U.S. Department of Justice
Office of Justice Programs
Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention

September 2009

Jeff Slowikowski, Acting Administrator

Reducing Disproportionate Minority Contact: Preparation at the Local Level

Mark Soler and Lisa M. Garry

Disproportionate minority contact (DMC) refers to the disproportionate representation of minority youth in the juvenile justice system. DMC first came to national attention in 1988, when the Coalition for Juvenile Justice (formerly the National Coalition of State Juvenile Justice Advisory Groups) focused on the problem in its annual report to Congress. In response to the report, Congress required that all States receiving formula grant funds address disproportionality among detained and confined youth. In 1992, Congress elevated DMC to a core requirement for States. Under the Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention Act of 2002, if a State fails to address the overrepresentation of minority youth in the juvenile justice system, the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (OJJDP) may withhold 20 percent of the State's formula grant allocation for the subsequent year. The Act expanded the requirement to include disproportionality at all points in the juvenile justice system.

The Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention has long been a leader in DMC-reduction efforts, offering a wide range of training, technical assistance, and other resources for States and localities. Recently, OJJDP added the *Disproportionate Minority Contact Technical Assistance Manual, 4th Edition* (see sidebar, page 8) to its Web site. The manual provides detailed guidance on all aspects of DMC reduction.

This Bulletin was written by the authors of the manual's chapter on local preparation. In addition to useful "how to" information (including a six-step preparation process) drawn from the manual, the Bulletin presents important background on the context in which local preparation takes place—media coverage and public attitudes about crime, race, and youth.

A Message From OJJDP

Addressing disproportionate minority contact (DMC) with the juvenile justice system is a core requirement of the Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (JJDP) Act. More important, it is a fundamental matter of justice and fair play.

The Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (OJJDP) works proactively with States to ensure that they comply with the JJDP Act's requirements, including DMC. This goal is pursued through a variety of means, including onsite visits, technical assistance, and national and regional training conferences.

OJJDP has trained a large number of juvenile justice professionals in the core requirements. This training provides them with information to address DMC and other significant challenges facing the juvenile justice system.

The key focus of OJJDP's efforts to combat DMC is prevention. By preventing disproportionate minority contact with the juvenile justice system, we also will lower the rate of disproportionate minority confinement and enhance the administration of justice.

A companion to the latest edition of OJJDP's *Disproportionate Minority Contact Technical Assistance Manual,* this Bulletin describes strategies that States and communities can use to reduce DMC.

It is OJJDP's hope and conviction that the information provided in this Bulletin, as well as the ongoing efforts described above, will advance that worthy end.

Why Preparation Is Important

Preparation before launching a DMC-reduction effort has several benefits. Major benefits include—

- Establishing relationships with and among key stakeholders.
- Determining the key goals of DMC-reduction efforts.
- Identifying available data and research on DMC in the jurisdiction.

In addition, preparing locally for a DMC-reduction effort has a number of specific advantages. For example, planning at the local level is less susceptible to bureaucratic and political intervention than planning at the State level. Further, local stakeholders are likely to invest in viable solutions aimed at particular issues in the community. From a practical perspective, local DMC efforts place the issue closer to the direct work of agency staff and community leaders who either (1) closely resemble the population of youth most represented in the juvenile justice system in terms of race and ethnicity or (2) are experienced in planning and problem-solving for a specific population of youth and families in a way that is responsive to culture and context.

Preparation at the local level is critical to understanding the roles, values, priorities, and joint missions of local stakeholders as they begin to reduce DMC.

Talking About DMC

Critical to any DMC-reduction effort is an understanding of the context in which the effort takes place. Negative public attitudes about the association between race (particularly minority races) and crime are an important part of that context. These issues form a volatile combination: they are sensitive and controversial, stereotypes are common, and opinions are strong. However, the reality may not correspond with public attitudes.

The most important influence on public attitudes about these issues is the media, especially local television news, which is the way most people receive information about crime in their community (ABC News, 2000; Merkle, 2000). The depiction of crime, race, and youth in the media can have a significant impact on the level of motivation for and commitment to DMC intervention strategies (Braxton, 1997; McCombs and Shaw, 1993). Reports that perpetuate racial and ethnic stereotypes can raise difficult barriers to DMC efforts (Martindale, 1996).

Public opinion research demonstrates the impact that this media coverage can have (Bell, 2006). At the same time, opinion research indicates that the public has mixed views on justice system responses to juvenile crime: a desire to hold young offenders accountable, frustration at perceived ineffectiveness of the current system, and a belief that young people in trouble can change for the better. Perhaps most important, the public is concerned about the fairness of a justice system that may treat youth differently based on their race or ethnicity.

Public opinion polls should certainly not control policy changes and DMC efforts. However, research on these issues may help a community prepare to launch a DMC-reduction effort (Dorfman and Schiraldi, 2001a, 2001b; Soler, 2001).

Crime, Race, and Youth in the Media

Dorfman and Schiraldi (2001a, 2001b) examined 77 studies on how the media report crime. The studies covered stories in local and network television news programs, newspapers, and broadcast and print news magazines between 1910 and 2001. Their finding was clear:

> "Overall, the studies taken together indicate that depictions of crime in the media are not reflective of the rate of crime generally, the proportion of crime which is violent, the proportion of crime committed by people of color, or the proportion of crime committed by young people."

The problem is not inaccuracy of individual stories. The problem is that the cumulative effect of what is included in the news—and what is not included—makes it seem as though crime is more frequent and more severe than is actually the case.

It is not surprising that newspapers and television emphasize and report extensively on violent crime, particularly on local television news, where "if it bleeds, it leads" is an unspoken but well understood journalistic mantra. However, this creates a problem for DMC-reduction efforts because it contributes to the public's erroneous impression that violent crime is a common and increasingly frequent occurrence. In fact, the opposite is true. As Dorfman and Schiraldi report, three different studies of television news in the 1990s[1] all found that homicides made up more than a quarter of the crimes reported on the evening news (27 to 29 percent) during the periods studied, while homicides accounted for only 0.1 to 0.2 percent of all arrests during the same periods. From 1990 to 1998, homicide coverage on network news increased 473 percent (Center for Media and Public Affairs, 2000), while the incidence of homicides decreased more than 30 percent (Federal Bureau of Investigation, 2000).

Another problem for DMC-reduction efforts is that media coverage, particularly television news, disproportionately connects crime with race and ethnicity. The studies noted above found that

Preparation at the local level is critical to understanding the roles, values, priorities, and joint missions of local stakeholders as they begin to reduce DMC.

African Americans and Hispanics were overrepresented as perpetrators in news reports, especially those involving violent crimes, and underrepresented as victims (Dorfman and Schiraldi, 2001b, table 1). Articles about homicides with African American suspects were longer than those about homicides with white suspects (Weiss and Chermak, 1998). More articles were written about white victims of homicide than about black victims (Sorenson, Manz, and Berk, 1998), and the articles about white victims were longer (Weiss and Chermak, 1998). In local television news coverage, black suspects were less likely to be identified by name than white suspects, were not as well dressed as white suspects, and were more likely to be shown being physically restrained. Thus, African American suspects were regularly depicted as poor, dangerous, and indistinct from other noncriminal members of the black community (Entman, 1992).

The third problem for DMC-reduction efforts is that media coverage disproportionately connects violent crime with young people, particularly minority youth. As Dorfman and Schiraldi note, an analysis of 840 newspaper stories and 109 network news segments in 1993 showed that 40 percent of all newspaper stories on children and 48 percent of network television news stories on children were about violence (Kunkel, 1994). A study of 3,172 youth-related stories appearing in 3 California newspapers[2] in 1 year found that 25 percent were about youth violence, although only 3 percent of young people are either violent offenders or victims of violence (McManus and Dorfman, 2000).

Minority youth may fare badly in the media. For example, as Dorfman and Schiraldi report, a study of cover stories in *Time* and *Newsweek* between 1946 and 1995 found that the term "young black male" became synonymous with the word "criminal" in the late 1960s. In later stories in the 1970s, both magazines portrayed crime as "largely perpetrated by 'young Black males'" (Barlow, 1998). Research covering reports from 1990 to 1995 found that minority youth were also more likely than white youth to appear in television news stories about crime (Dorfman and Woodruff, 1998).

The combination of a focus on violent crime, disproportionate linking of crime with people of color, and overrepresentation of young people (especially minority youth) in stories of criminal violence may have a significant effect on public attitudes toward crime, race, and youth. Because these attitudes are an important part of the context in which DMC-reduction efforts take place, those working on DMC preparation at the local level should be aware of local media coverage of crime, race, young people, and related topics.

[1] Rocky Mountain Media Watch's 1-day snapshot of local television news in 55 markets around the country on February 26, 1997 (Klite, 1995); the Kaiser Family Foundation (1998) analyses of national television news in 1996; and Gilliam et al.'s (1996) and Gilliam and Iyenger's (2000) studies of the evening news on KABC–TV in Los Angeles from 1993 to 1994.

[2] The stories were randomly selected from the *Los Angeles Times, Sacramento Bee,* and *San Francisco Chronicle.*

Several types of stories may convey messages or receive coverage that perpetuates racial or ethnic stereotypes. These include stories on violent crimes (especially in white neighborhoods) (Brown, 2006; Fischer, 2006); police crackdowns (Stewart and Klein, 2006); statements by political candidates; aggressive efforts by community activists; and new studies of issues such as poverty, race, crime, "urban decay," and "the plight of the poor" (Gans, 1995). To the extent that juvenile justice stakeholders, public officials, or other members of the community accept racial/ethnic stereotypes conveyed in the media, these stereotypes present barriers to DMC-reduction efforts.

Public Attitudes About Crime, Race, and Youth

Of course, the media do not dictate the attitudes of individuals, and, as mentioned earlier, research indicates that members of the public have complex views on the juvenile justice system. Some of these attitudes present additional barriers to DMC-reduction efforts, but others provide important support. Opinion polls consistently show that the public is very fearful about juvenile crime (Soler, 2001). In fact, although arrests of juveniles for violent crime decreased 33 percent from 1994 to 2003 (National Center for Juvenile Justice, 2006), the public believes that juvenile crime is increasing (S and Sickmund, 1999; Gray, 2003; Wagner, 2003). believes that young people who break the law will commit other crimes in the future and that the juvenile justice system is ineffective in dealing with young offenders (Butts, 1999). There is widespread belief that the system does not hold youth accountable for their actions but instead lets delinquent youth back on the streets without effective interventions or rehabilitation. Moreover, the public is unsympathetic to arguments that delinquent behavior is a result of immaturity (the "youth excuse") (Soler, 2001). All of these opinions present challenges for DMC-reduction efforts.

On the other hand, the public has great concern about what happens to young people in the justice system. It overwhelmingly supports a focus on prevention and rehabilitation rather than imprisonment and strongly endorses a variety of rehabilitation programs (Steinhart, 1988; Ladd, 1997; Hart Research, 2002). The public is concerned about dangerous conditions in juvenile facilities (Amnesty International, 1998) and does not want delinquent youth incarcerated with adult inmates (Schiraldi and Ziedenberg, 2000; Coalition for Juvenile Justice, 2005). Instead, it supports programs that emphasize responsibility and accountability (e.g., victim

reconciliation and restitution) and programs that provide adult models (e.g., mentoring) (Marcus, 2005; Sherman et al., 1998).

Public attitudes about race and juvenile crime are complex. Many people subscribe to racial stereotypes. In a national poll conducted for Building Blocks for Youth, when asked direct questions, more than one-third of respondents agreed with statements that African American youth are more likely to commit crimes than white youth. Black respondents were less likely to agree with the statements, but only slightly: at least one-quarter of black respondents agreed with the statements (Soler, 2001). Nevertheless, the public is concerned that the justice system may treat minority youth unfairly. "Fairness" is the critical issue (Dunnaville, 2000). In the Building Blocks poll, large majorities considered the issue to be serious and supported measures to remedy unequal treatment of minority youth, such as diversity training and new guidelines for arrest, prosecution, and sentencing.

Taking Public Attitudes Into Account: Suggestions for Local DMC Efforts

These findings about public attitudes may help a jurisdiction develop its approaches to enlisting support for DMC-reduction efforts. They suggest that strongly held beliefs may present challenges to DMC interventions but that approaches may be successful if they emphasize some basic principles of juvenile justice reform:

- Young people should be held accountable for their behavior.
- Holding young people accountable does not necessarily mean incarcerating them.
- Alternatives to incarceration are desirable, but interventions for delinquent youth should be proven to be effective.
- Having a race-neutral justice system is a matter of basic fairness.

Thus, local preparation should include research on media coverage of crime, race, youth, and related sensitive issues to determine whether the community may have attitudes (in general or related to a particular, highly publicized incident) that DMC-reduction efforts must overcome.

With these findings in mind, people working on local DMC-reduction efforts should consider how the public may receive their efforts in view of widespread attitudes about DMC-related issues (Schwartz, 2001; DeMuro, 1999). For example, it probably will not be effective to argue that DMC-reduction efforts are important because many minority youth come from poor homes in which parents have many difficulties. The argument that DMC is a matter of basic fairness—minority youth should not be treated differently in the justice system because of their race or ethnic background—is more likely to find support. Similarly, DMC-reduction efforts should avoid any suggestion of excusing delinquent behavior or calling for a slap on the wrist of young people who commit crimes. A better approach is to agree that young people should be held accountable for their misbehavior—after all, everyone must learn from their mistakes, and everyone makes mistakes when they are young—and then discuss whether incarceration is the most effective way of holding youth accountable. Stakeholders, public officials, and members of the community may be receptive to proposals for effective alternatives to incarceration, such as evidence-based intervention programs (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 2001).

Funding Sources for Local DMC Efforts

An initial issue in preparation for local DMC-reduction efforts is how to support them financially. OJJDP awards Title II Formula Grant funds to States for system improvement and programmatic efforts as well as technical assistance and other support for DMC-reduction and other reforms. OJJDP's Juvenile Accountability Block Grant and Title V Community Prevention Grant Program funds provide additional financial support to States for juvenile justice reform, intervention, and prevention services in the area of juvenile delinquency. Title II Formula Grant funds passed from States to communities support the work of the Burns Institute, described below, in many communities. State and county agencies may also support DMC-reduction efforts with State or local dollars. Local foundations, particularly community foundations, may be a source of funds. The Council on Foundations and other organizations provide information on locating and contacting community foundations. Several national foundations, such as the Annie E. Casey Foundation and the John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation, support juvenile justice reform initiatives—e.g., the Casey Foundation's Juvenile Detention Alternatives Initiative and the MacArthur Foundation's Models for Change—that have DMC-reduction components.

Steps in Local Preparation

Establishing a Steering Committee

Local preparation should begin with the establishment of a steering committee. The committee should include key stakeholders in the juvenile justice system, such as the chief judge in the juvenile court, chief juvenile probation officer, senior prosecutor in the juvenile court, senior public defender, and police captain or lieutenant in charge of juvenile cases. It is important to have chiefs or senior officials on the committee to ensure that committee decisions are implemented.

The committee should also include nontraditional stakeholders (i.e., persons with an interest in DMC from the perspective of program services rather than system policies and practices). These representatives are identified from community-level leadership, such as directors of community groups, civil rights organizations, child advocates, parent advocates, and others in the community who are concerned with DMC issues. The committee should also include young people

or representatives of young people who are or have been in the system to anchor the work to the population most affected. For example, the composition of DMC workgroup members in Cook County, IL (South Suburbs), is exemplary in its engagement of nontraditional stakeholders, such as community-based service providers, grassroots leaders, and community residents. Community representatives often understand the program and service delivery needs of youth, families, and communities in greater context. Reductions in overrepresentation cannot be sustained without an infrastructure of effective community-based detention alternatives, diversion, and other programs to address and prevent youth involvement in the criminal justice system.

Identifying Leadership

DMC is a difficult issue to address, so it is critical to identify strong leadership for the steering committee. This usually means the chief judge in the juvenile court or chief juvenile probation officer, since they will most likely control policy changes that may be necessary to implement DMC reduction. Leadership by high-level administrators of the judicial and/or probation system also conveys and lends validity to the message that DMC reduction is an important issue within system agencies.

Reaching Consensus

The first task of the steering committee is to reach consensus on the goals of the DMC-reduction effort and the responsibilities of participants in the effort. If the local effort will conduct its activities in conjunction with a State DMC-reduction effort, State leaders should use the preparatory phase to introduce DMC as a shared vision and responsibility of both State and local entities. This approach will incorporate the concerns, insights, and innovations of local communities in the broader context of statewide DMC-reduction activities.

At the early stage, this foundational step in preparation at the local level will be based more on dialog than on data research. Dialog among all participants on the committee will help establish consensus, prioritize problematic decision points, and create a sense of urgency among local leaders and stakeholder groups.

Members of the steering committee may come to the effort with different expectations and understandings of the goals. The preparatory dialog will reveal the shared agendas and differences of position among stakeholders concerning variables contributing most to DMC. Leadership of the steering committee should anticipate and plan for differences among stakeholders in goals, priorities, or strategies. Creative tension helps the collaborative build consensus and trust.

Conveying a Sense of Urgency

DMC reduction will not occur as an afterthought or a by-product of other initiatives. The leadership of the steering committee must

convey a sense of urgency about the issue. The members of the committee should address the following questions:

- Do the stakeholders consider DMC to be an important issue?
- Do they believe that fair and equitable treatment of minority youth will improve their outcomes and, therefore, reduce concerns about public safety?
- What changes in policy are they prepared to consider to reduce DMC?
- What resources can they bring to the effort?

Conveying a sense of urgency reflects the committee's determination to search for active solutions to racial and ethnic disparities.

Setting Priorities

DMC may occur at any decision point in the system—arrest, referral to juvenile court, diversion, secure detention, petition (charges filed), delinquent findings, probation placement, secure confinement, and transfer to adult court. The steering committee should lead an effort to gather available data—broken down by race, ethnicity, gender, geography (ZIP code or census tract), and offense—at all or selected decision points (e.g., secure detention). The committee should then oversee an analysis of the data in order

to develop interventions to reduce racial and ethnic disparities. Collecting and assessing data, creating interventions, and analyzing the efforts can be challenging and time-consuming. In order to simplify the process, a committee may want to address one decision point at a time. Although committees should set priorities based on data, other factors—such as the level of collaboration among stakeholders, the community's readiness for change, and availability of resources—may drive local efforts.

Consensus, urgency, and priority are keystones of DMC preparation and planning. The process may take months, or even longer, to accomplish. Local communities should not move forward until they meet these prerequisites. By the same token, when they meet these prerequisites, the community should acknowledge and celebrate them as notable successes in the DMC planning process.

Organizing the Work by Defining Success

The next step in local-level DMC-reduction preparation is defining success. How do local stakeholders define success based on their own perspective of need and their collective experience in local juvenile justice work? Although the goal is to reduce disproportionate representation at particular points in the system, there are many ways to move toward that goal, such as adopting an objective risk assessment instrument to control detention admissions, developing new community-based programs and services as alternatives to secure detention, modifying police procedures to better track contacts with minority youth, adopting policies to reduce transfer to adult criminal court, and reducing postdispositional placements in secure confinement. As with the consensus-building process, reaching agreement among stakeholders on the definition of success may be a struggle, but it is an important step.

Basic Tasks for the Steering Committee

The lessons learned from the Baltimore City DMC Reduction Initiative's planning and preparation activities have identified the following basic tasks for the steering committee.

Articulating Local Goals and Objectives

The core goals and objectives of the DMC reduction initiative in Baltimore City, MD, are to reduce over representation of youth of color at the secure detention decision point by altering conditions, policies, and practices that contribute to their overrepresentation in the system and by influencing the culture and values of the system and community toward least-restrictive and community-based sanctions. The steering committee has clearly articulated a set of objectives, identified specific tasks, made assignments, and developed timelines for activities. The result is a tangible workplan to which the steering committee, its staff, and consultants hold themselves accountable and by which they measure progress toward policy and practice reforms and, ultimately, DMC reductions. Additionally, routine dissemination of the workplan to partners and community stakeholders helps to communicate the steering committee's work, findings, and progress.

Mediating Discussions

Initial discussions about the system decision points at which disproportionality was greatest unveiled differences of opinion and perspectives among key stakeholders within the steering committee. Although some stakeholders believed that disparate law enforcement practices resulted in the high numbers of juveniles being presented at intake, others were convinced that disparate system policies and practices following juvenile arrest were the issue and priority. Opinions differed even more when the jurisdiction experienced an increase in the number of difficult-to-place, postadjudicated juveniles who were in confinement, and thereby increased disproportionality even further. Through its mediation of the DMC discussions and debates, the steering committee facilitated a shift from disagreements on the extent of disproportionality at various decision points to a mutually agreeable focus on decision points where DMC-reduction victories could be gained more readily and rapidly. City stakeholders agreed that the steering committee's influence over policies and practices at the doors of detention was greater than its influence over the public attitudes and perceptions that were driving law enforcement practices. Ultimately, DMC-reduction activities in Baltimore City were better served by this focus on detention rather than law enforcement.

Keeping DMC at the Forefront of Juvenile Justice Activities

The task of keeping the issue of DMC front and center in all juvenile justice discussions and activities in the jurisdiction is strongly tied to the principle of creating and maintaining a sense of local urgency on the issue. Early in the planning process, Baltimore City's DMC steering group identified all other local planning and strategy initiatives that shaped and drove outcomes for youth of color who were either involved, or at risk for involvement, in the juvenile justice system. The intention was to establish racial disparity as an agenda item for the other initiatives. This was accomplished through the active involvement of DMC group members in the other initiatives to apply a "racial lens" to their planning and strategies. For example, the DMC steering committee and the other committees within Baltimore City's detention reform initiative formed working partnerships to assess and redevelop detention alternatives, expedite case processing, and study the nexus between the juvenile justice and child welfare systems. Through a full-time DMC coordinator in Baltimore City, the DMC steering committee has taken the lead on detention utilization studies and community capacity building to increase community-based resources that serve juveniles in less restrictive settings.

Moving Ahead With Intervention Strategies

Jurisdictions must be careful not to allow extended dialog and analyses of assessments to immobilize them so that they fail to move forward with active reduction strategies and interventions. This "analysis paralysis" is a common experience in jurisdictions that lack measurable goals and objectives and a detailed workplan to accomplish them. While the State of Maryland had been examining the issue of DMC through various data analyses, reports, and conferences for several years, communities lacked viable strategies toward attainable goals. The development of its DMC workplan and the decision to hire a full-time DMC coordinator enabled the Baltimore City DMC Reduction Initiative to move beyond abstract discussion and to finally focus on the development and implementation of intervention strategies that address day-to-day agency practices and increase community-based resources and detention alternatives.

The Burns Institute Process: Building Community Momentum

The W. Haywood Burns Institute is a national organization working with local jurisdictions to reduce the disproportionate representation of minority youth in their juvenile justice systems using a data-driven, consensus-based process model that engages both traditional and nontraditional stakeholders. The Institute has a range of services to assist jurisdictions in reducing racial disparities in the juvenile justice system, from consulting to intensive engagement.

The Institute model requires the active commitment and participation of the key traditional and nontraditional stakeholders in the juvenile justice system in each site. This includes judges, prosecutors, public defenders, police, probation, school officials, political leaders, service providers, and community groups. The Institute leads these stakeholders through a process that focuses specifically and intentionally on reducing DMC.

Without a committed and intentional approach to reducing DMC, jurisdictions often lose momentum because of changes in stakeholders, inconsistent approaches, and short attention spans. To ensure that sites stay focused, the Institute has developed a manual and workbook to guide them through the process. The Institute's model of Intensive Site Engagement calls for stakeholders to develop a workplan and to meet monthly to move it forward. The model requires each site to hire a full-time local coordinator to lead the process. In addition, an Institute staff member is assigned to each site, attends all local meetings, and is available for the local site coordinator and stakeholders to contact for technical assistance and guidance. Site coordinators from each of the Institute sites meet twice yearly to compare best practices and are available year-round for consultation with one another. The Institute also provides a Readiness Assessment Consultation to enable a site to assess its readiness to address DMC. In 2006, the Institute worked in Baltimore, MD; Louisville, KY; Pima County, AZ; Cook County (Lawndale and South Suburbs), IL; St. Clair County, IL; Peoria County, IL; San Francisco, CA; San Jose, CA; and Seattle, WA.

The Juvenile Detention Alternatives Initiative: Changing the System

To demonstrate that jurisdictions can establish more effective and efficient systems to accomplish the purposes of juvenile detention, the Annie E. Casey Foundation established the Juvenile Detention Alternatives Initiative (JDAI) in 1992. The objectives of JDAI are to reduce the number of children unnecessarily or inappropriately detained, to minimize the number of youth who fail to appear in court or reoffend pending adjudication, to redirect public funds toward successful reform strategies, and to improve conditions of confinement. As minority youth are consistently overrepresented in juvenile detention facilities, the elimination of disparate treatment and decisionmaking for these youth is a core JDAI strategy. Other core strategies include collaboration, reliance on data, objective admissions screening, alternatives to secure detention, expedited case processing, interventions for special detention cases (e.g., probation violations), and rigorous facility inspections.

In May 2005, the Foundation began developing system assessment frameworks for sites participating in JDAI. The frameworks provide a structured, content-specific way for local jurisdictions to examine their detention policies, practices, and programs and to gauge progress in JDAI's eight core strategies for detention reform.

As part of this process, the Foundation and the Burns Institute developed a framework for viewing the JDAI core strategies "through a racial lens." This JDAI Core Strategies Matrix can help jurisdictions to examine detention policies, practices, and programs and can also serve as a workplan to help jurisdictions accomplish the following:

- Structure a diverse DMC-reduction collaborative that has authority, common agendas, shared responsibilities, and community representation.

- Rely on both quantitative and qualitative data to assess and reform detention utilization and to determine the most effective allocation and placement of community resources.
- Eliminate intentional and unintentional biases in detention admission screening.
- Develop culturally and racially competent detention alternatives.
- Equalize case processing at all system decision points to minimize delay and ensure equity in the judicial process.
- Address disparate handling of special detention cases (e.g., writs, warrants, violations of probation).
- Ensure that confinement conditions are acceptable and competent.

The JDAI Core Strategies Matrix supports the more than 80 JDAI sites around the country when they examine system practices. The matrix is also useful to non-JDAI jurisdictions that are planning or expanding DMC-reduction initiatives and developing workplans for racially equitable juvenile justice systems.

This Bulletin includes a draft section from the JDAI Core Strategies Matrix (see pages 10–11). The full matrix is included in chapter 3 of OJJDP's online *Disproportionate Minority Contact Technical Assistance Manual, 4th Edition* (see sidebar).

Conclusion

This Bulletin outlines minimum core steps for local jurisdictions to prepare to engage in DMC-reduction activities. Additional preparatory steps will be unique to the specific climate for system reform in each particular site. Public attitudes and beliefs about race, crime, and youth, and key decisions by key juvenile justice system stakeholders reflect that climate. Engaging in preparatory activities presents an important opportunity for local leaders to develop concrete strategies toward measurable DMC-reduction results.

Disproportionate Minority Contact Technical Assistance Manual, 4th Edition

OJJDP's online *Disproportionate Minority Contact Technical Assistance Manual, 4th Edition,* provides detailed guidance on DMC identification and monitoring, assessment, intervention, and evaluation. Its intended audience is juvenile justice specialists, members of State planning agencies and State advisory groups, DMC researchers and consultants, and policymakers and practitioners involved in the juvenile justice system at the State and local levels.

The manual incorporates lessons learned in DMC efforts over the years. It brings States and localities the latest information and tools for understanding and effectively addressing disproportionate minority representation in the juvenile justice system. Electronic publication of the manual offers important benefits, including:

- Wide distribution.
- Hyperlinks for instant access to related materials.
- Annual updates: new information, resources, and examples of effective DMC-reduction strategies.

Access the manual at www.ncjrs.gov/html/ojjdp/dmc_ta_manual/index.html.

References

ABC News. 2000. Large majorities of Americans say the news media influence their perceptions about crime. May 31–June 4. Republished on Public Agenda Online. Accessed January 9, 2007, at www.publicagenda.com/issues/pcc_detail.cfm?issue_type=crimeandlist=4.

Amnesty International USA. 1998. Betraying the young—Children in the U.S. justice system. Accessed online November 28, 2006, at www.amnestyusa.org/regions/americas/document.do?id=50F375DF4236C3BA80256900006931A1.

Barlow, M.H. 1998. Race and the problem of crime in *Time* and *Newsweek* cover stories, 1946–1995. *Social Justice* 25:149–182.

Bell, J. 2006. Correcting the system of unequal justice. In *The Covenant with Black America.* Chicago, IL: Third World Press, pp. 49–69.

Braxton, G. 1997. Ratings vs. crime rates: Putting L.A.'s changing numbers into perspective. *Los Angeles Times* (June 4):A1.

Brown, D.L. 2006. Fear's neighbors: Violent crime is no stranger to one side of the city, now it's crossed the line. *The Washington Post* (July 19):C01.

Butts, J.A. 1999. *Youth Violence: Perception Versus Reality.* Washington, DC: Urban Institute.

Center for Media and Public Affairs. 2000. The media at the millennium: The networks' top topics, trends, and joke targets of the 1990s. *Media Monitor* 14(4):1–6.

Coalition for Juvenile Justice. 2005. *Childhood on Trial: The Failure of Trying and Sentencing Youth in Adult Criminal Court.* Washington, DC: Coalition for Juvenile Justice.

DeMuro, P. 1999. Consider the alternatives: Planning and implementing detention alternatives. In *Pathways to Juvenile Detention Reform.* Baltimore, MD: Annie E. Casey Foundation.

Dorfman, L., and Schiraldi, V. 2001a. *Off Balance: Youth, Race, and Crime in the News, Executive Summary.* Washington, DC: Building Blocks for Youth.

Dorfman, L., and Schiraldi, V. 2001b. *Off Balance: Youth, Race, and Crime in the News, Full Report.* Washington, DC: Building Blocks for Youth.

Dorfman, L., and Woodruff, K. 1998. The roles of speakers in local television news stories on youth and violence. *Journal of Popular Film and Television* 26:80–85.

Dunnaville, C.M. 2000. Unequal justice under the law—Racial inequalities in the justice system. *Virginia Lawyer* December (Senior Lawyer's Section):20–25.

Entman, R.M. 1992. Blacks in the news: Television, modern racism, and cultural change. *Journalism Quarterly* 69:341–361.

Federal Bureau of Investigation. 2000. *Crime in the United States, Uniform Crime Reports, 1999*. Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Justice, Federal Bureau of Investigation.

Fischer, M. 2006. D.C.'s reaction to killing misses the point. *The Washington Post* (July 18):B01.

Gans, H.J. 1995. *The War Against the Poor: The Underclass and Antipoverty Policy.* New York, NY: Basic Books.

Gilliam, F.D., and Iyengar, S. 2000. Prime suspects: The influence of local television news on the viewing public. *American Journal of Political Science* 44(3):560–573.

Gilliam, F.D., Iyengar, S., Simon, A., and Wright, O. 1996. Crime in black and white: The violent, scary world of local news. *Harvard International Journal of Press-Politics* 1(3):6–23.

Gray, E.S. 2003. The media—Don't believe the hype. *Stanford Law and Policy Review* 14(45):45–50.

Hart Research. 2002. *The New Politics of Criminal Justice: A Research and Messaging Report for the Open Society Institute.* Washington, DC: Peter D. Hart Research Associates.

Kaiser Family Foundation and the Center for Media and Public Affairs. 1998. *Assessing Local Television News Coverage of Health Issues.* Menlo Park, CA: Kaiser Family Foundation.

Klite, P. 1995. A day in the life of local news in America. Rocky Mountain Media Watch. www.bigmedia.org.

Kunkel, D. 1994. How the news media "see" kids. *Media Studies Journal* 8:74–84.

Ladd, E. 1997. Crime and punishment: An American odyssey. *The Public Perspective* June/July:8–26.

Marcus, D. 2005. Communities helping kids: Why diversion, outreach, and counseling programs serve troubled children—and society—better than prisons. *The American Prospect* September (Special Report).

Martindale, C. 1996. Newspaper stereotypes of African Americans. In *Images That Injure: Pictorial Stereotypes in the Media,* edited by P. Lester. Westport, CT: Praeger Publishers, pp. 21–26.

McCombs, M., and Shaw, D. 1993. The evolution of agenda-setting research: Twenty-five years in the marketplace of ideas. *Journal of Communication* 43(2):58–67.

McManus, J., and Dorfman, L. 2000. *Youth and Violence in California Newspapers.* Issue 9. Berkeley, CA: Berkeley Media Studies Group.

Merkle, D. 2000. Crime fears linger, public still concerned despite improvements. ABCNews.com: June 7. Accessed online November 30, 2006, at http://abcnews.go.com/sections/politics/DailyNews/poll000607.html.

National Center for Juvenile Justice. 2006. *Easy Access to FBI Arrest Statistics,* 1994–2004. Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Justice, Office of Justice Programs, Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention. Accessed online November 28, 2006, at http://ojjdp.ncjrs.gov/ojstatbb/ezaucr.

Schiraldi, V., and Ziedenberg, J. 2000. *The Florida Experiment: An Analysis of the Impact of Granting Prosecutors Discretion To Try Juveniles as Adults.* Washington, DC: Justice Policy Institute.

Schwartz, R.G. 2001. Promoting and sustaining detention reforms. In *Pathways to Juvenile Detention Reform.* Baltimore, MD: Annie E. Casey Foundation.

Sherman, L.W., Gottfredson, D., MacKenzie, D., Eck, J., Reuter, P., and Bushway, S. 1998. *Preventing Crime: What Works, What Doesn't, What's Promising.* Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Justice, Office of Justice Programs, National Institute of Justice.

Snyder, H., and Sickmund, M. 1999. *Juvenile Offenders and Victims: 1999 National Report.* Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Justice, Office of Justice Programs, Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention.

Soler, M. 2001. *Public Opinion on Youth, Crime, and Race: A Guide for Advocates.* Washington, DC: Building Blocks for Youth.

Sorenson, S.B., Manz, J.G., and Berk, R.A. 1998. News media coverage and the epidemiology of homicide. *American Journal of Public Health* 88:1510–1514.

Steinhart, D. 1988. California opinion poll: Public attitudes on youth crime. *NCCD Focus* December.

Stewart, N., and Klein, A. 2006. Council approves earlier curfew: Video surveillance in neighborhoods also wins support. *The Washington Post* (July 20):A01.

U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. 2001. *Youth Violence: A Report of the Surgeon General.* Rockville, MD: Health and Human Services, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, National Center for Injury Prevention and Control; Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, Center for Mental Health Services; and National Institutes of Health, National Institute of Mental Health.

Wagner, P. 2003. *The Prison Index: Taking the Pulse of the Criminal Justice System.* Portland, OR: The Prison Policy Initiative.

Weiss, A., and Chermak, S.M. 1998. The news value of African-American victims: An examination of the media's presentation of homicide. *Journal of Crime and Justice* 21(2):71–88.

Juvenile Detention Alternatives Initiative Core Strategies Matrix

Collaboration

Issue	What We're Looking For, Why This Is Important	Review, Observe, and Interview	Major Findings	Best Practices, Recommendations
Authority	• Is there an official imprimatur that reducing racial disparities is an explicit responsibility of the JDAI collaborative?			
Composition	• Does the collaborative reflect the diversity of the kids and families involved in your juvenile justice system? • Do we have the decisionmakers sitting at the table with the appropriate community representatives? • Does the collaborative effort include representatives of the impacted neighborhoods of color? • Are civil rights advocates at the table? • Are community-based service providers at the table?			
Organizing the work	• The intentionality and infusion of the racial lens needs to be driven in unison with decisionmakers and communities of color. • Is the current configuration (e.g., work group, ad hoc committee) working? • Is each subcommittee held accountable for contributions to reducing racial disparities? • Common challenges are: "work groups" working in a silo, which are expected to "fix" the problem.			
Creating a safe place	• Are discussions regarding disproportionality undertaken with respect and tolerance? • Are the discussions mainly finger-pointing sessions? • Are deliberations based on facts and supported by data or impressions? • Have efforts been made to ensure equal and full participation in the discussions and deliberations?			

Juvenile Detention Alternatives Initiative Core Strategies Matrix (continued)

Collaboration

Issue	What We're Looking For, Why This Is Important	Review, Observe, and Interview	Major Findings	Best Practices, Recommendations
Forging a common agenda	• Do members of the collaborative, including work group members if relevant, have a common understanding of, and embrace, the same agenda: detention as the entry point to the reduction of racial disparities? • Members of the collaborative understand that the work entails changing policies and practices under the control of their juvenile justice system. • Members of the collaborative reach a consensus on the use of detention in their jurisdiction. • A shared value that pretrial detention should not be used as either punishment or treatment.			
Disaggregating data by race and ethnicity	• Baseline data of youth ages 10–17, disaggregated by race, ethnicity, gender, and geography, should be collected as a foundation to identify the disproportionality and to commence the discussion. • Has the collaborative compared the percentage of youth of color in the juvenile justice system with the percentage of minorities in the general youth population? All ensuing data collection—e.g., admissions by reason, risk assessment instrument (RAI) screening, RAI overrides, length of stay (LOS), average daily population (ADP), use of alternatives to detention—should be disaggregated by race/ethnicity/gender/geography. • Routine management reports present basic utilization statistics by race/ethnicity/gender to enable stakeholders to identify disparities and to assess trends and change policies and practices.			
Detention utilization study	• One of the first steps in planning for reform is to document how detention is currently used through careful data collection and analysis. A thorough description of recent trends and current practices in detention utilization provides the foundation for the problem identification and analysis, as well as the subsequent development of change strategies. The detention utilization study should provide the collaborative with a quantitative picture of how detention use varies for different categories of youth.			
Geocoding and community mapping	• Identify the target area(s), i.e., the geographic area(s) contributing the highest number of kids in detention. • Map the community assets, including community-based organizations currently providing services to youth and their families in the target neighborhoods. • Identifying the target neighborhoods and mapping community-based services will assist in informing strategies for effective and efficient alternatives to detention.			
Routine management reports	• Using data to monitor progress toward reducing racial disparities and disproportionate minority confinement. The JDAI quarterly reports are an example of fundamental management reports. As the data from the reports raise questions, further data queries should be developed to dig deeper and acquire clarity.			
Qualitative analysis	• Digging deeper generally leads to going "behind the data" to look at individual policies and practices to clarify reasons behind the statistics. • What are the practices or policies contributing to the statistical disproportionality?			
Comprehensive annual analysis of racial disparities	• Is the community informed of the state of racial disparities/DMC on an annual basis in your jurisdiction? • Annual reports developed by the system partners help keep eyes on the prize and promote accountability and transparency.			

U.S. Department of Justice
Office of Justice Programs
Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention

Washington, DC 20531

Official Business
Penalty for Private Use $300

NCJ 218861

PRESORTED STANDARD
POSTAGE & FEES PAID
DOJ/OJJDP
PERMIT NO. G–91

Acknowledgments

Mark Soler is Executive Director at the Center for Children's Law and Policy in Washington, DC. Lisa M. Garry was the Baltimore City DMC Coordinator in Baltimore, MD, and is currently DMC Policy Director at the Center for Children's Law and Policy.

The authors are deeply indebted to Sarah Boyle, Saint Louis University School of Law summer intern, for her excellent research for this Bulletin.

This Bulletin was prepared under grant number 2004–JL–FX–0083 from the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (OJJDP), U.S. Department of Justice.

Points of view or opinions expressed in this document are those of the authors and do not necessarily represent the official position or policies of OJJDP or the U.S. Department of Justice.

Share With Your Colleagues

The Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention is a component of the Office of Justice Programs, which also includes the Bureau of Justice Assistance; the Bureau of Justice Statistics; the Community Capacity Development Office; the National Institute of Justice; the Office for Victims of Crime; and the Office of Sex Offender Sentencing, Monitoring, Apprehending, Registering, and Tracking (SMART).

For information about other OJJDP programs, go to www.ojp.usdoj.gov/ojjdp.