

Missouri DMC Strategies

The following strategies have been used to reduce DMC in Missouri.

1. Teen Court of peers in school

As an alternative to a referral to the Juvenile Office, a parent is offered the option of sending their child to a trial by peers in school. School children have been selected and trained to be prosecuting and defense attorneys, and jury members. The offending child must agree to abide by the sentence handed down by the jury of his peers. Sentences often include community service, apology letters and possibly future jury duty. Referrals to the Juvenile Office in one Middle School have gone from 78 to 1 from the first semester of 2009 to the first semester of 2012 as a result of the implementation of Teen Court. Fighting is a typical minor offense that is eligible for Teen Court. The Teen Court video can be viewed here:

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=w2d97GP34Pg&list=LLR3NPTHMbGifGukTIBcXT6g>

2. School Referral Memorandum of Understanding

A memorandum of understanding between a school district, local law enforcement and the county juvenile office is being implemented in some counties to eliminate minor offenses from being referred. The purpose is to handle minor offenses in school rather than creating a referral to the juvenile office. This is allowed by the Safe Schools Act for minor offenses, such as fighting, which are typically referred as Assault 3rd Degree. Research shows that contact with the juvenile office has negative consequences for youth.

3. Mentor Assignment in school for at-risk kids

Several counties have implemented mentoring programs in schools for at-risk kids. One county selected and trained African American males specifically, to meet with the youth. Another county implemented a school district-wide mentoring program, so that mentors could follow their child from kindergarten through high school. For additional detail on the Jefferson City Public Schools Mentoring program, link here: <http://www.icps.k12.mo.us/Page/4692>

4. De-escalation training for teachers

A school district held de-escalation training for Special Education teachers, who typically handle children with behavioral issues. Teachers who have a larger percentage of minority referrals were also required to attend the training, to enhance their skills in the classroom. The training was Nonviolent Crisis Prevention from the Crisis Prevention Institute, and can be found at <http://www.crisisprevention.com/Specialties/Nonviolent-Crisis-Intervention/Onsite-Training>.

5. Girl Matters training for SROs

One county had a disproportionate number of minority females being referred to the juvenile office. Training around the unique needs of girls was held for all the SRO's in the district in order to prevent referrals to the juvenile office. Requests for training can be made to mija@mija.org. A description of the Girl Matters training can be found here: <http://www.nationalgirlsinsitute.org/i-work-with-girls/tools/curriculum/>

6. Community Resource Guide

One county prepared a small pocket reference of resources with phone numbers that may be needed by juveniles in trouble. These pocket references were distributed to the juvenile office, schools, law enforcement and other agencies that deal with youth. The purpose is to give kids someone to call for help. A copy of the resource guide can be found here. (St. Charles Resource Pocket Guide)

7. Juvenile Office staff meeting with at-risk kids in school

A Detention Superintendent in one county meets monthly with a group of kids in school to speak to kids about their goals. The purpose is to provide a role model (African-American male) for at-risk youth who is knowledgeable about what can happen to youth when they choose to offend.

8. Law Enforcement training on dealing with juveniles effectively

One county brought in training for law enforcement and school principals about their role in eliminating disproportionate minority contact in the juvenile justice system. Strategies for communicating with juveniles effectively and improving police/youth relations were covered. A description of the training can be found here. (Description of law enforcement training)

9. Community Collaboration

Several communities are forming groups that consist of the juvenile office, law enforcement, schools, parent advocates, faith community, etc. to review their county statistics, brainstorm ideas that might work in their community, and create an action plan for implementation. Many of these counties have seen a reduction in the relative rate of minority juveniles being referred to the juvenile court. This saves time and money for everyone involved, and research shows that kids have better outcomes when they have less contact with the juvenile court system. The juvenile court can then better focus their attention on those kids with the more serious needs. A description of the process can be found here. (DMC Process Outline)