

An Assessment of Disproportionate Minority Contact for Juvenile Division,
Common Pleas Court of Clark County

Cheryl L. Meyer, Ph.D., J.D.
CLM Program Evaluation
P.O. Box 615
Yellow Springs, OH 45387
cmeyer@clmevaluation.com
www.clmevaluation.com

Tom Wilson, J.D.
Court Administrator
Clark County Juvenile Court

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I. Overview

This assessment report on disproportionate minority contact (DMC) in Clark County focuses on referrals to juvenile court in 2007. The relative rate indexes (RRI) for Clark County and for the city of Springfield are in Table 1. The relative rate index compares the “volume (rate) of activity at each major stage of the juvenile justice system for minority youth with the volume of that activity for white (majority) youth” (OJJDP, 2006). Clark County elected to focus on 2007 because these were the most current statistics. In addition, Clark County targeted the city of Springfield.

All decision points are addressed in this report except transfer to adult court. There were so few juveniles transferred to adult court in Clark County generally, and in the City of Springfield specifically, that it was difficult to determine any underlying causes or factors.

Data reflecting juvenile arrests for the city of Springfield was unavailable for 2007 but for Clark County the RRI was 5.98 and was significant. DMC continues upon referrals, with an RRI of 3.74 for Clark County and 2.31 for the city of Springfield. However, in terms of the next decision point, cases diverted, the RRI indicates there is no DMC in the city of Springfield and for Clark County. In terms of the next decision point, cases involving secure detention, there is DMC within Clark County but not in the city of Springfield. In both the city of Springfield and Clark County there is no DMC for cases petitioned, but there is for Clark County for cases resulting in delinquent findings. There is disproportionate contact in probation placement for Clark County, but it is in favor of minority youth. Finally, there is disproportionate contact in cases resulting in confinement for both Clark County but again it is in favor of minority youth. Since the

only area for DMC in the city of Springfield was cases referred to juvenile court, it is the focus of this report.

II. Assessment Method

The first phase of the assessment process involved the establishment of a coalition. The coalition first began forming in the fall of 2007 in conjunction with training opportunities provided by the Ohio Department of Youth Services. By the spring of 2008, a coalition comprised of representatives from the Clark County Juvenile Court, the Clark County Detention Center, the Springfield Police Department, the Clark County Family and Children First Council and local churches was in place, with monthly meetings beginning in May, 2008 (see Appendix F for the Coalition Roster).

The second phase of the assessment process involved a re-calculation of the Relative Rate Index (RRI) after limiting the scope to African American youth within the city of Springfield. African American youth were selected as the target population because there were very few referrals to juvenile court of other minority youth in 2007. For example, in all of Clark County the total number of juvenile arrests for Hispanic or Latino youth was 1, while there were 0 juvenile arrests of Asian, Native Hawaiian or other Pacific Islander, American Indian or Alaska Native youth. It was decided to limit the geographic region to Springfield because the coalition wanted to target a specific area and most referrals to juvenile court come from the city of Springfield. In addition, Springfield is Clark County's urban area.

The third phase of the assessment process involved a review of the literature on DMC. In the literature, two main methods have been used to assess DMC. The first method is using a multiple regression analysis to determine what factors weigh into the

juvenile arrests (Pope & Snyder, 2003), intake and adjudication decision making (Leiber, Johnson, Fox & Lacks, 2007), and multiple decision points (Leiber & Fox, 2005). The second method used to assess DMC involves qualitative data collection. Kakar (2006) utilized a focus group/interview design to determine the causes of DMC. Kakar's participants included stakeholders who represented the juvenile justice system and the community and ranged from mental health service providers to school personnel to parents. Clark County decided to use a qualitative approach using individual interviews and a focus group.

Interviews lasted approximately 30-45 minutes and were conducted primarily at the offices of the juvenile court. All interviews were taped to back up the interviewer's notes. In addition, all interviewees signed a consent form (see Appendix B) and were also fully informed about the purpose of the interview through the use of an introductory script (see Appendix C). When the interviews were completed, they were transcribed and coded using a coding sheet (see Appendix D).

In addition, one focus group was conducted with school principals. The same questions were used for the interviews and focus group (see Appendix A), as was a modified consent and introductory script (see Appendices B and C). The focus group was audio taped and there was a facilitator and note taker present.

The interviewees/focus group participants job titles are listed below and the number of people interviewed who had each job title is in parentheses after the title: Probation officer (7), Police (4), School Principal (4), Community Representative (3), Magistrate (2), Detention (2), Juvenile Offender (2), Public Defender (1), Placement Coordinator (1) and Parent (1).

Categorized by department, interviewees/focus group participants represented the following departments: Probation (7), Law Enforcement (4), School (4), Community (3), Parent/Juvenile (3), Judicial (2), Treatment centers/detention facilities (2), Prosecution/PD (1), and Court Employee (1).

There were a total of 23 individual interviews and four participants in the focus group. Fifty-five percent of the interviewees were female and 60% belonged to a minority race.

III. Assessment Results

The RRI was recalculated for the city of Springfield and the results are compared in Table 1 to the results of the RRI for Clark County. As can be seen, the pattern of the RRI is very similar for Clark County and city of Springfield. For example, “Cases referred to juvenile court” is quite high when compared to other numbers at different decision points. In fact, “Cases referred to juvenile court” is the only significant difference for the city of Springfield that is disproportionate in favor of Caucasian youth. Although there is another significant finding for Clark County in “Cases diverted,” that difference is in favor of African American youth. In short, according to the RRI, DMC in the city of Springfield primarily occurs when the cases are referred to juvenile court.

These results were supported by the interview results. When interviewees were asked if DMC occurs in their job, only 12% thought that it did. However, when asked if DMC occurred in other parts of the system, 22% thought that it did. It bears noting that some of the interviewees who said that DMC occurred were tentative in their responses framing them with qualifiers such as “Yes, but it is a socioeconomic issue.” Still when those 5 interviewees who said there was DMC were asked where it is occurring 80% said

the police, 20% said all parts of the system. Of the focus group participants, 50% said they did not think DMC occurred and 50% said they did not know.

Interviewees were also asked to identify factors they consider when making a decision about a youth. The factors were coded and grouped and are presented in Table 2. Since 30% of the interviewees were not in positions where they make decisions about youth directly (for example supervisors or community members) the data was reanalyzed deleting the interviewees who were not in a decision making position. Those results are presented in the second column of Table 2. Fifty percent of the decision maker group was males and 43% belonged to a minority race. As can be seen, with few exceptions, the factors that decision makers considered were almost identical to the factors that the full set of interviewees noted. The top three factors were level of charge, threat to community or themselves, and family situation. The only exception was that 100% of decision makers also considered the juvenile's history with the court.

All four focus group participants were principals and there were three females and three African Americans. Focus group participants were similar to interviewees in the top factors they considered when making a decision. The factors they most often consider were the juvenile's behavioral history at school, level of charge, family situation and the type of help s/he needs. They identified a few other factors they consider including response to previous consequences, history with the court, mental capabilities, and whether the referral will be helpful.

Interviewees were also asked, "If you were able to intervene at any point to try and prevent disproportionate minority contact from occurring, where would you intervene and how?" Their responses to this question were grouped and are presented in

Table 3. The top six areas for intervention identified by interviewees were parent education, empower parents with skills and resources, engage youth in activities that enhance self-esteem and encourage responsibility, community programs, school programs, and encourage parental involvement. The top areas identified by focus group participants mirrored interviewees. They were community programs, parent programs/education, police and court education, encourage parental involvement, empower parents with skills and resources, and engage youth in activities that enhance self-esteem and encourage responsibility.

Some individual interviewees/focus group participants had more specific ideas for intervention. These included Parent project; Have court purchase South High School and provide classes for parents and kids; Counseling; Project Jericho; Teach kids how to be parents; Education on social skills and nutrition in grade schools; Educate families on hygiene, social skills, sex education, safety, drugs/alcohol; Programs that teach kids how their behavior got them/family/community in trouble; In-home parenting program; Safety City; Adult education; School uniforms; Mandate parent progress conferences; Do not fund after school academic programs-only good students participate; Educate African American community about police; Educate police about cultures, minorities; Involve community in interagency collaboration; Hire an advocate to work with African American families-rights, access help, navigate system; Have a student advocate in school called when an African American student in trouble; Build positive relationship between police and African American juveniles; Father program; Training courts and agencies on understanding African American families; Clearinghouse that acts as a referral for resources/negotiate services; Grandparents parenting grandkids; Job

programs; Youth center; Court liaison that knows community; City recreation programs (port-a-pool); Triage program for kids with parents who are incarcerated; Educate African American community that police can be an ally.

Finally, interviewees/focus group participants were able to add any comments. The following is a listing of comments. If there is a number after the comment, it represents how many interviewees mentioned that issue.

Poverty is an issue (2)
See a large Caucasian population at the court (2)
Individual officers may have DMC
Low income African Americans don't know their rights or how to access legal help
Youth on south side offend out of boredom
Judge M is an extremely fair judge
City is racist but Juvenile Justice System is fair
Sometimes seems like judge is too soft
Sometimes white kids offenses are mediated or they are brought home more often because of the officer
More contact with African Americans because of calls
Change cycle of kids following parents; show juveniles a different way to live their lives-generational problem
Uninvolved parents, unstable home life
If DMC does occur it is on an individual basis
Judge is excellent-has impacted all parts of system-before this judge many problems
Police respond to the distrust African American kids show them
Some police are prejudiced but I was treated fairly
There is a distrust of service providers and police
Force parents to participate in programs
Early intervention
African American youth are more visible-congregate in groups

III. Recommendations

All of the results were presented to the coalition. Because the RRI was highest at referral, the coalition decided to target cases referred to juvenile court. The RRI for this decision point was significantly different between African Americans and Caucasians in both the city of Springfield and Clark County. In addition, interviewees most often

identified referral as the point where DMC likely occurs. Finally, the top areas for intervention identified in the interviews and focus group were parent education, empowering parents with skills and resources, engaging youth in activities that enhance self-esteem and encourage responsibility, community programs, school programs, police and court education and encouraging parental involvement.

The coalition identified two themes in the results. The first theme was parent/child/family education. The interviewees/focus group participants had many specific program recommendations. These included Parent project; Have court purchase South High School and provide classes for parents and kids; Teach kids how to be parents; Education on social skills and nutrition in grade schools; Educate families on hygiene, social skills, sex education, safety, drugs/alcohol; Programs that teach kids how their behavior got them/family/community in trouble; In home parenting program; Adult education; and a Father program. The coalition identified several parent programs that are already functioning within the community, including one that is facilitated by the court. The coalition recommended that parenting programs be intensive, hands on, occur early (pre-involvement with the court and most likely grade school), provide training on social skills for parents to model and include a support group. This could be accomplished with a new program or by enhancing a pre-existing program.

The second theme was educating the police and other service providers about the African American Community and educating the African American Community about the police and service providers. The African American Community seems to have mistrust toward police and service providers which causes conflict during contact and escalates the situation. Conversely, respondents indicated police and service providers

would benefit from more education on the norms of African American communities. One way to intervene is to provide more positive contact between the police and the community. The coalition discussed many programs including providing school resource officers at a lower grade (they are currently not in grade schools), developing a program where police tutor children, and enhancing existing police programs. The coalition was able to identify several programs the police department currently sponsors including self-defense classes, DARE and school resource officers. In October, the Springfield police plan on opening a community center in the heart of a high risk neighborhood. The coalition discussed ways this community center could be incorporated into programs to improve police-community relations.

One response that arose in approximately one quarter of the interviews was that if DMC occurs it is related to socioeconomic status. Interviewees indicated since there were more minority youth living in poverty, it would explain DMC. For them, DMC was not the issue, poverty was the issue.

It is recommended that the coalition that has been established to address DMC remain in place (see Appendix E-logic model). The coalition is working on a mission and vision and has begun to bring together representatives of most agencies that work with juveniles for interagency dialogue. The coalition could track the success of programs funded by this initiative and fundees could attend coalition meetings. The coalition could be improved with more minority representation.

References

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- Pope, C. E., & Snyder, H. N. (2003). Race as a factor in juvenile arrests. *Juvenile Justice Bulletin, April*, 1-7.

Table 1: Relative Rate Index for the City of Springfield Compared to Clark County

Data Items	Relative Rate Index (City of Springfield)	Statistically Significant? (p<.05)	Relative Rate Index (Clark County)	Statistically Significant? (p<.05)
1. Population at risk (age 10 through 17)				
2. Juvenile Arrests	---	---	5.98	Yes
3. Cases Referred to Juvenile Court	2.31	Yes	3.74	Yes
4. Cases Diverted	.79	No	.84	No
5. Cases Involving Secure Detention	1.01	No	1.20	Yes
6. Cases Petitioned (Charge Filed)	1.04	No	1.02	No
7. Cases Resulting in Delinquent Findings	0.92	No	1.10	Yes
8. Cases resulting in Probation Placement	0.96	No	0.86	Yes
9. Cases Resulting in Confinement in Secure Juvenile Correctional Facilities	1.02	No	.73	Yes
10. Cases Transferred to Adult Court	.37	*	.53	No

*Could not be compared. N size too low.

Table 2: Factors Interviewees Considered When Making a Decision about a Youth (not including focus group)

Factor	All Interviewees (N=23)	Decision makers (N=16)
Threat to community or themselves	88%	88%
Family situation	82%	88%
Level of charge	65%	69%
Information from the probation officer (assessment of child)	53%	56%
Response to previous consequences (compliance)	47%	44%
Juvenile's history with the court	47%	100%*
Demeanor	41%	44%
Information from service providers	41%	44%
Drug/alcohol/MI screening information	41%	44%
Information from assessments	41%	44%
Parent input	35%	38%
Victim characteristics (such as extent of injury, relationship between perpetrator and victim)	29%	31%
School status	24%	25%
Victim wish to press charges	24%	25%
Prior abuse or neglect	18%	19%
Peer environment	18%	19%
Circumstances of arrest (where, when)	18%	19%
Age	6%	6%
Race	6%	6%
Gender	0%	0%
Number of charges	0%	0%
Community characteristics (such as SES, crime rate, community resources)	0%	0%

% Percent represents percent endorsing the factor.

*This was the one notable change between all interviewees and decision makers.

Other factors: Juvenile input (2), Pattern/Escalation (2), Whether a crime has been committed (2), On medications (1), Family financial situation (1), Services available to person (1), Child's motivation to change (1), Behavior on streets or at school.

Table 3: Interviewees Suggestions on Where to Intervene

Place to Intervene	Number endorsing
Empower parents with skills and resources	5
Encourage parental involvement	5
Parent education	5
School programs	4
Engage youth in activities that enhance self-esteem and encourage responsibility	4
Community programs	4
Police education	2
Monitor Police	2
Promote mentoring	1
Interagency collaboration	1

Appendix A: Interview Questions

1. Can you tell me about what your job entails?
2. When a case is presented to you and it is time to make a decision about what to do with the juvenile, what are the top three to five factors you consider in making that decision? Why and how do you consider these?
3. I am interviewing you today because Clark County Juvenile Court received a grant to examine disproportionate minority contact with African American. When you consider your job, do you think disproportionate minority contact occurs? Why or why not? Do you think it occurs in other parts of the system? How and why?
4. If you were able to intervene at any point to try and prevent disproportionate minority contact from occurring, where would you intervene and how?
5. Since these interviews are about disproportionate minority contact, it may be important to look at the responses of interviewees by race when analyzing the data. If you feel comfortable answering, how do you identify yourself racially?
6. Is there anything else you want to add?

Appendix B: Consent Form

The purpose of this interview is to learn any input you may have regarding the Clark County Juvenile Justice system.

This interview will take approximately 45 minutes. The interview will be audio taped to capture all of the important things you say. The tape of this session will be available to Debra Zendlovitz/Cheryl Meyer. It will be destroyed after your input is summarized.

Participation in this interview is voluntary. You can refuse to participate at any time.

This signed consent indicates your willingness to participate in this interview.

Please contact Debra Zendlovitz or Cheryl Meyer at (937) 545-4729 if you have any questions about the interview. If you agree to the statements listed above and you have been able to have all of your questions about this project addressed, please sign below.

Interview Participant

Interview Facilitator

Appendix C: Introductory Statement

Details about the Interview

_____ I am an independent program evaluator. That means that I have been hired by a company or organization as a consultant to help insure the quality of their program. Today we will be discussing the Clark County Juvenile Justice system. You have been asked to participate because you are a part of that system. I am not affiliated with CCJC or any of the agencies that are a part of the CCJC in any way. I am an independent evaluator. CCJC is interested in your responses so they can use your input in their intervention and programming.

_____ Your participation is voluntary.

_____ The interview will take approximately 45 minutes.

_____ Here is a copy of the questions for you to review.

_____ The interview will be taped to back up my notes. Please speak slowly and clearly. I will provide CCJC with an aggregate summary of all the interviews and your name will not be identified with your comments. Please take a moment to read and sign the **consent form** if you agree to participate in this interview.

Appendix D: Coding Form

Demographics

Position held: 1=magistrate; 2=probation; 3=police; 4=csb; 5=case manager; 6=court administrator; 7=court deputy; 8=prosecutor; 9=legal aid attorney; 10=PD; 11=DYS liaison; 12=Guardian Ad litem; 13=school truancy officers; 14=assessment specialist 1; 15=assessment specialist 2; 16=detention; 17=human resource person; 18=director of residential treatment center; 19=receiving specialist; 20=intervention center manager; 21=probation manager

Department: 1=judicial; 2=probation; 3=law enforcement; 4=csb; 5=clerical; 6=prosecution/PD; 7=school truancy; 8=intervention; 9=treatment centers/detention facilities; 10=advocates (GAL and legal aid)

Gender; 1=male; 2=female

Race; 1=white; 2=minority

Factors

Juvenile's history with the court: 1=yes; 2=no; 3=na

Level of charge: 1=yes; 2=no; 3=na

Number of charges: 1=yes; 2=no; 3=na

Circumstances of arrest (where, when): 1=yes; 2=no; 3=na

Information from the probation officer (assessment of child); 1=yes; 2=no; 3=na

Information from assessments; 1=yes; 2=no; 3=na

Demeanor: 1=yes; 2=no; 3=na

Information from service providers: 1=yes; 2=no; 3=na

Parent input: 1=yes; 2=no; 3=na

Family situation: 1=yes; 2=no; 3=na

Threat to community or themselves: 1=yes; 2=no; 3=na

Drug/alcohol/MI screening information: 1=yes; 2=no; 3=na

Prior abuse or neglect: 1=yes; 2=no; 3=na

Response to previous consequences (compliance): 1=yes; 2=no; 3=na

Age: 1=yes; 2=no; 3=na

Peer environment: 1=yes; 2=no; 3=na

Victim wish to press charges: 1=yes; 2=no; 3=na

Race: 1=yes; 2=no; 3=na

Gender: 1=yes; 2=no; 3=na

School status: 1=yes; 2=no; 3=na

Community characteristics (such as SES, crime rate, community resources): 1=yes; 2=no; 3=na

Victim characteristics (such as extent of injury, relationship between perpetrator and victim): 1=yes; 2=no; 3=na

Other:

DMC

Does DMC occur in your job: 1=yes; 2=no

Other parts of the system? 1=yes; 2=no; 3=na

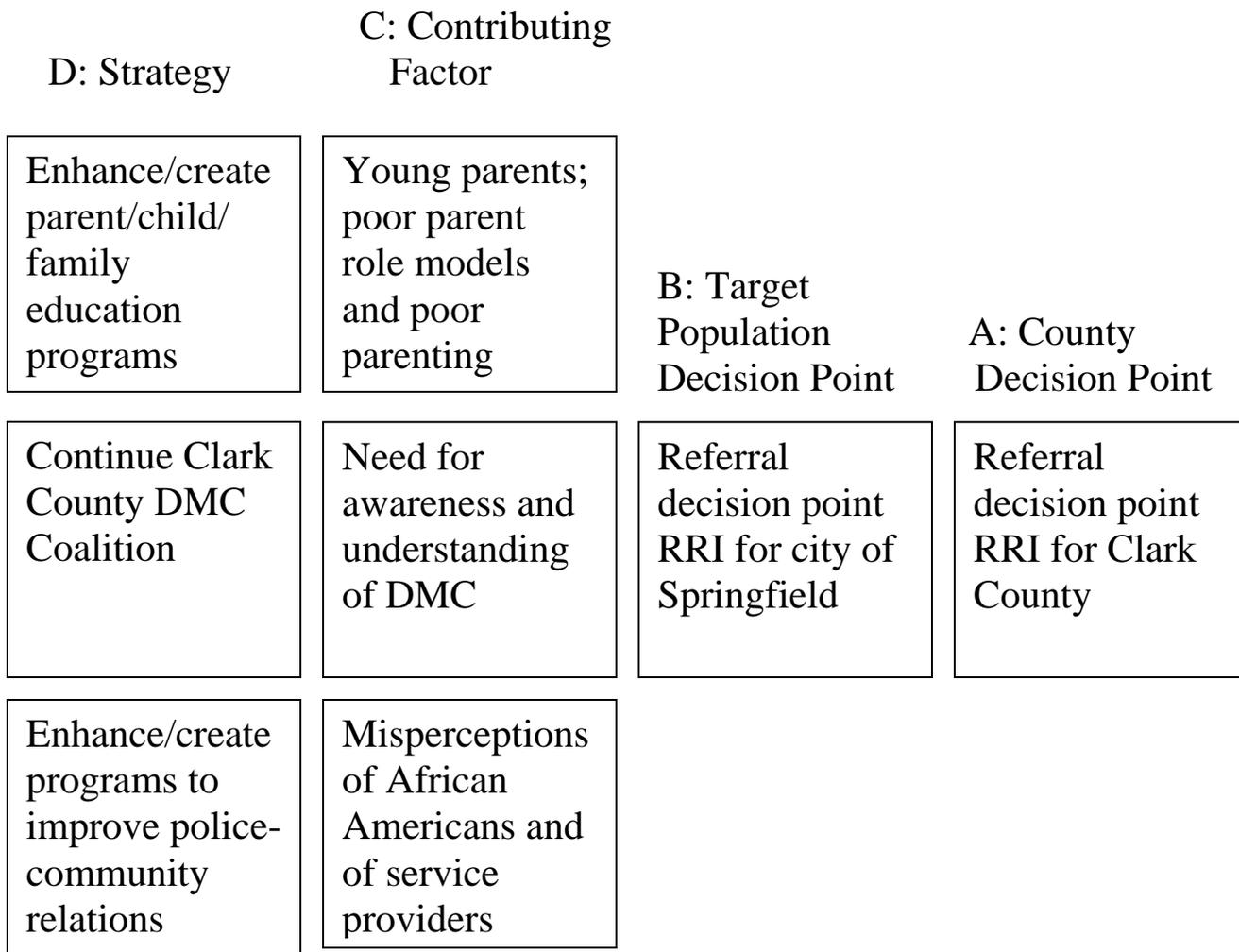
Which parts of the system? 1= police; 2=magistrates; 3=All parts; 4=NA

Intervention

Where intervene? 1=Community programs; 2=Parent education; 3=School programs; 4=police education; 5=monitor police; 6=Encourage parental involvement; 7=empower parents with skills and resources; 8=Target problem areas; 9=Promote mentoring; 10=Address dropout and truancy issues; 11=Insure youth access to alternate learning programs; 12=engage youth in activities the enhance self-esteem and encourage responsibility; 13=Interagency collaboration; 14=Community court; 15=Involve area businesses; 16=Coalition of service providers

Specific programs_____

Notes_____



Appendix F- Coalition Roster

Disproportionate Minority Contact (DMC)

CLARK COUNTY JUVENILE COURT

Tom Wilson wilsont@clarkohiojuvcourt.us
521-1603
Matt West westm@clarkohiojuvcourt.us
521-1653
Nettie Carter carterw@clarkohiojuvcourt.us
521-1665
Mike Pifher pifherm@clarkohiojuvcourt.us
521-1610
Kathy Lopez lopezk@clarkohiojuvcourt.us
521-1609
Bob Davidson davidsonb@clarkohiojuvcourt.us
521-1634
Alicia Brown blkberry34@aol.com
521-1632

SPRINGFIELD CITY BOARD OF EDUCATION

Ed Leventhal eleventhal@aepowdercoating.com
525-3750; cell 605-0060

CONSULTANT

Cheryl Meyer cheryl.meyer@wright.edu
545-4729
Debra Zendlovitz zendlovitz@clmevaluation.com
545-4729

RESTORED LIFE MINISTRIES

Pastor Larry Coleman revcoleman@woh.rr.com
324-8015

ST. JOHN MISSIONARY BAPTIST CHURCH

Pastor Ernest Brown ecbrownsr@ameritech.net
323-3504

SPRINGFIELD POLICE DIVISION

Lt. Michael Varner mvarner@ci.springfield.oh.us
324-7616

AVETEC

Cathy Balas cbalas@avetec.org
Sheila Ross sross@avetec.org
Judy Steiritz jsteiritz@avetec.org
322-5000

CLARK COUNTY FAMILY AND CHILDREN FIRST COUNCIL

Marilyn Demma ccfcfc@clarkdjfs.org
327-1991; cell: 605-5450