



Statement on DMC Guidance

The Coalition for Juvenile Justice is a national organization representing the interests of Juvenile Justice State Advisory Groups and related state agencies. Our membership includes 40 states and territories, and more than 11,000 juvenile justice allies nationwide. We seek to support the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention's process of revising guidance on addressing disproportionate minority contact (DMC) within the justice system by offering this statement as guidance for moving forward in the process.

Public safety is paramount. For more than three decades we and our members have worked with states to implement policies that have driven down youth crime by investing in proven, rehabilitative responses like restorative justice. These alternative practices have helped drastically reduce the rates of incarceration among youth as well, with nearly half as many young people detained now as were in the 1990s. Youth of color, however, are still vastly overrepresented in the justice system. When compared to their white peers who have engaged in similar behaviors, African American youth are five times more likely to be incarcerated.¹ Hispanic youth are three times more likely.²

Keeping our communities safe requires us to address this disproportionate minority contact in a meaningful way. When youth come into contact with the juvenile justice system or move deeper into the system because of the color of their skin or ethnicity, public safety is compromised. Simply coming into contact with the juvenile justice system may negatively impact the life trajectory of the youth and increase their likelihood of later engaging in delinquent activity.

States are required under the federal Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention Act to address DMC. Some programs have already proven successful in reducing disproportionate minority contact. For example, since 2002, the School Justice Partnership has successfully reduced racial disparities in the context of school arrests. In Clayton County, Ga., where the program started, African American students were 12 times more likely to be arrested on campus than Caucasian students when the program started 16 years ago. Today, African American students are no more likely to be arrested than Caucasian students notwithstanding the fact that African American students make up the majority of the school age population in the county.

States are not equipped to handle this massive problem alone. Clear guidance and assistance is needed from the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (OJJDP) to make this

¹ The Sentencing Project. "Black Disparities in Youth Incarceration." Available at: <https://www.sentencingproject.org/publications/black-disparities-youth-incarceration/>. Last accessed July 24, 2018.

² The Sentencing Project. "Latino Disparities in Youth Incarceration." Available at: <https://www.sentencingproject.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/10/Latino-Disparities-in-Youth-Incarceration.pdf>. Last accessed July 24, 2018.

happen and help states end the inequities that exist within the justice system. We urge OJJDP to provide clear guidance on how states can work with OJJDP to end DMC. We encourage OJJDP to meaningfully engage DMC Coordinators, Juvenile Justice Specialists, and youth in the development of this guidance. We further urge OJJDP to recommend Best Practice strategies to address DMC. We look forward to partnering with OJJDP on training and technical assistance for states that are struggling and/or states that desire to take their DMC efforts to the next level. Without such, the safety and futures of children across this country are placed in jeopardy.