tribal Justice and Safety](#), designed to serve as a "one-stop shop for tribal communities, developed to provide a user-friendly, updated, and comprehensive resource for American Indian and Alaska Native tribal communities." OJJDP also released a new report on youth in custody, entitled *Youth's Needs and Services: Findings From the Survey of Youth in Residential Placement*, which reviews services provided in facilities throughout the country and makes recommendations to improve mental and physical health, substance abuse, and educational services. Finally, OJJDP released a bulletin on the *Causes and Correlates of Girls' Delinquency*, which summarizes social science literature on factors impacting girls' delinquency and outlines the implications for juvenile justice policy and practice.

- The Opportunity Agenda, a project of the Tides Center aimed at ensuring that all Americans have the equal access to advancement in contemporary society, has released a set of talking points on facilitating productive communications on racial justice problems and solutions. The publication, [Ten Lessons for Talking About Racial Equity in the Age of Obama](#), outlines strategies for building support for reforms to overcome racial bias and other barriers to advancement.
- The Coalition for Juvenile Justice (CJJ) has released a new report on the potential of helping court-involved youth develop their pro-social strengths and attributes and increasing their abilities to contribute to healthy, safe family and community life. The publication, entitled [Positive Youth Justice: Framing Justice Interventions Using the Concepts of Positive Youth Development](#), argues that adapting principles of positive youth development (PYD) to services can improve the future for youth involved in the juvenile justice system.
- The U.S. Department of Justice's Office of Justice Programs (OJP) has launched a [Grants 101 web resource](#) to assist applicants in navigating the challenges of the grant application and award process. The new website offers a host of resources for new applicants, including information on different types of funding, tips on writing proposals, and a host of other information.
- The Center for Children's Law and Policy has published a new fact sheet on the January 2010 Bureau of Justice Statistics study on sexual victimization in juvenile facilities. The resource, [Understanding the BJS Study of Sexual Victimization in Juvenile Facilities](#), distills key findings from the survey and provides a concise and accessible summary of the study's methodology.
- The National Juvenile Justice Network (NJJN) has released a new fact sheet that discusses how international law supports juvenile justice reform. The fact sheet, entitled [Convention on the Rights of the Child: Implications for Juvenile Justice Reform](#), discusses the Convention's specific guidance on youth in conflict with the law. To date, the United States and Somalia are the only UN member nations that have not yet ratified the Convention.

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.