

## 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

### Jason Witt of Rock County, WI Wins 2010 Champion for Change Award for Work to Reduce DMC

*Nine months ago, we described how Jason Witt, Deputy Director of the Rock County, Wisconsin, Human Services Department, was navigating a vigorous debate surrounding reforms that had improved outcomes for youth of color. This month, the MacArthur Foundation recognized Jason's persistence and dedication at its third annual Champions for Change awards ceremony.*



When the MacArthur Foundation awarded its first Champion for Change award for the DMC Action Network, it sent a clear message: DMC reduction is tough work, but determined advocacy based on the Action Network's guiding principles can yield real benefits for youth of color. That's why the Foundation recognized Jason Witt, former director of the Rock County, Wisconsin, Human Services Department, with the award at the Fifth Annual Models for Change Working Conference on December 7 in Washington, DC.

When presenting the award, CCLP's Executive Director, Mark Soler, likened Jason's devotion to data as a "religion." Rock County implemented a monthly review of trends, known as RockStat, that focuses on using data and continual follow up to inform strategies for improving youth outcomes. That fits with one of Jason's key mantras: "If you can't measure it, you can't manage it."

This data-driven approach has helped Rock County achieve impressive results. By expanding the number and quality of detention alternatives, the county saw a 27% drop in the number of youth of color admitted to secure detention for probation violations. Under Jason's leadership, the county has also reallocated resources from detention to community-based programming, adopted a strength-based assessment instrument for youth under agency supervision, and helped create a training program for school resource officers focused on alternatives to arrest.

The school resource officer training, developed in collaboration with the state's two DMC Action Network replication sites, Outagamie County and Kenosha County, reflects the impact that Rock County's work is having across the state. Wisconsin's DMC Coordinator, Lindsey Draper, noted that "Jason's leadership and commitment played a major role in developing the credibility and 'buy-in' that led local stakeholders to support the reform efforts and helped spread the idea that such projects could be replicated."

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

## 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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**We Want Your**

To be sure, other Network sites are working hard on data-driven approaches to DMC reduction and serving as state-wide models. Yet, Lisa Garry, DMC Policy Director at CCLP and manager of the DMC Action Network, noted that Jason had also demonstrated his willingness to stay true to the Network's vision, even in the face of resistance and hesitancy from some individuals in the county. That determination reflected a true commitment to reducing racial and ethnic disparities.

Jason is now Director of the La Crosse County Human Services Department in Wisconsin, where he is continuing to work on behalf of youth in the state. In accepting the award, he stated that the honor "demonstrated that there is no excuse for inaction."

Given Jason's relentless focus on improving outcomes for youth of color during his time in Rock County, we have no doubt that he will keep racial and ethnic fairness at the forefront of his efforts.

*Tell us if you're recognized for your work to reduce racial and ethnic disparities: email [jzanyj@cclp.org](mailto:jzanyj@cclp.org).*



*Jason Witt (center) and other supporters from Wisconsin celebrate the MacArthur Foundation's first Disproportionate Minority Contact Action Network Champion for Change award.*

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## Feedback!

We want to hear from you about how we can improve the DMC Action Network eNews.

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](mailto:jszanyi@cclp.org) or 202-637-0377 x108.



## Thank You and Farewell to a Key CCLP Staff Member

This month, we bid a fond farewell to Travis Long, who expertly provided administrative and technical support to the DMC Action Network as CCLP's Project Coordinator.

CCLP staff and those throughout the Network are grateful to Travis for his hard work in making the DMC Action Network a success. We have no doubt that the next organization lucky enough to work with Travis will benefit tremendously from his coordination and planning skills, and we wish him all the best in his future endeavors.

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## 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 **identify and recognize the champions for change in your communities**. Individuals working in DMC Action Network sites know that strong and dedicated leadership has many benefits: it ensures that DMC stays a priority, it helps keep reforms on track even in tough financial or political times, and it creates a sense of ownership and responsibility around efforts to reduce racial and ethnic disparities in systems that serve youth. Jurisdictions with strong judicial, agency, or community leaders have demonstrated the benefit of having active individuals who are dedicated to DMC reduction. Rock County, Wisconsin, is one such example.

The MacArthur Foundation's Champions for Change awards ceremony only takes place once a year, but individual jurisdictions don't have to wait to shine the spotlight on those who are ready to advocate for better outcomes for youth of color.

*If you have a tip you would like to share, or if you would like to hear more about a particular topic, let us know: email [jszanyi@cclp.org](mailto:jszanyi@cclp.org).*

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## The Newest DMC and Juvenile Justice Resources

- The Chicago Urban League's Department of Policy and Research has released a new edition of its newsletter, which is focused on the issue of DMC in Chicago's south suburbs. The [Strategies newsletter](#) features data, interviews, and analysis related to the growing issue of racial and ethnic disparities in the greater Chicagoland area.
- The Children's Defense Fund - Ohio, in collaboration with a number of other organizations, has released an [issue brief](#) and [fact sheet](#) outlining key arguments for detention reform in Ohio. Both documents summarize the advantages of alternatives that will keep youth out of pretrial detention, in addition to referencing the impact of those alternatives on reducing DMC.

- A new study by the Vera Institute of Justice, commissioned by the New York State Office of Children and Family Services, finds that punishing parents in family court for children's chronic school absenteeism, does not help improve attendance rates. The study, entitled [Getting Teenagers Back to School: Rethinking New York State's Response to Chronic Absence](#), recommends that the state extend flexibility and incentives to localities to address the root causes of truancy in their communities.
- The Federal Advisory Committee on Juvenile Justice has issued its [2010 annual report](#) with recommendations to the President on juvenile justice policy. The report urges "strengthen[ing] disproportionate minority contact (DMC) efforts, initiatives, and programs to reduce and eliminate racial and ethnic disparities that adversely impact youth of color," in addition to making other specific recommendations.
- The Office of Justice Programs' Bureau of Justice Statistics, in collaboration with the National Center for Education Statistics, has published a new report, entitled [Indicators of School Crime and Safety: 2010](#). The publication draws on federally funded studies to present detailed statistical information about the crime that occurs in school and on the way to and from school, addressing bullying, victimization, fights, weapons, drug and alcohol use by students, school conditions, and student perceptions of personal safety.
- This month, the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention released a new bulletin based on the agency's Survey of Youth in Residential Placement. The report [describes the characteristics, family and educational backgrounds, offense histories, and expectations of youth in residential placement](#).
- The journal *Pediatrics* has published a new study on the criminalization of lesbian, gay, and bisexual youth, entitled [Criminal Justice and School Sanctions against Nonheterosexual Youth: A National Longitudinal Study](#). The research, the first of its kind documenting excessive punishment of these children nationwide, found that lesbian, gay, and bisexual youth are about 40 percent more likely than other teens to receive punishment at the hands of school authorities, police, and the courts. The study describes an "urgent need for all child-serving professionals to reflect on strategies to reduce the criminalization of non-heterosexual youth as they navigate adolescence in an often hostile environment."

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](mailto:jszanyi@cclp.org) or 202-637-0377 x108.