

WASHINGTON STATE JUDICIAL BRANCH  
 2013-2015 BIENNIAL BUDGET REQUEST  
 Detailed Decision Package

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**Agency:** Administrative Office of the Courts  
**Decision Package Title:** Washington State Family and Juvenile Court Improvement Plan - Restoration  
**Budget Period:** 2013-2015 Biennial Budget Request  
**Budget Level:** Policy Level

**Recommendation Summary Text**

The Family and Juvenile Court Improvement Plan, RCW 2.56.030, coordinates courts' efforts on Superior/Family and Juvenile cases, to strategically implement principles of the Unified Family Court (UFC) which were adopted as best practices by the Board for Judicial Administration in 2005

Funding is requested to restore funding to the base funding for FJCIP courts to previous levels. Due to state agency budget reductions in 2009, the biennial FJCIP pass-through budget was reduced by \$310,000 or 19.3%. Because of this reduction, funding for training opportunities and court enhancement projects was eliminated. Maintaining case coordinator positions is the primary funding objective for the courts and AOC, but absent restoration of the base funding, the FJCIP courts fail to meet the objective clearly spelled out in statute.

**Fiscal Detail**

<b>Operating Expenditures</b>	<b>FY 2014</b>	<b>FY 2015</b>	<b>Total</b>
<b>001-1 General Fund-State</b>	<b>\$155,000</b>	<b>\$155,000</b>	<b>\$310,000</b>
<b>Staffing</b>			
<b>FTEs</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>

**Package Description**

The FJCIP program represents a product of legislative and judicial branch cooperation, resulting from a workgroup which designed and implemented a plan to promote the UFC principles and best practices. Through a true partnership, the

Board for Judicial Administration, the Superior Court Judges' Association, the Washington Association of Juvenile Court Administrators, the Supreme Court, and the Legislature together enacted and implemented FJCIP. Family and Juvenile Court Improvement Plan (FJCIP) funding and framework for superior courts exist in thirteen counties to implement enhancements to their family and juvenile court operations that are consistent with UFC principles.

The FJCIP program invites accountability for program development and fiscal expenditures, especially through the system of reporting and communication created by the Washington State Center for Court Research.

The FJCIP courts are obligated to comply with educational requirements, judicial leadership and case management. Without funding to support education and secure case coordinator positions, the programs are vulnerable and reform efforts undermined. Although FJCIP funding was reduced in 2009, thirteen of the initial sixteen sites continue their programs with reduced state funding. All of the sites maintain case coordinator services as their primary need but enhancement projects that required additional resources were delayed.

The FJCIP allows flexible implementation centered on core elements including stable leadership, education, and case management support. The statewide plan promotes a system of local improvements

**Narrative Justification and Impact Statement:**

**This package contributes to the Judicial Branch Principle Policy Objectives as noted below.**

**Fair and Effective Administration of Justice in All Civil and Criminal Cases.**  
***Washington courts will openly, fairly, efficiently and effectively administer justice in all criminal and civil cases, consistent with constitutional mandates and the judiciary's duty to maintain the highest level of public trust and confidence in the courts.***

Each superior court in Washington processes cases that fall under juvenile court (offender and civil) and domestic relations. The judiciary adopted standards for best practices in 2005 for managing these cases that improved the quality, efficiency, and consistency of outcomes for families. These enhancements are tangible ways for the superior courts to improve public trust and confidence in our courts that deal with sensitive case types.

FJCIP courts represent 65% of dependency case filings in Washington State. The FJCIP courts are measured in six timeliness objectives against non-FJCIP sites (and a seventh measure will be implemented in 2013). Those objectives reflect federal and state mandated time standards (see below). According to the attached tables, FJCIP courts show better compliance with the timeliness standards.

<u>OBJECTIVE</u>	<u>DESCRIPTION</u>
#1	fact finding within 75 days
#2	review hearings every six months
#3	permanency planning hearing within 12 months
#4	permanency achieved before 15 months of out-of-home care
#5	termination of parental rights petition filed before 15 months of out-of-home care
#6	adoption completed within six months of termination order
#7	time from termination of parental rights petition filing to termination of parental rights (effective 2013)

***Accessibility. Washington courts, court facilities and court systems will be open and accessible to all participants regardless of cultural, linguistic, ability-based or other characteristics that serve as access barriers.***

All of the superior courts in our state process family and juvenile cases. The FJCIP courts were given the opportunity to effectively implement best practices as they relate to processing family and juvenile case types. While all courts process cases, FJCIP courts have targeted individual areas for improvement that are measured and provide better services to families involved in multiple court cases.

***Commitment to Effective Court Management. Washington courts will employ and maintain systems and practices that enhance effective court management.***

More timely resolution to cases in family and juvenile court is the mission of the FJCIP courts.

The FJCIP programs require local analysis and program development that is consistent with UFC principles. One of those underlying principles of UFC is case management or coordination of cases involving multiple family members. The FJCIP projects are monitored and held accountable for meeting the targets of UFC and dependency timeliness standards, accomplished through improved case management strategies (i.e. calendaring cases involving family members with one judicial team or calendaring dependency cases with a consistent “team” of providers (AG, parent attorney, social worker, GAL or CASA, Commissioner)).

***Appropriate Staffing and Support. Washington courts will be appropriately staffed and effectively managed, and court personnel, court managers and court systems will be effectively supported.***

The amount requested in this funding package restores the initial level of funding to the existing FJCIP sites for thirteen programs.

For courts to manage their local reform efforts, they need court leadership and staff to provide analysis, program design, and implementation of the improvement practices. The request will provide adequate funding for staff to continue a full time effort on FJCIP projects.

## **Measure detail**

### **Impact on clients and services**

The FJCIP program requires local leadership to identify areas of enhancement in family and juvenile court operations. As a result of FJCIP, the courts are proactive in seeking projects to strengthen the coordination of cases between court level stakeholders (e.g., courthouse facilitator) and external stakeholders (e.g., Department of Social and Health Services). Effecting system-wide improvements shows direct benefits to families and the measured impact of the improvements is evident in the time standards report.

The recipients of the improved coordination of cases, service delivery, and education of court staff (including judicial officers) are the court community and the citizens served by them. Communities in thirteen counties are better served as a result of FJCIP.

### **Impact on other state programs**

The FJCIP embodies a major reform effort in family and juvenile court operations. The FJCIP promotes innovative strategies that respond to local court needs. If the courts are more efficient as a result of targeted improvements, collateral state and county stakeholders also benefit from a streamlined and better informed court process.

### **Relationship to Capital Budget**

None.

### **Required changes to existing Court Rule, Court Order, RCW, WAC, contract, or plan**

None

### **Alternatives explored**

The alternatives to FJCIP courts already exist in the remaining superior courts that do not have the benefit of FJCIP funding and staffing to enact improvements to their system of processing family and juvenile cases. One of the appealing aspects of FJCIP is the court demographics that are addressed by FJCIP. Take note that King is one FJCIP court and at the same time so is the Hells Canyon Circuit Court. Regardless of court size, structure, or number of judicial officers, FJCIP is applicable to all court sizes because it allows local enhancements. While based on uniform standards, the UFC principles, each site has the opportunity to invest in innovated improvements while other courts have not had the same advantage.

### **Distinction between one-time and ongoing costs and budget impacts in future biennia**

Funding is ongoing.

## Effects of non-funding

If this decision package is not funded, and assuming the program does not receive additional reductions, the thirteen FJCIP courts will continue to exist and impact their court processes in the capacity they do now. There are basic court management or coordination efforts that can impact the quality of case processing that are consistent with UFC principles. These modifications have happened to a large extent by using court leadership and innovation that does not require additional funding. These enhancements will be maintained at their current level.

A residual impact of uncertain funding, compounded by considerable budget strain both state and locally, is that FJCIP courts have treated the funding as “grants” and potentially unsustainable. This transitory feeling has resulted in higher than expected staff turnover and marginal court commitment. Both the chief judge and case coordinator must work effectively at instituting changes in their courts. To date, the courts have been sidetracked by the threat of potential funding reductions. The FJCIP program has operated for four years. While no program has a guarantee of continued state funding, restoration back to original funding levels provides courts assurance that the program has the longevity to invest in the *future* development of FJCIP. Funding restoration will engender more satisfaction with and faith in the improvements accomplished in the past four years that currently feel temporary in some courts.

## Expenditure calculations and assumptions and FTE assumptions

The amount requested would restore FJCIP to the original amount of the FJCIP program authorized by the Legislature in 2008. This amount allows funding for case coordinator staff, education, and limited project funding to implement enhancements.

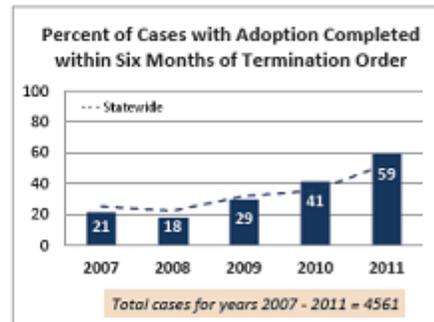
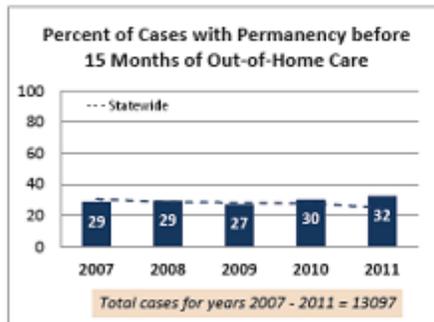
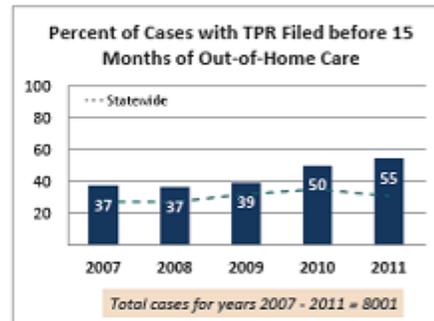
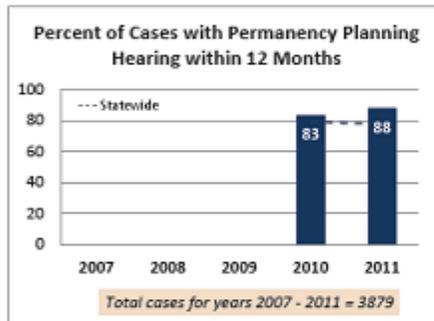
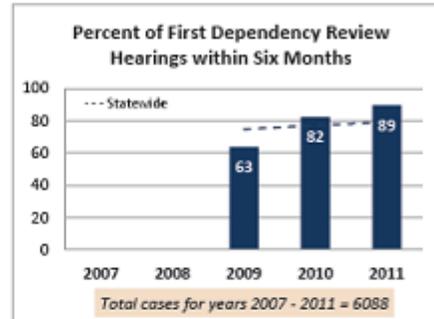
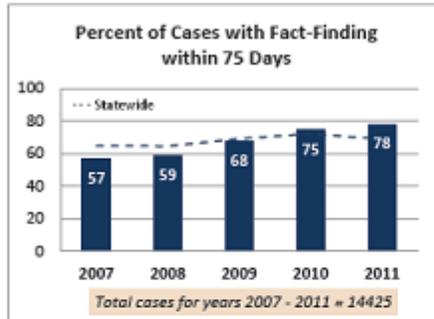
Funding was initially divided and allocated based on applications from courts that included commitments to follow the requirements of the statute. FJCIP courts were invited to recruit case coordinator staff at the range that was consistent with the draft job description provided by the AOC. The FTE packages, including salary and benefits, vary depending on the court. Also, the AOC made a determination on what level of case coordinator FTE each court would be eligible for, either full or half time. This was based on case filings and number of judicial officers in each court.

## Expenditure Calculations and Assumptions

(Rationale for costs shown)

<u>Object Detail</u>	<u>FY2014</u>	<u>FY2015</u>	<u>Total</u>
Staff Costs	\$ -0-	\$ -0-	\$ -0-
Non-Staff Costs	\$ 155,000	\$ 155,000	\$ 310,000
<b>Total Objects</b>	<b>\$155,000</b>	<b>\$155,000</b>	<b>\$310,000</b>

# APPENDIX A: PERFORMANCE OF THE FJCIP COURTS ON DEPENDENCY TIMELINESS INDICATORS



**A - 1**

*Timeliness of Dependency Case Processing in Washington State—2010 Annual Report*  
 Washington State Center for Court Research