

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.

Sustaining Success: The DMC Action Network's Fourth Annual Meeting

This month, representatives from DMC Action Network sites gathered in Alexandria, Virginia, for the final annual meeting of the full Network. The three-day conference focused on equipping jurisdictions with tools to sustain the reforms that have made them models for DMC reduction throughout the country.

When the MacArthur Foundation launched the DMC Action Network in 2007, it aimed to build a network of state and local leaders, exposing them to the latest tools and ideas to reduce the disparate treatment of youth of color within the juvenile justice system. Three years later, there is much to celebrate: Network sites have expanded their capacity to collect and analyze data, reduced racial and ethnic disparities in detention admissions and out-of-home placements, and worked to create and strengthen community-based services.

At this stage, some are now asking an important question: what will happen to the youth who benefit from the Network's innovations when the Foundation shifts resources away from the Network and toward other initiatives? If this year's DMC Action Network Annual Meeting achieved its goal, the answer to that question is simple: youth will continue to benefit from current and future efforts to eliminate DMC in each jurisdiction.



Approximately 100 representatives from Network sites and other juvenile justice professionals gathered in Alexandria, Virginia, from May 12-14 to discuss how to sustain the groundbreaking work that has helped reduce DMC in their communities. Speakers included Candice Jones, Program Officer for the MacArthur Foundation (photo left), Melodee Hanes, Acting Deputy Administrator for the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (photo lower left), and Professor Paul Butler of the George Washington University School of Law (photo lower right).



Lisa Garry, DMC Policy Director for the Center for Children's Law and Policy, manages the DMC Action Network. Travis Long, Project Coordinator, provides administrative and technical support to the Network.

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

Presenters focused on a number of topics, including gaining the support of faith-based communities, generating community-level interest in DMC, and building relationships with local media outlets. Other sessions challenged conference participants to think critically about how they engage law enforcement and line staff in reform efforts, and Professor Butler encouraged attendees to look to hip-hop music and culture for a critique of America's criminal justice system. [Click here to see the conference agenda, download presentations, and view photos from the event.](#)



At the close of the three-day meeting, Lisa Garry, manager of the DMC Action Network and DMC Policy Director for the Center for Children's Law and Policy (photo left), recognized individual sites for their accomplishments, describing how they have improved the lives of children in their jurisdictions. Ms. Garry noted that while those achievements are worth celebrating, they also underscore the need to think carefully about how to sustain and build upon current efforts in order to secure a more just and equitable future for youth of color.

Photo credit: Shannon Finney, [Shannon Finney Photography](#).

Local Leadership: How Baltimore County and Montgomery County, MD Are Reducing Racial and Ethnic Disparities through Diversion and Alternatives to Detention

In Maryland, a state-level agency bears the primary responsibility for administering most juvenile justice services, including intake, probation, detention, corrections, and aftercare programming. That doesn't mean that DMC reform can only occur at the state level, though. This month, two DMC Action Network replication sites show how counties can have a big impact on racial and ethnic disparities in states with centralized juvenile justice systems.

Each of the DMC Action Network's sites has committed to a data-driven approach to eliminate racial and ethnic disparities. That means taking a hard look at what happens to youth of color in their individual jurisdictions, and developing targeted interventions to address DMC based on those data. Two of the Network's replication sites - Baltimore County and Montgomery County - are no exception to that rule. However, those counties are working in Maryland, where a state-level agency, the Department of Juvenile Services (DJS), administers almost all programs for youth in the juvenile justice system.

This significant state-level involvement could mean that counties take a backseat to the state on DMC reform. Or, it could mean that counties think creatively about how to tackle racial and ethnic disparities. As Jeff Williams, DMC Reduction Coordinator at the Montgomery County Collaboration Council notes, local jurisdictions have a big role to play in educating and engaging stakeholders, building support for reform, and implementing targeted interventions in a centralized system.

For both counties, those interventions have included measures to reduce the number of youth in secure detention. According to Lisa Wyckoff, Baltimore County's DMC Coordinator, detention data from her jurisdiction highlighted the need to work with youth who were detained on writs for failing to appear in court - a group that comprised nearly 40% of the detention population. "After looking at the numbers, we came to realize that youth might just be forgetting about their scheduled court appearances," says Ms. Wyckoff.

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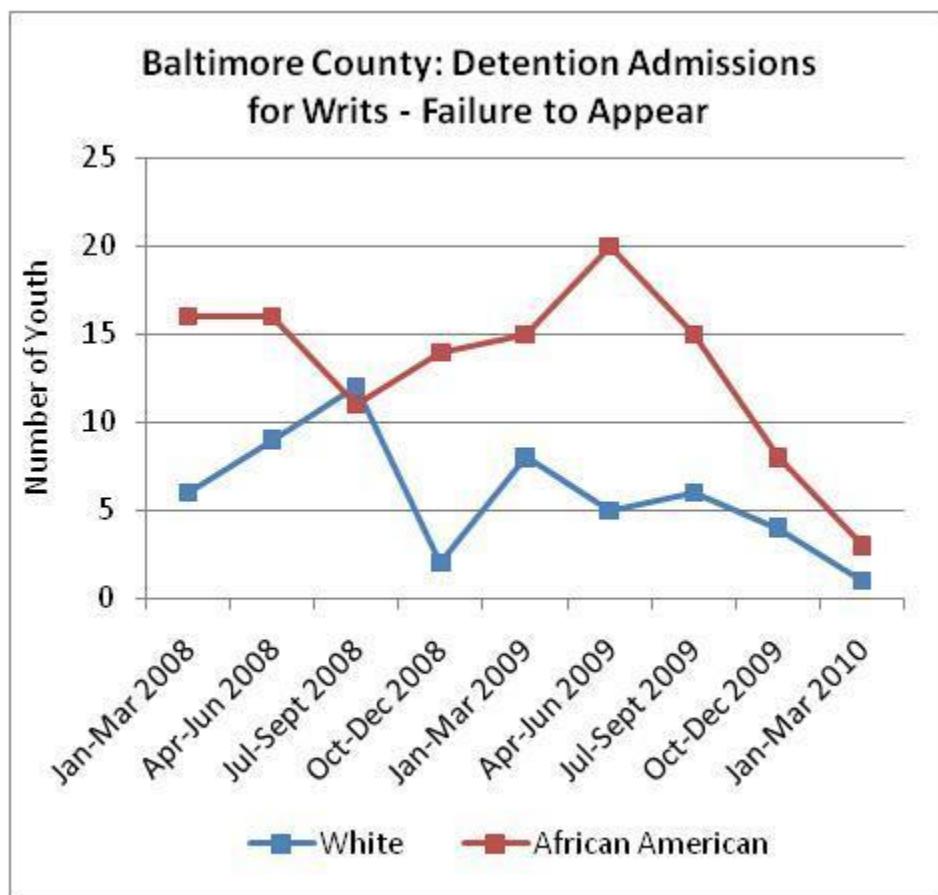
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Baltimore County responded in two ways. First, officials implemented a Respondent Notification Caller Program, designating a staff member to make phone contact with a youth two or three days before his or her scheduled court date. Second, Baltimore County adopted a new protocol for the issuance of the writs themselves. Courts now have an option to issue a "Writ with Authorization to Release," which allows law enforcement to take youth into temporary custody to reschedule his or her hearing, but does not require secure detention pending that court appearance. The result? Only 5% of youth were detained for failure to appear in the most recent quarter. Ms. Wyckoff notes that "the costs of these interventions were minimal, but the costs avoided when a youth appears in court at his or her scheduled day and time are substantial."



In Montgomery County, officials also focused on keeping youth out of secure detention, starting an Alternative to Detention Wraparound Program for pre-adjudicated youth in March 2007. The initiative aims to ensure that youth attend scheduled court hearings and do not commit another offense while in the program by providing mentoring, recreational activities, anger management and conflict resolution sessions, and other support services to youth and their families. Since its inception, nearly 80% of youth have successfully completed the program. That success has led to its expansion to adjudicated youth who are awaiting placement or who require short-term interventions. Mr. Williams emphasizes that "if the program wasn't an option for these youth, they would be in secure detention."

Montgomery County also looked to strengthen its diversion protocols as a way of reducing racial and ethnic disparities. The county analyzed its notification procedures and discovered that letters notifying youth that they were eligible for diversion were only sent out in English - a problem in a county with a substantial number of Latino youth. By employing an outside vendor to make contact with youth and families directly, the county prevented many youth from being referred to DJS for formal processing. Additionally, the county has worked to re-engage youth who were struggling with diversion and were at risk of a formal referral.

Mr. Williams and Ms. Wyckoff are quick to note that these programs did not emerge overnight. Both counties had to lay the groundwork for reform in their individual jurisdictions. Ms. Wyckoff explains that her predecessor had to dispel myths that youth from the City of Baltimore were driving disparities in Baltimore County before there could be a genuine dialogue on how to respond to DMC. Mr. Williams notes that consistently engaging law enforcement in the process has been instrumental in Montgomery County's success, particularly given that police hold important data on juvenile arrests. Engaging all of the relevant stakeholders, he states, is critical.

These programs, while successful, do not represent the only ways to tackle DMC in a state-run juvenile justice system. Ms. Wyckoff is looking ahead to the implementation of graduated responses to violations of community detention, which is a "home arrest" alternative to secure detention. Data collection has proven difficult, requiring manual inspection of files to determine the reason for violations. However, the county will have a full year of data by the summer, which will guide future efforts. School resource officers have also agreed to send data to Ms. Wyckoff, which will help the county get an accurate picture of school referrals.

In Montgomery County, Mr. Williams recognizes that one of the greatest challenges on the horizon is making existing reforms stick in light of funding cuts that threaten the programs that have helped make the biggest difference in his community. However, he notes that the Action Network provides support during good times, as well as challenging ones: "It's helpful to be able to share thoughts and ideas with other jurisdictions, particularly the struggles and strategies to address the barriers to doing this type of work."

Let us know how you're developing local solutions to DMC: email jszanyi@cclp.org.

TA Tips: Practical Advice for Successful DMC Reduction

This section of our newsletter focuses on sharing strategies and insights that can help jurisdictions effectively and sustainably eliminate DMC in their juvenile justice systems.



This month's tip is to **keep current on the latest juvenile justice news and research**. By staying on top of the latest research studies and reports, you can help strengthen the case for reform in your jurisdiction. That could mean showing that alternatives to detention [can save money and promote public safety](#), or [correcting public perceptions about youth who commit serious offenses](#). Not only that, news events such as the [Supreme Court's recent ruling](#) banning life without parole for juveniles who commit non-homicide crimes can provide a hook for outreach to local media outlets and legislative officials.

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

- This month, the United States Supreme Court issued its decision in *Graham v. Florida*, [deciding that sentencing juveniles to life without parole for non-homicide offenses violates the Eighth Amendment of the U.S. Constitution](#). In doing so, the Court cited the limited culpability of youthful offenders and the fact that no other country in the world permits such sentences for that class of offenses.

- The National Juvenile Justice Network (NJJN) has [released its policy platform on disproportionate minority contact](#). NJJN's platform outlines concrete steps that jurisdictions must take to ensure that they are committed to reducing racial and ethnic disparities, engaging necessary stakeholders, and generating data-driven responses to DMC.
- The Center for Children's Law and Policy has made presentations from the [DMC Action Network's Fourth Annual Meeting available online](#). CCLP has also made all of its DMC resources, including publications, presentations, and technical assistance materials, searchable by keyword on its [new DMC resources page](#).
- The Charles Hamilton Houston Institute for Race and Justice at Harvard Law School has released a new policy brief on the impact of school resource officers on public schools and youth. The publication, entitled *First, Do No Harm: How Educators and Police Can Work Together More Effectively to Preserve School Safety and Protect Vulnerable Students*, offers recommendations for how police can work more effectively with schools based on research and interviews with school resource officers.
- The Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (OJJDP) [announced a set of new funding opportunities](#) related to juvenile indigent defense, youth exposure to violence, and interventions for juveniles with sexual behavior problems. OJJDP also released [a new bulletin on conditions of confinement in juvenile facilities nationwide](#), based on its Survey of Youth in Residential Placement. The bulletin describes the security in facilities where juveniles are housed, the disciplinary measures used in the facilities, and youth's access to legal representation and emotional support, among other topics.
- The U.S. Department of Justice issued proposed supplemental guidelines for the implementation of the Adam Walsh Act. Those guidelines indicate that [states do not need to place youth on their public sex offender websites in order to comply with the federal law](#).

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.