

DMC Action Network e-News

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In This Issue

[A New Decade of DMC Reduction](#)

[Making the Best Case for Reform](#)

[Small Community, Big Improvements: DMC in Union County, North Carolina](#)

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

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

A New Decade of DMC Reduction

As we look forward to a new year and new successes in DMC reduction, we also look back to remind ourselves of the strategies that generate results.

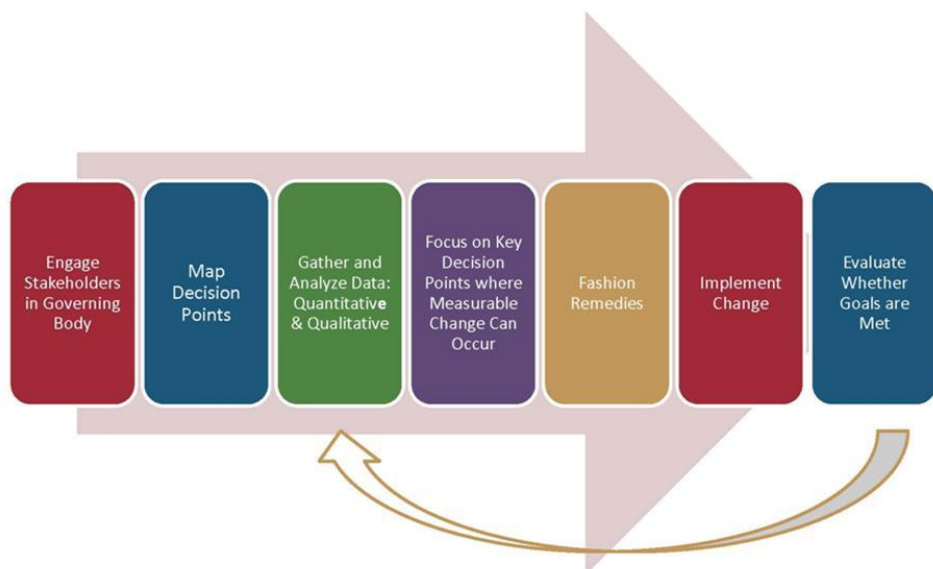
The DMC Action Network had much to celebrate at the end of 2009. Last month, the MacArthur Foundation's Fourth Annual National Working Conference in Washington, DC highlighted successes in DMC reduction in sites throughout the country. In the past year, jurisdictions have expanded their capacity for data collection, reduced their use of secure detention and out-of-home placement, and improved the cultural competence of services in the juvenile justice system.

2010 is also looking bright. Sites are already moving forward to build on these improvements, and the addition of nine new replication and learning sites to the Network has increased the potential for collaboration on strategies to eliminate racial and ethnic disparities.

At the turn of the new year, we take the opportunity to remind sites of the data-driven strategies that will ensure the DMC Action Network continues to make strides in DMC reduction. We also restate the common goal toward which all sites are working: ending the disproportionate representation of youth of color at each stage of the juvenile justice system.

[Click here to download the full-size, printable versions of the charts below.](#)

DMC Action Network Model for DMC Reduction



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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.

Core States

Pennsylvania
Berks County
Allegheny County
Philadelphia
Lancaster County

Illinois
Peoria

Louisiana
Jefferson Parish
Rapides Parish

Washington
Benton/Franklin Counties
Pierce County



Making the Best Case for Reform

What are the keys to winning over reluctant stakeholders and using data to drive a dialogue on racial and ethnic disparities? DMC coordinators and other staff from Network sites found out at the first DMC Coordinators Technical Assistance Seminar.

Engaging a broad base of stakeholders is critical to achieving measurable and sustainable DMC reduction. Yet numbers alone may not be enough to sell some individuals on the importance of working to reduce racial and ethnic disparities. On December 7, 2009, over a dozen individuals from DMC Action Network sites traveled to Washington, DC to sharpen their skills in winning the support of juvenile justice officials and community members. They did so as part of the first in a series of three Technical Assistance Seminars for DMC Coordinators from the DMC Action Network.

Lisa Garry of the Center for Children's Law and Policy (CCLP) and Mike Finley of the Burns Institute (BI) designed the Technical Assistance Seminars to develop the expertise and leadership skills of local DMC Coordinators and other staff responsible for day-to-day operations of DMC reduction initiatives. These small seminars provide practical guidance through information- and idea-sharing among peers, practice applications, and presentation opportunities.

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

The December seminar focused on facilitating a dialogue about DMC and engaging key players in DMC reduction initiatives. The intensive daylong session covered the role of DMC coordinators, individualized strategies for gaining buy-in and participation of various stakeholder groups, methods to win over reluctant DMC stakeholders, and guidance from Action Network member sites on using data to drive a dialogue about DMC. [An agenda and materials from the first seminar are available on the CCLP website by clicking here.](#)

Future seminars will assist DMC coordinators in developing expertise in planning, executing, and monitoring DMC reduction strategies, as well as in sustaining reforms. For more information on the Technical Assistance Seminars or to learn more about the DMC Action Network, contact [Lisa Garry, DMC Policy Director.](#)



Participants from the first Technical Assistance Seminar for DMC Coordinators.



Ariel Barak, DMC Data Analyst from Rock County, Wisconsin, discusses effective data presentation during the first DMC Coordinator Technical Assistance Seminar.

Small Community, Big Improvements: DMC in Union County, North Carolina

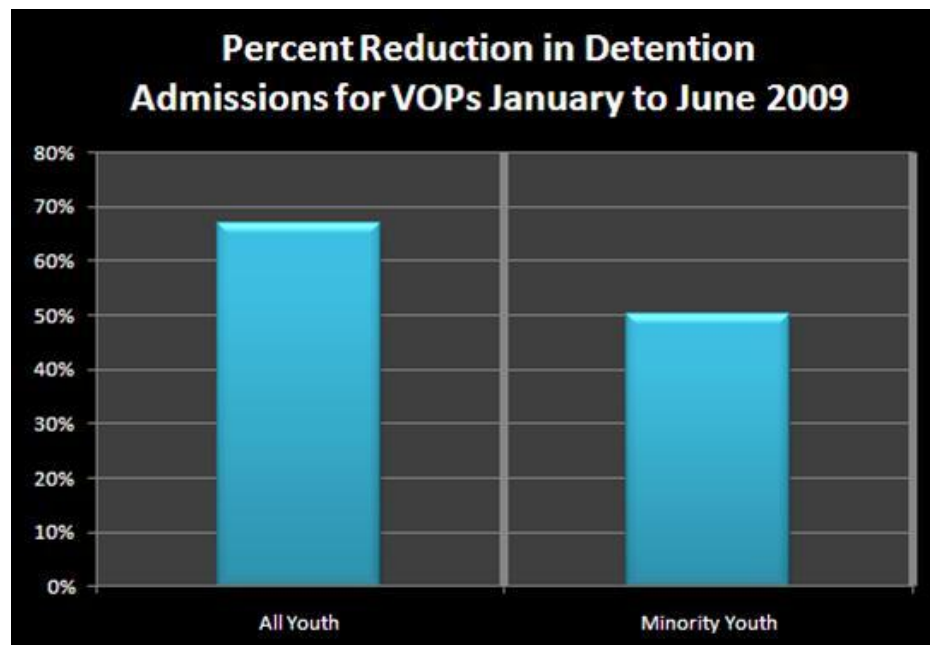
Karen Tucker, DMC Project Coordinator for Union County, North Carolina, shares successes with, and challenges for, reducing racial and ethnic disparities in a rural community. Union County, a Models for Change partner site, is now serving as a model for other counties in the state.

Union County, North Carolina, is one of the smallest sites within the DMC Action Network in terms of its total population. However, Union is the 13th fastest growing county in the nation and the fastest growing county in the state, with around 31,000 juveniles aged 6 to 16. And this relatively small county is getting some big results from its efforts to reduce DMC as part of the Models for Change initiative.

Union County joined the DMC Action Network in 2007 to improve race and ethnicity data collection methods, implement and monitor strategies to reduce the use of secure detention for probation violators, and develop detention screening tools to reduce unnecessary and inappropriate admissions to secure detention. At that time, officials there had already begun examining racial and ethnic disparities in the juvenile justice system with a grant from the Governor's Crime Commission in 2004.

Since joining the DMC Action Network, Union County has implemented the MacArthur Foundation's [guidance on accurate collection of race and ethnicity information through the use of a 2-question approach](#). The County also added questions at intake about youth's language preference. Those reforms allowed the county to accurately count the number of Hispanic youth in its juvenile justice system for the first time and to use those data to direct its limited resources accordingly.

Union County also saw a 67% reduction in the total number of youth admitted to secure detention for violations of probation (VOP) from October 2008 to June 2009 after introducing a graduated responses grid for VOPs. That drop contributed to a 50% overall reduction in total detention admissions over the same period. The County's success with the grid has sparked a broader movement to rethink VOPs: as of June 1, 2009 four counties throughout the state are using a pilot version of the grid. By June 30, 2010, the Union County DMC Advisory Board hopes to expand the usage of the grid throughout the state.



Admissions to secure detention for violations of probation have been cut by more than half. Yet, minority youth continue to represent 60% of youth referred to detention for VOPs in spite of representing only about 30% of the county's juvenile population. Advocates in Union are moving to make its system for recording VOPs fully electronic, which will permit analyses that will help the county continue to reduce racial and ethnic disparities at that decision point.

Karen Tucker, Union County DMC Project Coordinator, notes that having a strong ally in the North Carolina Department of Juvenile Justice and regularly scheduled time with that agency each month has helped in implementing certain reforms. However, the ability to engage line staff when introducing reforms is also key. Becky Smith, DMC Project Director, works as a court counselor in the County's system and was able to anticipate and answer questions successfully when the graduated responses grid was introduced. And while taking these reforms to scale in a large state with many rural areas is a challenge, it is a challenge that Union County and the state will meet through the use of web-based training modules.

As the number of youth in secure detention has fallen, DMC advocates in Union County know where to look next. Approximately 70% of referrals to the juvenile justice system come from Union County schools. And although Ms. Tucker emphasizes that the school officials are strong allies in reform efforts, she also recognizes that reducing disparities in this context presents a different challenge. "Many of the charges coming out of the schools are no longer frivolous charges," according to Ms. Tucker. "The question now is how to get inside the schools and teach youth other ways to handle problems." Initial efforts have included collaborating with the school's Parent Involvement Coordinators to hold parent academies, which are evening trainings for parents on various topics.

In addition to engaging state-level officials and line staff in DMC reforms, Union County advocates have also made a concerted effort to reach out to community members to build support for reform. Those efforts include a website, www.uniondmc.webs.com, which provides accessible descriptions of DMC and up-to-date information on the County's efforts. According to Ms. Tucker, that website aids "individuals who are initially overwhelmed by initial presentations on DMC by giving them a place to follow up on the issue." Not only that, Union County now issues its own [newsletter on recent DMC activities](#).

As Union County refines its existing reforms and implements new strategies for reducing racial and ethnic disparities, Ms. Tucker and others are also thinking about the sustainability of this work for youth in the long run: "You can't do it in two years, and you can't do it in five years. Engaging people who are really passionate about this work is what will help sustain these reforms." As Ms. Tucker notes, "that means more than engaging the community - it means empowering it."

Tell us how you're getting the word out about DMC in your community: email jszanyj@cclp.org.

The Newest DMC & Juvenile Justice Resources

- The National Juvenile Defender Center has released the second edition of the John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation's Juvenile Court Training Curriculum. The curriculum includes modules that cover five different areas of juvenile justice practice. Each module provides in-depth training materials based on the most up-to-date adolescent development research and its application to juvenile court practice. [Click here to request a copy of the curriculum through NJDC.](#)

- Stakeholders in Pennsylvania have released a new monograph on family involvement in juvenile justice systems as part of the Models for Change initiative. The publication, entitled [Family Involvement in Pennsylvania's Juvenile Justice System](#), identifies and develops strategies and models that support family involvement in the juvenile justice system.
- A recent report released at the MacArthur Foundation's Fourth Annual Models for Change National Working Conference indicates that youth who commit serious offenses may benefit more from community-based placements than incarceration. The publication, entitled [Research on Pathways to Desistance](#), relies on data from 1,354 juvenile offenders, family members, and friends. The report concludes that secure placements do not demonstrate any advantage over probation in reducing recidivism rates or self-reported offenses.
- The Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (OJJDP) is accepting comments on its proposed plan for fiscal year 2010, which outlines the discretionary activities that the office will engage in during that period. OJJDP considers those comments, along with its finalized funding arrangement, when developing a final plan for FY 2010. Individuals may [read the plan here](#) and can [submit comments online by following this link](#).
- The Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) is accepting proposals from entities interested in expanding substance abuse treatment capacity for juvenile treatment drug courts. SAMSHA is seeking to address gaps in substance abuse and mental health prevention and treatment services. Current juvenile drug treatment courts are eligible to apply. SAMHSA plans to award up to \$8.8 million in grants through the program. The deadline for applications is February 23, 2010. [You can learn more about the program by clicking here and reading the initial announcement](#).
- The Campaign for Youth Justice has published a policy brief examining the experience of Native American youth with transfer laws. The publication, entitled [A Tangled Web of Justice: American Indian and Alaska Native Youth in Federal, State, and Tribal Justice Systems](#), examines how Native American youth are disproportionately affected by transfer laws. The report concludes that many Native American youth commit low-level offenses and receive either no court intervention or disproportionately severe sanctions.

The DMC e-News 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 network and publishes this newsletter. Contact us at jszanyi@cclp.org or 202-637-0377 x108. For a PDF version of this newsletter, [click here](#).