

DMC 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](#).

Core States

Pennsylvania
Berks County
Philadelphia
Lancaster County

Illinois
Peoria County

Replicating the DMC Action Network Approach and Getting Results in Connecticut

All across the country, students are working hard as the school year progresses. And thanks to recent work to reduce racial and ethnic disparities in Bridgeport and Hartford, Connecticut, students there will be more likely to stay in the classroom and less likely to end up in juvenile court for minor misconduct than in previous years.

Since May 2011, officials in Bridgeport and Hartford have been replicating the DMC Action Network's approach to eliminating racial and ethnic disparities with the support of the Public Welfare Foundation and the Tow Foundation. That has meant convening local governing committees, meeting on a regular basis, obtaining and analyzing data, and implementing and monitoring reforms. The goal has been to create a more equitable and effective juvenile justice system. And now, just 18 months later, it looks like those efforts are paying off.

Coordinators of Connecticut's Local Efforts to Reduce Racial and Ethnic Disparities



As in many jurisdictions, data revealed that public schools generated a high number of referrals to juvenile court. Almost all of those referrals were referrals of children of color, who represent 80% of the youth population in Bridgeport and 90% of the youth population in Hartford. Governing committee members drilled down in the data to identify the most common offenses for which youth were arrested and the schools with the greatest number of referrals to juvenile court. Then they took action. Over the past year, officials engaged in targeted outreach to school administrators, trained school resource officers and school security personnel, and developed memoranda of understanding between public schools and the police on the appropriate role of law enforcement on campus.

The result? In Hartford, school-based referrals were down 78% from March through June 2012 when compared with that time period last year. The drop contributed to a 28% decline in overall delinquency referrals when compared with the previous year. In Bridgeport, school-based arrests were down almost 40%. The city's community-based diversion program, the Juvenile Review Board, is receiving almost five times as many referrals from law enforcement as it had during the previous year.

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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The hope is that these reforms, including the written agreements between law enforcement and the public schools, ensure that officials reserve referrals to juvenile court for only the most serious offenses. As Hartford Mayor Pedro Segarra noted, [the shared understanding between schools and police "will go a long way to ensure that our kids are held to a certain level of accountability \[without\] criminalizing the conduct as the first option, because the consequences are far too great."](#)

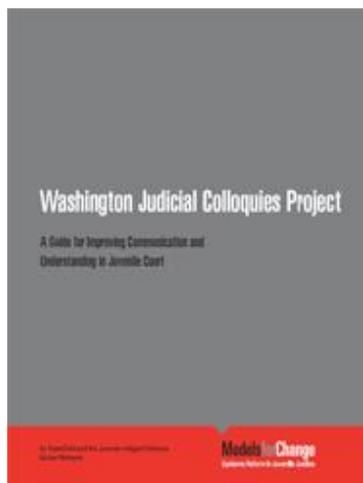
Although stakeholders have focused many of their efforts on diverting youth from juvenile court involvement, officials have also looked closely at youth of color's experience at later stages of the system. For example, the state's probation department, the Court Support Services Division (CSSD), adopted a new system of graduated sanctions and incentives to address the number of youth of color entering detention for technical probation violations and violations of court orders. The new policy took effect statewide on July 1, 2012. The new system uses a wide range of sanctions beyond detention to hold youth accountable. It also requires probation officers to reward youth for pursuing goals beyond basic compliance with the terms of their supervision. That could mean visiting a local college, joining a community-based organization, or pursuing a leadership opportunity at school

According to Bill Carbone, CSSD's Executive Director, the work done to reduce racial and ethnic disparities has complemented other recent reform efforts in Connecticut. "As we have made significant strides in Raising the Age to include 16 and 17 years old in juvenile court, and prohibiting the detention of status offenders and diverting them from court entirely through a new service network, the area needing most attention is reducing disparities. The Hartford and Bridgeport communities provide examples of concrete strategies for other communities to consider and replicate. We don't want kids coming to court disproportionately and the work of diversion needs to be done at the local level. Hartford and Bridgeport are showing that it can be done. We are happy to partner however we can to meet this critical goal."

Efforts in Bridgeport and Hartford have also sparked a broader conversation about making local-level data available to communities throughout the state. CSSD is currently finalizing a system, modeled upon the DMC Action Network's Data Template, which will report quarterly information on youth at various decision points in the juvenile justice system. The goal is to equip local officials with knowledge that will help them reduce racial and ethnic disparities and implement other reforms in their jurisdictions.

The work in Connecticut doesn't stop there. Within the past few months, new initiatives have emerged to reduce arrests of youth of color in child welfare and juvenile justice placements, increase opportunities for family engagement, and educate judges who are responsible for transfer hearings on the latest research on adolescent development. Although space here is limited, you can learn more at the upcoming Models for Change Annual Working Conference next week

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



Using Language in Court That Youth Can Understand

When youth end up in court, they are often confused about the proceedings and what is expected of them when they leave. Why? Because much of the language used by professionals goes right over their heads. A new guide from Models for Change may help change that. The document, entitled *Washington Judicial Colloquies Project: A Guide for Improving Communication and Understanding in Court*, provides guidance on how to consistently use developmentally-appropriate language in court.

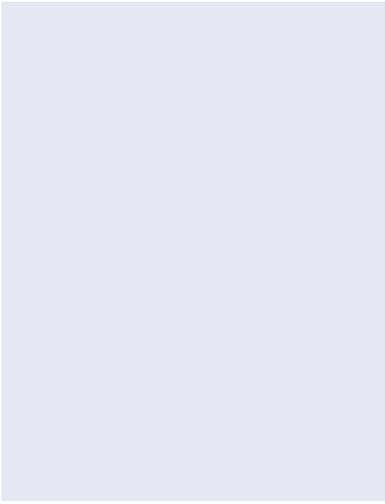
TeamChild, a Washington State-based legal advocacy group, led the development of the guide as part of its participation with the Juvenile Indigent Defense Action Network. Working with a team of experts, including the National Juvenile Defender Center and a group of youth (many with experience in juvenile court), TeamChild produced a guide that offers draft bench colloquies for two critical hearings—(1) a youth's first appearance, at which rights and conditions of release are explained, and (2) disposition hearings, at which the consequences of adjudication and conditions of probation are explained.

[Click here to learn more and to download the guide.](#)

The Newest DMC and Juvenile Justice Information

- This month, the Department of Justice filed a lawsuit alleging that officials in Meridian County, Mississippi, help to operate a school-to-prison pipeline that violates the federal constitutional rights of children. The lawsuit, which follows a December 2011 Justice Department investigation, alleges that children in Meridian are incarcerated for allegedly committing minor offenses, including school disciplinary infractions, and that youth are punished without due process of law. According to the Justice Department, African-American children and children with disabilities are most affected by the alleged practices. [To learn more, follow this link.](#)
- A new brief from the Research and Evaluation Center at the John Jay College of Criminal Justice reports that violent youth crime has dropped to a 30-year low. In 2011, according to the most recent national data available, U.S. law enforcement agencies made nearly 1.5 million arrests involving youth under 18 years of age. Of these arrests, 68,000 involved one of the four offenses included in the FBI's Violent Crime Index. In 1994, law enforcement reported more than 150,000 youth arrests for these same crimes. [Click here to view the full report.](#)

- The National Juvenile Justice Network released a new paper that synthesizes the latest research on youth in the child welfare system who become involved with the juvenile justice system. The publication highlights the factors that make youth more likely to cross over from child welfare to juvenile justice, as well as the policy implications from those findings. [Download the report by clicking this link.](#)
- The Center for Juvenile Justice Reform at Georgetown University's Public Policy Institute, in partnership with the Juvenile Law Center, has announced that applications are now available for the Information Sharing Certificate Program being held March 17-20, 2013. This program, supported with funding from the MacArthur Foundation's Models for Change Initiative, is designed to enable leaders in the juvenile justice, child welfare, education, behavioral health, and other child serving fields to overcome information sharing challenges that prevent the communication and coordination necessary to fully serve youth. [Follow this link for more information and the application.](#)
- The National Juvenile Justice Network's Fiscal Policy Center has a new tool to help officials and advocates calculate the cost of a youth's arrest in their jurisdiction. Recently, DC Lawyers for Youth, an NJJN member, determined that it costs \$1,000 just to arrest and detain a youth in the District of Columbia, even though more than half of youth were released after a night in detention. [To download the guide, click here.](#)
- On October 3rd, 2012, the Maryland Governor's Office on Crime Control and Prevention hosted the state's second annual conference on racial and ethnic disparities in the juvenile justice system at Morgan State University. More than 300 people attended the event to learn about effective strategies from Maryland and around the country. CCLP staff presented on the use of graduated incentives and sanctions for youth on probation to reduce racial and ethnic disparities. [Click here to view materials from the conference.](#)
- On January 24-25, 2013, Georgetown University's Georgetown Public Policy Institute and Center for Juvenile Justice Reform (CJJR) will host a conference entitled "Positive Outcomes for At-Risk Children and Youth: Improving Lives Through Practice and System Reform." The event, to be held in Washington, DC, will highlight the work of CJJR and explore issues, policies, and practices related to improving the outcomes of at-risk children and youth. Presenters will share innovative practices and models from across the country and facilitate a panel to garner families' perspectives on best practices and recommended reform initiatives. [Follow this link to learn more.](#)
- A new report from the Georgetown Center on Poverty, Inequality, and Public Policy, *Improving the Juvenile Justice System for Girls: Lessons from the States*, addresses the impact of poverty and violence on the lives of girls in the juvenile justice system. The report encourages policymakers to invest in community-based supports to keep girls out of the system; provide girls with gender- and culturally-responsive trauma-informed services and support; and keep girls out of the juvenile and adult criminal justice systems. [View the full publication here.](#)

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- A new report from the American Civil Liberties Union and Human Rights Watch outlines the harms associated with the solitary confinement of youth in adult prisons and jails across the country. The publication, *Growing Up Locked Down: Youth in Solitary Confinement in Jails and Prisons Across the United States*, is based on interviews and correspondence with more than 125 young people in 19 states who spent time in solitary confinement while under age 18, as well as jail and prison officials in 10 states. The report outlines the ways in which solitary confinement causes anguish, provokes serious mental and physical health problems, and works against rehabilitation. It also presents recommendations for reforms. [Click here to learn more.](#)

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 202-637-03 77 x108.