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**Reducing  
Disproportionate  
Minority  
Confinement:  
The Multnomah County,  
Oregon Success Story  
and its Implications**

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## **Reducing Disproportionate Minority Confinement: The Multnomah County, Oregon Success Story and its Implications<sup>1</sup>**

### **Introduction: Why Do We Need to Focus on Disproportionate Minority Confinement in Juvenile Detention?**

An effective juvenile justice system that meets the twin goals of public safety and providing youth with opportunities to have a crime-free life will minimize the inappropriate pre-trial detention of youth. While youth with serious delinquency histories or young people who are arrested for the most violent crimes need to be detained to keep the community safe, the vast majority of youth in a detention center are awaiting trial for non-violent acts, and many should not be held in locked custody.

It is impossible to talk about juvenile detention reform without talking about disproportionate minority confinement. The number of youth held in secure detention nationwide increased by 72% from 1985 to 1995. During this period, the proportion of detention populations made up of white youth dropped and minority youth came to represent a majority of the young people detained. Between 1983 and 1997, the overall youth detention population increased by 47%, but the detained white youth population increased by 21%, while the detained minority youth population grew by 76%.<sup>2</sup> This means that 80% of the increase in youth being detained during these years were minority youth—or put another way, 4 out of 5 new youth detained during this 15-year period were youth of color. Recent research by the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (OJJDP) and the *Building Blocks for Youth* initiative have documented the scale at which minority youth are affected by policies that have expanded the use of juvenile detention:

- Of the 105,790 youth in juvenile detention facilities prior to adjudication or committed to state juvenile correctional facilities following adjudication in 1997, minority youth represented 63% even though they only represent 34% of the total youth population in the United States. White youth represented 71% of the youth arrested for crimes nationwide, but only 37% of detained or committed youth.<sup>3</sup>
- In 1997-98, African American youth represented 15% of the total youth population, but 26% of the youth arrested, 31% of the youth referred to juvenile court and 44% of the youth detained.<sup>4</sup>

By 1997, in 30 out of 50 states (which contain 83% of the U.S. population) minority youth represented the majority of youth in detention. Even in states with tiny ethnic and racial minority populations, (like Minnesota, where the general population is 90% white, and Pennsylvania, where the general population is 85% white) more than half of the detention population are youth of color. In 1997, OJJDP found that in every state in the country (with the exception of Vermont), the minority population of detained youth exceeded their proportion in the general population.<sup>5</sup>

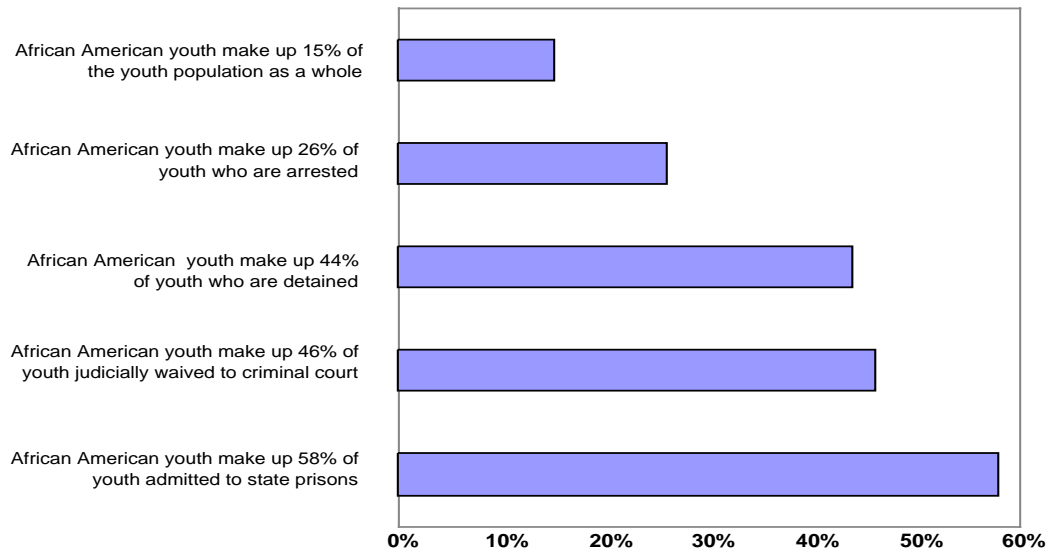
Because detention is a key entry point from which youth further penetrate the juvenile justice system, decisions made at detention can have a profound impact on disproportionality – for better or worse. Both aggregate national and individual state data show that racial disparities increase at every stage of the juvenile justice process. For example, when white youth and African American youth with no prior admissions to public facilities were charged with the same offenses, African American youth were six times more likely to be incarcerated than white youth. Latino youth were three times more likely than white youth to be incarcerated. In 1997, minority youth comprised 46% of the youth transferred by the judicial system to adult criminal court, and 58% of the youth admitted to state prisons. Three out of four youth admitted to a state prison in 1997 were minority.<sup>6</sup> If disparities in detention could be reduced, these subsequent disparities should also decline.

Since the increase in juvenile detention utilization was fueled almost wholly by the increased incarceration of minority youth, any strategy designed to reduce the number of young people detained must address race, and the “race effect” that researchers say follow racial and ethnic minorities as they travel through the justice system. Juvenile detention reform efforts must reflect the reality that minority youth bear the brunt of policies which lead to arresting, processing, detaining, adjudicating and imprisoning of young people.

This policy brief will review the work done in one jurisdiction that has succeeded in reducing the

number of minority youth detained pre-trial, summarize the lessons learned from innovations in Multnomah County, Oregon, and highlight their national significance. While the more general nationwide picture on reducing racial disparity in the juvenile justice system may seem rather gloomy, Multnomah County’s success story provides inspiration for communities looking to create a more efficient and fairer juvenile justice system.

**Figure 1: The Proportion of African American Youth Increases at Every Stage of Involvement in the Justice System**



**Source:** Yamagata, Eileen Poe and Michael A. Jones. *And Justice for Some: Differential Treatment of Minority Youth in the Justice System*. Washington, DC: Building Blocks for Youth, April, 2000.

**Attempts to Reduce Disparity in Detention.**

For the last decade, the Annie E. Casey Foundation’s Juvenile Detention Alternatives Initiative (JDAI) has worked with communities to strategize tactics to reduce disproportionate minority confinement of youth in the detention system. To be considered “successful” in DMC reduction, juvenile justice agencies have to accomplish two measurable goals: (1) reduce the rates at which minority youth are detained (2) reduce the number of minority youth in detention (at a point in time and over time).

To achieve these two objectives, a community would have to pursue both explicit DMC reduction strategies, and combine these strategies with other methods of making their detention system more efficient in only detaining youth that truly represent a risk to public safety, and moving youth

**Defining The Problem:**  
**Disproportionate Minority Confinement in Detention.**

*Admissions:* After a juvenile is arrested and processed by the police, he or she may be “admitted” to the detention system. At the admissions stage (or thereafter), a youth may be referred to detention or to alternative to detention programs.

*Detention:* A form of locked custody of youth pre-trial who are arrested —juvenile detention centers are the juvenile justice system’s version of “jail,” in which most young people are being held before the court has judged them delinquent. Some youth in detention are there because they fail the conditions of their probation or parole, or they may be waiting in detention before their final disposition (ie. sentence to a community program).

*Disproportionate Minority Confinement:* A condition that exists when a racial/ethnic group’s representation in confinement exceeds their representation in the general population.

*Disparity:* Different treatment of individuals who are similarly situated or who have common characteristics.

*Minority:* An individual who is of a race other than white or who is of Latino ethnicity, regardless of race. These groups are considered minority within the U.S. context.

*Discrimination:* Occurs if and when juvenile justice decisionmakers treat one group of juveniles differently from another group of juveniles based wholly or in part on their gender, racial, and/or ethnic status.

*Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention Act Mandate (JJDP A):* Since 1988, the Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention Act has required states that receive funding under the Act to determine whether the proportion of juvenile minorities in confinement exceeds their proportion in the general population. The Act was amended by Congress in 1992 to make it a “core requirement” that states demonstrate they are making efforts to reduce DMC.

*Source:* *Youth Crime/Adult Time*, Building Blocks for Youth (October 2000). “Minorities in the Juvenile Justice System.” *Juvenile Justice Bulletin*. Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention. (December, 1999)

## WHY ARE YOUTH OF COLOR DISPROPORTIONATELY DETAINED?

- 1. Overrepresentation in detention is one of a number of categories where minority youth are worse off than white youth.** Minority youth have less access to good education and are more likely to come from families that are economically marginalized through high rates of unemployment.
- 2. While white youth and minority youth commit several categories of crime at the same rate, minority youth are more likely to be arrested.** White youth self-reported using heroin and cocaine at 7 times the rate of African American youth, but African American youth are almost three times as likely to be arrested for a drug crime.<sup>7</sup> Policing practices, like the targeting of minority neighborhoods, may have the unintended consequence of arresting disproportionately more minority youth.
- 3. White youth have access to better legal representation, who more vigorously advocate for their release.** White youth are twice as likely as African American youth to retain private counsel.<sup>8</sup> Youth represented by private attorneys are less likely to be convicted and less likely to be tried as adults than youth represented by either public defenders or appointed counsel.
- 4. White youth have better access to programs and services in the community that minority youth.** In getting minority youth treatment and services they need in their communities court officials often lack the option they have for white youth. Court officials will sometimes detain minority youth because they think it is the only place they will get treatment.<sup>9</sup> African Americans—who make up 33% of all drug youth drug arrests—only represent 17% of the youth admitted to state-funded drug treatment programs, while whites are generally represented in the portion they are arrested.<sup>10</sup>
- 5. People involved in the decision to detain a youth may bring stereotypes to their decision.** One study shows that people charged with the decision of holding youth pre-trial are more likely to say a white youth's crimes are a product of their environment (i.e. broken home), while they say that an African American youth's delinquency is caused by their personal failings—even when youth of different races are arrested for similar offenses and have similar offense histories.<sup>11</sup>

quickly through the system to other kinds of treatment and punishment. To make the detention system more efficient and effective and to detain fewer youth, the following “core” detention strategies were recommended by JDAI for communities trying to reform their juvenile justice systems:

- 1) Objective admissions screening instruments**
- 2) New or enhanced alternatives-to-detention programs**
- 3) Expedited case processing to reduce lengths of stay, and**
- 4) New policies and practices for probation violations, warrants and “awaiting placement” cases**

JDAI’s designers believed that if sites developed objective, risk-based approaches to decide who would be admitted to detention, the large number of low and medium-risk youth common in most detention center populations would be reduced. These youngsters would be served by community-based, non-secure options. By moving cases through the courts more quickly, lengths of stay would be reduced and program slots would turn over more quickly (therefore, allowing more youth to participate). Developing non-custodial sanctions for rule violators, new categories of warrants that did not mandate detention, and more efficient placement techniques would all work to reduce bed occupancy. If sites were successful in implementing these core strategies, the reasoning went, they should see reductions in the number of youth of color in their detention facilities simply as a function of overall decreases in utilization. (This was not a radical assumption, since the proportion of youth of color in these facilities was so high.)

At the same time, however, Foundation staff warned that in other places, detention reform had actually increased the percentage of minority youth in detention because the first to benefit from the reforms were white youth. It was necessary, therefore, for sites to go beyond the core strategies and to develop DMC-specific ones that would maximize the likelihood that racial disparities could be reduced. JDAI also recommended explicit strategies that could help reduce the number of minority youth detained. The ten DMC-specific strategies suggested were:

- 1) Formulate a vision and related policy goals for reducing DMC**
- 2) Create structures (e.g., task forces) charged with sustaining a focus on DMC**
- 3) Collect data and conduct research to document where disparity occurs**
- 4) Build coalitions and alliances with communities and people of color**
- 5) Diversify the composition of the system’s work force**
- 6) Diversify the service delivery system by contracting with organizations located in and managed by people of color**
- 7) Provide cultural and racial sensitivity training for staff at all levels of every agency of the system**

- 8) **Minimize opportunities for discriminatory decisions by creating objective instruments and guidelines free of racial bias**
- 9) **Improve defense representation to increase advocacy for youth of color**
- 10) **Change the policies and practices of other systems (e.g., mental health, child welfare) to prevent “dumping” youth better served by those systems into secure detention**

Since many of the reasons for DMC are beyond the direct reach of the juvenile justice system, it is easy to “get lost” in the complex global and historical issues that cause disparity. Yet, the lessons learned in Multnomah County have taught the field how to begin to address the web of issues connected to DMC.

Of all the JDAI sites, Multnomah County probably had the biggest head start in thinking about and

**Multnomah County, Oregon**

**Census Context:**

In 2000, Multnomah’s youth population was 74% white, 10 % African American, 8% Asian, 6% Latino, and 2% Native American.

**Detention Context:**

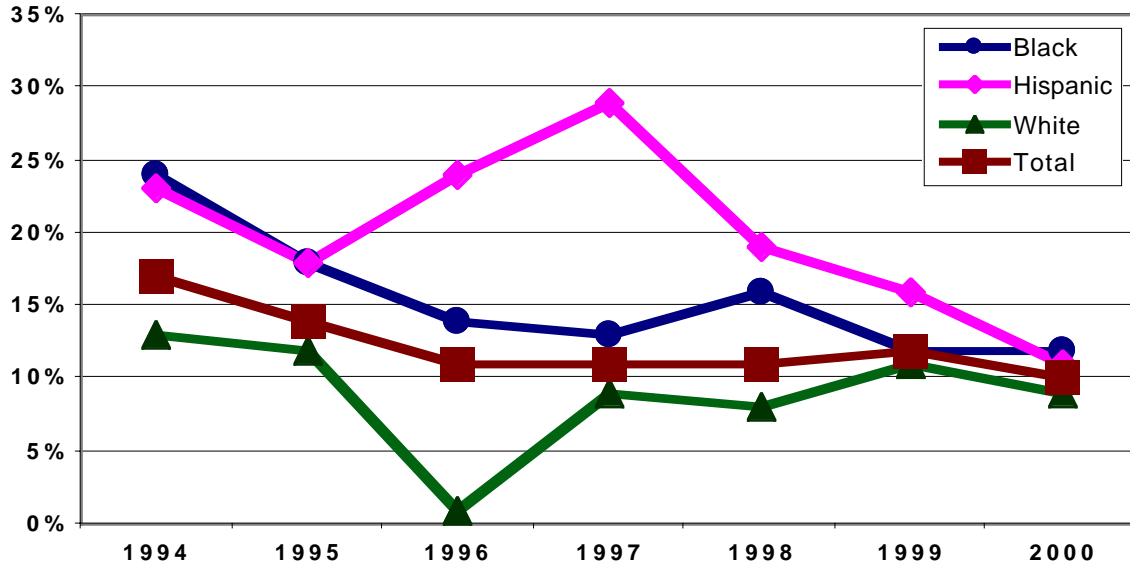
In 2000, whites were 60% of admissions, African Americans were 26%, Asians were 4%, Latinos were 8.5%, and Native Americans were 1%.

acting on racial disparities in its juvenile justice system. Oregon had been chosen as one of five places to be studied extensively following passage of the JJDP A DMC mandate. Professor William Feyerherm, of Portland State University, one of the country’s most cited experts on this issue, was locally-based and accessible to system officials seeking data or its accurate analysis. As a consequence of having this national light shined on it, the system’s officials had begun talking about reducing these disparities prior to JDAI. For example, major efforts had already been initiated to diversify the work force and to build programmatic linkages with community organizations. Multnomah County was the only jurisdiction visited by the Casey Foundation’s JDAI-site selection committee to present data on DMC and to consider it a priority problem.

Perhaps because of this headstart, Multnomah’s efforts to reduce disparity in its juvenile detention system was the most successful and had the most measurable impact of any of the JDAI sites.



Figure 2: In Multnomah County, the proportion of youth detained dropped for all races. The proportion of Multnomah County referrals that resulted in actual detention, by race and ethnicity



Source: Keir, Scott. Et al. *Juvenile Minority Over-Representation in Multnomah County's Department of Community Justice: Final Report for 2000 (1990-99)*. Portland, Oregon: Department of Community Justice, 2001

Despite continued overrepresentation of minorities in detention, particularly as compared to their representation in the general public, Multnomah is emerging as a national model in the area of reducing disparate treatment of minorities in the juvenile justice system. JDAI participants in Multnomah took very deliberate steps to reduce disparate treatment as part of their detention reform efforts, and the detention reform leadership focused on making DMC reduction a key feature of each reform strategy.

### Multnomah Strategies to Reduce DMC

A 1993 analysis of Oregon's data by J. P. Heuser<sup>12</sup> found that detention processing and police referrals were major factors contributing to overrepresentation in Multnomah County. Indeed, in the years prior to the detention reform initiative, the county had made much greater use of detention and racial disparities were far higher. In 1994, there was an average daily population of 60 pre-adjudicatory youth in The Donald E. Long Home (Multnomah's secure detention facility). By 2000, that number (including youth who had to be held due to mandatory minimum laws) had fallen to 33. The "detention gap" between white and minority youth was substantial prior to the initiation of JDAI. In 1990, Latino youth were more than twice as likely to be detained as white

youth (34% vs. 15%) and Asians, African Americans, and Native Americans were detained at rates that were 47% - 60% higher than white youth.

*“disproportionality  
flourishes in  
a sloppy  
system”*

In response to these data, Multnomah County initially set up a Disproportionate Minority Confinement Committee, chaired by Presiding Juvenile Court Judge Linda Bergman, with membership from the police department, district attorney, public schools, county commission, juvenile justice department (i.e., probation), and Portland State University. Its objectives were to make fair and equitable decisions about police custody and detention and to ensure that system resources were accessible, culturally relevant, and appropriately used for all racial and ethnic communities. For a variety of reasons, including two major leadership changes, this committee became inactive, leaving behind virtually no real legacy. However, once leadership within the system’s agencies had stabilized, the larger policy-making collaborative assumed responsibility for making sure that reduction of racial disparities was a key part of juvenile detention reform. Rick Jensen, Multnomah’s JDAI Project Coordinator, noted that DMC issues proved to be more effectively pursued in the context of comprehensive reforms (and, therefore, under the purview of the policy-making collaborative) because “disproportionality flourishes in a sloppy system.”

As with much of Multnomah’s successful detention reform initiative, efforts to reduce disproportionate minority confinement were data driven. According to Judge Bergman, “once we had real data, we were able to move from anecdotal information to data-based strategies, because now we knew how real the problem was.” Multnomah had advantages in this regard because, as noted earlier, Portland State University Professor William H. Feyerherm consulted with Multnomah’s JDAI. The Multnomah Department of Community Justice (as the probation agency is now known) also had a relatively large staff deployed to operate its automated data collection system and to provide some analyses.

As Multnomah’s policy-making collaborative developed detention reform strategies, they examined each to ensure that it addressed racial disparities. First, Multnomah JDAI established a series of detention alternatives that were accessible to youth of color. These included shelter care, foster homes, home detention, and a day reporting center. These programs were contracted out to local providers located in the communities of color where the majority of detained youth lived. They were established both as alternatives to admission to detention and to divert youth from being

returned to custody for violating terms of their release. According to Dr. Feyerherm, “by using providers who were engaged with youth in these communities, not only would the location make them more available to the youth, but also it was hoped that the youth who might need additional social services would be placed in contact with agencies and persons who could provide those services.”<sup>13</sup>

*In an area in which there are precious few models, Multnomah’s success is significant.*

Concurrent with the development of detention alternatives, Multnomah carefully developed a risk assessment instrument (RAI) to guide admission decisions, introducing it only after more than a year of discussion and pilot testing. A cross-agency team, including representatives from the judiciary, public defenders, prosecutors, probation, detention system personnel, school officials and researchers, developed the instrument. “The objective,” in the words of the public defender’s representative, “was not to eliminate the use of detention, but rather to make sure the ‘right kids’ were detained.”<sup>14</sup>

Because reducing racial disparities was an explicit priority, the committee that developed the RAI was careful to evaluate its individual elements through the lens of race. For example, instead of relying on criteria like “good family structure,” which might be biased toward intact, nuclear families and, therefore, against minority youth, the instrument asks whether there is an adult willing to be responsible for assuring the youth’s appearance in court. Likewise, the RAI dropped references to “gang affiliation” that might be biased against youth of color who are often characterized in this manner simply by virtue of where they live. Instead of exclusively using “school attendance” as a mitigating factor, the concept was expanded to include “productive activity.” Both were considered good indices of appropriateness for community placement while, for a variety of reasons, the narrower “school attendance” criterion might have skewed the RAI to the detriment of youth of color.<sup>15</sup>

The creation of a new detention intake team was critical to successful implementation of the RAI and effective utilization of detention alternatives in reducing DMC and detention rates. The team consisted of six to seven intake workers overseen by a “pretrial placement coordinator” (PPC). Each day, the team reviewed every single youth in detention, their risk assessment scores, their case status, and their amenability for community based alternatives. The PPC did quality control checks on a daily basis to insure that youth were being processed expeditiously and that staff were faithfully adhering to the RAI. This provided a level of quality control quite unique for public bureaucracies. If one worker, for example, was overriding the RAI at a significantly higher rate than other workers, or at a significantly higher rate for minorities than for whites, that pattern would be noted and could be addressed immediately. The result of this level of swift and consistent oversight was

substantial compliance with the system’s reform efforts. “While we saw some effect from the creation of the risk assessment instrument initially,” stated Rick Jensen, “the impact wasn’t really maximized until we created a system of internal accountability. Then, the reforms really began to kick in.”

Another key detention reform strategy was the development of a new system for dealing with the 20-30% of admissions who were probation violators (also known as VOPs, violators of parole).<sup>16</sup> Prior to JDAI, Multnomah County detained many youth who violated probation, often inconsistently and frequently without regard to the risks or needs posed by the youth. To reduce the use of detention for VOPs, and to minimize staff inconsistencies, the county developed and implemented a sanctions grid for its community supervision staff to follow. The grid provided a range of sanctions (including things like, a warning, community service, re-admission to the detention system) to be used depending on the seriousness of the violation and the youth’s overall risk status. Officers could choose among specific options, but they could not go outside the grid’s ranges. Moreover, line staff could not place youth in detention for a VOP without having first tried other sanctions. Finally, decisions to detain VOP cases now have to be approved by the supervisor and by an alternative placement committee. The new sanctions grid immediately reduced the detention population.

***Only 12% of African Americans, 11% of Latinos, and 9% of whites brought to intake ended up being detained, and the average daily population of the detention center dropped from 60 in 1995 to 33 in 2000.***

Several other explicit DMC strategies also had an impact on the changes that occurred in Multnomah. For example, defense representation of indigent youth was enhanced by hiring four half-time trial assistants to help attorneys improve the pretrial placement planning for juveniles. They assisted lawyers by obtaining the lists of children who were scheduled for preliminary hearings and by obtaining discovery about the youth and his/her charges prior to the hearing. They also helped public defenders identify the strengths and resources a child may have in the community and appropriate community-based programs for youth. Trial assistants attended pre-trial placement planning meetings, where all the stakeholders – the district attorney, defender, probation and others—made decisions about the appropriate placement of youth scheduled for preliminary hearings. The trial assistants played an important role in equalizing the defender’s access to information that the prosecutor and probation already possessed. This enhanced representation resulted in a significant increase in the use of alternatives for youth who would have otherwise faced secure detention. Given that minority youth are more likely to be represented by public defenders or appointed counsel,

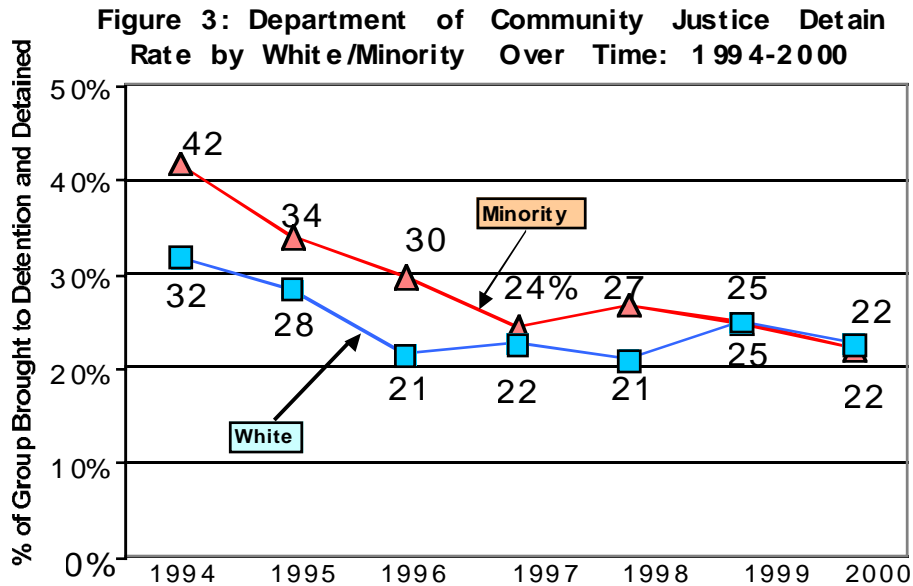
and that those represented by overburdened indigent defenders receive more restrictive outcomes than those represented by retained counsel, enhancing indigent defense may well have played a role in leveling the legal system's playing field.

The probation department also sought to diversify its staff. According to Rick Jensen, in the early 1990s, the Chief of the Juvenile Probation Department (which is today called the Department of Community Justice), Harold Ogburn, made a determined and successful effort to "make the department look like the community." Like most of the other systems affecting delinquent youth, (courts, prosecution and defense), probation, prior to JDAI, was largely staffed by whites. By the time JDAI started, the staff of the probation department reflected the demographic diversity of Multnomah County, a factor that facilitated efforts to achieve parity in treatment.

*Multnomah is emerging as a national model in the area of reducing disparate treatment of minorities in the juvenile justice system.*

The JDAI leadership also worked in coalition with police. Portland established a community policing effort that brought law enforcement into contact with youthful offenders in a different way than the more traditional policing approach. Commander Robert Kauffman, who for a time was in charge of training community police officers, incorporated the Juvenile Detention Alternatives Initiative efforts into his curriculum, so new community police officers were educated in detention reform efforts from the outset. Training community police officers in the goals of the JDAI, in turn, helped divert a lot of youth from ever being referred to the juvenile justice system.

How did these reforms affect detention utilization overall, and racial disparities in particular? In 1993, the average daily detention population in Multnomah County was 92. By 1995, when the RAI was put into effect, the average daily detention population began dropping, despite the group of youth being held on "Ballot Measure 11" (i.e., transfer to adult court) charges, for which detention is mandatory. By 2000, the average daily population had been reduced to 33. In 1994, there was an 11-percentage point difference between African Americans (24%) and whites (13%) in the likelihood that an arrested youth would be detained at some point in his or her case. Between Latinos (23%) and whites, the difference was 10%. By 1995, this detention "gap" dropped to six percentage points for both African Americans and Latinos. The differentials dropped still further by 2000, to 3 percentage points for African Americans (12% v. 9% for white) and to 2 percentage points for Latinos (11%). (See Figure 3.)



Source: Multnomah Department of Criminal Justice, 2001.

In addition to having a significant impact on reducing disproportionality, Multnomah County’s detention reform strategies had an extraordinary overall impact on reducing the number of detention admissions. Between 1994 and 2000, the number of youth admitted to detention dropped by half for all youth (from 1107 in 1994, to 478 in 2000), and by half for both African American and Hispanic youth.

It appears, therefore, that the core detention strategies described above (detention alternatives, reducing delays in the system, the development of risk assessment tools), in conjunction with explicit DMC strategies and an overall focus on reducing disparities, had the intended impact of reducing disproportionate minority confinement in Multnomah County.

These successes are more notable because the strategies were implemented during a time when local concerns over youth crime and immigration might have worked against reform in general, and reducing racial disparities in particular. In the mid-1990s, the state was whipped into a frenzy over youth crime through the campaign for Ballot Measure 11, an initiative passed overwhelmingly by Oregon voters, which mandated that youth charged with certain very serious crimes be tried as adults. All youth charged under Ballot Measure 11 had to be held prior to trial.

Amongst the youth held under that law, there continues to be substantial disparity in the use of detention. Even though the county's youth population is three-quarters white, youth of color comprise the majority detained under this new law (African Americans, who are just 10% of the youth population, are 43% of Ballot Measure 11 admissions to detention). Even though they are in the adult court system for trial, these youth are still housed in the Donald E. Long Home, adding about 15 youth to the facility's population on an average day. While many of these youth may have been detained without Ballot Measure 11, some would not.

Along with youth crime, fears and concerns over immigration were heightened in Oregon, as they were on the rest of the West Coast, during the early 1990s. With the highly publicized passage of California's Proposition 187 – an initiative that disqualified undocumented residents from attending public schools or using public hospitals – fear of immigrants reached a high point in 1994. Prior to 2000, the Donald E. Long Home also detained youth on Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS) holds, a factor that partly explains why disparities for Latino youth were consistently higher than other disparities. Last year, the Department of Community Justice declined to renew its contract with INS, and in the intervening period, the proportion of referred Latino youth who ended up in pre-trial detention declined by 31%.

Multnomah's success in reducing overall reliance on detention, and racial disparities in secure confinement in particular, during a time of intense concern over youth crime and immigration makes their achievements all the more impressive.

## **Conclusion: The Multnomah Success Story.**

Professor Feyerherm cited three factors as contributing to Multnomah County's successful efforts to reduce racial disparities in detention utilization:

- (1) the development of alternatives to detention
- (2) training sessions addressing and raising awareness about overrepresentation
- (3) the design and implementation of a risk assessment instrument<sup>17</sup>

Additionally, rigorous oversight, improvements in case processing and enhanced defender services assured that all of the above factors were used to make the system more efficient and, ultimately, fairer.

It is difficult to assess what any one detention reform strategy (alternatives to incarceration, objective risk assessments, expedited case processing, sanctions grid for VOPs) or explicit DMC reduction



strategy (diversity training, additional public defender resources, staff diversification, data collection and research, new coalitions with other agencies and groups, diversification of the delivery system) made the difference in Multnomah. But it is safe to say that somewhere in that stew of detention reforms—both general and DMC-specific—a combination was found that produced results greater than the sum of its parts.

It seems important to remember that Multnomah’s DMC committee was not as effectual as the larger, more authoritative detention reform policy collaborative that took DMC reduction on as one of its central goals. The fact that DMC reduction became the focus of the initiative’s leaders, instead of a sub-committee, sent both a broad message about values and ensured that core detention reform strategies would always be examined with racial sensitivity.

The county’s efforts to raise cultural awareness occurred simultaneously with the creation of real alternatives to detention and other mechanisms (e.g. risk assessment screening, additional resources for public defense, streamlining case processing) that actually had an impact on DMC. The synergy of awareness-raising and action had more of an impact than cultural awareness could have on its own, and may have put some “teeth” into efforts to heighten sensitivity.

Finally, Multnomah had superior data-driven research tools to draw upon as a basis for discussion, which may have reduced defensiveness among system players. Not only did Multnomah have data analysis conducted through OJJDP, but it had William Feyerherm on board early to cement the importance of data analysis and data-driven solutions. Since 1997, the DCJ has had a full-time research and evaluation specialist with a background in methodological techniques, who was able to measure the county’s progress in juvenile detention reform.

The combined impact of these detention reform strategies and explicit DMC reduction strategies bore impressive results, both in terms of an improved detention system overall, and in the substantial reduction of disproportionate minority confinement in Multnomah County. In an area in which there are precious few models, Multnomah’s success is significant.

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## Endnotes

<sup>1</sup>The authors of this policy brief are Vincent Schirali and Jason Ziedenberg, with the Justice Policy Institute. This policy brief was prepared for and release at the Annie E. Casey Foundations' 2<sup>nd</sup> National Training Conference on Juvenile Detention Reform in Portland, Oregon, September 21, 2001. For more information on Casey's JDAI program, please visit [www.aecf.org/](http://www.aecf.org/)

<sup>2</sup>Numbers of youth detained from, Sickmund, Melissa and Snyder, Howard. *Juvenile Offenders and Victims: 1997 Update on Violence—Statistical Summary*. Washington, D.C.: Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, 1997; Sickmund, Melissa and Snyder, Howard. *Juvenile Offenders and Victims: 1999 National Report*. Washington, D.C.: Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, 2000.

<sup>3</sup> Jones, Michael and Poe-Yamagata, Eileen. *And Justice For Some*. Washington, D.C.: Building Blocks for Youth, 2000.

<sup>4</sup> Jones and Poe-Yamagata, 2000.

<sup>5</sup> Snyder, Howard et al. *Easy Access to Juvenile Court Statistics: 1988-1997* [data presentation and analysis package]. Pittsburgh, PA: National Center for Juvenile Justice [producer]. Washington, D.C.: Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention [distributor], 1999.

<sup>6</sup> Jones and Poe-Yamagata, 2000.

<sup>7</sup> Jones and Poe-Yamagata, 2000. *U.S. Population Estimates by Age, Sex, Race, and Hispanic Origin: 1980-1999*. Population Estimates Program, Population Divisions, U.S. Census Bureau, 2000.; *Monitoring the Future Report, 1975-1999*, Volume I. Washington DC: National Institute on Drug Abuse, 2000.

<sup>8</sup> The sample includes only youth tried as adults, in 18 large metropolitan centers selected for study. Juskiewicz, Jolanta. *Youth Crime/Adult Time: Is Justice Served?* Washington, D.C.: Building Blocks for Youth, 2000.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid.

<sup>10</sup> Of 145,084 youth (aged 0-17) admitted to drug treatment programs in 1998, 100,145 were white, and 25,071 were African American. *Treatment Episode Data Set, 1998*. Substance Abuse and Mental Health Service Administration, Office of Applied Studies: Washington, D.C, 1998.

<sup>11</sup> Bridges, George S. and Sara Steen. "Racial Disparities in Official Assessments of Juvenile Offenders: Attributional Stereotypes as Mediating Mechanisms." *American Sociological Review*. Volume 63, 1998.

<sup>12</sup> J.P. Heuser, *Final Research Report on Phase I of Oregon's Participation in the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention Disproportionate Minority Confinement Program*. Report to Oregon Community Children and Youth Services Commission, 1993.

<sup>13</sup> Feyerherm, William H., Detention Reform and Overrepresentation: A Successful Synergy, *Corrections Management Quarterly*, 2000, 4(1), 44-51, Aspen Publishers, Inc.

<sup>14</sup> Feyerherm, 2000.

<sup>15</sup> Feyerherm, 2000.

<sup>16</sup> For more information, see the Annie E. Casey Foundation Publication , Pathway #9: *Special Detention Cases..*

<sup>17</sup> Feyerherm, 2000.

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