

Family and Juvenile Court Improvement Program



2018 Report to the Legislature



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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Family and Juvenile Court Improvement Program (FJCIP) courts outperform other courts in Washington State in compliance with dependency timelines. This report details why this is the case and shows how a small investment of funds reaps tangible financial benefits, but more importantly provides better outcomes for children and families. The FJCIP incorporates Unified Family Court (UFC) principles (see [Appendix A](#)) in a model that allows flexible implementation centered on core elements, including stable leadership, education, and case management support. In addition to the core elements, the FJCIP coordinators gather and analyze data which is then shared with local dependency stakeholder groups working on system improvement.

The FJCIP promotes a system of local improvements that are incremental and measurable. Funding for the FJCIP makes system improvements possible in each court regardless of size, calendaring systems, number of judges, or availability of resources. The goal of this effort is to foster judicial and court administration leadership to institute improvements in family and juvenile court that are consistent with UFC principles. This report provides examples of the innovative work that FJCIP courts are performing, as well as the challenges these courts face as reported from October 2017 through September 2018.

FJCIP courts provide meaningful assistance and services to families and other stakeholders involved in dependency and family court. These services impact several kinds of outcomes, ranging from a parent's understanding of court processes to decision-makers receiving more relevant information. Contributions that FJCIP courts make to both legal and real-life outcomes are similarly influenced by the court environment and by the range of services and benefit programs available in the jurisdiction.

FJCIP courts work more collaboratively in dependency cases, not only with their court partners but also with community partners, to connect youth and families with community resources. Because these FJCIP courts provide dedicated staff to manage court processes for dependency cases and under judicial leadership provide assistance to convene stakeholder groups to work collaboratively on systemic improvements, overall, dependency outcomes are improving in these courts, compared to courts that do not have FJCIP support.

Washington State recently completed the federal Child and Family Services Review, and the Department of Children, Youth, and Families (DCYF) is working with FJCIP courts on the Program Improvement Plan (PIP). FJCIP coordinators are key contacts for DCYF staff tasked with developing the PIP connecting with local stakeholder groups already working on improving the dependency system in their communities. Permanency is one of the focus areas of the PIP. Five of our FJCIP courts hosted Permanency Summits in 2018, which are detailed in [Appendix B](#). The other five FJCIP courts are scheduled to host summits in 2019.

The data provided in [Appendix C](#) and in the [Dependent Children in Washington State: Case Timeliness and Outcomes, 2017 Annual Report](#) demonstrates that FJCIP courts generally perform better than other courts on timeliness measures. This is due, at least in part, to the court's focus on improving dependency processes with dedicated staff to monitor and bring attention to areas that need to be addressed.

The FJCIP coordinators support and collaborate with each other through a Community of Practice, which allows the coordinators to meet online monthly and during twice yearly visits. These online and in-person sessions allow coordinators to share innovative ideas, ask questions, and work together toward continuous quality improvement.

Continued funding for the FJCIP is critical, though current funding is insufficient to cover the costs of the existing FJCIP coordinator positions. Full funding for the FJCIP coordinator positions will make a significant difference in family law courts where many of the same litigants appear. The ultimate goal is adequate funding for all superior courts in Washington State to support an FJCIP coordinator so that all will benefit from improved outcomes.

We are hopeful that the new DCYF will provide increased awareness of the resources needed by our most vulnerable families. FJCIP courts shine a light on barriers that prevent dependency cases from moving forward, but if the necessary resources are not available for families to address underlying causes then there will be delays in timeliness and permanency outcomes.

Despite the FJCIP benefits, three factors impact dependency cases, caseloads, and timeliness more than anything else:

- Social worker turnover.
- Lack of substance abuse treatment programs/facilities.
- Lack of resources for completing timely adoptions.

The majority of dependency cases involve addiction, primarily heroin/opioids, and mental health issues. Counties are experiencing more dependency cases involving infants, and without adequate and appropriate treatment programs at the local level, longer times to permanency and a commensurate increase in rates of re-entry into out-of-home care. We encourage the Legislature to continue to address these challenges in a holistic way, as it is difficult to untangle issues related to mental health and/or addiction since they often go together.

The federal Family First Prevention Services Act and the Children's Bureau, a division of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, encourage all child welfare agencies to work with the courts and other appropriate public and private agencies and partners to plan, implement, and maintain integrated primary prevention networks and approaches to strengthen families and prevent maltreatment and the unnecessary removal of children from their families. FJCIP courts and coordinators are ready to

support the vision of coordinated and robust primary prevention efforts critical for strengthening families, preventing the initial occurrence of and ongoing maltreatment, preventing unnecessary family disruption, reducing family and child trauma, interrupting intergenerational cycles of maltreatment, and building a well-functioning child welfare system.

Court collaboration will be more effective when the FJCIP program is implemented statewide. Currently the FJCIP operates in 10 of the 39 counties. Primary enhancement of the program lies in the expansion of this proven program to other counties in Washington State. The 2019-2021 Judicial Branch Biennial Budget Request includes a proposal of \$577,000 over the two-year period to fully fund current FJCIP coordinator positions, fund up to three additional courts, conduct an evaluation of the FJCIP, and develop a five-year strategic plan for statewide implementation. Full funding for the FJCIP coordinator positions is critical. An evaluation of the program, along with development of a five-year strategic plan, will provide a roadmap for statewide implementation of best practices for this program in a thoughtful, methodical approach.

This report reveals the impact the FJCIP coordinators have in their local communities and, if replicated, how they will benefit children, families, and communities statewide.

HISTORY

In 2008, Second Substitute House Bill (2SHB) 2822 established the FJCIP. It provided funds for the initial efforts to reform and enhance court systems that manage family and juvenile cases. The Legislature wanted to improve the dependency system in Washington State to be consistent with Unified Family Court (UFC) principles being adopted nationwide. The judicial branch agreed and asked that improvements be focused on local circumstances. The guiding principles for reform are based on the UFC methodology as well as state and federal timelines related to processing dependency cases. The FJCIP is a balanced approach that directs the dependency reform efforts but allows courts autonomy in deciding how to focus their efforts within the context of UFC. The FJCIP also requires judicial officers to receive a minimum of 30 hours of topic-specific training to preside over family and juvenile cases.

Initially, state funding of \$800,000 provided grants to 16 sites across the state to begin reformation efforts and enhance court systems that manage family and juvenile cases. The money primarily funded case coordinators who worked with the juvenile court/ UFC chief judges to conduct local court analysis of service delivery. Findings from the *Timeliness of Dependency Case Processing in Washington, 2008 Annual Report* were used to establish local improvement plans to facilitate enhancements to court practices using the UFC principles as a guide.

State funding was reduced after the first year and currently \$598,819 is allotted for the FJCIP annually. The funding reduction precluded funding of innovative projects, training, and travel. Funding covers 86% of the salaries and benefits for the FJCIP coordinator

positions. Despite these cuts, ten superior courts continue to participate in the FJCIP: Chelan, Clallam, Island, Jefferson, King, Kitsap, Pierce, Snohomish, Spokane, and Thurston. This report shows that a small annual investment of approximately \$600,000 realizes financial benefits over time, not to mention improved outcomes for children and families, and ultimately savings for the state.

The FJCIP continues to deliver on the promise that local reform efforts can be accomplished based on a set of universal best practice principles. During these years of maintenance, our mission has been to develop projects within existing resources that yield statewide benefit, implement a system of evaluating statewide and local projects, and design a communication plan between the sites and the Legislature. By these actions, the FJCIP has proven to be a solid investment of state funds. The primary focus for the administration of the FJCIP is working with other stakeholders in family and juvenile court operations for dependency cases and family law cases, and to coordinate dependency reform efforts.

FJCIP Courts in Washington State



REPORTING

RCW 2.56.230 requires the Administrative Office of the Courts (AOC) to compile a financial report, comparing the spending plan to actual expenditures, for submission to the Legislature. When state funding for the FJCIP was reduced in 2009, salaries and benefits of FJCIP coordinators became the primary funding objective for the program, and other expenses, such as training, office supplies, etc., were not able to be reimbursed.

The “Actual Expenditures” listed below show the actual cost to counties for the FJCIP coordinator salary and benefits, along with the amount reimbursed by the AOC. The “Spending Plan” shows the amount contracted between each county and the AOC. For most of these counties, the contracted amount does not cover the cost to the counties for salaries and benefits for the coordinator position, nor does it cover other costs associated with the projects and programs implemented by those courts.

FJCIP Expenditures FY2018

County	Actual Expenditures		Spending Plan
	Cost to Counties	Reimbursed by AOC	Contracts
Chelan	\$43,546.00	\$19,325.00	\$19,325.00
Clallam	\$35,230.39	\$30,944.00	\$29,673.00
Island	\$19,989.00	\$19,989.00	\$19,989.00
Jefferson	\$12,761.00	\$11,887.75	\$14,420.00
King	\$115,515.74	\$92,118.16	\$85,175.00
Kitsap	\$107,038.28	\$94,009.34	\$90,146.00
Pierce	\$106,698.44	\$106,698.44	\$108,160.00
Snohomish	\$103,452.90	\$96,996.78	\$93,946.00
Spokane	\$75,956.72	\$60,564.20	\$56,000.00
Thurston	\$76,908.05	\$66,286.33	\$63,265.00
TOTAL	\$697,096.52	\$598,819.00	\$598,819.00

FJCIP courts submit semi-annual reports to the AOC that provide a comprehensive review of data to identify any trends, address any barriers, and propose possible solutions. Based on these reports, the following information is provided.

FJCIP courts meet the following requirements established in RCW 2.56.230:

- Assign a chief judge to the family and juvenile court for a minimum of two years.
- Implement one judicial team to hear all of the proceedings in a case involving one family.
- Train judicial officers assigned to family or juvenile courts for a minimum of 30 hours in specialized topics related to family and juvenile matters within six months of their assuming duties in family and juvenile court. (Please see [Appendix D](#) for a list of trainings that judicial officers and FJCIP coordinators received from October 2017 to September 2018, in addition to the minimum required 30 hours.)

FJCIP grant funding is provided to the courts to hire FJCIP coordinators. FJCIP coordinators work with the assigned chief judge, conduct local analysis, understand the timeliness indicators and lead local reform efforts identified through the FJCIP project. FJCIP coordinators access the Interactive Dependency Timeliness Reports (IDTR), a web-based application provided by the AOC. This data assists FJCIP coordinators in tracking individual cases and assessing trends in their dependency court system. In the process of providing case management, FJCIP coordinators identify potential needs, convene stakeholder groups to create solutions, and develop and implement projects to address local court needs. Some FJCIP coordinators also provide specific training for their judicial officers and FJCIP court partners.

The following matrix provides an overview of the various programs and specialized court teams that each FJCIP court provides, based upon the needs of their local community.



Family and Juvenile Court Improvement Program Overview

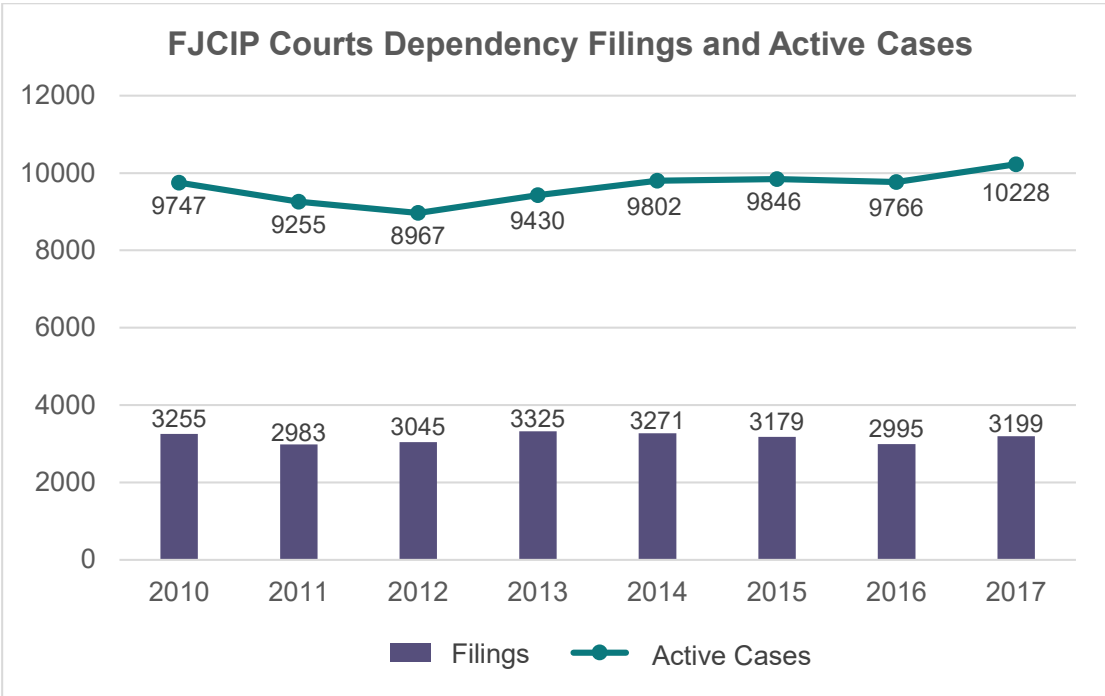
	Chelan	Clallam	Island	Jefferson	King	Kitsap	Pierce	Snohomish	Spokane	Thurston
Unified Family Court Principles										
Assignment of a chief judge for the family and juvenile court for a minimum term of two years.	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
FJCIP Coordinator (Part-time/Full-time)	Part	Part	Part	Part	Full	Full	Full	Full	Full	Full
Case screening and coordinating	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Assistance with Family Law	✓	✓			✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Multi-system Youth Coordination					✓	✓			<i>Developing</i>	✓
Judicial officers have received at least 30 hours of specialized training	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Mediation/Settlement Conferences	✓	<i>Developing</i>	✓	<i>Developing</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓
Specialized Court Teams										
Baby Court Team							✓			
Family Treatment Court	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓
Indian Child Welfare Court Team									✓	
Legally Free Court Team							✓		✓	✓
Special Programs										
Adoption Day Celebration	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Adoption Workgroup						✓	✓	<i>Developing</i>	<i>Developing</i>	✓
Courthouse Dog	✓									✓
Family Time (Visitation) Focus			✓					✓	✓	✓
Finding Fathers in Dependency Cases	✓					✓	✓	✓	<i>Developing</i>	✓
Parents for Parents	<i>Modified</i>	✓	<i>Modified</i>	<i>Developing</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Protein for All	✓				✓		✓	<i>Developing</i>	✓	✓
Reunification Celebrations					✓	<i>Developing</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓
Totes for Kids								✓		

Detailed descriptions of each program are provided in [Appendix E](#).

The following section of this report features highlights of trends and possible solutions that FJCIP courts reported in 2018.

System Overload with Active Cases

Several FJCIP counties experienced a decrease in filing of dependencies in 2018, while others experienced an increase. However, overall caseloads continue to grow in most counties. For example, Pierce County realized a decrease in filing of dependencies, but has also seen a decrease in dismissals. In King County, dismissals have decreased in the past few years which has led to an increase in active cases from 2,573 in 2011 to 2,921 in 2017. In Snohomish County, the ratio of filings to dismissals has improved in 2018 with concerted effort by the bench to move cases towards permanency. However, dismissals are insufficient to resolve the backlog of open/active cases from previous years, which have increased 10% from 2012 through 2017. Given the increase in dependency filings over the past several years, there has been a steady increase in cases, causing significant pressure on state and local systems.



Social worker turnover is one likely contributing factor. Social worker turnover has been noted as a trend that causes system overload with active cases. According to DCYF, when there is a change in the social worker assigned to a case, this adds on average three months to the time to case resolution. This is due to large caseloads and training downtime for new employees, along with instability regarding services offered. Most dependency stakeholders feel staffing levels for their departments must increase to meet the needs of the increased caseloads.

Another possible contributing factor could be the implementation of the Family Assessment Response (FAR), where the dependency cases that are filed are believed to be more difficult and complex. For example, many of these cases involve substance abuse without adequate access to treatment, increasing time to resolution, which increases the workload with no additional resources.

Continuances of dependency hearings also cause cases to take longer and bog down the system. FJCIP courts regularly review their continuances. A review by King County identified 1,729 continuances in 2017. Of those cases, 52% were attributable to the department; 18% were attributable to parent/youth counsel; 12% were attributable to the court; and the remaining smaller percentages were due to parents, youth, CASA, and miscellaneous. The main reason for department continuances was due to late court reports. There were several cases where a hearing had to be continued two or more times, leading to a decrease in timeliness measures.

Judicial officer turnover due to retirement is increasing. In 2017, 23 Superior Court judicial officer positions were replaced statewide, mostly due to retirement. In 2018, the number increased to 31. In Chelan County, three of four judicial officers retired in 2017, and the two new judges had little to no dependency experience. Snohomish County had four of its 15 judges retire within the past 18 months and more are expected in the year ahead. King County has three judges involved in dependency for 2,900 active cases. Any changes due to retirement and subsequent new appointments, will have an impact on dependency cases. King County trained five judges for the dependency rotation within the last 20 months, and statistics are being reviewed to determine whether there is a discernible difference in the timeliness measure for first-year judicial officers versus those who have been on the dependency bench two years or more.

Several FJCIP counties are experiencing a high turnover rate of parent attorneys: 50% in Chelan County, 36% in Kitsap County, 28% in Snohomish County, and 27% in Spokane County. The Office of Public Defense (OPD) reports that in fiscal year 2018, there was an average of 18% turnover in parent attorney contracts statewide. Attorney turnover negatively impacts case timelines. The loss of even one contract attorney can impact as many as 80 families involved in the dependency process. Inadequate compensation has been identified as the cause for turnover. The OPD is requesting a budget increase in order to compensate parent attorneys at a rate comparable to other publicly-funded attorneys with similar experience.

Solutions Used to Address System Overload

Case Screening and Coordinating, Assistance with Family Law, and Mediation/Settlement Conferences

These are described in [Appendix E: Descriptions of FJCIP Court Programs](#).

Additional Support for Dependency Professionals

- Kitsap County provides extra training, coaching and senior staff mentors for new social workers. Specific training regarding permanence and licensing will be provided to the four Child and Family Welfare Services (CFWS) units.
- In Spokane County, the FJCIP coordinator continues to work with the Teams Efficient Dependencies (TED) Committee to increase awareness of organizational self-care and how leaders can implement practices and policies to help increase the well-being for themselves, staff, and clients. They created a “wall of gratitude” for dependency workgroups to write something for which they are grateful. A survey was created and administered to dependency team members to determine what they considered “teamwork” and then a nomination form was created using that feedback. Based on submitted nominations, the first annual Triplet Teamwork Award was given, and the winner’s name was added to the Triplet Teamwork plaque displayed in the juvenile court hall.

Calendaring

- King County changed the language in continuance orders, to identify whether the continuance will affect the next timeliness measure, with the hope that parties will be more cognizant of upcoming dates and provide the judges with more information to make a determination. On another calendaring issue, Judge Rajul will lead a workgroup to address the large number of cases in Seattle and other issues regarding shelter care hearings.
- The Snohomish County Table of Ten stakeholder group looks closely at the filings, dismissals, and dependency duration statistics, as well as other compliance measures. There is continued impact of heroin/opioid use with lack of sufficient treatment options in the county, turnover in both caseworkers and parent’s attorneys, and delays in adoption for legally free children. Recognizing these ongoing challenges, specific emphasis has been placed on timely fact finding, termination, and permanency hearings.
- Thurston County was selected as an implementation site by the National Council of Juvenile and Family Court Judges (NCJFCJ) to assist with improving dependency processes. Judicial officers, court staff, stakeholders, and the NCJFCJ engaged in a two-day site visit, a trauma audit, and a strategic planning meeting to create a list of target areas for improvement, including the following calendaring and court processes: time specific calendaring; court reports; cross system youth/specialty court calendars; trial and hearing practices; case scheduling orders; Family Recovery Court (FRC) calendar and time allotment; and training/support.

Agreed Orders

Thurston County established a protocol for the presentation of agreed matters to the assignment judge without the need for a hearing. This procedure saves time of counsel and the judicial officer by not holding hearings for agreed matters that did not require an in-person hearing.

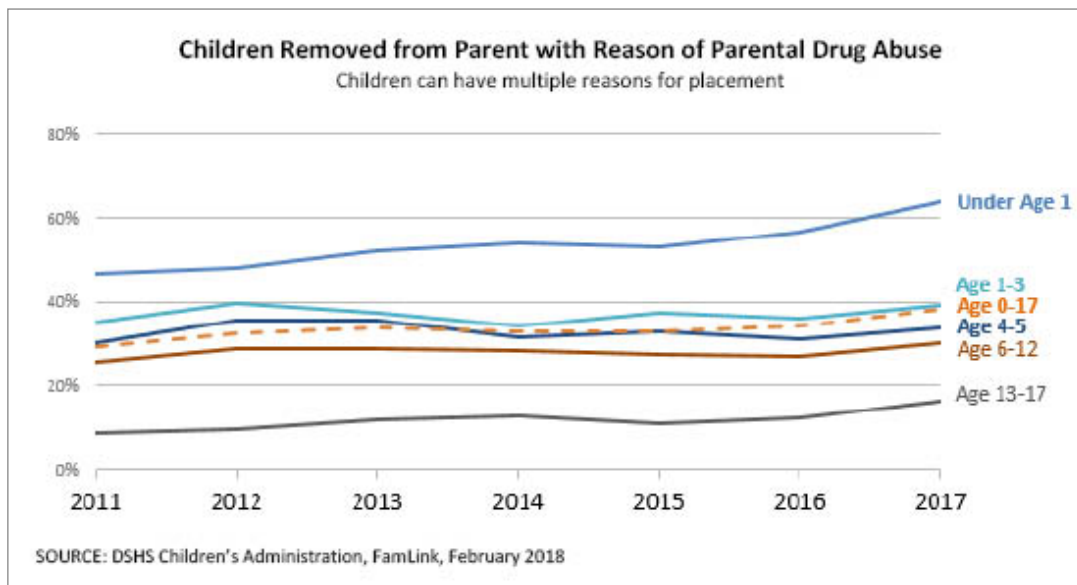
eWorking Papers Pilot

A King County workgroup drafted a proposal for how the court should be notified of which Electronic Court Records (ECRs) to review for cases. This new pilot process is anticipated to start in January 2019.



Increase in Substance Abuse/Chemical Dependency/ Mental Health Issues

The following chart shows an increase in the percent of children removed from parents involving allegations of parental drug abuse, particularly young children. In 2017, statewide data shows 65% of children under age one were removed for reasons that included parental drug abuse. The percentage is higher in some counties. This may explain, in part, the increased time to permanency for children in care as FJCIP courts work to facilitate services to remediate the issues that impact child safety. FJCIP courts also report that mental health issues have increased and appear to be more severe and complex. Lack of service providers is a real issue, especially in the rural counties where service providers are sometimes a two-hour drive away. Transportation to obtain services can be a barrier. In urban areas, substance abuse treatment, especially in-patient treatment, is scarce. Another challenge is the shortage of foster homes for children with behavioral issues. A primary barrier is the shortage of funding and services for substance abuse treatment, primarily community-based in-patient options. Timely access to mental health evaluations and assessments continues to be a challenge, with similar impact to delayed access to services and progress in dependency cases.



Solutions Used to Address Increased Substance Abuse/Mental Health Issues

Family Treatment Courts

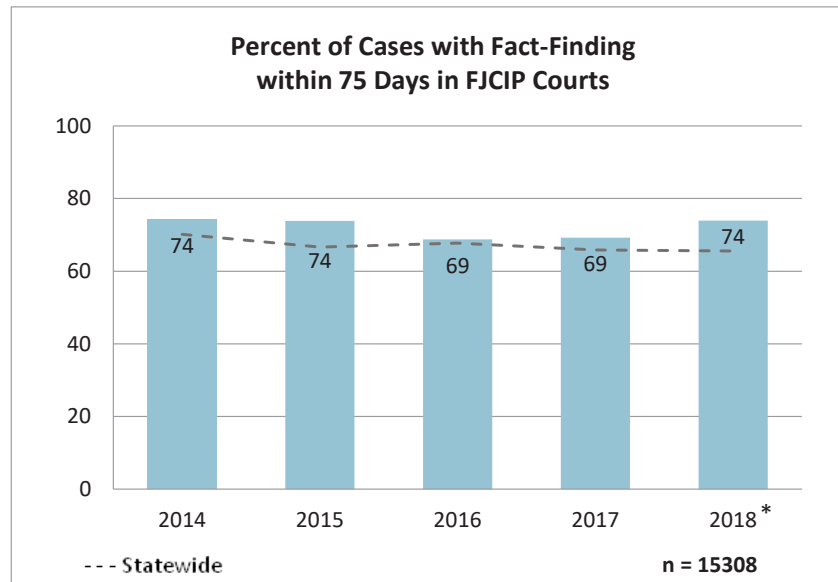
This is described in [Appendix E: Descriptions of FJCIP Court Programs](#).

Transitional Housing for Parent/Infant Pairs

In November 2017, the United Way of Snohomish County awarded a collaborative grant to establish Homeward House. The long-term goal is to provide transitional housing for parent/infant pairs while the parent is in substance abuse treatment. In the short term, it will serve as a visitation center and location for delivery of wrap-around services. The YWCA is the lead and fiscal agency for the grant.

Fact-Finding within 75 Days

RCW 13.34.070(1) states...*The fact-finding hearing on the petition shall be held no later than seventy-five days after the filing of the petition, unless exceptional reasons for a continuance are found.* Fact-finding is one of the first major judicial events in the dependency process, and significant delays to fact-finding may prolong court involvement and increase the amount of time a child spends in foster care.



*Data included through September 2018.

Several FJCIP counties have improved performance regarding compliance with the 75 day fact-finding hearing requirement. Chelan County increased to 97% compliance from 80% for the last few years, and King County increased compliance from 43% to 61% through September 2018. Even with the pressures on the system, Pierce County is at 80% compliance through September 2018. Thurston County is at 91% through September 2018, surpassing last year's compliance rates by 22%. Clallam County had a slight decrease in compliance rates due to one complicated case involving five children and other cases with special circumstances. In counties with small caseloads, one family with special circumstances will have a big impact on the data.

Solutions Used to Address Compliance with Fact-Finding within 75 Days

Elimination of Extended Trial Date

Kitsap County FJCIP eliminated the extended trial date scheduling. In prior years, Kitsap County scheduled a first set fact-finding date and an extended trial date. The elimination of the second extended date increases the expectation that court hearings proceed when scheduled and parties will be ready. If the attorney is not prepared, then the attorney must request the second date.

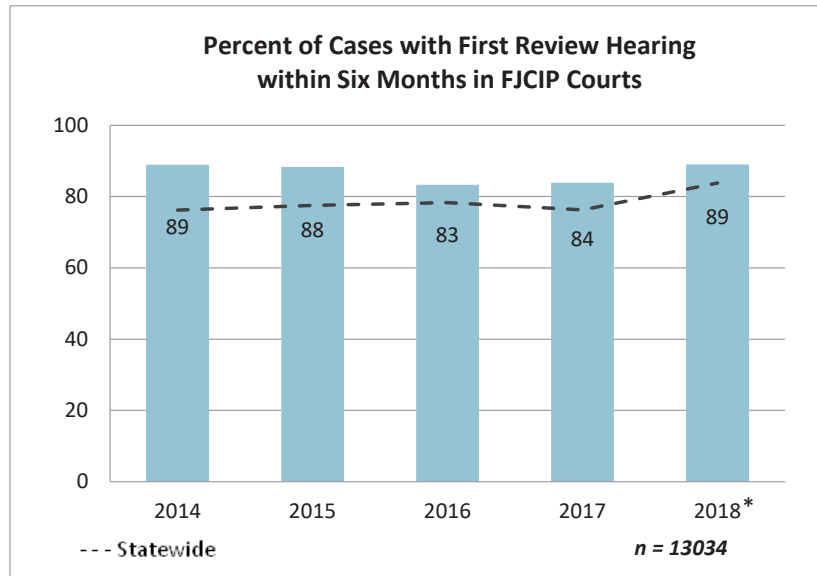
Increased Judicial Pressure on Stricter Adherence to Timelines

- During 2017 and into 2018, Snohomish County judicial officers implemented a combination of stricter adherence to compliance timelines, settlement/mediation/case conferences, and earlier setting of fact-finding hearings. This appears to be resulting in improved case timelines and outcomes via increased compliance with 75 days to fact-finding. The Permanency Planning review hearing prior to 15 months is used as a decision-making hearing, where children are returned home or a termination petition is ordered.
- Thurston County realized increased compliance, in part, through the conscientious efforts of the judiciary to enforce the 75 day timeline and limiting continuances to absolute necessity. Exceptional circumstances were found in all but one of those cases not meeting the 75 day requirement.



First Review Hearing within Six Months

RCW 13.34.138(1) states...*The status of all children found to be dependent shall be reviewed by the court at least every six months from the beginning date of the placement episode or the date dependency is established, whichever is first. The purpose of the hearing shall be to review the progress of the parties and determine whether court supervision should continue.*



*Data included through September 2018.

While Chelan and Pierce Counties have nearly perfect compliance, several of the FJCIP counties significantly increased compliance this year. King County increased from 59% in 2017 to 75% through September 2018. Kitsap County increased compliance from 71% to 91% in 2017, continuing to 95% through September 2018. After two years of decreasing compliance, Snohomish County increased compliance to 89% through September 2018. Noncompliant cases in 2017 were an average of 91 days overdue; whereas, noncompliant cases in 2018 were on average 32 days overdue. Thurston County increased from 69% to 88% in 2017 and continued to 96% through September 2018.

Solutions Used to Address Compliance with First Review Hearing within Six Months

Court Form for Better Tracking

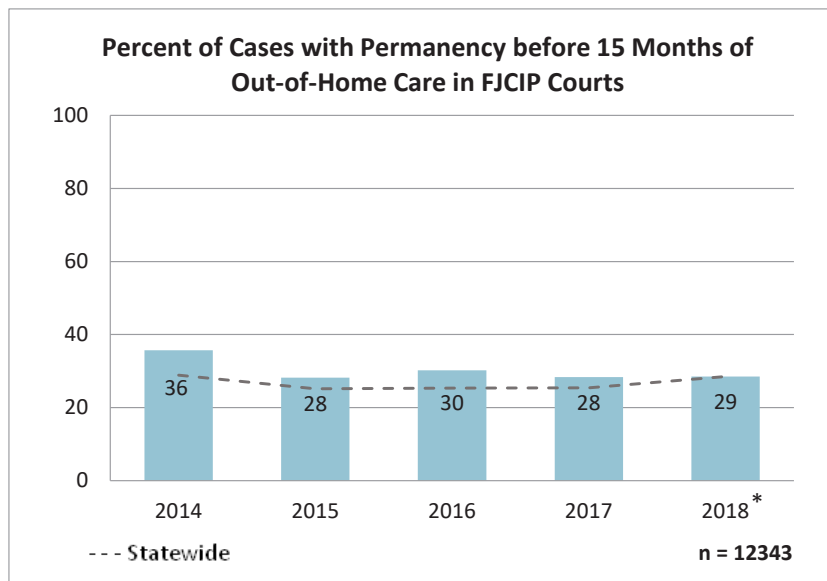
The Kitsap County Assistant Attorney General (AAG) developed a new court form that identifies the actual out-of-placement date for improved tracking.

Timely Fact-Finding Hearings

Thurston County's efforts to hold more timely fact-finding hearings led to more timely review hearings.

Permanency within 15 Months

RCW 13.34.145(1)(c) states...*Permanency planning goals should be achieved at the earliest possible date, preferably before the child has been in out-of-home care for fifteen months.* The goal of state and federal child welfare laws is to provide children with safe, nurturing, and permanent living situations as quickly as possible. Although there is no specific statutory time requirement for achieving permanency, the Washington State Legislature has set a goal of achieving permanency before a child has spent 15 months in out-of-home care.



*Data included through September 2018.

Achieving permanency before 15 months of out-of-home care is challenging for all counties.

- In Chelan County, while time to reunification decreased, time to adoption increased.
- Clallam County reported a decline in permanency outcomes within 15 months of filing. The non-compliant cases will be reviewed to determine the reason for this dramatic decline.
- Kitsap County decreased from 34% to 25% compliance in 2017, with a slight increase to 28% through September 2018. Kitsap County reported the following issues that directly affect these outcomes:
 - Adoption delays.
 - Parents who are unwilling to engage in services until a disposition order is in effect.
 - Child support is creating a barrier for low income clients, especially those who cannot afford housing.
 - Parents who are inconsistent in responding to the prosecutor to address parentage and child support establishment. Alleged fathers may be inaccessible for paternity testing due to incarceration.
- Snohomish County compliance continues to improve, but stakeholders expressed concern that many cases are directly impacted by delayed adoptions. However, reunifications in Snohomish County show 55% of cases reaching permanency within 15 months. The average overall time to permanency through September 2018 (excluding emancipation and extended foster care) is 19 months. The median time to reunification is 14 months.
- Thurston County increased compliance from 26% in 2017 to 41% through September 2018.

Solutions Used to Address Compliance with Permanency within 15 Months

Finding Fathers in Dependency Cases and Baby Court

These are described in [Appendix E: Descriptions of FJCIP Court Programs](#).

Focus on Consistent Hearings

Clallam County focused on consistency of permanency planning and review hearings.

Identify Barriers to Achieve Permanency

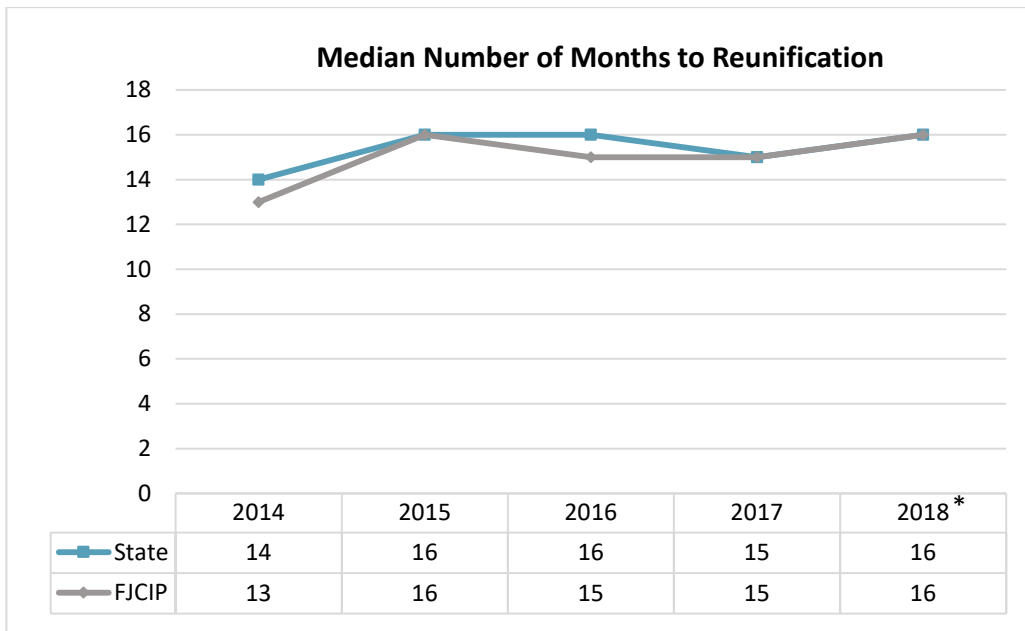
In April 2017, Kitsap County organized two dependency workgroups to: examine timeliness measures; identify barriers delaying permanence; and collaborate on possible solutions. Both workgroups include partners from the bench, DCYF, Attorney General's Office (AGO), Guardians ad Litem, parent attorneys, FJCIP coordinator, and supervisors from all the agencies.

- The first workgroup targets the adoption timelines and meets on the first Wednesday of the month, corresponding with the legally-free court calendar.
- The second workgroup focuses on the remaining dependency timelines and meets on the first Tuesday of the month. One workgroup generated solution: At the 30-day staffing, DCYF provides a one-page document to the Assistant Attorney General (AAG) recommending services for the family. The AAG ensures it contains all required information per the RCW and meets compliance with federal funding. Parents and their attorneys will know and discuss recommended services earlier therefore dispositions can occur sooner, and services can get started, which should improve timelines.



Reunification

For most children in foster care, reunification with family is the best option for a permanent and loving home. All children need the care, love, security and stability of family, and the bond between child and family is a critical element for a solid foundation of personal growth, development and maturity.



*Data included through September 2018.

Chelan County’s average time to reunification was 15 to 19 months, and it dropped to 13 months in 2018. In Clallam County, the length of time in care for children reunified with a parent or guardian decreased from 18 to 12 months. FJCIP counties identified the following challenges to reunification:

- Lack of early parent-child visits, parental knowledge of visit expectations, resources, locations, transportation, supervisors, monitors, alternative means for contact between parent and child (Skype, calls, texting), and child-centered communication between parent and caregiver.
- Ongoing delays with parents obtaining parenting plans, including difficulty in locating and serving the parenting plan summons and petition on the other parent.

The Fall 2018 edition of the NCJFCJ *In Session* publication stated, “Family time is the single most effective way to maintain the integrity of the parent child relationship when children are in out of home placement and a powerful way to ‘normalize’ foster care and reduce trauma to children.” Several of the FJCIP courts are focusing on visitation.

Solutions Used to Address Reunification

Assistance with Family Law, Baby Court Team, Family Treatment Court, Indian Child Welfare Court Team, Family Time (Visitation) Focus, Parents for Parents Program, Protein for All, and Reunification Day Celebrations

These are described in [Appendix E: Descriptions of FJCIP Court Programs](#).

Family Time (Visitation)

- In Island County, the Table of Ten stakeholder group focused on improving visitation. They are planning to include more information about visitation in the Dependency 101 program and handbook. They are also developing a court conversation guide about visitation. Alternate visitation locations are being researched, and they are assisting DCYF to identify volunteer visitation supervisors, monitors, and transportation providers. The court hosted a Talking about Safety and Visitation presentation for its multidisciplinary group.
- The Spokane County court commissioner meets with Family Impact Network (FIN) personnel to work on issues to improve access, availability, quality and frequency of visitation.
- Thurston County hosted a Parent-Child Visitation Forum, a day-long multidisciplinary event focusing on improving visitation in the community. Thurston County is also part of the DCYF Supported Visits Pilot Project, where contracted visitation providers engage with the parents to better prepare parents for visits and provide increased up front support.

Dependency Court Hearings more like Therapeutic Court

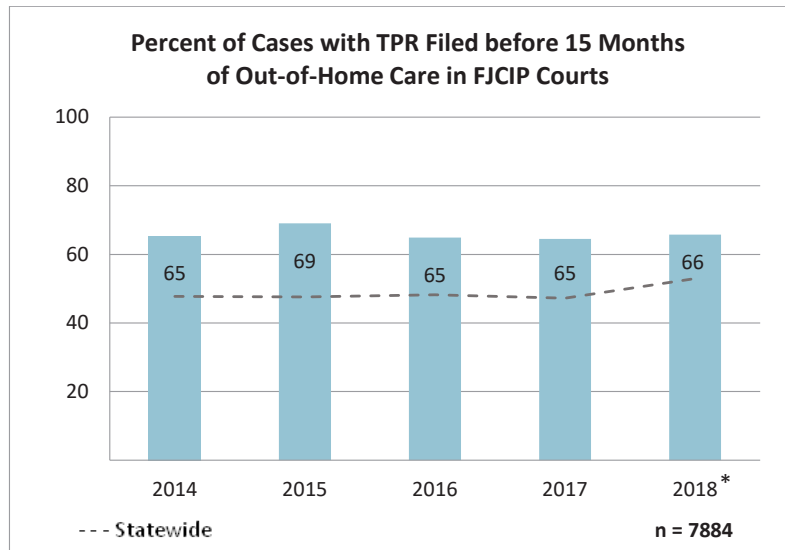
One of the action plans developed at the Permanency Summit in Clallam County was to transition primary dependency court hearings, which tend to be adversarial, to be more therapeutic like Living in Families Together (LIFT) Court. This action plan was developed to encourage more parents to engage earlier and continuously throughout the dependency process. Development of this idea is in process to determine viability.

Parent Coaching

In Jefferson County, parent coaching is now available and DCYF contracted with a local Functional Family Therapist to serve some of its caseload in Jefferson and Clallam Counties.

Termination of Parental Rights (TPR) within 15 Months

The Adoptions and Safe Families Act (United States Public Law 105-89, Section 103) requires states to begin the process of terminating parental rights for certain cases, including those in which children have been in foster care for 15 of the most recent 22 months. Exceptions to this rule are cases where the child is being cared for by a relative, there is a compelling reason why termination would not be in the best interest of the child, or the state has failed to offer the necessary services to the family.



*Data included through September 2018.

Compliance with this measure significantly improved for several of the FJCIP counties. Clallam County compliance increased from 40% in 2017 to 74% through September 2018. King County increased compliance from 30% in 2017 to 42% through September 2018. Kitsap increased in compliance from 61% to 64% in 2017 and continuing to 78% through September 2018. Pierce County increased compliance from 72% in 2016 to 77% in 2017, continuing to 82% through September 2018. After two years of decreasing compliance in this category, Snohomish County significantly improved to a rate of 88% through September 2018. Likewise, after a decrease in 2017, Thurston County increased compliance to 95% through September 2018.

Solutions Used to Address Compliance with TPR within 15 Months

FJCIP Audit of Non-Compliant Cases

- Clallam County reported that improved compliance is a direct result of the FJCIP coordinator drilling into the data, determining that hearing orders were not properly documenting the good cause reasons for not filing the TPR petition. The coordinator is maintaining a list of cases coming due for TPR petitions and is tracking and distributing information to dependency stakeholders.
- Kitsap County completed an audit of the 49 non-compliant cases and determined 20 cases would have met the timelines if the clerk code box had been checked. Discussion with the Attorney General's Office occurred regarding the expectation that codes will be entered accurately.

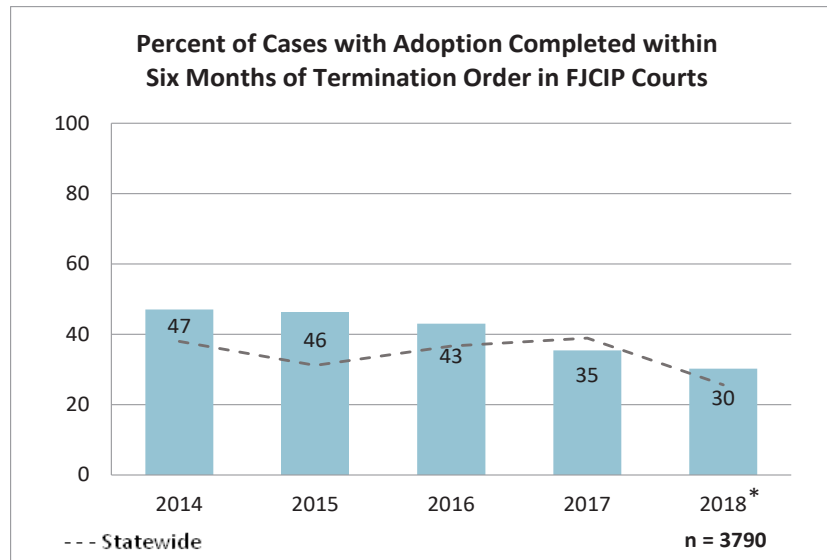
Court Focus on Timely Filings

- Thurston County identified that dedicated monitoring of dependency timelines by the FJCIP coordinators, judges, counsel, and all parties, has wholly contributed to the rising rate of compliance. Staff also remained fairly constant at the Attorney General's Office, as well as the pool of parent attorneys, youth attorneys, and CASAs, leading to more consistent, experienced, and knowledgeable participants in dependency and termination proceedings.
- Snohomish County made timely filing of termination petitions a focus area in 2018.



Adoption within Six Months

RCW 13.34.145(1)(c) states...*In cases where parental rights have been terminated, the child is legally free for adoption, and adoption has been identified as the primary permanency planning goal, it shall be a goal to complete the adoption within six months following entry of the termination order.*



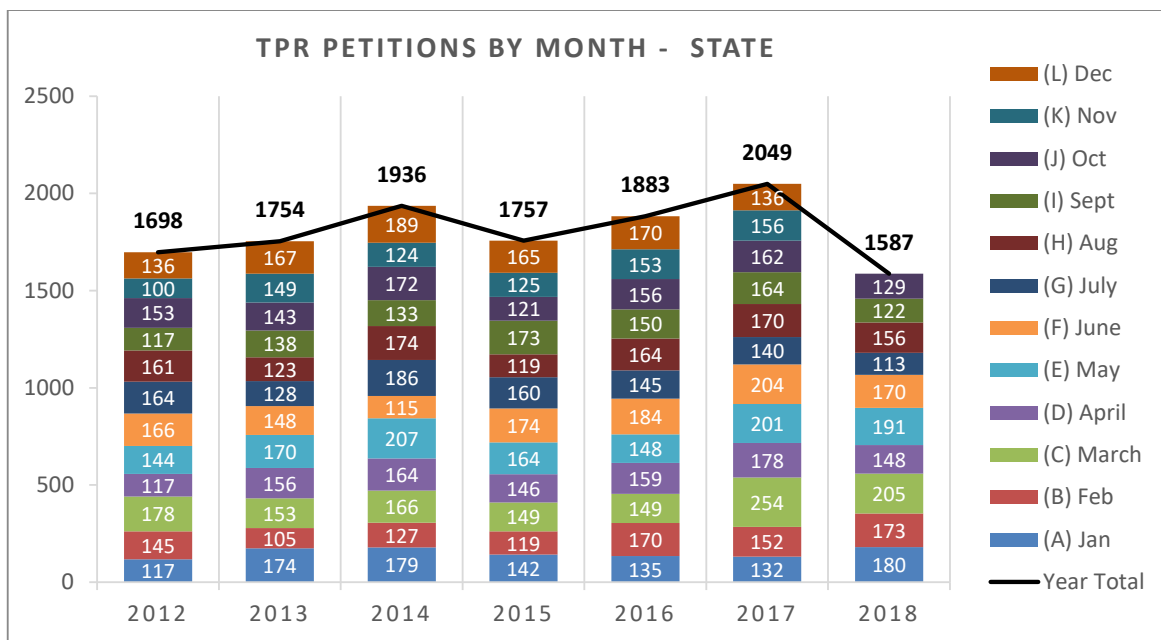
*Data included through September 2018.

In 2017, FJCIP courts performed below the statewide average in completing adoptions within six months. While the FJCIP courts returned above the statewide average in 2018, there continues to be a decline in compliance rates for both FJCIP and other courts. In September 2018, DCYF headquarters staff presented information about the adoption process during the FJCIP Community of Practice meeting. Providing this basic foundation regarding the adoption process assisted the FJCIP coordinators in analyzing adoption issues in their communities. FJCIP coordinators reported the following issues delay the adoption process:

- Changes in adoption workers. In Kitsap County, the licensing unit had 90% turnover in staff, leaving workers overwhelmed.
- Delays in processing home studies due to staff turnover.
- Caregivers slow to complete paperwork.
- Adoption units responsible for cases in more than one county.
- File redaction must be completed by the social worker to remove any confidential information before the file can be forwarded to the adoption worker.
- Delays in publishing child information for recruitment efforts.
- Difficulty finding adoptive homes for youth requiring Behavioral Rehabilitation Services (BRS).
- Need of stabilization or support services for adoptive families.

- Adoptive parent not agreeing to the adoption support package, resulting in delays.
- Late referrals for children who have been in a home for a long time, only to find there are identified issues with placement, meaning adoption will be delayed or will not be possible.
- Youth is close to 16 years of age and entitled to other benefits.
- Waiting for Adoption Day celebration in November or for another sibling to be adopted on the same day.
- Increase in legally free children over the past 5 years, resulting in an additional adoption workload.

One of the primary factors in failing to meet this 6-month measure is the large backlog of home studies. In addition to the issues listed above, termination of parental rights petitions have increased since 2015, which in turn increased the number of legally free children, causing additional system pressures.



*Data included through October 2018.

Solutions Used to Address Compliance with Adoption within Six Months

Legally Free Court Team, Adoption Day Celebration, and Adoption Workgroup

These are described in [Appendix E: Descriptions of FJCIP Court Programs](#).

Increase Adoption Staff

In Chelan County, a partial full-time employee was approved to assist the adoption caseworker.

Assist Adoptive Families in Completing Home Study Paperwork

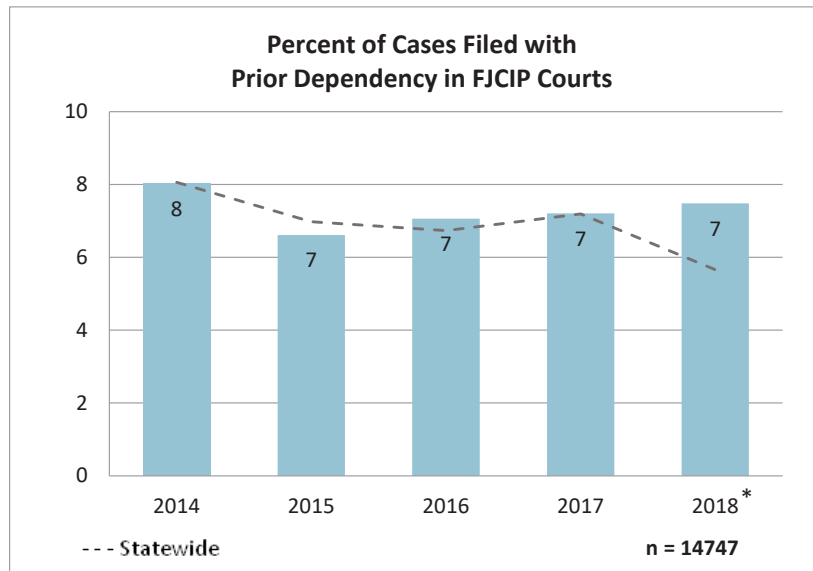
The Clallam County FJCIP coordinator offered assistance to adoptive families with the home study paperwork. Also, some of the families looking to adopt could possibly afford to pay for private home studies, which could speed up the adoption process. A list of private home study providers located in Washington State is needed.

Improve Processes between Agencies

- Kitsap County formed its Adoption Work Group in May of 2017 to review and examine ways to develop processes between and within agencies to improve timeliness measures. Participants include the court commissioner, DCYF (Adoption unit, licensing, support), AAG, and Guardians ad Litem. They are considering the following:
 - The AAG will draft a court order for child information to be published that will not interfere with issues of confidentiality of the child. The AAG will also be invited to permanency planning meetings when the plan is adoption.
 - Recommendation at shelter care hearing and as the case moves forward – any identified placement for the child should complete a questionnaire that includes barrier-related questions. It may not prevent the placement from occurring at the time but can bring to light earlier what may hold up a case for a future adoption.
 - At the shelter care hearing, the bench will hand out the home study information form and application packet.
- Thurston County identified the following solutions: increased consistency in personnel in the adoption unit, active judicial monitoring, and enough prospective adoptive parents to fill the demand.

Prior Dependency

State and federal child welfare laws and services are crafted to enable and encourage permanency as soon as possible. However, any analysis of permanency is incomplete without also examining children who reenter foster care and the dependency system. The graph below shows data collected on children who entered the system with a prior dependency case (includes priors within county only, and excludes dismissals documented as “Dependency not Established”). Adoption disruptions leading to re-dependency are currently not available.



*Data included through September 2018.

Based on a review of dependency petitions, Snohomish County believes that substance use relapse, particularly involving heroin, is a major contributing factor to re-dependency. FJCIP coordinators are working with dependency stakeholders to monitor these numbers and identify trends.

Solutions Used to Address Re-Dependency

Reunification Day Celebrations and Parents for Parents Program

These are described in [Appendix E: Descriptions of FJCIP Court Programs](#).

APPENDIX A
UNIFIED FAMILY COURT BEST PRACTICES

Adopted by the Board for Judicial Administration
March 18, 2005

1. One Family, One Judicial Team. Perhaps the hallmark of a UFC is the concept of one judicial team, comprised of dedicated and specially trained judges and commissioners, hearing all of a family's legal matters. Recommendations include:
 - Assignment of one judicial team to one family. Require assignment of one judicial team to one family in cases under UFC management, so far as practical.
 - Types of cases under UFC management. Require adoption of local rules identifying types of cases to be included under UFC management, including actions from among Title 13 actions (dependency and termination, juvenile offender, CHINS, ARY), dissolution, modification, nonparental custody, parentage, domestic violence, adoption, and truancy.
2. Case Management. A process to resolve multiple case types through centralized case management is an essential UFC element. Recommendations include:
 - Case screening criteria. Require local courts to develop criteria for screening and coordinating cases included in UFC management.
 - Case management objectives. Design case management to reduce protracted litigation and achieve compliance with court orders.
 - Case planning conferences. Implement case planning conferences where appropriate.
3. Specialized Education. A knowledgeable and dedicated judiciary is vital. Recommendations include:
 - Specialized training. Require that judicial officers serving in UFC receive specialized training in areas of judicial leadership, child development, cultural awareness, child abuse and neglect, chemical dependency, domestic violence, and mental illness.
 - Statewide training opportunities. Provide frequent and regular opportunities for judicial officers to receive required specialized training.
4. Dedicated Judiciary. Longer-term judicial assignments provide continuity to families and ensure experienced and dedicated judicial officers. The UFC Workgroup recommends:
 - Long-term assignment of judicial officers. UFC assignments should be a minimum of two years.
5. Mandatory Mediation. UFC is a problem-solving court. Use of non-adversarial methods to resolve family disputes during the life of a case is critical. In addition to an overall problem solving-approach, the UFC Workgroup recommends:
 - Mandatory early mediation. Require mediation of parenting disputes within 120 days of filing an action and before an opportunity for trial, as far as practical with available mediation resources. Court communities are encouraged to develop mediation opportunities.

APPENDIX B

FJCIP PERMANENCY SUMMITS

Federal Court Improvement Program (CIP) funds were used to support Permanency Summits in five of the ten FJCIP counties in 2018. The remaining five FJCIP counties will hold summits in 2019. Permanency Summits provide an opportunity for child welfare agency and court system professionals to gather in a forum outside of the courtroom to develop an understanding of each other's roles, address system issues, share ideas for system improvement, and inspire and build champions for permanency. A description of each summit is provided below:

Chelan – June 2018. The summit explored the ways different partners in the juvenile dependency system interact with one another and improve early response to dependency parents suffering from substance use disorders. Participants included court commissioners and a wide variety of partners in the dependency court system, including representatives from the Attorney General's Office, DCYF, the Chelan Douglas CASA Program, a parent attorney, and treatment providers from the Center for Drug and Alcohol Treatment and Catholic Family Charities. Much of the day's exploration revolved around:

- How each participant plays a role in helping parents engage in treatment,
- What is available and working in our community to help parents engage in treatment,
- What is counter-productive (that we should stop doing), and
- How we might respond together to get parents engaged earlier to reduce or eliminate the time children spend in foster care.

Additionally, dependency timeliness data was reviewed to explore where we are performing well and where we may need to re-focus our efforts to improve the work we are doing for children and families. The day resulted with a short list of action items to collaborate on going forward. At least two of the projects identified by the group were implemented immediately.

- **Early Case Conferences** - The goal of scheduling early case conferences is early parent engagement in services and increased participation in the dependency court process. Every case where the parties agree to engage in an early case conference is set on a regular day and time that has been designated for that purpose. The case conference can be cancelled, but having a regular day/time set aside and the conference automatically scheduled with all parties present eliminates the barrier of future coordination and finding a day/time that works for the many participants.
- **Use of an Agreed Order in Limine** - This Order is now routinely entered at the shelter care hearing and provides parents and their attorneys with the security they need to actively participate in the investigative process and engage in services before they are ordered by the Court (thereby working toward reunification) without the worry that doing so may negatively impact them during the court's decision making process. The order sets forth certain facts that occurred on or after the date of the dependency petition that the parties agree may not be offered or admitted at the dependency fact finding hearing unless specifically agreed by all parties, including the CASA. Those facts include:
 - The parent requested any particular evaluation or service.
 - The parent participated in or failed to participate in any such requested evaluation or service.

- Observations of or conclusions reached by the person who conducted any such requested evaluation or service.
- Statements made by the parent during any such requested evaluation or service.
- Statements made by the parent at any case conference.

Clallam – August 2018. The Dependency Permanency Summit addressed early engagement of parents in the dependency process to decrease the length of stay of children in out-of-home placement. The summit resulted in the following solutions:

- Parents for Parents (P4P) program engages parents before the 72 hour shelter care hearing. Due to the trauma experienced by parents when children are removed, the first 72 hours are critical. If the P4P program engages parents sooner, then parents are more likely to engage with services earlier, and lead to a quicker return home.
- The second issue with parent engagement is attending the Dependency 101 classes and/or providing ongoing classes and contact with parent allies. The Parents for Parents program is considering Dependency 101 classes located on both ends of the county to include parents residing on the west end of the county. The program is also exploring Dependency 201 classes to continue parent contact and address the needs of parents throughout the case. Local non-profits may be contacted to provide incentive rewards for the parents who come to the classes to increase engagement in the program.
- Consideration of expanding the traditional dependency calendar structure to a more therapeutic structure similar to family treatment court. This allows parents to have more of a voice in their case and court partners are able to identify barriers to help the parent.
- Mediation allows parents to engage more in the discussion of their cases. It also allows all parties to identify conflict and use constructive decision making to create solutions.

Jefferson – August 2018. At the summit, the Jefferson County team identified two programs to pursue: Parents for Parents and Mediation in Dependency.

King – June 2018. The summit provided the opportunity to learn about civility, data, and roles in the dependency system. The afternoon focused on developing ideas for improvement regarding civility and early engagement with a visitation component. Two workgroups formed to work on developing these ideas into actions.

Pierce – April 2018. Pierce County Juvenile Court partnered with Children’s Administration and hosted an Early Permanency Symposium to increase understanding and collaboration amongst dependency stakeholders. The day included a reunification planning workshop, including the safety framework, and articulating when safety risks have been mitigated. Agenda topics included:

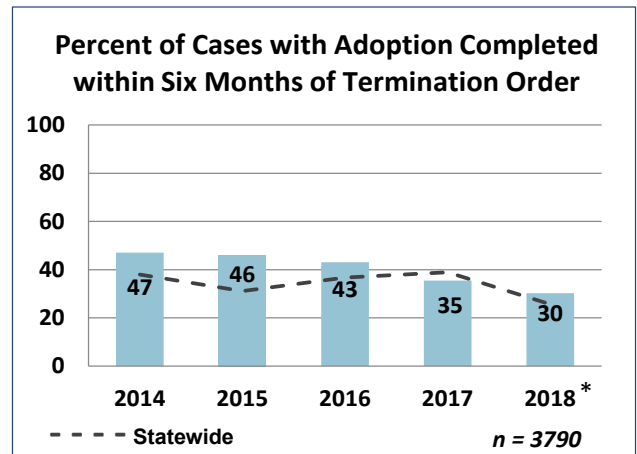
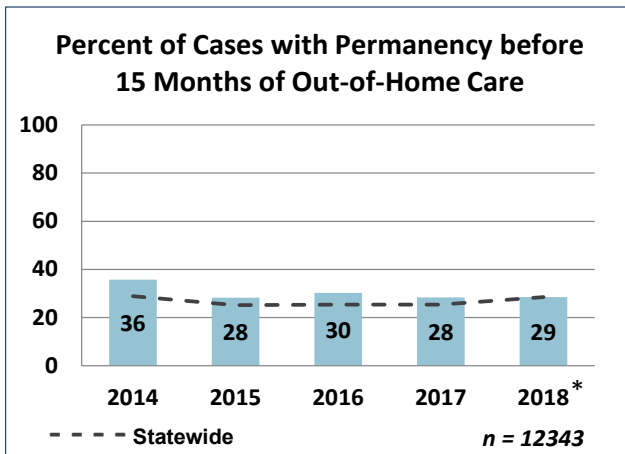
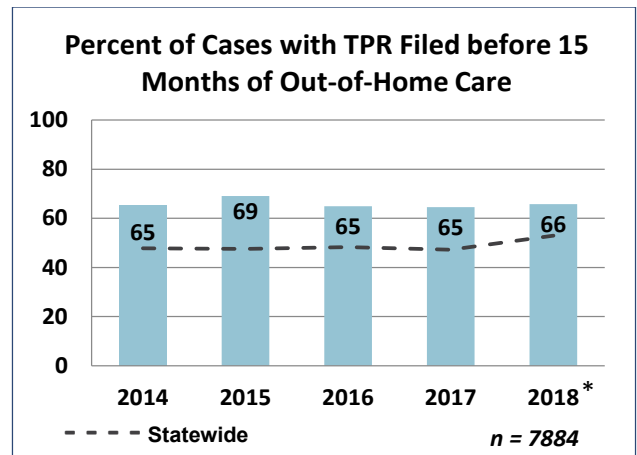
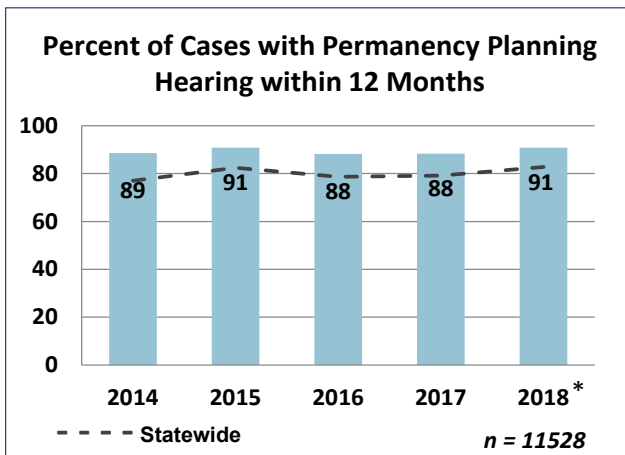
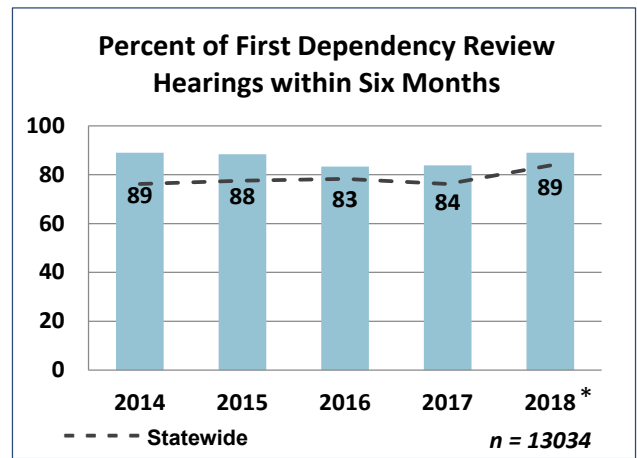
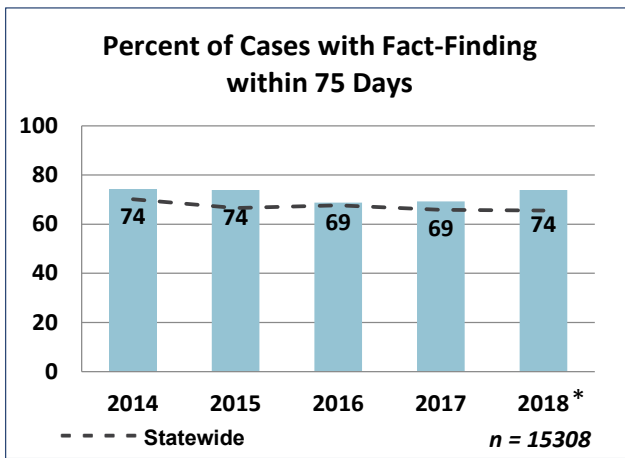
- “A Day in the Life . . .” which consists of the various dependency stakeholders providing a short PowerPoint presentation describing their work;
- Dependency Stakeholder Fishbowl Conversation;
- Exercises to increase understanding and collaboration amongst dependency stakeholders; and
- A Return Home/Reunification Planning Workshop with breakout sessions/discussion groups.

Snohomish – September 2018. The summit focused on working together within ethical roles, responsibilities, reviewing data, and the process and time from legally free to adoption. Five areas to promote timely permanency/adoption were identified for action planning:

- Early conduct of home studies.
- Ensure permanent placement for all children with special or exceptional needs.
- Provide adoption cross-training for units within DCYF.
- Create an effective case transfer process across DCYF units.
- Address the underlying needs of cases involving children less than one year old when the dependency case is filed.



APPENDIX C PERFORMANCE OF THE FJCIP COURTS ON THE DEPENDENCY TIMELINESS INDICATORS



*Data included through September 2018.

APPENDIX D
TRAINING BEYOND THE 30 HOURS REQUIRED
FOR JUDICIAL OFFICERS

TRAINING OF FJCIP JUDICIAL OFFICERS OCTOBER 2017–SEPTEMBER 2018:

- 10 judicial officers attended the Employees Win training about self-care strategies
- 10 judicial officers attended the Implicit Bias training
- 9 judicial officers attended the two-day Dependency Boot Camp developed by the Court Improvement Training Academy (CITA)
- 8 judicial officers attended the Federalization of Family Law training
- 6 judicial officers attended the Becca Conference
- 6 judicial officers attended the Bill and Ted's Gnarly Ethical Adventures: National Trends Intersecting with Family Law training
- 6 judicial officers attended the Children's Justice Conference offering a variety of courses related to child welfare and well-being
- 6 judicial officers attended the Family Case Law Update
- 6 judicial officers attended the Procedural Justice: Fair Treatment Matters training
- 5 judicial officers attended the two-day Pathways to Adulthood: Engaging Older Youth dependency training offered by CITA
- 4 judicial officers attended the Civil Legal Issues that Impact Military Families and Resources training
- 4 judicial officers attended the Guardian ad Litem training
- 4 judicial officers attended the Non-parental Custody and Vulnerable Youth training
- 3 judicial officers attended the Beyond Batson: Developing Skills to Avoid Bias Influencing Judicial Determinations training
- 3 judicial officers attended the Effects of Incarceration on Youth training
- 3 judicial officers attended the Helping All People Flourish training
- 3 judicial officers attended the On the Move: Overview of Relocation, UCCJEA, and The Hague Convention training
- 3 judicial officers attended the Sex, Drugs, and Electronic Search Warrants training
- 3 judicial officers attended the White Fragility training
- 2 judicial officers attended the Combating Bias Against Muslims in the Legal System: Equipping and Empowering Washington Judges training
- 2 judicial officers attended the Court Access for Incarcerated Parents training
- 2 judicial officers attended the Culture of Foster Care training
- 2 judicial officers attended the Effectively Utilizing Division of Child Support Forms and Reports in Calculating/Modifying Child Support training
- 2 judicial officers attended the Immigration's Impact on the Judiciary training
- 2 judicial officers attended the Myth of Entitlement training
- 2 judicial officers attended the Responding to the Opioid Addiction Epidemic training
- 2 judicial officers attended the To Understand and Be Understood: Working with Self-Represented Litigants training

- 2 judicial officers attended the What Every Judge Should Know in Deciding a Request to Seal or Expunge a Court Record training
- 2 judicial officers attended the Working with Interpreters training

FJCIP judicial officers attended the following array of training sessions individually:

- Accuracy & Justice: Listening to Innocence training
- Enhancing Judicial Skills in Domestic Violence training
- Child Advocacy Center training
- Child Support training
- Domestic Violence training
- Domestic Violence Symposium
- Domestic Violence, Mental Health and Family Law training
- Guardianships: Basic Procedures and Special Issues training
- Indian Child Welfare Act (ICWA) training
- Judicial Ethics - Applying Judicial Canons to Judicial Leadership and Wellness training
- Justice for All: How the Courts Can Stop Being Part of the Problem and Help Create Solution training
- King County Dependency training
- Legal Issues Surrounding Supervised Injection Sites training
- Let's Talk about Sexism training
- Love Stinks X training
- Navigating the Landscape of LGBTQ Issues in the 21st Century training
- National Association of Drug Court Professionals Annual Training Conference
- National Council of Juvenile and Family Court Judges (NCJFCJ) Annual Conference
- NCJFCJ Domestic Child Sex Trafficking training
- NCJFCJ Judicial Engagement Network training
- NCJFCJ Judicial Institute on Teen Dating Violence training
- NCJFCJ Train the Trainer Conference for Custody Evaluators in Domestic Violence Cases
- Non-parental Case Law training
- Non-parental Custody & Vulnerable Youth Guardianships training
- Representing and Dealing with Individuals with Diminished Capacity training
- Treating Opioid Disorders training
- Youth Education and Child in Need of Services (CHINS) Petitions training
- Talking About Safety and Visitation Presentation
- Understanding the Impact of Trauma training
- Washington's Children: A Judicial Response to Sex Trafficking

TRAINING OF FJCIP COORDINATORS OCTOBER 2017–SEPTEMBER 2018:

- 6 FJCIP coordinators attended the two-day Pathways to Adulthood: Engaging Older Youth dependency training offered by CITA
- 5 FJCIP coordinators attended the Children’s Justice Conference offering a variety of courses related to child welfare and well-being
- 3 FJCIP coordinators attended the two-day Dependency Boot Camp offered by CITA
- 2 FJCIP coordinators attended the Courthouse Facilitator training

FJCIP coordinators attended the following array of training sessions individually:

- Addiction in Thurston County training
- Blood Borne Pathogens training
- Buccal Swab Specimen Collection and Chain of Custody Procedures training
- Child Abuse and Neglect training
- Child Welfare and Housing Forum
- Culture of Foster Care training
- Cultural Competency training
- Equity and Social Justice Basics training
- Fundamentals of Toxicology Testing training
- Girls Only Active Learning Certification training
- Helping Families Navigate Substance Use Disorders training
- HIPAA training
- ICWA Presentation
- Perinatal Collaborative Conference
- Planning for Safe Care: What Your Family Drug Court Needs to Know about Serving Pregnant Women with Opioid Use Disorders and Their Infants training
- Poverty Simulation training
- Project Management training
- Leadership Snohomish County
- Mental Health First Aid training
- Non-Discrimination and Anti-Harassment training
- Parents for Parents Program training
- Making the Most of Parent Child Visitation training
- Strategies to Enhance Parent-Engagement training
- Kinship Placement Families training
- Resilience After ACEs: An Introduction to Trauma Informed Care training
- Resiliency training
- Talking About Safety and Visitation Presentation
- Unpacking White Privilege in the Workplace training

APPENDIX E

DESCRIPTIONS OF FJCIP COURT PROGRAMS

Unified Family Court Principles

Case Screening and Coordinating

Chelan – The court commissioner hears all dependency and juvenile offender matters, including At Risk Youth (ARY), Children in Need of Services (CHINS) and truancy cases. Superior Court judges preside over dependency settlement conferences and occasionally preside over a fact-finding or termination of parental rights trial. All family law cases are presided over by teams of the assigned judge and, in cases where parties are represented by attorneys, the court commissioner. All Domestic – Case Type 3s are assigned to a judge at the time of filing. The assigned judge presides over all trials; pro se hearings; and any motion hearings in excess of 30 minutes when attorneys are involved. The court commissioner presides over the show cause calendar each week for hearings lasting up to 30 minutes where one or both parties is represented by counsel. Except in rare circumstances, any hearing involving a family comes before either the court commissioner or the assigned judge. Domestic violence or criminal proceedings are not yet included in this process; however, information on all pending cases is provided to the judicial officer presiding over the hearing. The judges and the commissioner have electronic access to all court files and communicate regarding cases and families. Additionally, when it is discovered the litigants have separate family law matters pending before a certain judge, new filings (involving some or all of those parties) are assigned to that same judge when at all possible.

Clallam – The same judicial officer oversees all family law, dependency, and non-offender juvenile cases. This allows for better tracking. When the need for a family law case proceeding is identified, the parents or non-parents meet with the coordinator to begin the process. The coordinator also sits on the Living in Families Together (LIFT) court panel, the therapeutic court for dependency cases. The coordinator advises the team of any pending family law matters for the litigants ordered by the court to continue or those started by other individuals for children not in a dependency. It is important to track all cases because those cases for the non-dependent children will affect the parent's recovery process and need to be addressed.

Island – The coordinator provides corresponding case information and tracks and reports on timelines and dates of significance for the life of dependency cases. In shelter care and dependency review hearings, the commissioner has a court conversation regarding visitation with the parents and the coordinator tracks the conversation and gathers data to present to the Table of Ten stakeholder group. This new court process is part of the focus on visitation in Island County.

Jefferson – One superior court judge hears all proceedings in a case involving one family.

King –

For Dependency/Termination cases:

- All cases are assigned to the Lead Dependency Judge. Trials are assigned to the Lead Dependency Judge. If there are multiple dependency trials, the Lead Dependency Judge works with the trial assignment team to coordinate having a Unified Family Court (UFC) or other judge take the trial.
- All pre/post-trial motions and hearings are heard by the judge assigned to the dependency court in which the case is filed (Seattle or Kent).
- Social workers and defense attorneys are assigned to specific DCYF calendar dates so that court appearances are minimized.

For family law cases involving children:

- All cases are assigned to one of the seven UFC Judges.
- All dispositive motions are heard by the assigned UFC Judge and all non-dispositive motions are heard by a UFC commissioner assigned to the courthouse in which the case is filed.

Kitsap – A team approach is used for assignment of cases at the Juvenile Department and DCYF. This effectively increases communication and services provided to the clients. The FJCIP coordinator supervises all youth with dependency and offender matters and attends all hearings to provide the court with updates. This communication is crucial to provide clients with the programs and assistance they need. The FJCIP coordinator also assists clients with finalizing parenting plans to establish permanence and communicates with the legal parties/court on their progress. While there is a rotation of Judicial Officers hearing juvenile offender matters, the court commissioner hears all the dependency matters.

Pierce – Juvenile court transitioned to a modified “Spokane Model” in 2011 and the principle of One Family – One Judicial Team was largely accomplished since January 2013. In the unified family “best practice” court, the judge is paired with a limited set of AAGs, social workers and CASAs or GALs helping the same group of families together with a core group of defense attorneys.

Snohomish – Two judges are assigned to the dependency calendar rotations in overlapping 18-month increments. When a case is filed, it is designated as being assigned to the Red or Blue judge and court team based on the DCYF Office from which it originated. The case remains with that judge/court team (AAG, assigned social worker, parent’s attorneys, CASA, and CASA program coordinator) until the child and parent(s) are reunified or other permanency is reached and the case is dismissed, or the child is legally free. The same judge who hears the dependency case also hears the relevant family law matter on the UFC hearings calendar, with the same court team present to ensure coordination. Cases that are in Family Drug Treatment Court (FDTC) are scheduled for the family law to also be heard by the same FDTC judge. The FJCIP manager/UFC coordinator works across teams to facilitate communication and timeliness in process and outcomes for children and families. The FJCIP coordinator coordinates the cases that are referred to UFC and runs the UFC court hearings, where family law and dependency cases are heard together; facilitates the Table of Ten stakeholder group; provides case facilitation and assists with case flow management for domestic status conferences; and coordinates with community collaborators on priority issues for the court and

those identified by the Table of Ten. The FJCIP manager continues to work with stakeholders to improve efficiencies in dependency and UFC, to make mediation available when parents are willing to try to reach an agreed parenting plan or when a case is set for trial in the family law and mediation is required, and to analyze Snohomish County data to inform planning and decision-making.

Spokane – The Spokane Model was developed in the Spokane County Juvenile Court in 2007. A core team consisting of a court commissioner, a DCYF social worker, an assistant attorney general, a defense attorney, and a CASA is assigned to dependency cases at the shelter care hearing and participates in all subsequent hearings until the dependency is dismissed or until the termination of parental rights trial begins. Court commissioners are assigned to a rotation in juvenile court and, in addition, sit in juvenile court part or all of one day per week when they are not assigned to juvenile court. This team approach provides consistency, continuity, and stability.

Thurston – All dependency cases are assigned to a judge by the FJCIP coordinator; companion cases are identified and assigned the same judge as well as linked in the case management system. The coordinator confirms that all cases set on the weekly dockets and any other matters set for special hearings are set before the assigned judge. The FJCIP coordinator also ensures that all hearings for cross-system youth (youth in dependency with offender or juvenile actions) are before the assigned judge and assigns Family Recovery Court (FRC) cases to the FRC Judge.

Assistance with Family Law

Chelan – The family court navigator serves as an initial point of contact for any parent in cases where an order granting concurrent jurisdiction is entered. The caseworkers and parent attorneys are instructed to send clients to the navigator when assistance is needed with a parenting plan or other family law order(s). The navigator assesses exactly what is needed and either provides assistance, schedules an appointment with a court facilitator, or refers the petitioner for an appointment with a volunteer attorney through CLEAR and/or the local Volunteer Attorney Services agency. The family court navigator also provides specialized case flow management and resource referrals in family law cases where parties are self-represented.

Clallam – Courthouse facilitation has always been part of the FJCIP in Clallam County, but recently the program has expanded. The FJCIP coordinator, who also serves as the courthouse facilitator, attends the dependency calendar twice a month to help parents or placements with family law cases in order to dismiss the dependency case. This eliminates the cost of an appointment and the need to schedule an appointment for another time. Clallam County has had 77 appointments with a steady increase each year from 15 appointments in 2016. This does not include the non-parental cases that were not referred but encouraged in order to avoid filing a dependency. In 2017, there were 26 appointments for non-parental custody cases, and 38 in 2018. Assisting with these types of cases allowed a relationship to be formed with the local tribes. When a case is going through a tribal Minor in Need of Care (MINOC) or Indian Child Welfare (ICW) case and needs a family law case to be dismissed, the tribal members and DCYF representatives are able to contact the coordinator to help with appointments with their families and are able to get cases finalized and closed in the MINOC cases which provide stability to the children involved. This encourages trust between the facilitator

and tribal members, resulting in an increase of tribal members using the services. In 2016, there were only 16 tribal member appointments and this number increased to 51 in 2017.

Another area of expansion includes FJCIP coordinator/facilitator travel to Forks once a month to assist with facilitation for residents located on the west side of the county. This expansion started in April 2018. Between April and December 1, 2018, the program held 35 regular and quick info appointments, one of which was a dependency case moving to dismissal. At minimum, this saved clients 31 hours of travel time, 2,835 miles of travel distance, and \$1,545 of mileage cost. Many of the clients use bus transportation significantly, which increases the amount of travel time. This expansion is possible through the community efforts of: the FJCIP coordinator/facilitator, the Clallam Jefferson County Pro Bono Lawyers paying for mileage, and the City of Forks providing a space free of cost.

King – The Family Law Information Center (FLIC) houses facilitators and attorney Early Resolution Case Managers (ERCMs) that work with pro se parties needing assistance with family law and guardianship (RCW 11.88) matters. The FLIC front desk handles an average of 22,000 inquiries per year. The family law ERCMs work directly with the UFC judges at both status conference and pretrial hearings. They identify the pro se cases and work with the parties (including mediations) with the goal of getting the case resolved in advance of the trial date. They assist in resolving approximately 1,250 cases per year.

In addition, a part-time dependency ERCM receives approximately 450 parenting plans and non-parental custody referrals per year from judges or attorneys involved in dependency cases. The ERCM works with the parties (including some mediation) and, if the parties are in agreement, the ERCM prepares all documents and presents the family law final orders so the dependency case can be dismissed. An average of 395 of these cases are resolved per year.

Kitsap – The FJCIP coordinator assists self-represented litigants in completing parenting plans once concurrent jurisdiction is established and the facilitation system known as “KFAM” is ordered. The court order granting concurrent jurisdiction was modified to include an appointment date at 60 days wherein the parent(s) is/are court ordered to meet with the UFC coordinator and receive a parenting plan packet. Additionally, an addendum is completed in the concurrent court hearing citing concerns or restrictions raised in the dependency action, i.e., domestic violence, mental health or drug/alcohol issues. This addendum is reviewed by the commissioner at the concurrent jurisdiction hearing and the addendum serves to assist the parent(s) and facilitator with factors to include in the parenting plan. Parents are then required to meet with the coordinator to obtain and complete the appropriate documents. The coordinator consults with the Prosecutor’s child support division to obtain any information regarding parentage and child support orders. The coordinator assists the clients to navigate through the system to get the parenting plans filed and schedule court dates. The coordinator alerts the GAL and social worker of the ongoing progress.

Three and a half years ago, the FJCIP coordinator began assisting pro se litigants with parenting plans, rather than send every case to the courthouse facilitators housed in a different building within the county, improving the process. In April 2018 a work group was organized to look at the Pierce County JFAM process. Since that time there have been multiple work groups to create Kitsap's KFAM process which will improve the screening and referral process and review hearings to ensure progress is being made on the parenting plan. KFAM began in October 2018.

Pierce – The facilitation system known as “JFAM” was initially developed by the FJCIP coordinator and a facilitator was hired to assist. With respect to family law cases, when the children go home to one but not both parents' household, an order for referral to JFAM is made. The JFAM facilitator assists the parties to prepare, file, and serve the family law petition for a residential schedule or parenting plan. JFAM is also available to help the served party to file a response and if cases are agreed, prepares the final paperwork. The goal is to complete the JFAM case prior to the children being home six months, and regular status conference checks are monitored by the court.

Snohomish – The FJCIP manager provides facilitator services, case management, and mediation for families involved in both dependency and family law actions, or for family law actions that have shown no activity for more than 180 days, or where a scheduled trial date is missed. The FJCIP manager coordinates with AAGs, parent's attorneys and others to ensure timely referrals to UFC; manages the cases through the UFC process to facilitate timely completion of the family law action and dismissal of the dependency; and, runs the weekly UFC hearings calendar, including briefing of the judge who will be hearing the cases in UFC. Review of the dependency and family law histories by the FJCIP manager enables prioritized scheduling, coordination, and direct assistance to families in dependency who require a family law action to be drafted and filed before the dependency can be dismissed. The FJCIP manager coordinates the work of a courthouse facilitator, who is present during Monday UFC hearings to assist families to draft and file in the family law action, and two FJCIP intern positions that are intended to facilitate various improvement efforts. Planning conferences are conducted throughout the week to ensure that cases move forward in a timely manner and remain with the assigned judge/court team. Should the family law action be disputed and thus set for trial or the parents are willing to try to reach an agreed parenting plan, the FJCIP manager is available to mediate on a case-by-case basis, as determined by the judicial officer. This option assists in bringing cases to a more timely final parenting plan and dismissal of the dependency. Data on dependency cases and family law actions is maintained and analyzed by the FJCIP manager to inform court and team practices and decision-making. The Table of Ten regularly reviews the data reported by the FJCIP manager, who facilitates discussion, prioritization, and decision-making.

Every case where there is the return home of a child to one parent, is referred to UFC for determination of any necessary family law action prior to dismissal. Assistance is also provided for non-parental custody cases. As of October 1, 2018, 219 cases have been referred to UFC this year, as compared to a total of 207 cases in 2017. Two specific goals are for cases in shelter care status to be completed in UFC as quickly as possible and for cases in dependency to be completed in UFC prior to the 6-month earliest dismissal date. On average, dependency cases are completed in UFC 63 days before the earliest dismissal date. This greatly facilitates the timely dismissal of dependency cases.

Spokane – The FJCIP coordinator provides facilitator services for parties involved in both a dependency and a family law matter. The coordinator assigns/reassigns one court commissioner to cases whereby individuals are involved in both a juvenile court and a family law matter. All dependency petitions are reviewed and the case history of participants reviewed to determine if they are involved in dual legal matters. If there is a dependency and a family law matter, the family law matter will likely be reassigned to the commissioner handling the dependency.

The FJCIP coordinator teams with the legal studies program at Spokane Community College to provide volunteer opportunities to interns seeking work in dependency and/or family law. The intern assists with family law case work and dependency project work. A large percentage of the FJCIP coordinator's workload includes meeting with dependency clients to create, file, and complete family law actions. To reduce time spent with one-on-one family law casework and increase time spent on system improvement, the FJCIP coordinator considered creation of a drop-in clinic for dependency clients. The FJCIP coordinator contacted multiple community agencies to see what type of family law clinics are available in the community, with the goal of creating a clinic to serve the special needs of Spokane's dependency clients. The Volunteer Lawyers program is interested in beginning a conversation about partnering on a clinic.

Thurston – The FJCIP coordinator continues to work with numerous parties in dependency actions, assisting them with the preparation, filing, and completion of family law cases in order to enter parenting plans so the dependency action can be dismissed. Parenting plans have been established for 140 children in dependency from January 2014 through November 2018, with several actions waiting to be started.

Multi-System Youth Coordination

King – Each week the FJCIP coordinator works with the juvenile offender coordinator to identify youth who have dependency and offender cases. The information is added to the case management database. When accessing the case management system, both dependency and offender judges can see the flagged, linked case and can view other cases in process. With that information the dependency judge can reach out to the juvenile offender judges and discuss whether it makes sense for them to keep the cases separate, or if one judge should handle all of the cases.

Kitsap – The FJCIP coordinator actively monitors new cases filed in juvenile court and, when applicable, oversees the dependency and juvenile offender matters. The coordinator identifies dependent youth at the time of arraignment or diversion and facilitates all offender hearings (adjudication/disposition) and diversion contracts. The coordinator completes a comprehensive review of the client’s dependency history, including all placement history while in care and reasons for movement. The coordinator completes a risk assessment on each youth and identifies needed programming and services. Services provided are intended to assist the youth in learning skills to make better and safer choices and be more productive. The coordinator works closely with social workers and placement coordinators to exhaust every effort to keep a youth in an approved healthy placement. Communication occurs between the offender and non-offender units in addition to all other involved agencies. The coordinator attends all offender and dependency court hearings to provide information to the judicial officers. The coordinator also communicates with the court where youth have an out-of-county dependency.

Spokane – The juvenile court recognizes the need to improve communications and processes to reduce the number of hearings for dually involved youth and increase advocacy and participation by all parties. Four meetings were held with the court commissioner, representatives from dependency and offender professionals, and Superior/Juvenile Court administration to try to better align services for youth and families that are dually involved with offender and dependency matters. It was determined that a policy be drafted to designate the FJCIP coordinator responsibility for tracking Spokane’s crossover youth, setting their hearings in front of a commissioner when possible, and communicating about upcoming hearings to all stakeholders. The draft policy will be presented to commissioners and judges for approval.

Thurston – The FJCIP coordinator reviews the daily juvenile intake docket for dependent youth who are detained on offender charges. The coordinator consults with the assigned dependency judge, prosecutor, and probation officer regarding scheduling the detention hearing; notifies all parties in both the dependency case and the offender matter, as well as internal staff and clerks; and links the cases in the case management system. The coordinator works with counsel and the assigned judge on setting special hearings as needed.

Mediation/Settlement Conferences

Chelan – One of the important improvements from the June 2018 Permanency Summit was the scheduling of early case conferences at the shelter care hearings. Every case where the parties agree to engage in an early case conference is set on a regular day and time that has been designated for that purpose. The case conference can be cancelled, but having a regular day/time set aside eliminates the barrier coordinating dates and times for the many participants. In addition, judicial settlement conferences are conducted before every fact finding trial and termination of parental rights trial.

Clallam/Jefferson – At the recent Clallam/Jefferson Permanency Summit, one of the action plans created was to provide mediation with dependency cases. This action plan is under development, with the hope that the structure of mediation will allow the parents to feel that they are being heard and increase engagement in their cases. Mediation also allows all parties to identify where there is conflict and try constructive decision making to create solutions.

Island – The FJCIP coordinator tracks cases flagged by the clerk that are involved in family law cases and dependency cases. Before parties proceed to trial on family law issues, mandatory mediation must occur.

King – The Dependency Mediation Program started in 2009 to provide a less adversarial means for addressing and resolving issues in child protection cases filed in Seattle. In November 2017, the program was expanded to include cases filed in Kent. In dependency mediation, a specially-trained neutral mediator helps guide the parties (the parents, social worker, attorneys and CASA) through a confidential discussion of the family's situation and the concerns that brought them to the attention of DCYF. The mediator assists parties in developing a plan that they all agree is safe, addresses parental deficiencies, and is in the best interests of the children. Specific goals of the dependency mediation program are: 1) to give parents a voice in the dependency process and encourage their engagement; 2) to support timely processing of dependency cases; 3) to give all parties the opportunity for thoughtful discussion and collaboration; and 4) to promote safe, timely permanency for children.

The National Council of Juvenile and Family Court Judges (NCJFCJ) studied this program during the first five years of operation and found that mediated cases had timelier case processing, increased resolution rates, increased placement with relatives compared to foster care, and higher rates of reunification with parents. Internal exit surveys showed that 95% of parents are satisfied with the process and the outcome and that they felt heard, respected, and had a greater understanding of the case and what was expected of them. Because this is a collaborative, non-adversarial process, mediation can preserve and improve the relationships between parties, allowing them to focus on the action steps and behavior changes necessary for reunification. In that way, mediation is a fundamental tool for realizing the primary intention of dependency court: to safely return children to their families.

Kitsap – Prior to fact finding or trial, any party to the case can ask for a settlement conference and the court will grant it. This is to ease the court's trial schedule. Many of the settlement conferences result in a resolution of the case. Hence, avoiding a lengthy trial.

Pierce – Settlement conferences are required if the parents have not agreed to a parenting plan or residential schedule. They are also required if a parent has not voluntarily agreed to a dependency. The settlement conferences are conducted by judicial officers not otherwise adjudicating the case. Settlement conferences by judicial officers are also available but not mandatory in termination cases prior to trial beginning. Reliance on the parent’s attorney and state’s attorney to schedule the termination cases that may benefit from a settlement conference works well to make these conferences fit with necessary judicial economy. These procedures were developed with the assistance of the FJCIP.

Snohomish – Mediation on the family law action within UFC has been available for nearly three years, with the intention of reducing the number of cases set to trial; decreasing the timeframe for dismissal; and improving the quality of and adherence to the final parenting plan. Data shows an increase in settled mediation and a decrease in cases set to trial.

Thurston – Thurston County hired a third court commissioner in 2017 and began holding settlement conferences for dependency and termination cases. Since August 2017, 59 settlement conferences were held, with 22 cases reaching full settlement, and six cases reaching partial settlement.

Specialized Court Teams

Baby Court Team

Pierce – In October 2016, Pierce County Juvenile Court implemented Baby Court, serving families with the Best for Babies Pilot Project. The goal of this program is to front-load services to infants (0-3) and their parents in accordance with current best practices, in order to preserve the infant-parent bond, promote child well-being, and reduce time to permanency. The program serves 10-20 infants and toddlers, including an early developmental assessment and referral of every child to early intervention services. Family time is maximized, including a brief assessment of parenting at the first or second scheduled family time, and coordinated parent and caregiver training/coaching. Specially trained CASAs are assigned to these cases, along with a monthly advisory team consultation. Court review hearings are scheduled every 60 days, versus the typical six month dependency reviews.

Baby Court is guided by Zero To Three’s national model. Zero To Three (ZTT) recently provided a grant opportunity to Pierce County starting September 30, 2018. Pierce County Juvenile Court will be the recipient of \$75,000 per year for the next three years to participate as a newly implemented ZTT site. ZTT offers technical assistance, access to the QIC-CT data portal, and program evaluation of the Best for Babies Court Program. Pierce County experienced similar results with infants and toddlers served through Baby Court. Since the implementation of Baby Court, 15 infants/toddlers were served, including seven dismissals – five dismissals resulting in reunification (avg. time to reunification: 9.8 mo.) – and two cases resulting in adoption (avg. time to adoption: 17 mo.). With the average time to permanence in a standard dependency case being 24 or more months, the Baby Court Program’s results are remarkable.

Amara Fostering sponsored a designated community coordinator position for Baby Court starting in August 2018. The community coordinator position serves as a neutral party in the Community Advisory Team staffings and assists with the Community Advisory Team's recommendations for parents and caregivers to better support infants, toddlers and their families. Additionally, the community coordinator continues to recruit and partner with agencies within the community to ensure families have supports in place after the dependency is dismissed. Lastly, Amara provides a data team to support the community coordinator to better analyze program data.

Family Treatment Court

Chelan – Although not technically an FJCIP project, the first adult drug court in Chelan County was launched this summer. When a parent is in both the drug court and dependency court, communication and coordination occurs with all partners in both the felony and dependency case to support the parent/family. DCYF is appointing one social worker to serve as a liaison and caseworker for any parent who is in a dependency.

Clallam – The Living in Families Together (LIFT) Court had 74 graduates out of 211 participants over the past 10 years. Parents with substance abuse issues are ordered to LIFT Court. The LIFT Court is not a service, but a court review, which is scheduled as often as needed in dependency court. Every Wednesday the LIFT Court team holds a staffing meeting at 1:30 p.m., then at 3:00 p.m. the LIFT Court participants come into court. Any participant comes to LIFT Court at any stage in the process and if they dropped out for whatever reason, they don't need to contact staff prior to re-engagement. By meeting more often, the court is more responsive to address the needs of the participants. The court usually has 28 cases on the weekly calendar. Out of the 211 cases, only three cases proceeded to termination trials. The average time to LIFT Court graduation is 14 months. A special tracking sheet is used, so the participant knows exactly what is expected during each phase of the program. Everyone is held accountable: the participant, DCYF, and attorneys. Transportation to services, visitation, etc. are discussed. There is power in the peer system, as they see each other's progress. The LIFT Court is considering adding a section to the tracking sheets regarding connections to outside supports and networks.

Once a month the LIFT Court holds a topic court where eight different topics are covered in-depth: housing, college, work source, LIFT Court Alumni, etc. The first Wednesday of the month is a one-on-one more intensive look at each case with the team. Parent attorneys don't usually come to court, as court orders are entered on the regular dependency calendar. The department can dismiss the dependency case before the parent graduates from LIFT Court, but the parent can continue in the program if they want.

In 2016, the FJCIP coordinator started managing a binder for the LIFT Court, which includes recent dependency review hearing orders and any permanency planning orders. This helps staff address issues that might be barriers for participants while they are in the recovery process with the goal of retaining custody of their children.

Island – The FJCIP coordinator attends weekly Family Treatment Court hearings which improves communication between parties.

Jefferson – The FJCIP coordinator attends weekly Family Therapeutic Court (FTC), which keeps the coordinator in touch with both the proceedings in FTC and the participants, which includes the families, judicial officer, Olympic Community Action programs, the Guardian ad Litem program coordinator and the DCYF supervisor.

King – Family Treatment Court (FTC) started in 2004 as an alternative to regular dependency court. It is designed to improve the safety and well-being of children in the dependency system by providing parents access to drug and alcohol treatment, judicial monitoring of their sobriety, and individualized services to support the entire family. The FTC has the capacity to serve 78 children at one time. Parents voluntarily enter the program and agree to increased court participation, chemical dependency treatment, and intense case management in order to reunite with their children. Case review hearings initially occur every other week and then become less frequent as parents progress through the program. Incentives are awarded to recognize parent's achievements and graduated responses are used when parents violate program rules. It is expected the parents will remain in FTC between 12 months and two years. If a parent is unable to engage in services or maintain sobriety, the process prepares the court for quickly finding the best solution for the children.

Through a collaborative, non-adversarial approach, the FTC integrates substance abuse treatment and increased accountability into the process. The court's first preference is always to help make families whole or to find children a stable environment with their own relatives. Each family has an FTC team that reviews parents' participation and recommends services. The team includes: parents attorneys, AAG, DCYF social worker, substance abuse counselor, CASA and/or youth attorney, FTC treatment specialist, FTC program manager, and the judge. This interdisciplinary team is cross-trained and works collaboratively to resolve issues.

Kitsap – The FJCIP coordinator does not manage the Family Recovery Court (FRC) program. However, Kitsap County offers FRC for anyone in dependency wherein a primary reason for placing their children in dependency is drug or alcohol abuse. Court hearings are held weekly and there are four phases that must be completed toward graduation. FRC has the capacity for 12 participants. Eight participants graduated FRC in 2018.

Pierce – Family Recovery Court (FRC) in Pierce County has 10 graduates, and served 132 children and 37 active participants in 2018. Pierce County Alliance (PCA) offers services to families which include chemical dependency treatment, supervised visitation, medically assisted treatment, and additional evidence based programs as needed. Additionally, PCA offers case management to help parents overcome barriers and access community services. The PCA has a mental health professional in-house for referrals when needed to serve both children and families. One goal of PCA is no family leaves FRC without a GED. The FRC cases are reviewed monthly or more often as needed. Dependency cases are reviewed every three months and cases are staffed weekly prior to dependency review hearings. Judges are on a one year rotation. The FRC Team includes parent attorneys, AAGs, DCYF designated unit, one CASA Coordinator, one full time GAL staff, and multiple CASA volunteers.

Snohomish – The FJCIP coordinator does not manage the Family Drug Treatment Court (FDTTC) program. Snohomish County Superior Court began the FDTTC in 2008. The goal of the FDTTC is the expedited permanency of children into a clean, stable, drug free and nurturing home. Through a coordinated team approach, access to substance use disorder and mental health treatment services, and ancillary services, the FDTTC provides parents struggling with the disease of addiction the opportunity for recovery and the skills necessary to successfully parent their children. One hundred fifty-one (151) participants graduated FDTTC since 2008.

Thurston – The FJCIP coordinator does not manage the Family Recovery Court (FRC) program. However, Thurston County offers FRC for anyone in dependency wherein a primary reason for placing their children in dependency is drug or alcohol abuse. Court hearings are held weekly and there are four phases that must be completed toward graduation. Thirty five (35) participants graduated Family Recovery Court since 2013.

Indian Child Welfare (ICW) Court Team

Spokane – Spokane County has a dependency court team that is specific to ICW families. When there is knowledge that a child is Native, they are assigned to the ICW court team at the shelter care hearing. The court team has the same commissioner, AAG, parent attorney, GAL and social worker on an ongoing basis. This allows all team members to become specialists not only on the ICW process, but also working with tribal courts. The team built relationships with other tribal courts that allow for more success in tribal courts taking part in the dependency, or in some cases, feeling secure in allowing Spokane's team to adequately meet the needs of the tribal family. The team also better understands how culture, historical trauma, and other unique needs impact individual cases and are therefore more responsive to those needs.

Legally Free Court Team

Pierce – The FJCIP coordinator provides oversight to cases where parents rights have been terminated and the child is legally free. This includes:

- Facilitation of monthly Adoption Workgroup meetings which provide a forum to address/eliminate barriers to timely permanence, as well as provide educational opportunities and collaboration;
- Assignment and tracking of child attorneys;
- Preparing and processing orders appointing attorney for legally free child; and
- Tracking/monitoring all legally free children and barriers to permanence on the legally free spreadsheet.

The legally free cases are currently heard on review dockets scheduled on the 2nd and 4th Fridays of each month. The legally free workgroup continues to provide a venue for stakeholders to reduce barriers impacting timeliness and collaboratively problem-solve. It is also important to note Pierce County has observed a trend in children becoming legally free who are: not placed in their home of choice, have severe mental health issues due to the trauma they have experienced, and are in need of services to stabilize in order to increase the likelihood of successful recruitment.

Spokane – Legally free youth are served by one court commissioner and court team, therefore, providing increased attention to the youth’s unique needs. Since all youth on this docket are legally free, the “one team” process provides the opportunity to have a single focused team finding resources for the child. This includes, but is not limited to, placement, housing, therapy, guidance, and knowledge unique to a legally free youth. The youth feels supported individually by an entire team. Spokane adoption and legally free social workers are housed in the same location so that they can better manage and problem solve youth cases. The AAG and youth attorneys are also more specialized on this team because they learn the specific needs of these children and cases and, therefore, are more prepared to handle those unique needs. The legally free docket is heard weekly.

Thurston – The FJCIP coordinator oversees the assignment and tracking of attorneys for youth six months legally free pursuant to RCW 13.34.100(6)(a) and prepares and processes orders of assignment. The coordinator monitors each judge’s assigned legally free cases, updates the list as a youth is adopted or ages out, and distributes the list monthly to the judges.

Special Programs

Adoption Day Celebration

Chelan – For this year’s National Adoption Day celebration, eight children were adopted by six families in Chelan and Douglas Counties. One of the adopted children was a 14 year old girl, which was cause for increased celebration. The children receive “passports” at the door which they take to over ten booths hosted by different organizations around the valley that assist adoptive families, i.e., the library, and Sage to Alethea riding center. Completed passports are added to a drawing for prizes, which are toys, gift cards, etc., donated by local organizations. The adoptive families are given flowers and gift cards to local restaurants. There is normally a fire truck outside and this year a Sheriff’s Office canine demonstration was provided. The adoption ceremonies are completed in front of the whole group and there is lunch and cake provided.

Clallam – During the week of National Adoption Day, the CASA program puts up signs and displays in the courthouse hallways explaining the lack of foster parents and the number of children in care in Clallam County who are in need of an adoptive home. The Adoption Day celebration is held in the Family Law Courtroom. Families who experienced the adoption process come and speak, the Commissioner also speaks, and cake is served. The CASA program organizes the event and social workers and service providers participate. In addition, the CASA program holds a shoe drive for children who are currently in out-of-home placement.

Island – The court holds an annual celebration inviting all families who adopted a child in the previous 12 months, along with any adoptions that occur the day of the celebration, and all parties to the cases. The celebration includes cake, coffee, balloons, and small donated gifts for the children. The presiding judge for that day’s adoption proceedings usually speaks to the families.

King – This year marked the 17th annual National Adoption Day celebration for King County. The event was attended by judges, lawyers, adoption advocates and foster care professionals. There were 17 families who finalized their adoptions this day and celebrated with mascots Mariner Moose, Blitz, and Harry the Husky; and had a sing-a-long with Caspar Babypants.

Kitsap – Prior to the Adoption Day, the Superior Court Administrator informs the GAL/CASA office and DCYF of the designated day/time of the adoption. The DCYF arranges as many adoptions as possible for that date. The Kitsap County GALs office, in coordination with the DCYF Adoption Unit, decorate the courtroom with balloons and banners, supply food and refreshments and attend the ceremony. The assigned GAL/CASA is afforded an opportunity to speak on behalf of the child during the proceedings. The children are presented with a small gift after the adoption finalization.

Pierce – National Adoption Day was celebrated in Pierce County on November 16, 2018. Thirteen children placed in foster care were adopted by their forever families. Prior to the docket, there was a short program featuring Judges Leanderson and Sorenson, along with the DCYF Regional Administrator welcoming the families and sharing the importance of community collaboration. This special day included cake and punch, a family photo booth, a social worker created balloon animals for children, and each adopted child received a special gift bag with all sorts of activities, a teddy bear, and a special certificate of adoption.

Snohomish – Snohomish County Superior Court and Clerk's office partner annually to host National Adoption Day. This is a meaningful local event in the community since 2005. In 2018, Snohomish County was one of twenty-five Washington counties celebrating adoptions while raising awareness for those children still waiting for a forever home. Eighteen local children were adopted by seventeen loving families at this year's event. The festivities included a proclamation by the County Executive, a presentation by Imagine Children's Museum, and community involvement from local businesses and stakeholders. Children and families had fun taking pictures at a special National Adoption Day photo booth and with mascots from area businesses including the Everett Aquasox Baseball team. Everett Police Department's Colby the Crime Dog mascot made an appearance along with the Prosecutor's office service dog. Everett Firefighters met with children and provided fire helmets and stickers while DCYF social workers and local Rotarians created art projects with the children. The families received toys and teddy bears and took silly pictures with the judges to commemorate the special day. It's a heartwarming event that many look forward to every year.

Spokane – Many families schedule the adoption hearing on Adoption Day and then participate in the celebration afterward. The annual court celebration includes gifts, superheroes, and food for the participants.

Thurston – Six to ten adoptions are scheduled to occur on Adoption Day and these families are celebrated during the ceremonial presentation. Participants are given flowers and a soft, stuffed animal for the adoptees. The gathering area of the upper floor is decorated, and activities are offered for the children which include face painting, books, and a reader from the Children's Museum. A life-size Booker T Bear and a Panda from Coordinated Care greet children and take pictures with them. Pizza, drinks and decorated cupcakes are also offered. Marshal the courthouse dog joins the event when available.

Adoption Workgroup

Kitsap – The Dependency and Adoption Work Groups are a combined effort of judicial officers, DCYF, AAG, defense attorneys and GALs to discuss dependency timelines, identify barriers to achieving permanence, and implement solutions. Two teams have been established, one for adoption timelines and the second for all other dependency timelines. This is a holistic approach to examine processes across all agencies and develop collective solutions to improve processes. The Adoption Work Group began in April 2017 and meets every other month. The Dependency Work Group began May 2018 and meets monthly. The two work groups combined for a special meeting in November 2018 to discuss the results of the federal Child and Family Services Review (CFSR) to start developing the Program Improvement Plan (PIP).

Pierce – In Pierce County the FJCIP coordinator, in conjunction with the commissioner who presides over the legally free docket, convenes an Adoption Workgroup to address/eliminate barriers to timely adoption. The Pierce County Adoption Workgroup began in 2013 and meets on a monthly basis.

Snohomish – The primary focus of the Permanency Summit, held on September 28, 2018, in Snohomish County, was on the time to adoption for children in dependency. A representative group is meeting to follow-up on the recommendations from the summit and to assess the path forward toward identified goals and outcomes.

Spokane – The Division of Licensed Resources (DLR) Area Administrator and Deputy Administrator attended the Teams Efficiencies in Dependency (TED) and Dependency Work Group (DWG) meetings to talk to all stakeholders about the DLR home study process and how to proceed when a client is not passing the home study. The administrator offered to assist with failed home studies to resolve the issues that are preventing a passing home study. The team is considering creation of a small work group to deal with adoption related issues.

Thurston – This workgroup began meeting in December 2018 to discuss strategies in bringing legally free children to adoption within six months. The workgroup consists of a judicial officer, the FJCIP coordinator, and the adoption unit supervisor with DCYF.

Courthouse Dog

Chelan – Hank is a specially trained facility dog who is able to attend interviews, advocacy and counseling sessions, and court sessions with a child if the child has to testify in court. Hank is a member of the SAGE Children's Advocacy Center and trained by Assistance Dogs Northwest since he was a puppy. He loves children and especially loves belly rubs. Clients have the right to ask to see if Hank is available for a visit, or if they would prefer, not to have Hank come to greet them. The Prosecutor's Victim Witness Office coordinates Hank's use in the courtrooms and for victim interviews by defense counsel.

Thurston – The Thurston County courts share a courthouse dog named Marshal, who attends hearings in both district court and superior court with a focus on comforting children during difficult hearings, but they find the adults enjoy his company just as much! He attends all of the dependency/termination calendars and is sometimes requested for trials and special set hearings. His presence calms participants, and they look forward to being with him. He visits with participants waiting in the hall for their hearing, as well as being in the courtroom to sit by youth who are nervous or afraid. Marshal also assists with calming victims in domestic violence and criminal assault cases. He is so busy, he is unable to make all of his obligations. For that reason, the Family and Juvenile Court is working on acquiring their own courthouse dog.

Family Time (Visitation) Focus

Island – The Table of Ten is focused on improving visitation. A Dependency 101 handbook was produced and distributed to families during the Dependency 101 course, including information about visitation. Court conversation bench cards were developed, which the commissioner uses at shelter care and dependency review hearings. The FJCIP coordinator tracks the conversations and changes in visitation and is compiling the data. The coordinator is also assisting DCYF in identifying alternate visitation locations, as well as volunteer visitation supervisors, monitors, and transportation providers. Island County dependency stakeholders participated in a multidisciplinary presentation, “Talking About Safety and Visitation.”

Snohomish – Judicial officers and dependency teams are focused on timely and appropriate visitation. Issues related to a lack of appropriate locations, supervisors, and transportation, as well as overly restrictive visitation orders, are part of Table of Ten discussions and planning. A grant awarded by the United Way in 2018 to the YWCA to establish “Homeward House” grew out of the Table of Ten deliberations and planning and is intended to facilitate better access to and appropriate visitation, particularly for parents and infants who are affected by opioid and other substances.

Spokane – The court commissioner meets with Family Impact Network (FIN) personnel to work on issues to improve access, availability, quality, and frequency of visitation.

Thurston – The court hosted a Parent-Child Visitation Forum, which was a day-long multidisciplinary event focusing on improving visitation in their community. Thurston County is part of the DCYF Supported Visits Pilot Project, where contracted visitation providers engage with the parents to better prepare parents for visits and provide more support up front.

Finding Fathers in Dependency Cases

The Finding Fathers project provides courts with reliable, fast, and low-cost DNA testing for alleged fathers in dependency cases. After a successful pilot project with five counties, ending in 2016, FJCIP courts saw the benefits and have implemented this program based on the protocol used by Pierce County, where DNA samples were obtained at the courthouse. Based on the success of the FJCIP courts, the 2019-2021 Judicial Branch Biennial Budget Request includes a request of \$152,000 over the two year period to expand this program to every county statewide.

Chelan – The Finding Fathers project was launched in October 2017 and observed benefits of the timeliness of receiving results. Testing alleged fathers located out of the area became easier through LabCorp. The court is paying the relatively small amount of money. Recently a DNA sample was collected from an infant, and the caseworker arranged to have a sample collected from an alleged father incarcerated in the Walla Walla Correctional Facility. The samples were connected through the court’s account at LabCorp, and the results were received in less than 60 days from the collection of the first sample. If the program was not in place, there would be no easy way to connect the samples, even if arrangements could have been made to collect them.

Kitsap – In coordination with DSHS, AAG’s office, Prosecutor’s Child Support Division, LabCorp and the Juvenile Department, the Finding Fathers project was implemented in July 2017. The FJCIP coordinator collects the genetic samples, submits the samples to LabCorp, files the results with the court and legal parties, and communicates with the Prosecutor’s Child Support Division for purposes of parentage and child support. As of December 2018, 52 genetic tests were performed with results returned from LabCorp between six days to two weeks from the time testing was ordered. By bringing the process in-house, the number of continuances and publication costs have been reduced. Establishing parentage early in a case reduces delays in dismissal when parenting plans need to be completed. A process was developed with the jail to allow the FJCIP coordinator to meet with the incarcerated alleged father for genetic testing.

By establishing the biological father earlier in the dependency, services can be offered. Recently a father, not named in the dependency by the mother who lived out of state, was notified that he had a child in a dependency in Washington and reached out to the department. He completed genetic testing, and was proven to be the father. He became involved in his child’s life and subsequently granted custody through a parenting plan.

Pierce –The juvenile court was part of the original pilot project starting in September 2015 and continued the program through 2018, significantly reducing the time it takes for paternity testing results. Current funding for the cost of the lab tests is provided by DCYF (2/3) and Office of Public Defense (1/3). Numerous cost savings are documented:

Year to date project period: 1/1/2018 – 9/30/2018

Number of cases with genetic testing completed: 128

Median time between order for genetic test and results: 16 Days

In 2017 126 tests were completed. Median time from order to results was 14 days.

- 11 children placed with bio father
- 20 children placed with paternal relatives
- 81 did not require publication
- 21 alleged fathers were dismissed, saving time and resources

Snohomish – The Juvenile Court was part of the original pilot program, but the project struggled due to transportation/access issues for the alleged fathers to get tested at the lab. Finding Fathers has restarted with support from both OPD and DCYF, providing the ability for swabbing alleged fathers at the Denney Juvenile Justice Center (DJJC). As of December 2018, 33 cases participated in swabbing at DJJC for genetic testing in order to establish paternity. Results are still pending in seven cases; tested fathers have been excluded in six cases; and paternity was established in 20 cases with those fathers and/or relatives now serving as potential resources toward permanency for the children.

Spokane – The FJCIP coordinator contacted LabCorp who confirmed they can train court staff to complete testing, which is the most responsive method. Spokane is still working out the details for implementation of this program.

Thurston – The Family and Juvenile Court was part of the original pilot program, but the project struggled once funding was cut at the end of the pilot. Genetic testing continued, and DCYF agreed to pay for the tests. A decision was made to start testing at the courthouse in an effort to reach alleged fathers for testing while at shelter care hearings. Testers were identified and trained in blood borne pathogens and buccal swab collection procedures. Kits were received and organized, and additional supplies were ordered for the protection of testers, such as goggles, gauze masks and hand sanitizer. A protocol was drafted and approved. The in-house genetic testing program started April 1, 2018, and 13 participants were tested in-house since that time. Parties who do not appear in court are still scheduled for testing at the LabCorp facility.

Parents for Parents Program

Chelan – Just as Chelan was preparing to launch a parent program, there was almost a complete change of parent representation attorneys, which stalled the process. The documents are revised and the program will move forward after the beginning of the year.

Clallam – The Parents for Parents program began in March 2018 and 19 parents registered for Dependency 101. Unfortunately not all of those parents followed through with attending the 101 class. The coordinator and parent allies connect with all parents who attend dependency court. Stakeholders are very supportive of the program and encourage guests to attend the 101 for more information. The Advisory Committee is considering the addition of a Dependency 201 class each month to focus on specific barriers parents face during their dependency. In addition, the committee is considering providing Dependency 101 classes in Forks for parents who live on the west end of the county. There also are discussions of possibly contacting parents earlier than the shelter care hearing. This concept was brought up at the Clallam-Jefferson County Dependency Permanency Summit.

Island – The coordinator approaches all parents in dependency cases and encourages them to view the Dependency 101 video presentation. The coordinator also goes over roles of the parties, provides tips for parents to be successfully reunited with their children, and provides parents with the Dependency 101 handbook that was produced by the Table of Ten.

Jefferson – The court held two team meetings which included members of the Superior Court, Juvenile Services, parents who successfully closed their dependency cases, and the DCYF. Bi-weekly phone meetings occur to keep the process moving. The main barrier to starting a Parents for Parents (P4P) program in Jefferson County is funding. DCYF recently received a grant related to permanency, and a portion of that funding can be used for implementation of P4P in Jefferson County this next year. The FJCIP coordinator will be working with Children’s Home Society to move this project forward.

King – The Parents for Parents Program consists of three main pieces: 1) parent ally support at dependency court hearings, 2) Dependency 101 class, and 3) Dependency 201 class. This year the program expanded from only providing parent support at the 72 Hour Shelter Care hearing, to being available for all hearings. The parent allies work with parents to provide encouragement and hope, and encourage the parents to sign up for the Dependency 101 class. The class is a two-hour session designed to educate parents about the dependency system. Various stakeholder groups send representatives to this class to discuss their role in the dependency process and interactions with parents, children, and the court. If parents attend the Dependency 101, they can then participate in the Dependency 201. This is a six-week course designed to offer continued mentoring and resource support through the dependency case. Parents can choose just one, or all six of the courses offered, which are: visitation, housing and DCYF services, family law resources, parenting and childcare resources, navigating the dependency system, and life skills.

Kitsap – The Parents for Parents (P4P) program has a part time program coordinator who focuses on providing support at shelter care hearings as well as educating parents at Dependency 101, a two hour class to educate parents on the process of dependency. This class is held twice a month at the local DCYF office. This year the program coordinator worked with the Kitsap County jail to gain access for parents who are in custody. Another parent ally has been hired to assist in working with the dependency parents. A reunification support book was placed in the courtroom to gather contact information from parents for the annual reunification celebration. The P4P program coordinator started a visitation bag closet with the assistance of a community member. Community donations provide supplies such as diapers, food, and backpacks to be used during visitations. Kitsap Strong is providing Neuroscience, Epigenetics, Adverse Childhood Experiences, and Resiliency (NEAR) training to the families involved in dependencies. The coordinator is working with the dependency court to provide this training as a court ordered service. In addition, the P4P coordinator worked with the local homeless shelter to secure two beds specifically for parents involved in a dependency that are homeless and in need of temporary housing.

Pierce – Parents for Parents was established in Pierce County 2010. Parent Allies offer Dependency 101 and 201 Classes to help support parents through the dependency process.

Dependency 101 is a two-hour session designed to educate and empower parents about the dependency system and to help them learn how to take a constructive, collaborative, and proactive approach when engaging in their case plan.

During the class, the parents:

- Receive a packet with information on the dependency process, a calendar to track appointments, a list of important phone numbers, a Family Treatment Court pamphlet, a list of current community resources, and other tools to assist them;
- Watch an educational video about the dependency process;
- Listen to Parent Allies share their experience with the dependency system; and
- Hear a Court Appointed Special Advocate (CASA), an Assistant Attorney General, a Social Worker, and a Parent’s Attorney discuss their roles in the dependency process and how they interact with parents, children, and the court.

After attending Dependency 101, parents were:

- More educated about the juvenile dependency system;
- Less anxious about the dependency process;
- Reassured that a support network exists; and
- Had a new more positive perception of DCYF.

Participation in Dependency 101 was related to:

- Increased compliance in the court ordered case plan by both mothers and fathers;
- Significant increases in parents’ compliance with court ordered visitation at the first review hearing; and
- Increased participation of the mother at key court events.

Additionally, Parent Allies provide support to parents at court, family team decision-making meetings, and advocate assistance wherever needed. Parents for Parents also provides families with nutritious snacks for family time (visits). The Parent Allies share stories of their own success in navigating the court process and share resources that worked for them. Parent Allies also offer a Fatherhood Engagement Program, specific to assisting fathers navigate the dependency system, as well as a support group called: “It Takes a Village.”

Snohomish – Parents for Parents is a Snohomish County program that promotes the safe and timely reunification of families with a dependency case through early engagement in peer mentoring and education on the dependency system and processes. Parent ally mentors, who have successfully reunited their own families after a dependency case, provide support to parents who are new to the process, and can provide assistance at dependency hearings.

Spokane – The Parents for Parents (P4P) program is designed to lend support to parents who have had their children removed from their care. The program utilizes parents, who have successfully navigated the child welfare dependency court system and been reunified with their children, to help support parents who are currently involved in dependencies. The P4P program refers to these successfully reunified birth parents as Parent Allies (PAs). There are two main elements of the program: support from PAs at the court hearings, as well as a two-hour educational class called Helping Other Parents Engage (HOPE). HOPE classes provide an overview of the child welfare process and gives tips and tools on how to navigate a case successfully. Building Hope classes are now offered with ongoing curriculum, such as: a housing clinic, how to make the most of your visits, how to show the courts you're making progress, and financial stability. Ongoing peer support is offered, and when parents get their cases closed, they can be a part of this program as a built in support system. This program runs full circle.

Thurston – The FJCIP coordinator is not involved with the Parents for Parents program; however, the Family Support and Education Services organization maintains this program to offer supportive help for parents in dependency via Dependency 101 classes, one-on-one mentoring, support groups, parenting classes, and assistance with personal needs, including transportation and housing. A parent ally attends every shelter care hearing to connect with the parents at the outset.

Protein for All

Protein for All provides resources to help individuals and families who find themselves navigating the legal system while experiencing challenges such as food security, homelessness, or high levels of stress. These resources are designed to help optimize brain function during high stake events like going to court, evaluations, visitations, and case meetings.

Chelan – In the spring of 2017, Chelan began providing protein snacks for parents, attorneys, social workers, and GALs during dependency dockets, and at shelter care hearings. On dependency docket day, court partners spend much of the morning round tabling, and the snacks are available in the room where that takes place. Additionally, snacks are offered to parents who are appearing for shelter care hearings. Handouts providing information regarding the importance of protein and brain function are available in English and Spanish for caseworkers and attorneys to provide to parents. For more information see the proteinforall.org website.

King – Since 2016, the Family Treatment Court, Parents for Parents, and FJCIP have worked together to receive food donations to support parents and families attending court. A few times a year, the FJCIP coordinator sends out a request to the stakeholder email list requesting protein snack donations. This email includes a link about the importance of protein and brain function. Donations are delivered to the Parents for Parents program. When parent allies and Family Treatment Court staff are working with families at court, they ask when the person last ate and encourage them to have a snack to be at their best.

Pierce – In October 2017, Pierce County partnered with a local food bank, Eloise’s Cooking Pot, to provide snacks in the court lobby. Parent allies assist with filling the lobby’s snack basket available to families waiting for court. The FJCIP coordinator retrieves snacks from the food bank once a month and stores the items at the courthouse in bins. The snacks vary from week to week and are subject to the Food Bank resources. Items typically include: granola bars, Goldfish crackers, cookies, protein bars, bottles of water and juice, etc. Items with protein are requested but are not always available. Families attending court may access the snack basket without question. There is signage indicating snacks are made available by Eloise’s Cooking Pot, and the food bank’s contact information is available for families needing assistance. Since the “Snacks at Court” program began, parent’s attorneys, social workers and parent allies continue to comment how the program has made a positive difference. Their clients are better able to pay attention and are not as angry as when they came to court hungry.

Snohomish – The court is working with community partners to establish “The Cupboard” at Denney Juvenile Justice Center.

Spokane – In 2016, Juvenile court staff, attorneys, social workers, and GAL staff were trained by Dr. Kristen Allott of Dynamic Brains Consulting about optimizing brain functions in court or other high stakes settings. Dr. Allott presented on how trauma and hypoglycemia impacts the brain. Through the training, staff learned that protein can help with sleep, energy levels, stable moods, decreased depression, and increased metabolism. Based on this information, the Parents for Parents program worked with juvenile court staff to put in place a policy that allow shelter care families to have protein in the lobby prior to their hearings.

Thurston – In collaboration with Family Education & Support Services and donations from the Thurston County Food Bank, a cabinet at the Family and Juvenile Court is stocked with healthy snacks and water. The rolling cabinet is placed in front of the courtroom door for all dependency calendars, shelter care hearings, family recovery court, and other dependency related matters. In August 2017, the program extended to the juvenile probation department for youth on probation. In January 2018, the program extended to the juvenile detention department to provide healthy snacks to youth who arrive for day detention hungry without eating breakfast. In the two years of maintaining this program, Food for Parents handed out 2,690 food bags to court participants.

Reunification Celebrations

Administrative Office of the Courts now has a Reunification Day website:
<http://www.courts.wa.gov/newsinfo/index.cfm?fa=newsinfo.familyreunification>

King – King County held its Ninth Annual Reunification Day to celebrate the parents who made significant life changes in order for their children to safely be returned to their care. Since inception, the event is held on the last Friday in June. The event begins with a judicial procession, and includes testimonials from parents who reunified with their children. Families can enjoy face painting, art tables, and a photo booth, and kids receive a goody bag. There is a raffle of gift baskets and lots of food which is sponsored by Casey Family Programs. Videos of past years events can be found on King County TV on YouTube.

Pierce – The annual Reunification Celebration occurred on June 21, 2018 at Wapato Park in Tacoma. In attendance were: 36 reunified parents, 81 reunified children, and 66 professionals and volunteers. The following new links report about the event:

- King 5's Jenna Hanchard reporting: <https://www.king5.com/video/news/local/families-celebrate-a-fresh-start-after-reunification/281-8167635>
- Q13 News' AJ Janavel reporting: <https://q13fox.com/2018/06/22/parents-children-celebrate-reunification-in-tacoma/>
- The News Tribune's Alexis Krell reporting: <https://www.thenewstribune.com/news/local/article213527039.html>

Snohomish – The Snohomish County branch of the Parents for Parents Program (formally Snohomish County Parent Advisory Committee—SnoPAC) provides a reunification picnic every year. The 2018 picnic was the eighth year and included a barbeque, crafts, a bouncy house, and speakers who are reunified parents. Organizations from the area also took part in a Resource Fair. The local CASA program donated a cotton candy machine this year, and several Superior Court judges typically attend. Reunified families, as well as families not yet reunified, are invited. Social workers often have clients arrange their weekly visit so that they can attend the event.

Spokane – The courts hosted a dismissal docket and reunification day celebration for families whose dependencies were dismissed in the 2017-2018 year. The docket was heavily attended along with the celebration. Dependency teams created large gift baskets that were given away at the celebration by raffle. After the event, the FJCIP coordinator surveyed dependency stakeholders for feedback. The results were positive, but staff are still interested in creating a uniform process for dismissal celebrations that would happen consistently throughout the year. The TED Committee discussed this topic further, and Commissioner Ressa is taking the idea back to the other commissioners.

Thurston – Thurston County holds an annual Reunification Celebration at Heritage Park in Olympia. The judges speak about each youth individually; there are also games, food and gift baskets for participants.

Totes for Kids

Snohomish – Totes for Kids was established as a 501(c)(3) non-profit, to provide a backpack/duffle/suitcase to each child taken into dependency in order to transfer their belongings with dignity. This idea grew out of a training provided by the AOC and the Court Improvement Training Academy (CITA) in March 2017. Youth from Mockingbird conducted an activity that simulated how children's belongings, when taken into State custody, are often put into garbage bags for transport. The judges were motivated to do better by our children. Multiple volunteers now work on this effort to ensure that each child has a way to transfer their belongings with dignity.

Miscellaneous Projects/Programs

King – King County developed processes and a new case schedule to address the new Vulnerable Youth Guardianship Petitions in response to legislation enacted last year. Review hearings are set every six months so the case can be tracked until completion.

Spokane – Spokane County is participating in Disabilities Response Team (DRT) to reduce entry into the justice system by people with hidden disabilities. The group is developing a resource sheet for families to use when they have a disabled youth that is vulnerable to entering the system. Meetings are held monthly and include members from police, fire fighters, school resource officers, parent advocate, court, and public transit.

Thurston – Thurston County was selected in 2016 as an Implementation Site by the National Council of Juvenile and Family Court Judges (NCJFCJ) to assist with and improve dependency processes. Judicial officers, court staff, stakeholders, and the Council engaged in a two-day site visit, a trauma audit, and a strategic planning meeting to create a list of target areas for improvement as follows:

- Trauma-Informed Practice/Facilities
- Reading Room
- Therapy Dog dedicated to Family and Juvenile Court
- Courtroom Improvements
- Building Improvements
- Training/Support
- New Calendaring System

Subcommittees meet semi-weekly to develop procedures and protocol for improvements in these areas. Thurston County anticipates implementation of the improvements by April 1, 2019.