

## How Can Systems Be Improved with Regard to DMC?

- Improve collection and sharing in juvenile justice data systems
- Train additional court advocates who can explain the court process and the consequences of failing to appear
- Legislatively improve the Juvenile Code to further delineate and separate child welfare and juvenile justice issues and systems
- Better allocate system resources
- Employ family advocates in all parts of the system
- Eliminate barriers to family involvement in justice programs
- Enhance cultural and racial diversity and sensitivity within the justice system

## What Can You Do to Help?

First, acknowledge that disproportionate minority contact with the juvenile justice system is a problem that needs to be solved.

Examine the part that you and your agency or system play in the issue of disproportionate minority contact. Stay abreast of developments in reducing minority disparity and take advantage of opportunities to attend training sessions and meetings on DMC.

And finally, work within your system to educate decision makers and co-workers on issues related to DMC.



## Resources

For continuing information and data on Disproportionate Minority Contact in the Arkansas Juvenile Justice System, go to:

[www.arjuvjust.org/dmc](http://www.arjuvjust.org/dmc)

For local information and contacts on DMC or to obtain training or technical assistance, contact:

**Lydia Dedner, Arkansas DMC Coordinator**  
**Division of Youth Services**

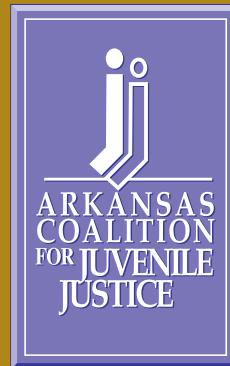
JJDP Unit Slot 503

700 Main Street

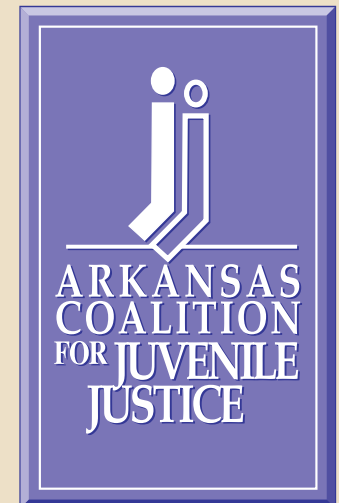
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# DMC Dishonors Minority Children



## What Is Disproportionate Minority Contact (DMC)?

DMC is the term used by Congress to describe the situation in which minority youth and families come into contact with the juvenile justice and child welfare systems at rates higher than those of youths in the general population.

Involvement of any child with the juvenile justice system, while sometimes thought necessary for the protection of citizens and as “punishment” for criminal conduct, can produce a lifetime of serious consequences, both for the delinquent child and for society.

The disproportionately large involvement of one or another minority group in the justice system can inflict lasting effects not only on individuals, but on many other members of that group. DMC does, in fact, dishonor minority children.

## Does Arkansas Have a Problem with DMC?

Yes. In its 2004 Report to the Governor and General assembly on Progress in Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, the Arkansas Coalition for Juvenile Justice stated black youth were arrested and detained statewide in juvenile detention or other secure facilities at two and one-half times their representation in the state’s population during that year.

While comparisons were not available for other contacts of juveniles with the justice system – such as court appearances, diversions, police citations and so forth – black youth were committed to Division of Youth Services programs at 2.89 times the numbers they represented in the general population during state fiscal year 2004. Though they represent only 15.7 percent of



the state’s youth population, according to 2000 Census Bureau figures, 45.4 percent of youth committed to state services were black.

Across the nation, similar statistics emerge. The US Department of Justice reported that blacks constituted 16 percent of the US juvenile population in 2002, while they made up 29 percent of the delinquency caseload. Although a majority of delinquency cases handled in 2002 involved white youth (67 percent), the 29 percent of cases involving blacks was disproportionate to the 16 percent they made up of the juvenile population.

A 2004 report of the Federal Advisory Committee on Juvenile Justice also expressed concern that minority youth are being transferred to adult court for trial more often than other youth. The report cited one study that examined an Illinois law mandating the transfer of young drug offenders to adult court, which found that 99 percent of the youth transferred to adult court in Cook County (Chicago) for drug crimes in 1999-2000 were black or Latino. This was in spite of surveys indicating white youth use illegal drugs at the same or higher rates than youth of color.

## What Are the Possible Causes of Disproportionate Minority Contact?

While the exact causes of DMC have not been pinpointed, several factors appear to contribute to the problem. These include:

- Lack of education
- Poverty
- Subjective decision-making by law enforcement and juvenile authorities
- Unstable family situations
- Lack of legal representation
- Confusion over which system is responsible for providing which services
- Lack of community resources

## What Is Being Done to Correct DMC in Arkansas?

The federal Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention Act of 2002 states that a core requirement for all states participating under the Act is “to reduce ... the disproportionate number of juvenile members of minority groups,

who come into contact with the juvenile justice system.”

A number of efforts are currently under way to research, document, find and correct the causes of disproportionate minority contact in Arkansas. These include the following:

- The Division of Youth Services and the Arkansas Coalition for Juvenile Justice (ACJJ) have created a plan to develop and expand community-based programs for the purpose of diverting minority youth from the state’s secure detention and correctional facilities to alternative programs in the youths’ local communities. Initially, proposals have been solicited and grants awarded to fund alternatives to minority contact in the three Arkansas counties with the largest numbers of minority youth.
- A position of DMC Coordinator for the state of Arkansas has been created and staffed within the Division of Youth Services.
- The ACJJ, which is the State Advisory Group on juvenile justice and delinquency prevention issues under the JJDP Act, has formed a statewide Committee on Disproportionate Minority Contact. The Committee includes members from across the state and from a broad spectrum of stakeholders with interests involving the youth of Arkansas.
- Steps are being taken to create greater sharing of DMC data through cooperation among agencies including the Division of Youth Services, Arkansas Crime Information Center, Administrative Office of the Courts, the Institute for Economic Advancement State Census Data Center, law enforcement and other agencies. Funds are also being allocated to conduct data collection and statistical research where no existing bank of data currently exists.
- Training and technical assistance are being provided by the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention in the US Department of Justice to help Arkansas move forward in compliance with the federal mandate.

