

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.

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

By the Numbers: Signs of Progress from Rapides Parish, Louisiana

The DMC Action Network illustrated the value of employing data-driven strategies to tackle racial and ethnic disparities. One big benefit of the approach is being able to ensure that reforms actually create a more equitable and effective juvenile justice system. This month, Rapides Parish, Louisiana, shares outcomes from its work to eliminate racial and ethnic disparities from arrest through adjudication.

When Rapides Parish joined the DMC Action Network in 2007, one word dominated early conversations: data. Officials spent a significant amount of time building the capacity to collect accurate information on youth in the juvenile justice system. Among other reforms, the parish installed a new data system in its detention center and standardized data collection among six local law enforcement agencies.

It wasn't easy. Some might ask, "Was it worth the effort to make all of those changes just to obtain better information?" The answer is a definite "yes" according to Larry Spottsville, Director of Juvenile Services for the Ninth Judicial District in Rapides Parish. As Spottsville notes, data empowered officials to make changes "based on information and not just impressions."

These data improvements also mean that officials can point to progress as they implement a broad range of strategies. In Rapides Parish, a primarily rural jurisdiction of about 130,000 residents, youth of color represent approximately one-third of the population between the ages of 10 and 16. As in most jurisdictions throughout the country, youth of color are overrepresented at key stages of the juvenile justice system, representing 63% of arrests and 86% of detention admissions during the last quarter of 2010.

Fortunately parish officials are working to reduce disparities at each of those stages. A key initiative focuses on reducing referrals to juvenile court because, as Spottsville notes, "our ultimate goal is to greatly reduce the number of children of color who enter the local juvenile justice system."

In Rapides Parish, data revealed a large number of youth entering the system from schools due to truancy and other disruptive behavior. In Louisiana, separate juvenile court proceedings, known as Families in Need of Services (FINS) proceedings, handle many of these referrals. "We were

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

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finding that court was becoming a dumping ground for youth and families who might just need a little extra help," says Spottsville.

The solution? The parish developed a new protocol that requires school officials to show that they have exhausted options to address a particular behavior. Before they can refer a youth to court, schools must document their efforts to work with the youth on an "exhaustion form," meet with caregivers about areas of concern, and refer the youth to a behavioral strategist or school counselor.

Since making this change, Rapides Parish has seen a 24% drop in FINS cases filed because of a youth's disruptive behavior. Spottsville notes that while it's good to have fewer youth entering the system, reductions haven't been uniform across race and gender. Fortunately, he and the Parish's DMC Coordinator, Sylvia Singleton, meet regularly with local law enforcement agencies, school personnel, and probation officials. With improved access to data, a clear policy, and a strong collaboration, parish officials are better able to analyze disparate impact and develop targeted interventions to close the gap.

Data also helped officials identify improvements to probation practices that would keep more youth of color in the community. One initiative focused on reducing probation revocations. Parish officials developed a service referral matrix, which outlined all of the options available to address a youth's needs in various domains, including mental health, family relationships, and peers. Probation officers use the matrix to ensure that they connect youth with every available resource in their community. Additionally, the parish now requires that a supervisor and two additional probation officers review and approve revocation requests before they move forward. As a result, probation revocations dropped 61% from 2010 to 2011. This included a 60% decrease for African American males and a 50% decrease for African American females.

Other changes have also led to improved outcomes for youth of color in Rapides Parish. For example, better coordination between juvenile probation and the district attorney has helped cut the average length of stay in detention for African American males by 24% from 2010 to 2011. Officials now work together to expedite court dates and place youth in alternatives to detention, when appropriate.

These promising figures don't represent the end of the story in Rapides. As Spottsville notes, "the fire is still burning even though the DMC Action Network has ended. The MacArthur Foundation has given us a lasting collaboration that's helping us do what is best for our kids and for public safety."

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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.



Center for Children's Law and Policy Launches New Project to Eliminate Racial and Ethnic Disparities in Juvenile Justice

The Center for Children's Law and Policy (CCLP) has begun a nationwide search for jurisdictions to engage in a new effort to create fairer and more effective juvenile justice systems.

Through the **Racial and Ethnic Disparities Reduction Project**, CCLP will select two local jurisdictions to engage in a strategic, data-driven effort to reduce disproportionate minority contact (DMC). Each jurisdiction will receive intensive site-based technical support and up to \$25,000 per year for up to two years to supplement resources dedicated to racial and ethnic disparities reduction.

The Racial and Ethnic Disparities Reduction Project, sponsored jointly by the federal [Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention \(OJJDP\)](#) and the [John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation](#), represents an innovative public-private partnership aimed at improving the lives of children of color. Both OJJDP and the MacArthur Foundation have promoted efforts to develop and implement strategies that reduce racial and ethnic disparities in the juvenile justice system.

CCLP is one of the leading national organizations working to reduce racial and ethnic disparities in juvenile justice. Selected jurisdictions will draw upon CCLP's experience with effective approaches to DMC reduction. This includes CCLP's coordination of the DMC Action Network, a project of the MacArthur Foundation's Models for Change juvenile justice reform initiative. The DMC Action Network brought together seventeen jurisdictions in eight states to adopt sustainable and measurable strategies to reduce disparities.

According to CCLP DMC Policy Director Tiana Davis, "We know that a data-driven and collaborative approach can reduce racial and ethnic disparities in the juvenile justice system. We are grateful that OJJDP and the MacArthur Foundation have formed this unique partnership that will allow local juvenile justice systems to tackle this difficult issue and improve outcomes for system-involved youth."

This project is part of a broader collaboration between OJJDP and the MacArthur Foundation. The collaboration includes three additional initiatives:

- **Juvenile Justice and Child Welfare System Integration:** Implementing effective multi-system early intervention practices for maltreated youth involved in the juvenile justice system to reduce recidivism, placement and correctional alternatives. Technical assistance and project oversight will be provided by the Robert F. Kennedy Children's Action Corps. Contact RFK Children's Action Corps at jtuell@rfkchildren.org or jwiig@rfkchildren.org.

- **Mental Health Screening and Risk/Needs Assessment:** Using evidence-based tools for effective case planning to achieve reductions in out-of-home placements and recidivism. The National Youth Screening and Assessment Project (NYSAP) at the University of Massachusetts Medical School will provide technical assistance and project oversight. Contact NYSAP at Laura.Guy@umassmed.edu.
- **Mental Health Training for Juvenile Justice:** Providing comprehensive adolescent development and mental health training to juvenile correctional and detention staff to improve staff knowledge, understanding and ability to respond to youth with mental health needs. The National Center for Mental Health and Juvenile Justice at Policy Research, Inc., will provide technical assistance and project oversight. Contact NCMHJJ at kskowyr@prainc.com.

For more information on the **Racial and Ethnic Disparities Reduction Project**, including eligibility criteria and application instructions, please visit www.cclp.org/apply.php.

The Newest DMC and Juvenile Justice Information

- Youth transferred to the adult criminal justice system recidivate at a higher rate than those kept in the juvenile justice system, according to a December 2011 report from the National Institute of Corrections (NIC). [You're An Adult Now: Youth In Adult Criminal Justice Systems](#), presents the findings of three dozen juvenile and criminal justice experts on the topic of transferred children. Jason Zeidenberg, who authored the report, also outlines innovative ways that some jurisdictions manage youth when they have been charged, convicted, and committed to the adult system.
- "Recent research on the juvenile justice system indicates that in nearly all instances, the best public safety outcomes coincide with the least restrictive interventions for youth, rather than more traditional processing and incarceration," according to a new fact sheet from the National Juvenile Justice Network (NJJN). You can download NJJN's publication, *The Truth About Consequences*, by [following this link](#).
- The Center for Civil Rights Remedies, a part of the Civil Rights Project at the University of California in Los Angeles, seeks research papers that will inform policymakers about race and gender disparities in school discipline. The Center will select approximately 15 papers for presentation at a national conference late this year in Washington, DC. For a complete description of the call for papers, including submission requirements, [follow this link](#).
- The University of Chicago's Chapin Hall will host a webcast on racial and ethnic disparities in the child welfare system on February 9, 2012. The event's panelists will review drivers of disparities and suggest the best ways of promoting equity in the system. To register for the webcast, [click here](#).

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- The National Juvenile Justice Network is seeking a full-time Program Associate to support its Fiscal Policy Center. The Associate will conduct research and policy analysis, assist with on-site regional trainings, provide technical assistance, develop resources, and engage in other relevant Fiscal Policy Center activities. The position, based in Washington, DC, requires excellent analytical, writing, communication, and relationship-building abilities. Flexibility, initiative, and excellent follow through are essential. [Click here to download the full posting.](#)
 - The Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (OJJDP) has updated the Statistical Briefing Book's (SBB's) data analysis tools. The SBB offers easy access to a wealth of information about juvenile crime, victimization, youth involved in the juvenile justice system. Developed for OJJDP by the National Center for Juvenile Justice, the SBB provides answers to the questions that OJJDP most frequently receives from media, policymakers, and the general public. [Click here to explore these resources.](#)

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 202-637-0377 x108.