

Transformation is the Theme of the Third DMC Action Network Meeting



Acting OJJDP Administrator
Jeff Slowikowski

Members of the **DMC Action Network** gathered in Washington, DC, in May for practical discussions of strategies and tactics for reducing racial and ethnic disparities by transforming how juvenile justice systems operate.

In the opening plenary, **Judy Cox** told the story of how the juvenile justice system in Santa Cruz — where she was chief of probation — transformed how they worked with families. Cox explained that “better and more sustainable outcomes are achieved when youth and families are involved” in planning and decision-making.

Two panelists offered additional **family engagement strategies**. **Lisa Procks** discussed how the Baltimore City Community Family Resource Center works with families to reduce the number of youth in detention and to strengthen the capacity of families to advocate for their child. **Trina Osher**, a leader in the family movement in mental health, stressed the importance of sharing information with families, and including them in policy and program decisions.

Dr. David Altshuler of Johns Hopkins University, talked about the elements of an effective aftercare plan, and how it is key to reducing recidivism.

DMC Action Network members met in **Strategic Innovation Groups** and shared information on **Detention Screening Tools, Graduated Sanctions, and Programs, Culture and Community**. This peer-learning model is a key component of the DMC Action Network’s activities.

DMC reduction efforts are data driven, so it was especially appropriate that **Michael Finley** of the W. Haywood Burns Institute led a special session on data collection and reporting issues that network sites have identified. Data collection and analysis were key elements of **Faith Augustine’s** presentation on how Louisville reduced the number of African American youth detained on bench warrants due to failure to appear in court.

On the final morning of the meeting, **Jeff Slowikowski**, Acting Administrator of the Justice Department’s Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (OJJDP), embraced the work of the DMC Action Network. Noting that DMC reduction is a core requirement of the law that created OJJDP, Slowikowski encouraged attendees and urged them to share their successful strategies.

Two speakers focused on school issues. **Barry McCurdy**, director of the Devereux Center for Effective Schools, gave examples of how schools using School-Wide Positive Behavior Support have transformed their disciplinary systems, reducing office referrals and suspensions. **Judge Steve Teske**, of Clayton County, Georgia, described his work with schools, police and other stakeholders to drastically reduce the number of youth referred to court for certain offenses in schools.

Conference presentations are available at http://www.cclp.org/simple.php/DMC_Action_Network_May_09

Resource

The National Council of La Raza and the Campaign for Youth Justice have released a report, [America's Invisible Children: Latino Youth and the Failure of Justice](#), examining the experiences of Latino youth in the justice system, with a particular focus on youth tried as adults. The report concludes that Latino youth are overrepresented in the U.S. justice system and receive harsher treatment than white youth for similar offenses.

