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# Seven Steps to Develop and Evaluate Strategies to Reduce Disproportionate Minority Contact (DMC)



Juvenile Justice Evaluation Center  
Justice Research and Statistics  
Association



Office of Juvenile Justice and  
Delinquency Prevention



**Seven Steps  
to Develop and Evaluate Strategies  
to Reduce Disproportionate  
Minority Contact (DMC)**

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Juvenile Justice Evaluation Center Guidebook Series

January 2005

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## JJEC Guidebook Series

*Seven Steps to Develop and Evaluate Strategies to Reduce Disproportionate Minority Contact (DMC)* is the second in the Guidebook Series provided by the Juvenile Justice Evaluation Center (JJEC). JJEC, a project of the Justice Research and Statistics Association (JRSA) and funded by the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (OJJDP), provides evaluation information, training, and technical assistance to enhance juvenile justice evaluation in the states. For more information about JJEC, visit the Web site at [www.jrsa.org/jjec](http://www.jrsa.org/jjec) or email [jjec@jrsa.org](mailto:jjec@jrsa.org).

The intent of the Guidebook Series is twofold: (1) to provide detailed information on special problems facing those who work in or with juvenile justice programs and initiatives, and (2) to report on evaluation issues related to those topics. The focus of this particular guidebook is on disproportionate minority contact and the juvenile justice system.

## Acknowledgments

Ashley M. Nellis, M.S., a Research Associate at JRSA on the JJEC Project, wrote this guidebook. Other JRSA staff members assisted with its preparation, including: Stan Orchowsky, Ph.D., JRSA Director of Research, and Mary Poulin, Ph.D., JJEC Project Manager, who provided oversight and guidance for the document. Nancy Michel, JRSA Director of Publications, copyedited the document. As always, thanks goes to Eric Peterson, JJEC's former Grant Manager at OJJDP, who has offered his invaluable support from the inception of this project. Thanks also go to Heidi Hsia, Ph.D., Disproportionate Minority Contact Program Manager at OJJDP, for her helpful comments.

This document was supported by Grant No. 98-RN-FX-0112 awarded by the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, Office of Justice Programs, U.S. Department of Justice. Points of view in this document are those of the authors and do not necessarily represent the official position or policies of the U.S. Department of Justice.



# Table of Contents

Introduction .....	5
Background .....	7
Step One: Define the Problem .....	9
Step Two: Implement Evidence-Based Programming .....	20
Step Three: Develop Program Logic .....	27
Step Four: Identify Measures .....	29
Step Five: Collect and Analyze Data .....	32
Step Six: Report Findings .....	34
Step Seven: Reassess Program Logic .....	35
Conclusion .....	36
Resources .....	37
End Notes .....	39
Selected Bibliography .....	40

## Tables and Exhibits

Table 1: Questions That May Help Define the DMC Problem .....	12
Table 2: Data Sources Related to Commonly Identified DMC Contributing Factors .....	17
Table 3: Some Appropriate Strategies and Evidence-Based Programs Related to DMC Contributing Factors .....	22
Exhibit 1: Logic Model .....	28
Exhibit 2: Logic Model Example .....	31





## Introduction

States are at various stages in addressing disproportionate minority contact (DMC). At each stage, evaluation plays a critical role and helps to shape the direction of any initiative to reduce DMC. In addition to determining whether program outcomes can be attributed to the initiative or other factors, evaluation can also measure the performance of ongoing efforts to meet the initiative's objectives.

JJEC has produced this document to enhance states' capacity to evaluate their DMC-related juvenile justice initiatives, as well as to incorporate evaluation into program development and planning processes. The two main purposes of this publication are (1) to help program administrators and juvenile justice personnel select the most effective ways to reduce DMC through performance measurement and evaluation, and (2) to discuss issues specific to DMC that should be considered when conducting an evaluation of an initiative or program. This guidebook discusses DMC in the context of a seven-step evaluation approach, focusing especially on the first two steps: identifying the problem and implementing an evidence-based intervention. For DMC reduction, these first two steps are crucial because problem identification and linking the problem to an appropriate evidence-based strategy are particularly complex.

The information provided and the suggestions offered in this guidebook are gleaned from the most recent research findings.

Interpreting race data is difficult. Though financial cost may be an issue, hiring an outside evaluator can facilitate DMC studies. Having a trained evaluator is worthwhile, particularly one who is sensitive to race factors in juvenile justice or the criminal justice system. Readers will want to consult the JJEC Briefing, *Hiring and Working with an Evaluator*, to get a better understanding of the recommended qualifications of an outside evaluator and what can reasonably be expected from him or her.<sup>1</sup> It will be essential that the evaluator be on board from the beginning, attend steering committee meetings, be familiar with the juvenile justice system and program evaluation, and be aware of the tasks for which he or she will be responsible.

Note that while many projects charged with identifying and reducing DMC will want to consider hiring an outside evaluator to complete a formal evaluation of their strategies, basic knowledge about evaluation and performance measurement issues as they relate to minority overrepresentation is essential for all staff working on a DMC project. One reason is that even if outside evaluators are utilized, various juvenile

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## Introduction

justice staff will probably maintain responsibility for data collection. In addition, performance measurement can be conducted before or along with evaluation, and juvenile justice staff working on a DMC reduction initiative may choose to make statements about how closely the activities are

following expectations or what outcomes have been achieved. This document will be a useful resource for those conducting their own studies of DMC as well as for those who wish to hire an outside evaluator.

## Background

In 1988, amendments to the 1974 Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention Act (JJDP) (Pub. L. 93–415, 42 U.S.C. 5601 et seq.) mandated that states that receive funding from the Part B Formula Grants Program address the issue of disproportionate minority confinement in their state. States were required to assess the extent of the problem, determine the reason for it, and employ strategies to remedy it. In 1992, Congress elevated its concern about disproportionate minority confinement by making efforts to reduce it one of the four core requirements of the Act, making 25% of each state's Formula Grants allocation contingent upon compliance with the disproportionate minority confinement requirement.

The Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention Act of 2002 expanded the core requirement of addressing overrepresentation of minorities in "confinement" to undertaking activities to reduce overrepresentation of minorities who come in "contact" with the juvenile justice system. Specifically, the legislation requires that states' participation in the Part B Formula Grants Program undertake "juvenile delinquency prevention efforts and system improvement efforts designed to reduce, without establishing or requiring numerical standards or quotas, the disproportionate number of juvenile members of minority groups, who come into contact with the juvenile justice system."<sup>2</sup>

The Office of Juvenile Delinquency and Prevention (OJJDP) determines states' compliance each year. Of the states' Formula Grant allocation in the subsequent year, 20% is contingent upon compliance with the DMC requirement.

This expansion from "confinement" to "contact" highlights the importance of examining disproportionate representation of minorities at all stages of the juvenile justice system, the complexity of this issue, and the need for comprehensive, multipronged intervention strategies. In an exhaustive review of the literature, Pope, Lovell, and Hsia<sup>3</sup> found that over half (53%) of the studies reviewed measured more than one point of contact. Some studies show that the effect is cumulative; that is, as minorities pass through the juvenile justice system, the likelihood of their receiving tougher responses (e.g., more likely to be arrested or placed in secure detention) than their white counterparts is significantly greater.<sup>4</sup> So while racial disparities may be slight at the early decision points, they become larger as juveniles proceed through the system.<sup>5</sup> Alaska's 2001 *Analysis of Minority Youth Representation* is a good example of a statewide study that measured four primary decision points: referral through arrest records, preadjudicatory detention screening, intake investigation, and court proceedings or disposition. The authors concluded that minority overrepresentation escalates as youths move



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## Background

through the decision points of the juvenile justice system. This was particularly evident for African-American and to a lesser extent Native American youths. Collecting data at critical decision points

throughout the system will help identify the points where action should be taken to address minority overrepresentation.

## Step One: Define the Problem

The first step in developing and evaluating a DMC initiative is to properly define the problem. Data collection is required in order to accomplish this. Identifying the source(s) of the DMC problem can be particularly challenging for DMC initiatives since system-level data from a variety of sources must be collected. This section makes recommendations to assist in determining whether DMC exists, where in the juvenile justice system it exists, and how far it extends. We begin by offering the following three broad suggestions for preparing to determine whether DMC exists: incorporate methodological improvements to study race and ethnicity, collect baseline data, and examine overrepresentation throughout the system.

### **Incorporate Methodological Improvements in the Study of Race and Ethnicity**

Methodological improvements over the past decade or so have significantly advanced the ability to thoroughly define if and why DMC exists. The first of these improvements is recognition of factors correlated with minority overrepresentation, such as socioeconomic status and the presence of a

prior record. For example, when examining the dispositions received by minority youths, researchers are now separating out the roles played by prior record and race in the disposition decision to determine how important race is when prior record is accounted for. Correlated factors are more easily detected by using multivariate statistical models for estimating overrepresentation than by using bivariate models (e.g., examining disposition by race) because multivariate statistics allow one to examine relationships among some variables while holding others constant. Multivariate analyses should examine each of the commonly identified contributing factors of DMC discussed in the next section. States and localities should have the capacity to collect and analyze factors typically correlated with overrepresentation.

#### *Correlation*

*Two variables are positively correlated if high values of one are likely to be associated with high values of the other. They are negatively correlated if high values of one are likely to be associated with low values of the other.*

Definitions of what is being measured in DMC studies have been refined over the years. For instance, while a number of early studies included only two categories of race/ethnicity—“white” and “nonwhite”—recent studies include all races/ethnicities for which there is more than a 1% representation in the population. A number of states classify race as either African-American or Caucasian because the mechanism is not in place to capture more detailed race/ethnicity information. It is important to recognize data shortcomings such as this so that appropriate steps can be taken to improve data collection procedures. In order to be in compliance with Formula Grants regulations, states and localities must examine all minority groups that comprise at least 1% of the total youth population.<sup>6</sup>

Differences in findings on race effects may indicate that race and ethnicity play different roles both across juvenile justice systems and over time. It is therefore important that states and localities use advanced statistical methods whenever possible, and incorporate the definitions of race and ethnicity provided by the U.S. Census in order to obtain more accurate findings on race effects in the juvenile justice system.

### Collect Baseline Data

Data collected when defining the problem will reveal whether and to what extent minority overrepresentation exists prior to targeting the most problematic juvenile justice system decision points, examining the contributing factors, and designing strategies to reduce it. Official juvenile

justice data should be used to establish this baseline and to track progress. OJJDP requests that data on minority contact rates be submitted triennially with the submission of Formula Grant State Plans. Beyond official race and ethnicity data on DMC, it may be useful to collect baseline data on the perceptions and experiences of those involved in the juvenile justice system—both the youths and the staff who work with them. Qualitative information from these or other stakeholders may offer insight into the official quantitative data.

### Examine Overrepresentation Throughout the System

As noted earlier, studies show that the overrepresentation of minorities in the system is often cumulative; minorities who are more likely than their white counterparts to be arrested for the same crimes may be even more likely to be detained than their white counterparts, and so on. Because of this, looking at all of the major decision points (arrest, referral to juvenile court, diversion, secure detention, petition, finding of delinquency, probation, confinement in secure correctional facility, transfer to adult court) for race and ethnicity disparities rather than just one presents a much clearer picture of where, how, and why minority overrepresentation exists.

Systems that are able to track individuals through each decision point are at a distinct advantage over those systems that cannot. Tracking individual cases simplifies the process for conducting the complex, multivariate analyses that

were discussed earlier and, consequently, produces comprehensive knowledge of the problem. However, tracking individual youths may not be a realistic undertaking for many states and localities. Many states are restricted by how data are currently collected in their jurisdiction. Furthermore, case processing time can span from one year to the next, making tracking of individual cases a daunting task. Also, though police arrest and court disposition data may be available, they may not be linked to each other. As a result, one must search distinct databases or data collection systems to learn about how a particular youth was processed. In this situation, it is difficult to track DMC problems as youths progress through the system. Therefore, measuring the volume of overrepresentation at each decision point in the juvenile justice system, rather than following youths individually, is often more feasible. It may also be feasible to individually track a subset of youths—rather than the whole population of juveniles in the system—and extrapolate the findings to the rest of the population. This should be attempted with the assistance of a well-trained researcher who is able to select a sample that is representative of the entire population.

Illinois's experience illustrates how a state can collect and organize its juvenile justice data to measure the volume of overrepresentation at each decision point. The Illinois Criminal Justice Information Authority (ICJIA) recently released a *Disparity Index Computation Database*.<sup>7</sup> This Microsoft Access-based system is designed to let users build a single database to match their

own juvenile justice processing system. In addition, the database permits users to view and analyze the proportion of racial/ethnic disparity at a number of stages in the system and reports both the relative rate index (RRI) and the disproportionate representation index (DRI). Users of this system can more accurately determine where in the juvenile justice process disparities originate, which is critical to implementing successful initiatives to reduce disproportionate minority contact.

### Summary

This discussion raises some issues that should be considered when collecting initial data to determine whether minority overrepresentation exists. In some instances, states and localities may need to collect more data to make this determination; in other cases, they simply need to analyze current data and report findings. At a minimum, they must have the capacity to collect baseline data at each decision point in the system to determine if and where DMC exists. It is also important that current studies incorporate methodological improvements that have been made in the study of race and juvenile justice as discussed here in order to prepare for defining the problem.

### Determining Whether Minorities Are Overrepresented in the System

When examining the issue of DMC, the importance of defining the problem should be stressed. Only after adequately accounting for whether, where, and *why* overrepresentation exists—exhausting all possible contributing factors—can one begin to pursue the strategies or make the modifications that will correctly target the affected decision points.

Once the data are ready for analysis, it is helpful to ask a number of questions related to juveniles, crime, race, and the community under study to determine whether DMC exists. Admittedly,

many of these questions are difficult to answer. It is nonetheless very important to ask these at the outset of any study of overrepresentation of minority youths not only to seek answers to them, but also to identify areas that require added concentration to develop an approach to reduce minority overrepresentation. Data sources are an essential consideration when attempting to define the problem. In many cases, state agencies will maintain the needed data. However, a number of national data collection initiatives produce state- and local-level information to help answer these questions. The table below provides suggested questions along with possible data sources for answers to these questions.

**Table 1**  
**Questions That May Help Define the DMC Problem**

Suggested Questions to Ask	Suggested Data Sources to Consult
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What minorities reside in the area?</li> <li>• Have the racial and ethnic demographics of the youth population changed over the past decade?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Population data (U.S. Bureau of the Census, <i>OJJDP Statistical Briefing Book</i>)</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Are there particular stages in the juvenile justice system where overrepresentation is more or less of a problem?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Arrest records</li> <li>• Court processing data</li> <li>• Detention facility data</li> <li>• Interviews with youths in the juvenile justice system</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Have offending patterns changed over the past decade?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Self-reported delinquency data</li> <li>• Arrest data trends</li> <li>• Court offense data trends</li> <li>• Crime statistics (<i>OJJDP Statistical Briefing Book</i>, State Statistical Analysis Centers, Federal Bureau of Investigation’s Uniform Crime Report data)</li> </ul>

Once interpretation of the data has helped to determine whether DMC exists and where it exists in the system, one is ready to determine what factors contribute to DMC. It is important to consider what factors contribute to minority overrepresentation to determine if the interventions selected are appropriate and can be expected to be effective. In the case of minority overrepresentation, these interventions are likely to target system changes and/or individual-level changes. After all, a sole focus on programming for youths assumes that it is the youths who need to change. Regardless of the nature of the interventions adopted, evaluation is key to measuring whether expected changes occurred.

### Commonly Identified Factors Contributing to DMC

This section discusses common contributing factors to minority disproportionality in the juvenile justice system. Following a brief description of five factors, we provide a list of questions that will help states and localities that have determined that DMC exists to explore which, if any, of the common contributing factors of DMC may be a problem in their state or locality.

Many scholars provide evidence that shows that race effects may be greater at some processing points in the juvenile justice system than at others, suggesting that the problem is much more complex than previously considered.<sup>8</sup> However, some researchers have found little to no evidence of disparate treatment,<sup>9</sup> while others report ambiguous results on whether minorities are treated more harshly for similar crimes.<sup>10</sup> Still others maintain that differential offending rates are the cause of disproportionate minority representation in the system.<sup>11</sup> The lack of consensus in the academic literature on why minorities tend to become involved in the juvenile justice system is an indication that the cause(s) and extent of DMC may vary within jurisdictions or across jurisdictions over time. Recently, though, evidence is increasingly clear that race effects are indeed present in juvenile justice processing. In a 2002 review of recent empirical research in this area, Pope, Lovell, and Hsia<sup>12</sup> found that 25 of the 34 studies they reviewed provided some evidence of a disparate impact on minorities in the juvenile justice system.

*Providing data to decision- and policy-makers allows them to understand what is actually happening in the system and to use that understanding to make statements about the processing of minority youths in the system rather than relying on guesswork or the use of anecdotal data. In Multnomah County, Oregon, for example, researchers noted that review of actual numbers of youths processed, as opposed to reliance on anecdotal evidence, enabled them to identify the origin of the overrepresentation of minorities in their detention system.*

Justice Policy Institute, 2002

Research provides five common explanations for why overrepresentation may exist. These are differential offending; differential opportunities for prevention and treatment; differential handling of minority youths; indirect effects; and legislative changes, administrative policies, and legal factors. Each is described in more detail below. Regardless of the contributing factor(s), the relationship among race/ethnicity, offending, and involvement with the juvenile justice system is complex. It is important to be aware of these five common explanations for DMC as one is defining the problem in his/her area of study, and measure the extent to which they may contribute to the overrepresentation of minorities. It is possible that all of these simultaneously contribute to DMC, or that only one or two explanations account for overrepresentation; it is also possible that DMC exists because of a reason other than one of these five. A thorough assessment of the problem will help explain why DMC is occurring.

*Differential Offending.* Some research shows that minority youths are disproportionately involved in crime. For instance, some studies indicate that minority youths are more likely to be involved in drug-related offenses;<sup>13</sup> others point to their increased proclivity toward involvement in gangs.<sup>14</sup> Still others show that minorities are more likely to be involved in serious crimes.<sup>15</sup> These findings may explain why minorities are more heavily represented in the juvenile justice system.

*Differential Opportunities for Prevention and Treatment.* There is also evidence that nonminorities have easier access to prevention and treatment programs than minorities, making nonminorities less vulnerable

to risk factors associated with juvenile delinquency.<sup>16</sup> Youths who are given more opportunities for prevention and treatment programs that work should be less likely to offend and subsequently enter or remain in the juvenile justice system.

*Differential Handling of Minority Youths.* All other factors being equal, minorities may be more likely to enter and remain in the juvenile justice system than nonminority youths. For example, research that shows differential arrest rates by race/ethnicity for similar offenses demonstrates that minority youths may be treated differently by the system even if they commit the same crimes as their nonminority counterparts. However, a recently released national study of arrest rates indicates no significant difference between minorities and nonminorities in terms of arrest.<sup>17</sup> The authors note that findings should be interpreted with caution, though, as they looked at arrests for 17 states combined. Review of arrests by individual communities has provided evidence for differential treatment of minority youth.<sup>18</sup>

*Indirect Effects.* Some research points to the effects of factors other than race as the explanation for minority overrepresentation in the juvenile justice system. That is, they suggest that there is an indirect relationship between race and crime. Though minority youths are overrepresented in the juvenile justice system, the relationship is mediated by other factors which are correlated with race. Indirect effects are those factors that contribute to presence in the system because of their coexistence with other factors. Direct effects, in contrast, are factors that lead to involvement in the juvenile

## Define the Problem

justice system independent of other factors. For example, family socioeconomic status may mediate the relationship between race and crime.<sup>19</sup> In other words, those who live in poor areas are more likely to be minorities. Those who live in poor areas may, in turn, have fewer protective factors and more risk factors that lead to crime. As a result, those youths who reside in poor areas (many of whom are minorities) are more heavily represented in the juvenile justice system. If minority juveniles who reside in poor areas are more likely to become involved in the juvenile justice system than minority youths who reside elsewhere in the same jurisdiction, then socioeconomic status is likely to be correlated with minority overrepresentation. The

figure below illustrates these effects through the use of a path diagram.

Race → Socioeconomic status → Juvenile crime

The following factors have been shown to mediate the relationship between race and crime: socioeconomic status, physical decay, and unemployment rates. So, the direct causes of DMC could be socioeconomic status, physical appearance, and the unemployment rate, while the indirect cause is race. Collection of neighborhood and community data, along with individual data, allows researchers to inspect what role each of these factors may play.

### *Risk Factors, Race, and Ethnicity*

*Risk and protective factors refer to commonly held characteristics and strategies that, respectively, serve to increase propensity toward or buffer youths' resilience against delinquency. Many consider race to be a risk factor for violence among youths. However, studies that take into account other known risk factors typically find that juveniles' propensity toward violence is not affected by race. Rather, race serves as a proxy for other known risk factors, such as living in poor, single-parent families; performing poorly academically; and being exposed to community disadvantages such as gangs, drugs, and violence (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 2001; see also Kurtz, Giddings, and Sutphen (1993) who find socioeconomic status is directly related to case processing and race is indirectly related to case processing).*

*Ethnicity has not been studied thoroughly enough to be able to say with confidence what role it plays in delinquency. However, it has been labeled as a risk factor by many with the reasoning that youths from ethnic minority groups are much more vulnerable to prejudice and discrimination, resulting in reduced opportunities for positive involvement in the community. Also, they may experience additional stresses due to family culture clashes with the dominant U.S. culture. It should be noted, however, that coming from a strong ethnic culture may also provide support and guidance to minority youths, thus operating as a protective factor (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 2001).*



*Legislative Changes, Administrative Policies, and Legal Factors.*

Legislative changes may inadvertently affect minority youths. Some studies have shown that “get tough” laws like “three strikes” legislation and mandatory waiver legislation have pulled more minorities into the system than nonminorities.<sup>20</sup> For instance, a study released in the mid-1990s showed that African-Americans residing in California were 13 times more likely to be sentenced under the state’s “three-strikes” law than white youths.<sup>21</sup>

Administrative policies within and outside the juvenile justice system may inadvertently draw more minority youths into the system or keep them there. For example, requirements that youths in custody only be released to guardians who are home may inadvertently discriminate against minority youths, since single parent homes with a working parent are more common in minority groups.<sup>22</sup>

Zero tolerance policies are another example of administrative policies that may unintentionally draw more minorities into the system. These types of policies have also been empirically shown to result in disproportionate treatment of minority youths. Zero tolerance laws originated from policies designed to deter students from carrying guns to school and engaging in violence at school. Over time, zero tolerance policies were extended to restrict other behaviors; research indicates that these policies are more likely to exist in predominantly African-American and Latino school districts. In addition, minority youths appear to be more likely to be disciplined for minor infractions than their nonminority counterparts.<sup>23</sup>

Legal factors such as prior arrest record have also come under scrutiny for their potential

inadvertent effects on DMC. While seemingly neutral, the use of legal factors, such as number of prior arrests to determine a youth’s disposition, can disproportionately affect minority youths if they have already been subject to differential opportunities or treatment.<sup>24</sup> Tracking a subset of individual cases through each decision point in the system may permit one to identify not only the result of each case but also the individual factors that contributed to how/why each decision was made. This makes it easier to identify what contributes to DMC.

**Questions to Ask to Determine Why DMC Exists**

The questions posed in Table 1 in the previous section help answer whether DMC exists and provide data sources that may help a jurisdiction determine whether minorities are overrepresented in the area under study. We now turn to questions to ask once DMC has been determined to exist. Table 2 consists of questions that will help jurisdictions determine why DMC exists. The column on the left provides useful questions to ask; the column on the right suggests data sources to consult when attempting to answer these questions. This is not an exhaustive list of questions, but these questions, organized according to the five commonly identified contributing factors to DMC that are discussed above, illustrate the types of issues that can be addressed and the kinds of data needed to answer these questions. Responses to these questions will help reveal which factors contribute to DMC.

**Table 2**  
**Questions and Data Sources Related to Commonly Identified DMC Contributing Factors**

Questions	Suggested Data Sources to Examine by Race/Ethnicity
<b>Differential Offending</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• In crimes reported to the police, do descriptions of offenders' race indicate that minorities and nonminorities commit offenses at different rates?</li> <li>• Do results of victimization surveys suggest that minority and nonminority youths commit offenses at different rates?</li> <li>• Do self-report data by race differ substantially from official (e.g., arrest) records on offending?</li> <li>• What factors are putting youths at risk of offending? What factors are protecting them?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Arrest records (police records)</li> <li>• Self-reported delinquency reports (Youth Risk Behavior Survey, managed by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention)</li> <li>• Incident-based crime reports (National Incident-Based Reporting System, managed by the Federal Bureau of Investigation)</li> <li>• Aggregated crime statistics (State Statistical Analysis Centers, <i>OJJDP Statistical Briefing Book</i>)</li> </ul>
<b>Differential Opportunities for Prevention and Treatment</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Do minorities and nonminorities have the same access to services?</li> <li>• Are minorities and nonminorities offered prevention and early intervention programming at the same rate?</li> <li>• What is the rate at which minorities are admitted to community-based programs for first-time offenders compared with the rate at which they are confined in secure detention? How do these rates compare with the rates for nonminorities?</li> <li>• What is the rate at which minorities are enrolled in prevention programming for at-risk youths? How does this rate compare with the rate at which nonminorities are being admitted?</li> <li>• What factors are putting youths at risk of offending? What factors are protecting them?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Prevention program availability, enrollment, and participation data (Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration)</li> <li>• Court disposition data (court records)</li> <li>• Self-report data on alcohol, tobacco, and other drug use (Youth Risk Behavior Survey, managed by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention)</li> </ul>

*continued*

**Table 2: Questions and Data Sources Related to Commonly Identified DMC Contributing Factors, continued**

Questions	Suggested Data Sources to Examine by Race/Ethnicity
<b>Differential Handling of Minority Youths</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Are minorities and nonminorities treated similarly by the justice system?</li> <li>• Are minorities and nonminorities treated similarly when charged with the same type of offense?</li> <li>• How do the rates at which minorities and nonminorities are adjudicated for the same offenses differ?</li> <li>• How do the rates at which minorities and nonminorities are offered programming compare?</li> <li>• Do youths' reports of interactions between youths and those who work in the juvenile justice system differ across races and ethnicities? How?</li> <li>• How do arrest rates compare with incident-based crime reports for minorities and nonminorities?</li> <li>• What factors are putting youths at risk of offending? What factors are protecting them?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Arrest data (police records)</li> <li>• Adjudication data (court records)</li> <li>• Self-report data on alcohol, tobacco, and other drug use (Youth Risk Behavior Survey, managed by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention)</li> <li>• Youth self-report data on interactions with the juvenile justice system (interview data)</li> </ul>
<b>Indirect Effects</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What is the racial/ethnic makeup of the community?</li> <li>• Does the poverty rate differ by race?</li> <li>• Are certain racial/ethnic groups less likely to attend school?</li> <li>• Does the employment rate differ by race/ethnicity?</li> <li>• Does the school attendance rate differ by race/ethnicity?</li> <li>• What factors are putting youths at risk of offending? What factors are protecting them?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Community-level income data (U.S. Bureau of the Census)</li> <li>• Community-level unemployment data (U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics)</li> <li>• Community-level demographic data (U.S. Bureau of the Census)</li> <li>• Area-level school attendance data</li> </ul>
<b>Legislative Changes/Administrative Policies/Legal Factors</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What rules exist for releasing youths after the initial hearing? Do these rules disproportionately affect minorities?</li> <li>• What policies are in place to regulate behavior among youths at the area schools? Do these disproportionately affect minority youths?</li> <li>• What procedures exist for providing youths with indigent defense? Do these procedures disproportionately affect minority youths?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• State and/or local code (National Center for Juvenile Justice)</li> <li>• Administrative rules regarding handling of youths in the juvenile justice system (procedural documents for handling youths in the juvenile justice system)</li> </ul>

### Summary

We began this section by discussing important considerations that should accompany the early stages of a DMC study. First, jurisdictions will want to determine whether DMC exists and, if so, where in the system it is present. We offered three improvements that have emerged in the broader study of overrepresentation and juvenile justice, to be used as guides for conducting a thorough assessment of the presence of DMC in a jurisdiction: incorporating methodological improvements, collecting baseline data, and examining overrepresentation throughout the system. This section also offered a series of suggested questions that will help determine whether DMC exists. Upon determination of the presence of DMC, a jurisdiction will want to extend its understanding

to determine why overrepresentation exists. To aid in this, we discussed commonly identified factors that serve to advance a jurisdiction's understanding about which factors contribute to overrepresentation. Among these are the following: differential offending; differential opportunities for prevention and treatment; differential handling of minority youths; indirect effects; and legislative changes, administrative policies, and legal factors. Finally, we offered a number of questions worth asking to help identify the factors that may be contributing to jurisdictions' minority overrepresentation problem. We now turn to the second step in the study of DMC.

## Step Two: Implement Evidence-Based Programming

### An Introduction to Evidence-Based Programming for DMC

A project arrives at this second stage of developing and evaluating strategies to reduce DMC once the problem has been fully defined. Minority overrepresentation may exist at only one decision point, a few decision points, or as many as every decision point. The factors contributing to the minority overrepresentation problem should be identified by the time one arrives at this stage.

The action taken to reduce DMC should depend on the problem that has been identified and the evidence that exists to show its effectiveness. An appropriate strategy is one that will target the specific decision point where the problem exists and address the factors contributing to DMC.

However, it is also necessary that the chosen strategy is evidence-based. Evidence-based strategies are modeled after approaches that have been used in the past and have produced positive results in treating the same problem. Therefore, a strategy to reduce overrepresentation needs to be both appropriate and evidence-based. Specific evidence-based programs should be considered if they have been shown to address the problems identified.

The literature on what works to reduce DMC is not as extensive as the “what works” literature in other areas of juvenile justice. For example, there are no *Blueprints*<sup>25</sup> programs for reducing DMC. Nonetheless, a number of approaches to DMC reduction appear to have promise, particularly with regard to early stages of contact with juvenile justice systems.

Some strategies to reduce DMC may affect both minority and nonminority youths. Other strategies are intended specifically to reduce the number and proportion of minority youths who come into contact with the juvenile justice system.<sup>26</sup> For instance, evidence-based substance abuse prevention programming should lower substance abuse for all youths who participate in the program. If minority overrepresentation is explained by unequal access to substance abuse prevention and treatment, implementing a substance abuse prevention program for all youths in an area—including minorities—should reduce involvement of minorities and nonminorities in the juvenile justice system. If only minorities

*Evidence-based programs and approaches are those that are based on prior research and evaluation findings.*

*For more information, see JJEC Online (<http://www.jrsa.org/jjec/>) and OJJDP's Model Programs Guide ([http://www.dsgonline.com/mpg\\_non\\_flash/mpg\\_index.htm](http://www.dsgonline.com/mpg_non_flash/mpg_index.htm)).*

receive the substance abuse program, this should reduce DMC without affecting the remainder of the juvenile population. Note, however, that while this program is evidence-based, it is not appropriate in all cases. Implementing an evidence-based drug prevention and treatment program is only appropriate if access to drug prevention and treatment has been identified as the contributing factor to DMC. Finally, there are some evidence-based approaches that have been shown to work for minority populations and others that have been shown to work for all youths without specifying differences in outcomes by race/ethnicity. Though both types of evidence-based approaches may be appropriate for the DMC problem, all other factors being equal, the ones that have been shown to affect the minority population should be considered for implementation before the others.

The strategies selected to reduce DMC should be based on the contributing factors at each stage of the juvenile justice system where it exists. Multnomah County, Oregon, is frequently referred to as a leader in the effort to reduce minority overrepresentation in the juvenile justice system. In Oregon, a persistent effort has been made to discover *why* overrepresentation exists, facilitated by committed researchers, political support, and accessible data. These factors allow the state to draw reliable conclusions about the nature of overrepresentation and to make informed decisions about strategies to reduce DMC. As a result, Multnomah County has successfully moved from overrepresentation of minorities in detention to proportional representation. Its success is in large part due to a complete exploration of why overrepresentation existed in the first place—it seemed

to be fueled by unequal procedures for detention processing and police referrals—followed by a “data-driven approach” designed to make appropriate changes to the *entire* juvenile justice system in its treatment of minority youths.<sup>27</sup>

### Evidence-Based Programs

The appropriate strategies discussed below are related to the five commonly identified contributing factors and explanations for minority overrepresentation in the juvenile justice system. These strategies may be effective means to reduce DMC if a locality determines that one or more of these factors contribute to DMC. More work is needed, however, to identify evidence-based programs that have effectively utilized strategies to reduce DMC.

Table 3 illustrates some appropriate strategies (middle column) that have been identified to address these five contributing factors (left column). Given that an area under study has identified one of these contributing factors, these appropriate strategies may be pursued with success. Within these identified strategies, we also provide programs that are evidence-based (right column). Depending on the nature of the contributing factor(s) in a jurisdiction, it is possible that only certain strategies listed for a particular contributing factor are appropriate.

*Prevention and Early Intervention.* Prevention and early intervention programs are targeted at youths who present risk factors that may increase their chances of entering the juvenile justice system.

**Table 3**  
**Some Appropriate Strategies and Evidence-Based Programs Related to DMC Contributing Factors**

Factor Contributing to DMC	Appropriate Strategies Related to Contributing Factor	Evidence-Based Programs <sup>a</sup>
Differential offending	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Prevention and early intervention programs</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Across Ages</li> <li>Big Brothers/Big Sisters</li> <li>Boys and Girls Clubs of America</li> <li>Gang Prevention Through Targeted Outreach</li> <li>Brief Strategic Family Therapy</li> <li>Functional Family Therapy</li> <li>Anger Coping Program</li> <li>Gang Resistance Education and Training Program</li> <li>Project PACE</li> <li>Project SUCCESS</li> <li>STARS for Families</li> </ul>
Differential opportunities for prevention and treatment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Prevention and early intervention programs</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Across Ages</li> <li>Big Brothers/Big Sisters</li> <li>Boys and Girls Clubs of America</li> <li>Gang Prevention Through Targeted Outreach</li> <li>Brief Strategic Family Therapy</li> <li>Functional Family Therapy</li> <li>Anger Coping Program</li> <li>Gang Resistance Education and Training Program</li> <li>Project PACE</li> <li>Project Success</li> <li>STARS for Families</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Alternatives to secure detention</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Project Confirm</li> <li>Detention Diversion Advocacy Project</li> <li>Juvenile Detention Alternatives Initiative (JDAI)<sup>b</sup></li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Administrative rule modification</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Specific to jurisdiction<sup>c</sup></li> </ul>
Differential handling of minority youths	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Administrative rule modification</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Specific to jurisdiction<sup>c</sup></li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Cultural competency training</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>More research needed in this area</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Development of objective decisionmaking tools</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Specific to jurisdiction<sup>c</sup></li> </ul>

Implement Evidence-Based Programming

Factor Contributing to DMC	Appropriate Strategies Related to Contributing Factor	Evidence-Based Programs <sup>a</sup>
Indirect effects	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Prevention and early intervention programs</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Across Ages</li> <li>Big Brothers/Big Sisters</li> <li>Boys and Girls Clubs of America</li> <li>Gang Prevention Through Targeted Outreach</li> <li>Brief Strategic Family Therapy</li> <li>Functional Family Therapy</li> <li>Anger Coping Program</li> <li>Gang Resistance Education and Training Program</li> <li>Project PACE</li> <li>Project SUCCESS</li> <li>STARS for Families</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Alternatives to secure detention</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Project Confirm</li> <li>Detention Diversion Advocacy Project</li> <li>Juvenile Detention Alternatives Initiative (JDAI) <sup>b</sup></li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Administrative rule modification</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Specific to jurisdiction <sup>c</sup></li> </ul>
Legislative changes, administrative policies, legal factors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Administrative rule modification</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Specific to jurisdiction <sup>c</sup></li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Development of objective decisionmaking tools</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Specific to jurisdiction <sup>c</sup></li> </ul>

*Note.* Evidence-based strategies may only be effective if one is reasonably certain of the factors contributing to overrepresentation.

<sup>a</sup> See OJJDP's Model Programs Guide for more information on these programs: [http://www.dsgonline.com/mpg\\_non\\_flash/mediation.htm](http://www.dsgonline.com/mpg_non_flash/mediation.htm)

<sup>b</sup> See, for example, work completed in Cook County, Illinois. (Hoytt, Shiraldi, Smith, & Ziedenberg, 2001)

<sup>c</sup> There are no evidence-based programs to recommend because administrative rules vary across jurisdictions.



Recall from earlier that risk factors can be reduced by strengthening protective factors that have been shown to keep youths from becoming involved in delinquency. There are many evidence-based programs that appear to prevent or reduce involvement in the juvenile justice system. The OJJDP Model Programs Guide (accessible online at [http://www.dsgonline.com/mpg\\_non\\_flash/mediation.htm](http://www.dsgonline.com/mpg_non_flash/mediation.htm)) contains a comprehensive listing of evidence-based programs.

*Alternatives to Secure Detention.* One promising strategy to reduce DMC that exists at the point of detention is the development of alternatives to secure detention. Developing and maintaining nonsecure detention options, such as evening reporting centers, for youths with little supervision at home will meet the need for supervision to reduce the likelihood of offending and/or provide interventions while reducing the number of minority youths held in detention. Community-based programs are often effective at preventing repeat offenses. For example, using alternatives to secure detention was employed successfully in Cook County, Illinois, for the explicit purpose of reducing the number of minority youths in detention.<sup>28</sup>

*Administrative Rule Modification.* Another promising strategy for reducing DMC is eliminating the use of decisionmaking criteria that may inadvertently bring a proportion of minority youths into detention or confinement. Risk or detention assessments can draw more minorities into the system if they capture information that is correlated with minority status.<sup>29</sup> For

instance, a detention assessment that calls for automatic detention for youths who live in a single parent home may bring more minority youths into the system unintentionally if minority youths are more likely to come from single parent homes. Thus, the utility of this criterion (based on the notion that youths from single parent homes may have an increased likelihood of not having someone present to whom they can be released and closely supervised) must be weighed against the possibility of increasing the rate at which minority youths are brought into the system. Note that both questions can be addressed empirically. That is, data can be collected and analyzed to determine whether youths from single parent homes are at greater detention risk, and whether minority juvenile arrestees are more likely to come from single parent homes.

*Cultural Competency Training.* A third promising strategy is cultural competency training for all decisionmakers and staff who routinely interact with youths in the system. DMC research conducted in Cook County, Illinois, demonstrated positive effects in reducing DMC as a result of cultural competency training given to law enforcement, the judiciary, the public defender's office, the juvenile detention center, the state's attorney's office, and juvenile probation and court services personnel.<sup>30</sup> The cultural competency training resulted in "DMC-sensitive thinking"<sup>31</sup> which helped decisionmakers and staff have a better understanding of circumstances in the lives of minority youths (e.g., single parent homes). Consequently, they were able to identify changes to make—for

example, changes in the detention assessments that were inadvertently biased against minority youths. In Santa Cruz, California, the probation department hired a cultural competency coordinator and developed a cultural competence plan. They regularly hold cultural competency trainings, ensure that staff represent the bilingual and bicultural makeup of the youth population, and also ensure that key staff members are bilingual.<sup>32</sup> Increased cultural awareness has contributed to reductions in DMC because those who come in contact with juveniles do not make assumptions about their behavior based on cultural ignorance that may inadvertently draw these youths into the system.

*Development of Objective Decisionmaking Tools for Selected Decision Points.* A fourth promising strategy for reducing DMC is the use of objective decision-making tools when deciding whom to hold in secure detention. Objective tools are those that apply criteria consistently to each case in order

to make a decision. Tools such as risk and detention assessments increase the visibility of the decision process and can reduce the likelihood of discrimination or inappropriate decisions based on race. In Multnomah County, Oregon, for example, the development of a risk assessment team, along with changes made to the risk assessment tool, led to more efficient and fair processing of minority and nonminority youths.<sup>33,34</sup>

Bringing together key stakeholders interested in the DMC issue is likely to lead to increased access to data, more confidence in the results of data analysis, greater agreement on how to interpret data, and enhanced support of and commitment to findings.

*Risk Assessments*

*In juvenile justice, risk assessments are useful for predicting the behavior of youths. Risk assessments have been developed to predict both initial delinquency and recidivism. They may be used to make decisions regarding how to respond to a youth—for example, the level of supervision to provide to a youth when a disposition decision is made.*

*Detention Assessments*

*Like needs assessments, detention assessments may identify specific needs of youth. However, detention assessments primarily help to distinguish whether a preadjudicated youth should be held in secure confinement or some other type of custody. Youth at this stage have not been adjudicated delinquent. Therefore, the purpose of detention at this point is not to punish or rehabilitate them, but rather to ensure that they appear at court hearings and do not commit any new offenses in the time prior to the hearing. Detention assessments are typically developed to predict the likelihood of court appearance and recidivism.*

Keeping relevant policymakers, court administrators, law enforcement, prosecutors, schools, youth program administrators, parents, media, and others aware of the efforts to reduce minority overrepresentation, as well as regularly soliciting their opinions and suggestions, will help develop a cohesive team approach to reducing DMC. In jurisdictions where DMC is a problem at multiple stages in the system, having decision- and policymakers from each stage of the juvenile justice system involved in reducing DMC will enable them to develop a comprehensive plan to address overrepresentation.

### Summary

Once the nature of the DMC problem has been well-defined, use of one or more of the evidence-based programs/strategies discussed above may help address its source. Though more research is needed to identify evidence-based strategies, these should be considered when appropriate for the problem, incorporated into an overall strategy to reduce DMC, and evaluated to determine their impact.

## Step Three: Develop Program Logic

Developing program logic is the third step in the JJEC seven-step evaluation process. Program logic is easily understood using a logic model. The goal of any DMC reduction strategy should be broad, similar to an organization's mission statement. Goals may not be achieved during a program's operation, but they should always be kept at the forefront of any planning related to the program. With regard to disproportionate minority contact, a reasonable overall goal is the reduction of minority overrepresentation in the juvenile justice system.

A logic model is a visual representation of a program's theory, objectives, activities, and desired accomplishments. Exhibit 1 shows a typical logic model. A logic model may be particularly helpful in the following ways:

- It clarifies the expected achievements;
- It is an effective way to monitor activities;
- It can be used for either performance measurement or evaluation;
- It can help initiatives stay on track;
- It can help initiatives plan for the future; and
- It can be an excellent way to document intended versus actual activities.

At the top of the model is a **goal**. The goal of a program is a *broad statement about what the program intends to accomplish. It is also the intended long-term outcome of the program.* Since it represents the overarching purpose, it rests above all the remaining components. The relevant question to ask when determining a program goal is: what are the expected achievements in the long term?

**Objectives** are *the expected achievements that are well-defined, specific, measurable, and derived from the goal.* In addition, objectives should contain three important elements: direction, target, and time frame. The relevant question that should be asked when determining appropriate objectives is: what difference will your efforts make, for whom, and by when?

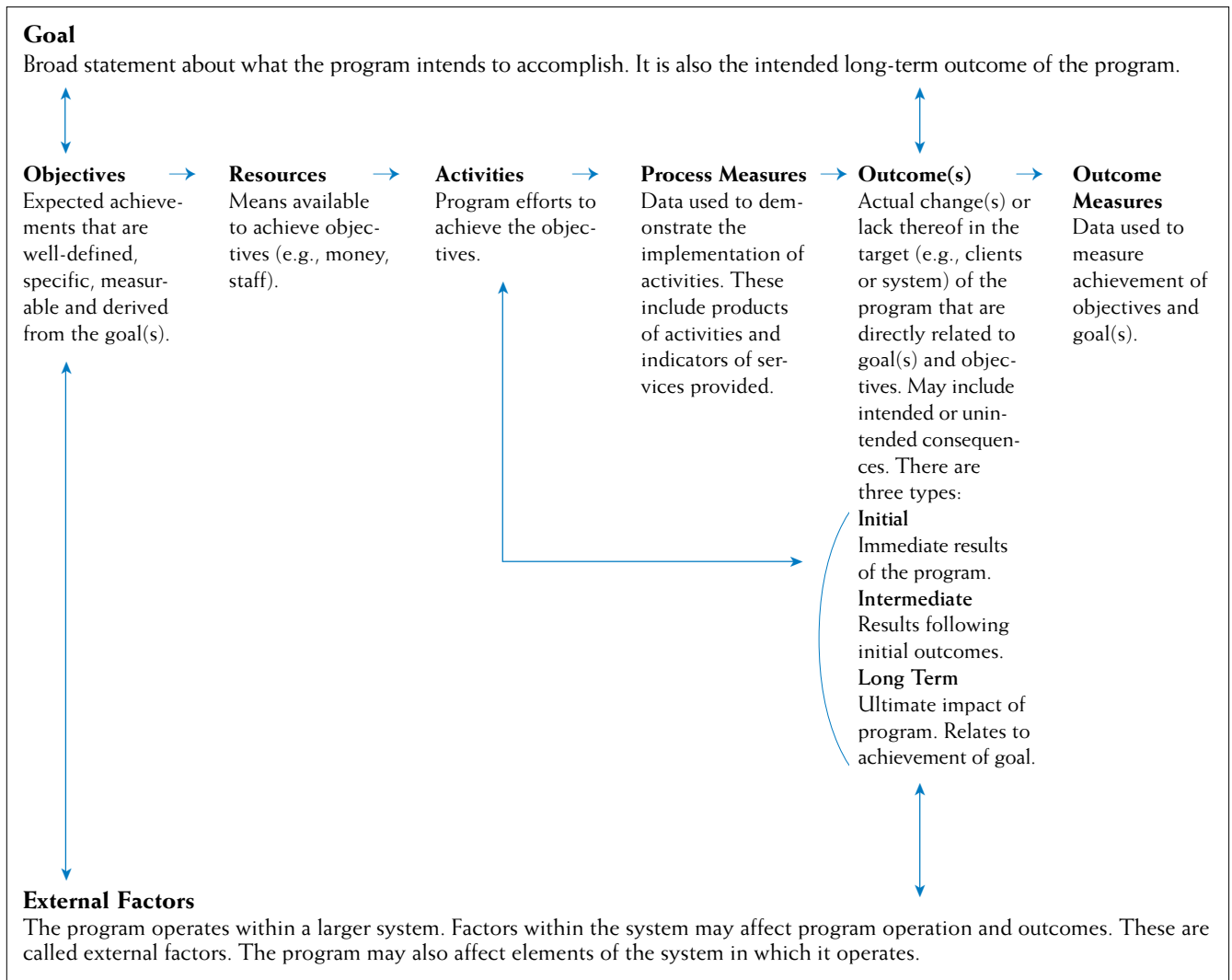
**Resources** should be considered after determining the objectives. *These are the means available to achieve the outcomes.* That is, what tools, funds, skills, personnel, and physical space are available and necessary to meet the objective(s)? In order to adequately define the DMC problem, it is necessary to examine what resources are available to study it. For instance, consideration of what data sources are available should indicate how many staff hours are needed to collect and/or analyze data.

Step Three

After resources have been identified, what **activities** will be pursued? **Activities** are *the efforts made to achieve the objectives*. Activities should be logically linked to the objectives such that their completion can be expected to cause the intended

changes determined in the objectives. Keep in mind that these activities may take some time to complete, as data can be difficult to access and may involve manual review of individual files.

**Exhibit 1**  
**Logic Model**



## Step Four: Identify Measures

Having identified what the factors contributing to DMC are, what the DMC strategy proposes to do, and how it will do so, the next step is to select measures to track the progress and achievements of the strategy. That is, performance measures must be identified.

**Process measures** are *data used to demonstrate the implementation of activities. These include products of activities and indicators of services provided.* They can be thought of as documentation of whether the initiative is being implemented according to the original plan. They demonstrate which activities were pursued as well as the extent to which they were pursued.

Following process measures are **outcomes**, which are the actual change(s) or lack thereof in the target (e.g., clients or system) of the initiative that are directly related to the goal(s) and objectives. Outcomes may include intended or unintended consequences. Note that only the **long-term outcome** will be directly related to the goal of the program. With regard to minority overrepresentation, this will usually be stated as a reduction in minority contact with the juvenile justice system. There are two other levels of outcomes to consider as well: **initial outcomes** are observed during or immediately after the intervention; **intermediate outcomes** are the results following the initial outcomes and also may be observed during the intervention, but will be observed

beyond the period during which initial outcomes are observed. Initial and intermediate outcomes are directly related to the objectives. **Outcome measures** are used to determine whether the goals and objectives of the strategy have been accomplished.

**External factors** are located at the bottom of the logic model. These are factors within the juvenile justice system, the community, or the political system that may affect the initiative's operation. An example of a commonly reported external factor is the resistance that may be experienced during the initiative from the police, the courts, or the community.

External factors are particular to an initiative's individual dynamics and may include influences like political forces that help or hinder activities, modifications to sentencing laws during an initiative's operation, unexpected budget cuts, or youths' involvement in other programs. External factors may alter activities and affect outcomes, and should therefore be included in the logic model if they are known at the outset of the initiative.

As previously discussed, addressing DMC may include the creation of programming for youths and/or systemic strategies to improve the ways that minorities are handled in the system. It is important to note that while logic models may commonly be used to establish a framework for programs, they are also appropriate tools for framing systemwide strategies.

On the next page is an example of a completed logic model, based on one of the five commonly identified contributing factors to DMC. In this example, minority overrepresentation exists at the secure detention facility. In order to ensure that race or ethnicity ceases to play a role in whether a youth is detained, two major steps will be taken: (1) the detention assessment tool will be restructured in order to make it objective and make certain that it is not inadvertently biased against minority youths; and (2) cultural awareness training will be provided to staff who are responsible for administering the detention assessment tool and making recommendations regarding who should be detained. In addition, intake staff will be trained on the use of the new detention assessment tool. These two activities were selected because the “defining the problem” stage revealed that the detention tool currently being used does not limit the factors used to make the recommendation regarding whom to detain. As a result, criteria that can introduce bias against minority youths may be used to make the detention decision. Specifically, the current detention tool requires the user to write a narrative statement regarding why the

youth should or should not be placed in detention; it appears that this allows for too much discretion and subjective decisionmaking about the youths placed in detention. The detention tool does not include a discrete set of criteria on which to base the recommendation nor provide an overall score based on the responses to each of the criteria in order to make a presumptive recommendation.<sup>34</sup> Furthermore, a recent study revealed that intake staff have a hard time communicating with and identifying the issues of juveniles who have recently immigrated to the state. It is expected that implementation of the new detention assessment tool will be challenging given public pressure.

The process measures will help determine whether the activities identified above actually occurred. The outcome measures will help determine whether a decrease in minority overrepresentation in detention occurred after the detention assessment tool was revised and whether communication between intake staff and recent immigrants improved after the cultural awareness training.

**Exhibit 2**  
**Logic Model Example**

**Problem:** Minorities are treated differently than nonminorities when the decision to detain a youth is made.

**Goal:** To reduce DMC in the detention facility

<b>Objective</b>	<b>Activities</b>	<b>Process Measures</b>	<b>Outcomes</b>	<b>Outcome Measures</b>
<p>To ensure race/ethnicity is not a determining factor when the detention decision is made.</p>	<p>1a. Restructure detention assessment tool.</p> <p>1b. Provide training on use of new detention assessment tool.</p> <p>2. Require cultural awareness training for all intake staff who come into contact with juveniles.</p>	<p>1a. Restructured detention assessment tool.</p> <p>1b. Completion of training.</p> <p>2. Completion of training.</p>	<p>1. Decrease in the percentages of minority youths held in detention.</p> <p>2a. Demonstrated cultural awareness among intake staff who handle youths.</p> <p>2b. Improved communication between recent immigrant youths and intake staff.</p>	<p>1. Comparison of secure detention data by race/ethnicity one quarter before use of restructured detention assessment and one quarter after use of restructured detention assessment.</p> <p>2a. Pre-post survey data on knowledge of cultures by staff trained.</p> <p>2b. Survey recent immigrant youths' perceptions of communication with intake staff. Compare survey of an intake cohort one month pre-cultural awareness training to survey of another intake cohort one month after training.</p>

**External Factor:** Pressure to implement new detention assessment tool within short time frame.





## Step Five: Collect and Analyze Data

The fifth step in the evaluation process, collecting and analyzing data, can present a formidable challenge when attempting to reduce minority overrepresentation in the juvenile justice system. As mentioned in the discussion of the first step, baseline data are collected as part of the problem identification phase and serve to establish the starting point for DMC reduction efforts.

Throughout the time that the selected intervention is being implemented, it is necessary to continue to collect data so that progress can be charted. It is important that the data are collected in a uniform manner at regular intervals so that results are valid and reliable. Different approaches to collecting and analyzing data can be used to determine whether the objectives of the program have been accomplished.

Two common approaches to assessing the performance of an intervention are performance measurement and evaluation, both of which are important when examining DMC. The Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (OJJDP) requires states and localities to regularly submit measures of performance in the area of DMC; these measures can be used in a more extensive evaluation of minority overrepresentation in the juvenile justice system.

Performance measurement is a subset of evaluation that is concerned with collecting information to determine whether a program is achieving its objectives. It is focused on process and/or outcome measures and reporting program outcomes, and uses information to improve program operation and/or design.

Evaluation is similar to performance measurement in that it too tracks process and/or outcome measures. Evaluation, however, is focused on how a program's outcomes are achieved. That is, evaluation attempts to determine whether program outcomes can be attributed to the program itself or factors external to the program. An evaluation assesses the effectiveness of a program in achieving its goals and/or objectives, uses methods to determine whether program outcomes can be attributed to the program or other factors, and aims at program improvement through modification of program operation and/or design.

A number of factors will influence whether a performance measurement or evaluation is conducted. More information on performance measurement and evaluation can be found in the JJEC Briefing, *Approaches to Assessing Juvenile Justice Program Performance*.

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## Collect and Analyze Data

Alaska recently moved from several separate systems to one statewide data collection system that makes collecting and analyzing data relatively easy. This type of system is particularly useful for evaluating initiatives that target stages of the juvenile justice system. Alaska's new system, the Juvenile Offender Management Tracking Information System (JOMIS), makes it possible to share

information and track youths from intake to disposition. Since it is Web-based and accessible through the Internet, changes to records are available instantly to other segments of the juvenile justice system. Alaska is currently working with the JOMIS database to produce a statewide report on disproportionate minority overrepresentation.<sup>35</sup>



## Step Six: Report Findings

Once the evaluation of an initiative, strategy, or program is complete, the findings should be reported. Race-related reports often result in controversy; some will probably dispute the findings regardless of what they are. Knowing this in advance is important because one can anticipate issues and plan responses.

Given this reality, some suggestions for releasing reports may help. Having the evaluation conducted by a reputable and objective source (such as a university that is completely unattached to the juvenile justice system) will distance the findings from the study's working group members and stakeholders. Findings that are considered objective as opposed to following a particular agenda will help give the report credibility. In addition, making stakeholders aware of important findings

along the way helps to avoid any surprises at the end. A third suggestion is to write research reports in such a way that the public, juvenile justice administrators and personnel, and the media can easily understand them. Finally, release of the study findings to the media, after stakeholders have been given an opportunity to address the findings, will prevent the temptation some may have to ignore or deny controversial findings. This will keep the issue out in the open so that positive change remains a priority.



## Step Seven: Reassess Program Logic

Once the evaluation is complete, the project team will want to return to the logic model and ask: Is this what we expected to happen? Are we satisfied with the results? Reassessing program logic allows the project team to review their original intentions, the actual activities, and the outcomes to determine whether the outcomes met the expectations. Some additional questions worth asking are:

- Which objectives have been accomplished and which have not, and why not?
- Are there data to suggest why certain objectives were not accomplished?
- Do certain objectives or activities need to be modified?
- Does the goal need to be redefined?

A revised program model may require the adoption of modified measures to assess effectiveness, which may in turn require new data collection techniques. This reassessment is central to implementing evaluation as an ongoing process that includes program development, assessment, and revision.



## Conclusion

This guidebook deliberately separates the identification of the existence of DMC and contributing factors to DMC from intervention strategies to reduce it. Defining whether DMC exists, to what extent it exists, and why it exists are complex undertakings. It is imperative that these questions be answered before an intervention strategy is selected and initiated.

The steps outlined in this guidebook, combined with the other techniques and suggestions offered, can help states and jurisdictions work with stakeholders to produce meaningful DMC studies and evaluations. Ultimately, the use of evidence-based strategies linked to the source of overrepresentation can be expected to result in reductions in the rate of minorities coming into contact with the juvenile justice system.

## Resources

Incorporating research and evaluation into the disproportionate minority contact intervention strategy can be daunting to juvenile justice program managers, administrators, and staff. This guidebook is meant to serve as a preliminary guide. The resources and Internet links below direct readers to additional information.

### **Annie E. Casey Foundation**

Juvenile Detention Alternatives Initiative (JDAI)  
701 St. Paul Street  
Baltimore, MD 21202  
Ph: 410-547-6600  
<http://www.aecf.org>

### **Building Blocks for Youth**

<http://www.buildingblocksforyouth.org>

### **Bureau of Labor Statistics**

Division of Information Services  
2 Massachusetts Avenue, N.E., Room 2860  
Washington, DC 20212  
Ph: (202) 691-5200  
<http://stats.bls.gov/>

### **Centers for Disease Control and Prevention**

National Center for Chronic Disease Prevention  
and Health Promotion  
<http://www.cdc.gov/HealthyYouth/>

### **Child Welfare League of America**

440 First Street, NW  
3<sup>rd</sup> Floor  
Washington, DC 20001  
Ph: 202-638-2952  
<http://www.cwla.org>

### **Children's Defense Fund**

25 E Street, NW  
Washington, DC 20001  
Ph: 202-628-8787  
<http://www.childrensdefense.org>

### **Coalition for Juvenile Justice**

1710 Rhode Island Avenue, NW  
10<sup>th</sup> Floor  
Washington, DC 20036  
Ph: 202-467-0864  
<http://www.juvjustice.org>

### **Federal Bureau of Investigation**

National Incident-Based Reporting System  
J. Edgar Hoover Building  
935 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW  
Washington, DC 20535  
Ph: 202-324-3000  
<http://www.fbi.gov/ucr/ucr.htm#nibrs>

### **Justice Research and Statistics Association**

777 North Capitol Street, NE  
Suite 801  
Washington, DC 20002  
Ph: 202-842-9330  
<http://www.jrsa.org>

### **Juvenile Justice Evaluation Center**

Justice Research and Statistics Association  
777 North Capitol Street, NE  
Suite 801  
Washington, DC 20002  
Ph: 202-842-9330  
<http://www.jrsa.org/jjec>

Resources

**National Center for Juvenile Justice**

710 Fifth Avenue  
Pittsburgh, PA 15219  
Ph: (412) 227-6950  
<http://www.ncjj.org/>

**National Council on Crime and Delinquency**

1970 Broadway, Suite 500  
Oakland, CA 94612  
Ph: (510) 208-0511  
<http://www.nccd-crc.org>

**Office of Juvenile Justice and  
Delinquency Prevention**

DMC Initiative  
Heidi Hsia, Social Science Program Specialist  
State Relations and Assistance Division  
810 Seventh Street  
Washington, DC 20531  
Ph: 202-616-3667  
[www.ojjdp.ncjrs.org/dmc/index.html](http://www.ojjdp.ncjrs.org/dmc/index.html)

**The Sentencing Project**

514 Tenth Street, NW  
Suite 1000  
Washington, DC 20004  
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[www.sentencingproject.org](http://www.sentencingproject.org)

**State Statistical Analysis Centers**

<http://www.jrsa.org/sac/index.html>

**U.S. Census Bureau**

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## End Notes

- <sup>1</sup> Juvenile Justice Evaluation Center, 2001
- <sup>2</sup> P.L. 107-273
- <sup>3</sup> Pope, Lovell, & Hsia, 2002
- <sup>4</sup> Liska & Tausig, 1979; McCarthy & Smith, 1986; Poe-Yamagata & Jones, 2000
- <sup>5</sup> Zatz, 1984
- <sup>6</sup> Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, 2000
- <sup>7</sup> Illinois Criminal Justice Information Authority, 2003
- <sup>8</sup> See, for example, Frazier, Bishop, & Henretta, 1992; Leiber & Stairs, 1999; McCarthy & Smith, 1986; Sampson & Laub, 1993; Tittle & Curran, 1988
- <sup>9</sup> See, for example, Cohen & Kleugel, 1979
- <sup>10</sup> See, for example, Bell & Lang, 1985; Leiber & Stairs, 1999
- <sup>11</sup> Daly & Tonry, 1997; Sampson & Lauritson, 1997
- <sup>12</sup> Pope, Lovell, & Hsia, 2002
- <sup>13</sup> Blumstein, 1995
- <sup>14</sup> Hindelang, Hirschi, & Weis, 1981; Chiricos, 1996; Farrington, Loeber, Stouthamer-Loeber, Van Kammen, & Schmidt, 1996
- <sup>15</sup> Farrington, et al., 1996; Hawkins, Laub, & Lauritson, 1998
- <sup>16</sup> U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 2001
- <sup>17</sup> Pope & Snyder, 2003
- <sup>18</sup> Poe-Yamagata & Jones, 2000
- <sup>19</sup> Leiber, 2003
- <sup>20</sup> See, for example, Sickmund, Snyder, & Poe-Yamagata, 1997
- <sup>21</sup> Males & Macalliar, 2000
- <sup>22</sup> Justice Policy Institute, 2002
- <sup>23</sup> The Civil Rights Project, Harvard University, 2000
- <sup>24</sup> Leiber, 2003
- <sup>25</sup> Center for the Study and Prevention of Violence, Institute of Behavioral Science, University of Colorado
- <sup>26</sup> Evidence-based juvenile justice programs typically target youths. As discussed above, DMC may be reduced if the solution targets youths, or system-level changes, or if the strategy involves some combination of the two.
- <sup>27</sup> Justice Policy Institute, 2002
- <sup>28</sup> Hoytt, Shiraldi, Smith, & Ziedenberg, 2001
- <sup>29</sup> Ibid
- <sup>30</sup> Ibid
- <sup>31</sup> Ibid
- <sup>32</sup> Ibid
- <sup>33</sup> Justice Policy Institute, 2002
- <sup>34</sup> For more information on detention assessment tools, see, for example, the National Council on Crime and Delinquency [http://www.nccd-crc.org/nccd/n\\_reform\\_sdm screen.html](http://www.nccd-crc.org/nccd/n_reform_sdm screen.html).
- <sup>35</sup> Phone interview with project leader for Alaska JOMIS implementation June 20, 2003



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