

IN THIS ISSUE:

- Message from the Executive Director
- Disproportionate Minority Contact: Where are we now?
- Legislative Updates
- Connecting the Dots: Eliminating the School to Prison Pipeline

Executive Director: Arnold Dennis

SUMMER 2013

Message from the Executive Director

Greeting & welcome to the Summer issue of the Juvenile Justice Institute (JJI) newsletter. JJI's primary goal is the promotion and exchange of information to facilitate prevention, intervention and reduction of juvenile crime in N.C. It is, therefore, appropriate to share with you a few of activities JJI has been involved in during the year.

The Durham JCPC established a DMC subcommittee whose sole responsibility was to try to reduce the rates of minority over representation in the juvenile justice system. JJI was asked to serve on that subcommittee. One of the committee's first interventions was for JJI to develop a Family & Community Resource Manual that could be used, when appropriate, as an alternative to referrals to the Juvenile Court. This resource manual has been made available to law enforcement, the courts, schools and other agencies that serve trouble youth in Durham County. In addition, JJI worked with this subcommittee to plan a very successful conference on DMC in February 2013, and to partner with the juvenile court to develop modules to train administrative staff, SRO's, social workers and guidance counselors in the Durham Public Schools.

During 2011-12 JJI also conducted an exploratory study of 10 school districts to establish if there was a connection between, school suspensions, referrals to juvenile court and its impact on DMC. The school districts were cooperative and interested in improving their suspension rates, referral to juvenile court and their impact in DMC. The article in this newsletter gives a synopsis of this exploratory study.

So that you are aware of new legislation that is being developed on juvenile, two important pieces of legislation which could have a profound impact on youth and how we handle them in the juvenile justice system is also mentioned in this edition (House Bill 217 and House Bill 725). Please check your NC Legislative website to find out more about these important bills.

This brief newsletter is meant to inform juvenile justice practitioners, administrators, those in academia and the general public about contemporary juvenile justice issues. We hope this information triggers your interest to better understand the important challenges being faced in the juvenile justice arena. We will continue to keep you informed of important juvenile issues as they occur and hope you will partner with us as we find working solutions to the challenges facing children in North Carolina.



JUVENILE JUSTICE INSTITUTE

Dept. of Criminal Justice
North Carolina Central University
1801 Fayetteville St.
208 Whiting Criminal Justice Bldg.
Durham, NC 27707
919-530-7092

Disproportionate Minority Contact: Where are we now?

Since the 1960s it has been acknowledged that a disproportionate number of minorities are involved in the juvenile justice system; unfortunately, this problem still persists today. In North Carolina 89 of our 100 counties have a Relative Rate Index (RRI)* for black juveniles greater than 1 which indicates some level of disproportionate representation in juvenile complaints during 2011-2012. The RRI rates differ by county and range from 0 to 43 with a statewide average of 3.

The Juvenile Justice Institute is working with the Durham County JCPC on efforts to reduce DMC. A successful conference on DMC was held in February 2013 and another conference will be forthcoming. JJI is also partnering with the juvenile court in Durham to develop modules to

train administrative staff, SRO's, social workers and guidance counselors in the Durham Public Schools. The purpose of the modules is to educate school staff about DMC and court operations so that their referrals to the Juvenile Court will be more appropriate. This training will be done in September 2013.

The problem of disproportionate minority contact has long-term implications on the future of minority youth in North Carolina. It is critical that communities struggling with DMC devote time and resources to this problem.

*The RRI is a calculation used to point to areas in need of more intensive examination of DMC.



*"We cannot always build
the future for our youth,
but we can build our
youth for the future."
~ Franklin D. Roosevelt ~*



Legislative Updates

HB 217, transfer of jurisdiction of juvenile to superior court, provides for the transfer of juveniles age 15 and older to adult court upon recommendation by the prosecutor for B1-B2 felonies.

On a positive note the Youth Offenders Rehabilitation Act (HB 725) has been introduced in the NC House to raise the age of juvenile jurisdiction from 16 to 18 for mis-

Connecting the Dots: Addressing the School to Prison Pipeline

The Juvenile Justice Institute completed a year long exploratory study examining Disproportionate Minority Contact (DMC) related issues in school suspensions. The project focused on short-term suspension rates and school disciplinary policies in ten school districts in North Carolina.

The exploratory study sought to establish if there was a connection between, school suspensions, referrals to juvenile court and its impact on DMC. Although no data was found to substantiate connections, JJI felt there were enough questions raised about the relationship of these three areas to warrant further study.

It was indicated that most school administrators uniformly follow district handbook guidelines as opposed to handing disciplinary matters on a case-by-case basis. Factors such as parental involvement and pro-

grams fostering positive school-student interactions were identified as effective practices to reduce suspensions.

Based on this research it is recommended that school districts review district-level data on DMC, re-examine their discipline policies, increase the number of programs fostering positive behavior, provide training to school staff about DMC and the juvenile justice system, and collaborate with community groups to devise a plan to attack the problem.



About Us

The Juvenile Justice Institute conducts research on juvenile justice issues and uses the findings to help North Carolina policy makers and practitioners make well-informed policy and program decisions to reduce juvenile crime and improve the juvenile justice system.

In addition, the Institute focuses on assisting public agencies to incorporate evidence-based knowledge and practices into new and existing programs in order to improve performance and outcomes. Our approach stresses the relevance of linking theory to practice, and consequently bridging the gap between science and service