

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.

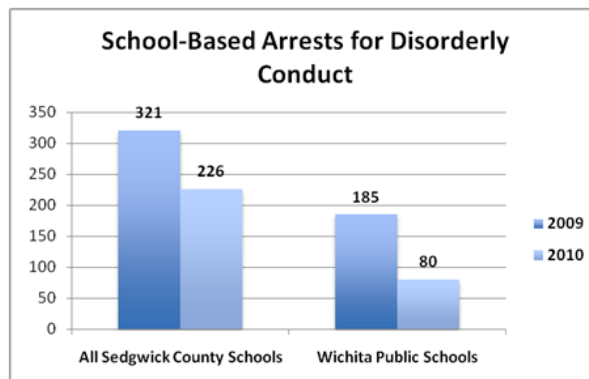
[Lisa Garry](#), DMC Policy Director for the Center for Children's Law and Policy, manages the DMC Action Network.

Core States

Getting Results: How Sedgwick County, Kansas, Slashed Arrest Rates for Youth of Color

Throughout the country, jurisdictions working on DMC reduction face a common problem: how do you move from simply studying DMC to taking action? This month, Sedgwick County, Kansas, shares how it dramatically reduced arrest rates for youth of color for two of the County's leading offenses.

When Sedgwick County joined the DMC Action Network in 2007, it was no stranger to DMC reduction. Officials had already taken steps in many areas, such as improving data capacity and developing community-based alternatives to detention. However, the County continued to struggle with one particular area. According to Mark Masterson, Director of Sedgwick County's Department of Corrections (DOC), "We made a lot of progress with DMC over the years, but never at the point of arrest."



That is, until now. From 2009 to 2010, Sedgwick has seen a 19% reduction in overall arrests, including an 18% reduction in arrest rates for African American youth and an 11% reduction in arrest rates for Latino youth. Those drops stem from careful data analysis and targeted interventions over the past two years.

In Sedgwick County, officials regularly analyze information to uncover disparities, dig deeper to pinpoint the causes of those disparities, and use what they have learned to take action. An active stakeholder group of sixteen juvenile justice professionals and community representatives meets monthly to plan, coordinate, oversee, and advocate for local juvenile justice services and needs. Known as "Team Justice," the group analyzes data on DMC as part of each meeting's agenda. The meetings, which have taken place for the past 10 years, regularly draw an audience of at least 35 individuals.

Team Justice helped develop the strategies that led to Sedgwick County's recent decline in arrest rates. Back in 2009, stakeholders reviewed yearly arrest data compiled by the W. Haywood Burns Institute (BI). The data indicated that juvenile arrests in the County jumped 10% between 2008 and 2009. The BI's analysis also revealed that arrests for two minor crimes, disorderly conduct and theft of property under \$1000, were the leading factors driving the increase.

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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Knowing that these two offenses offered the best opportunity for targeted intervention to reduce DMC at the point of arrest, officials were determined to develop strategies to reduce DMC for each offense.

When examining arrests for disorderly conduct, the data revealed that youth were most frequently arrested at school, leading officials to zero in on school-based interventions. The County's African American Coalition organized a conference that included presentations from some of Sedgwick County's stakeholders, including Masterson, the presiding juvenile judge, the deputy chief of police, and the school superintendent. Judge Steven Teske of the Clayton County, Georgia, Juvenile Court also presented, outlining his county's School Referral Reduction Protocol. Masterson emphasizes Judge Teske's role in galvanizing broad-based support for reforms in Sedgwick County: "He clearly and convincingly explained why zero-tolerance policies worked against school safety. Judge Teske also had data to show that his approach not only reduced arrests, but also improved overall school performance, including high school graduation rates."

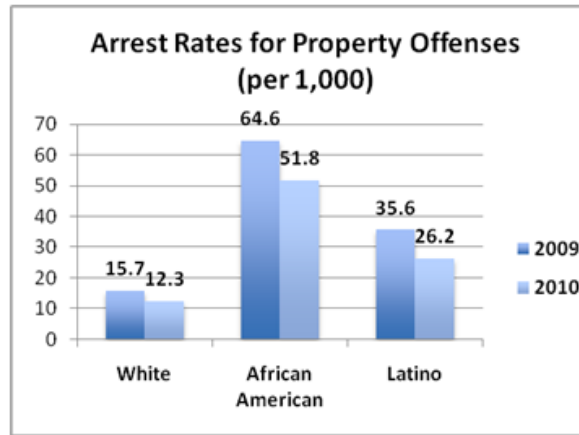
Shortly after that conference, Masterson pulled together a planning group to pilot interventions in the County's alternative schools. The group drew upon Judge Teske's model, developing a memorandum of understanding for handling disruptive behavior without automatically arresting youth. With funding from the MacArthur Foundation, the County hired a juvenile justice education liaison to assist with individual school-based cases and help develop agreements with other County schools to reduce referrals. That position, says Masterson, has helped focus the County's work and will remain in place after the conclusion of Models for Change funding in September.

There's evidence that these efforts are already paying off. School-based arrests for disorderly conduct have dropped by 37 percent from 2009 to 2010, and arrests at Wichita public schools have dropped by more than 50% over the same time period. Masterson attributes the reductions to many factors, including the strong partnership with school officials. "Our school superintendent is clearly dedicated to and personally involved in this work, and that has a big impact," says Masterson. Sedgwick County is now looking to introduce the approach in all 100 of the County's public schools.

In addition to its work on disorderly conduct, Team Justice also examined arrests for theft of property under \$1000, commonly referred to as the County's "shoplifting statute." Team Justice authorized a study, conducted jointly by the Sedgwick County DOC and Wichita State University, which explored the characteristics of youth arrested for the offense, the reasons for any disparities in arrest rate by race and ethnicity, and suggestions for actions the County could take to reduce disparities at that decision point. The study revealed, among other things, that theft of property under \$1000 was the most common reason for arrests of African-American youth by a significant margin. It was also the top offense for female youth, who comprised 58% of the referrals in 2007 and 2008. The study examined the location of the largest share of arrests for theft of property under \$1000 which was where the largest concentration of stores are located, the County's two shopping malls. This helped identify stakeholders and guide interventions.

[survey](#).

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



Officials used those findings to develop several strategies. One approach involved tapping into existing delinquency prevention programming. "One of our providers, the Mental Health Association, was already using evidence-based prevention practices in our middle schools," says Masterson. "The provider researched effective shoplifting interventions and incorporated them into their existing program, the Girl

Empowerment Program, which helped us reach hundreds of kids almost immediately." The program is based on the Girls Circle curriculum, an intervention that the federal Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention has identified as a promising program. The curriculum challenges inaccurate thought processes and perceptions. Finally, the program initiated an anti-shoplifting campaign and enlisted the help of youth from the Girls Circles to pass out materials aimed at deterring theft at the County's shopping malls. According to Masterson, the interventions "didn't cost a dime to implement, but have already had a significant impact." From 2009 to 2010, the arrest rate for property offenses dropped almost 20% for African American youth and 26% for Latino youth

Masterson has shared these results with his staff, eager to highlight the positive impact of Sedgwick County's latest interventions. However, he notes that the work's impact extends beyond the County's juvenile justice officials. "We're looking at these issues through a DMC lens and putting research into practice. In doing so, we're showing everyone that this is not only the right thing to do, but also that it's keeping our communities safe."

Share your results: email jszanyi@cclp.org.

Federal Government Issues New Guidance for State Courts Serving Limited English Proficient Youth and Family Members

Navigating the juvenile justice system is often difficult for youth and their families. For those from different linguistic backgrounds, understanding the process can be particularly challenging, and misunderstanding or confusion can contribute to their overrepresentation and harsher treatment in the system.

Under Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, recipients of federal funding, including state courts, must take reasonable steps to accommodate individuals with limited English proficiency (LEP). The failure to do so constitutes national origin discrimination under Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and puts federal funding in jeopardy.

The Department of Justice's Civil Rights Division recently issued new guidance to help state courts understand their obligations to LEP youth and family members. That guidance highlighted four areas where the Justice Department felt that state courts were not meeting their mandate under federal law.

(1) Courts must provide meaningful language access in all court and court-related proceedings, whether civil, criminal, or administrative. Courts must ensure interpretation for LEP parties or witnesses during all hearings, trials, and motions. Additionally, courts must provide language assistance to necessary non-party individuals, including the parents and guardians of juvenile justice-involved youth.

(2) Courts must provide interpreters free of cost to parties. Title VI prohibits practices, including requiring payment for interpretation, which have the effect of charging individuals for government services based on national origin.

(3) Courts must make reasonable accommodations for services conducted outside the courtroom. Language services may not be restricted solely to courtroom proceedings, but must extend to other court functions, including offices, operations, and programs that are managed by the court.

(4) Failing to ensure that LEP parties and witnesses can communicate with court-appointed or supervised personnel. Whenever court-appointed or court-supervised personnel communicate with LEP individuals, courts must enlist the support of professional interpreters if the personnel are not themselves bilingual. This includes defense counsel, court psychologists, probation officers, doctors, and other staff.

To help jurisdictions understand these obligations, the Center for Children's Law and Policy has published two fact sheets summarizing federal language access requirements. The first is [a short, one-page document summarizing the four areas of concern recently identified by the Justice Department](#). The second is [a longer document explaining federal language access requirements, including these four areas, in greater detail](#).

The Newest DMC News and Resources

- This month, Chicago Public Radio featured an interview with Randell Strickland, DMC Coordinator for the MacArthur Foundation's Models for Change Project in Illinois. In that interview, Strickland emphasized the importance of comprehensive data collection to a fair juvenile justice system. You can read Strickland's comments and the fully story by [following this link](#).
- A recently published research brief by Child Trends, [Multiple Responses, Promising Results: Evidence-Based, Nonpunitive Alternatives To Zero Tolerance](#), suggests that zero tolerance school discipline policies are not effective and are associated with negative outcomes, such as higher drop-out rates. The brief outlines alternative approaches to managing school behavior, including behavior interventions, social skills classes, and character education.
- The Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention has published [Highlights From Pathways to Desistance: A Longitudinal Study of Serious Adolescent Offenders](#). This fact sheet presents findings from a project, co-sponsored by the MacArthur foundation, that followed 1,354 serious juvenile offenders for 7 years after they had been adjudicated or convicted and examined the factors that caused these youth to continue, reduce, or stop offending. The publication also describes how longer

juvenile sentences, community-based supervision and aftercare, and substance abuse treatment may affect reoffending.

- On May 23rd, representatives from two DMC Action Network sites will present at the Coalition for Juvenile Justice's Annual Spring Conference in Washington, DC. Lance Horozewski of Rock County, WI, and Karen Tucker of Union County, NC, will explain how to develop and utilize graduated responses for youth compliance and non-compliance with probation. You can find additional conference details and registration information by [following this link](#).
- The Council of State Governments Justice Center recently released a frequently asked questions document, [The Implications of Federal Health Legislation on Justice-Involved Populations](#). This publication examines how the health reform legislation expands eligibility for Medicaid, as well as the services that are available to justice-involved populations, the requirements and exemptions specified by the legislation, and the Medicaid enrollment process.
- The Interstate Commission for Juveniles—an organization responsible for the transfer, supervision, and return of juveniles who have absconded, escaped, or run away from one state to another—recently published a [Bench Book for Judges & Court Personnel](#). This publication provides an overview of legal procedures for the interstate agreement to transfer or return juveniles who cross state lines. It also describes sentencing considerations, establishes a process for returning juveniles, explains liability and immunity considerations, and summarizes other relevant information.

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.