

Introduction to Institutional Analysis Findings Matrix

Fairfax County Human Service agencies, including the Court Services Unit (CSU) of the Juvenile and Domestic Relations District Court, have been addressing disproportionality in their services for a number of years. With the help of funding from the Virginia Department of Criminal Justice, the CSU was one of the first localities to conduct a study on the extent of DMC (at that time Disproportionate Minority Confinement) at the local level. Since the initial report in 1993, the CSU has continued to monitor the issue and to address DMC at decision points within the local juvenile justice system. We have put in place many of the practices and programs recognized as tools for addressing the issue, including:

- Continuous monitoring of the extent of DMC
- Diversion Hearing and Monitored Diversion programs
- Outreach Detention and electronic monitoring
- An Evening Reporting Center
- A twelve-bed shelter care facility, and
- Two probation houses that serve as alternatives to DJJ placements.

In addition, the CSU worked actively to ensure that our staff is as diverse as possible and staff receive frequent training in cultural diversity. Finally, over the past five years, the CSU has worked hard to implement structured decision making tools in as many decision making points as possible.

Despite our efforts, DMC stubbornly continues, especially at the “front door” of the system. The fact that Black youth are over three times as likely and Hispanic youth are over twice as likely to be referred to juvenile court intake compared to white youth suggests that a different approach to the issue of DMC is needed, one that examines the pathways through which minority youth come to the front door of the juvenile justice system.

The Institutional Analysis (IA) broadens the discussion beyond the juvenile justice silo and moves beyond monitoring the extent of DMC and addressing the issue with a program. The IA includes representatives from the surrounding systems. The focus of the Analysis is **not** on individual judges, police, probation officers or social workers but rather the focus is on the institutional administrative and conceptual practices that produce poor outcomes for families. By asking how something comes about, rather than looking at the individual who is doing it, the Analysis process reveals systemic problems and produces recommendations for longer-lasting change.

It involves training and forming an investigation team, consulting with a local advisory group, mapping key decision points not only in the juvenile and domestic relations court system but also in the police and schools, and collecting and analyzing data. Findings are compiled and any recommendations are directed toward institutional changes aimed at keeping youth out of the formal court system and in the community whenever safely possible and in providing adequate interventions that result in better outcomes for youth.