

# Disproportionate Minority Contact (DMC) Assessment Study

## Overview

Pursuant to Section 223(a)(22) of the Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention Act of 1974, as amended, states and territories must address specific delinquency prevention and system improvement efforts to reduce, without establishing or requiring numerical standards or quotas, the disproportionate number of minority juveniles who come into contact with the juvenile justice system. DMC exists if the rate that a specific minority group comes into contact with the juvenile justice system significantly differs from the rate of contact for non-Hispanic whites or other minority groups. The goal of the state of Missouri DMC efforts is to ensure equal and fair treatment for every youth involved in the juvenile justice system.

Thus, the Missouri Department of Public Safety will award a Title II Formula Grant, from the U.S. Department of Justice's (DOJ) Office of Juvenile Justice Programs' (OJP) Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (OJJDP)} to conduct a formal methodological study to explore whether there is a casual relationship between disproportionality and the contributing mechanisms, and if so, what is the pattern of the relationship (i.e. no relationship, a positive relationship, and/or an inverse relationship) Please see the list of contributing mechanisms in Appendix A. A mixed methods design is preferred versus a qualitative design because it has more statistical and methodological rigor. Additionally, a quantitative design may have statistical rigor but does not contain pertinent information that can be obtained through interviews, surveys, and/or questionnaires, case file reviews, etc.

## Registration, Application, Eligibility, Deadlines:

Please see the 2011 Title II Funding Opportunity Guidelines at <http://www.dps.mo.gov/dir/programs/jj/documents/titleii/FundingOpportunity.pdf>.

## Purpose

The purpose of a formal methodological assessment is to determine, based on data, information from juvenile justice system and other stakeholders, youth, case file reviews, contextual issues, etc., the mechanisms contributing to DMC. The assessment process looks more carefully at the decision points that the Identification Phase of OJJDP's Reduction Model has targeted to determine how DMC is created or amplified specifying the mechanisms at work in a particular jurisdiction. The outcome of the assessment study should result in an understanding of the DMC process which will assist policymakers with implementing and/or supporting delinquency prevention and systems improvement strategies to reduce DMC throughout state and/or local juvenile justice system Please see Appendix B for general assessment outline.

## Goals, Objectives, and Deliverables

The project's goal is to conduct a methodological study to assist with determining what factors most contribute to DMC throughout the state of Missouri juvenile justice system. The objective is to produce a sound study within the time period of July 1, 2011 through March 1, 2012. The deliverables include a published study with recommendations to reduce DMC based on the findings, presenting the findings and recommendations to the Juvenile Justice Advisory Group and/or its DMC committee, any local DMC reduction sites, and other applicable juvenile justice system stakeholders via meetings, websites, and other means designated by the Missouri Department of Public Safety.

## Additional Requirements for DMC Research Project

In addition to the application requirements outlined in WebGrants and the Title II Funding Opportunity, applicants for this DMC Research Project must include the following:

**Statement of the Problem:** Applicants must briefly describe the nature and scope of the problem that the project will address (i.e. the extent of DMC statewide and a description of how the assessment study will assist with determining the contributing DMC mechanisms).

**Timeline:** Applicants need to include a timeline or milestone chart that indicates major tasks, assigns responsibility for each, and plots completion of each task by month or quarter for the duration of the award.

## **Appendix A: DMC Contributing Mechanisms**

Mechanism	Definition
Seasonal Mobility	Occurs when a community has an influx of juveniles during a particular season, frequently either a holiday season (spring break) or a vacation season (summer break).
Attractive Nuisance	Applied to a number of commercial or entertainment areas, particularly in urban settings. For example, a shopping mall or entertainment facility may be located in a suburban community or an urban neighborhood that has lower proportions of minority residents but draws youth from across an urban area.
Immigration-and Migration-Related Mobility	May have an impact on communities to create higher levels of DMC, particularly where policies of the U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services are a major concern.
Institutional Effects	Jurisdictions provide residential or detention capacity for a number of other jurisdictions. For example, if a county operates a regional detention facility, then it might appear that its volume of detention activity is higher than in surrounding counties, and if the county includes these nonresident youth in its RRI calculation, it might create erroneous results.
Indirect effects	Reflects economic status, education, location, and a host of risk factors associated with delinquent behavior, among other factors, that are linked with race and ethnicity. These factors are related to delinquent activity or contact within the justice system.
Specific risk factors	Are correlated with race or ethnicity, may lead to differential offending issues. Risk factors such as poor school performance or living in disorganized neighborhoods are more likely to occur to minority youth, putting them at a greater risk of system involvement.
Programming Access/Eligibility	For example, access to some forms of behavioral health or substance use treatment is often contingent on medical insurance coverage. That coverage is, in turn, often contingent on economic circumstances, which places many minority families at a disadvantage in obtaining such services.
Decision making Factors	For example, a number of studies have indicated that juvenile justice decision makers respond differently to youth from an “intact” two-parent family setting than to youth from a single-parent home.
Access	May be limited by geography, hours of operation, or other means. For example, if a program is located in an area of a community that is not accessible through public transportation, the unintended outcome may be that only families who have access to private automobiles may participate.
Eligibility	May be used in many programs to define a set of youth most likely to benefit from the program or to exclude those youth that program leaders believe will likely disrupt the program or otherwise be less likely to benefit from the program resources.
Implementation	For example, the physical tone of a facility may be inviting or discouraging, may indicate an appreciation of multiple cultures, or may be sterile and institutional.
Effectiveness	The capability to achieve intended outcomes. Many prevention or treatment programs have been developed initially with a particular group of youth in mind, often white youth.
Differential Treatment	Minority youth are processed differently based on intentional or unintentional bias. Intentional bias is overt and operates on stereotypes and assumptions. Unintentional bias is typically indirect and operates through legitimate criteria but disadvantages minority youth.
Differential Processing or Inappropriate Decision making Criteria	An issue in determining program eligibility, implementing diversion programs, and selecting alternative decision outcomes.
Justice by geography	The concept that youth in general, and minority youth in particular, may be processed or handled differently in one jurisdiction than in another within the same state.
Legislation, Policies, and Legal Factors	Policies enacted through legislation or through administrative action may sometimes contain elements that create a disadvantage for minority youth.
Simple Accumulation	There may be a higher rate of arrest for minority youth, followed by a lower rate of diversion, higher rates of formal processing as delinquent, etc.
Impacts On Later Decisions	Another example where race and ethnicity may work indirectly through factors that influence decision making is the impact of earlier stages on later stages of the justice system, such as the impact of pre-adjudicatory detention.

## Appendix B: Assessment Outline

The assessment should provide “statewide” data by race and ethnicity (i.e. local jurisdictions with a minority youth population that comprise at least 1% of the total youth population ages 10-17 or the age of full criminal responsibility). If a local jurisdiction does not meet the 1% threshold it does not have to be included in the study due to the low volume of activity of minority youth.

Generally, the statewide assessment should be organized as follows:

- A. Executive Summary/Introduction:** This section should provide an overview of Section 223(a) 22 (i.e. the DMC core requirement), of the Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention Act of 1974, as amended, a brief summary of current empirical research and literature, and/or findings from existing state reports or studies. This section can also include the goals of the assessment, a summary of the methodology, findings, and recommendations.
- B. DMC Literature Review and Overview of DMC:** A literature review of current and past empirical research should be conducted, which includes primary findings and/or discussion of how some jurisdictions reduced or mitigated DMC. Findings from existing state assessments, studies, and reports should also be included in this section.
- C. State and local DMC delinquency prevention and systems improvement strategies:** This section should summarize current state and local (i.e. in the targeted reduction sites) DMC delinquency prevention and systems improvement activities. It should also contain information on how the local reduction sites were identified and if there are any promising or best practices (e.g. reductions in DMC, changes in policies, procedures, regulations, and/or legislation etc.).
- D. Assessment Study Goal(s):** This section should discuss the assessment’s goal(s) which primarily is to determine the DMC contributing mechanisms. It should also discuss the methodological design (i.e. qualitative, quantitative, or mixed methods) and how the contributing mechanisms will be identified (i.e. generating an informal list based on knowledge of a juvenile justice system, interviews, surveys, and/or questionnaires of juvenile justice and other stakeholders, youth, case file reviews, etc.).

The following stages can be used as a guide to assist with developing this section:

**Stage 1:** Generate possible explanations. At this stage, the starting point is to choose specific stages, groups, and jurisdictions to explore. This is the likely outcome from the identification stage. Using community leaders, agency personnel, and key informant processes, analysts should generate a set of plausible/possible explanations for the level of DMC observed in the jurisdiction (by stage and racial/ethnic group) for the targeted stages, groups, and jurisdictions.

**Stage 2:** Identify the types of data and the pattern of results needed. These should be consistent with the possible explanations and will distinguish between the possible explanations.

**Stage 3:** Obtain the data. Identify sources of the needed data, focusing on those that are most readily available and suitable for comparison over multiple time periods. If data sources are available, make sure that you know how the data are collected and what each data item actually means. If the needed data are not available, then develop plans to collect them. You could use existing files, collect additional data, or develop a hybrid model in which you collect additional/supplemental data on a periodic basis. To examine trends over time data from at least a 5 year period should be reviewed and/or analyzed.

**Stage 4:** Analyze the data and identify the most likely mechanism(s) creating DMC in this jurisdiction. Conduct the analyses according to the patterns you expect to emerge (stage 2). Examine the data analysis to see whether the patterns you have observed are consistent with possible explanations. If the data results are consistent with more than one explanation, you

may need to plan additional analyses that may help distinguish between options. Develop feedback methods for taking the data results back to key informants to verify the interpretations and begin the process of selecting interventions

- E. Assessment/Study Findings:** This section should present assessment/study findings based on all collected and analyzed data (e.g. the RRI and/or other statistical measures) and DMC contributing mechanisms.
- F. Conclusion/Recommendations:** This section should offer a brief summary of the assessment/study and recommendations of how states and their localities can address the contributing mechanisms.