
Family and Juvenile Court Improvement Program



2019 Report to the Legislature



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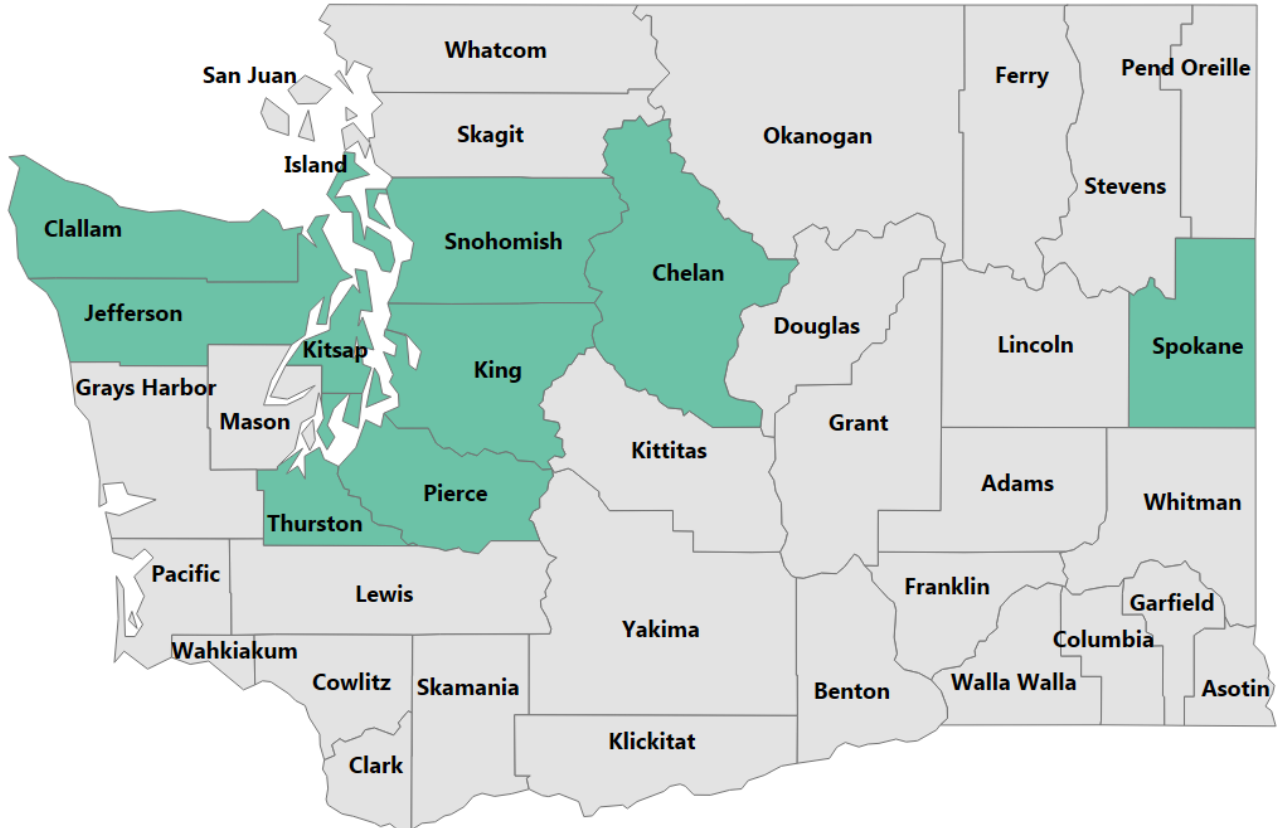
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FJCIP Courts and Performance

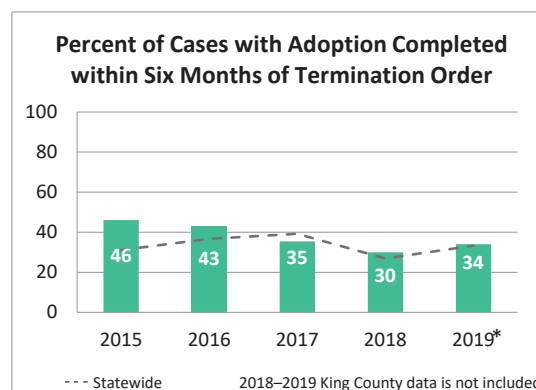
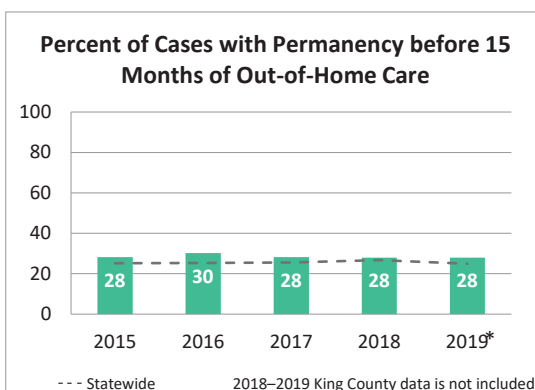
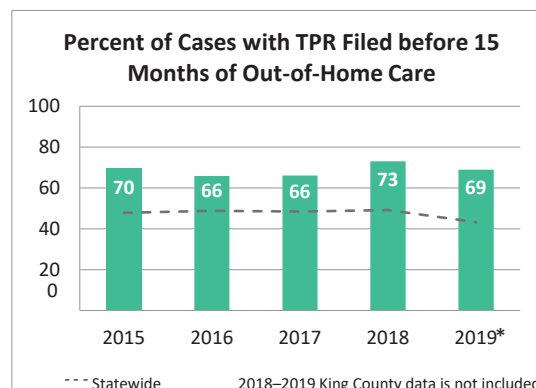
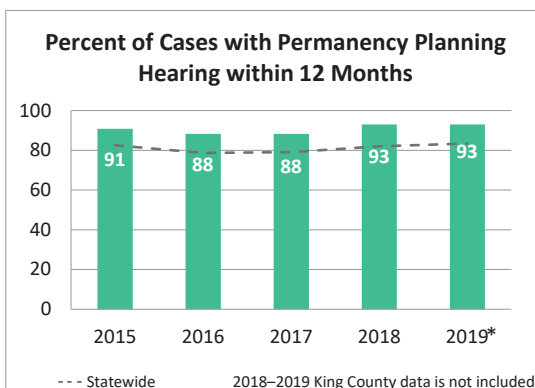
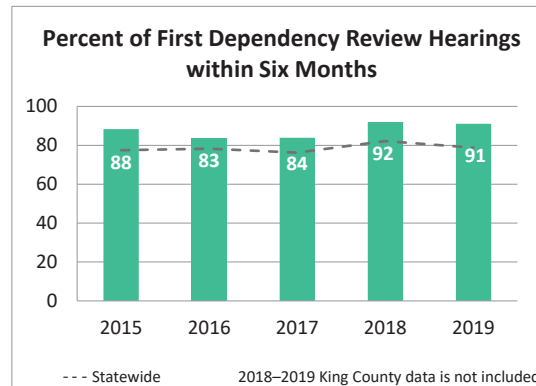
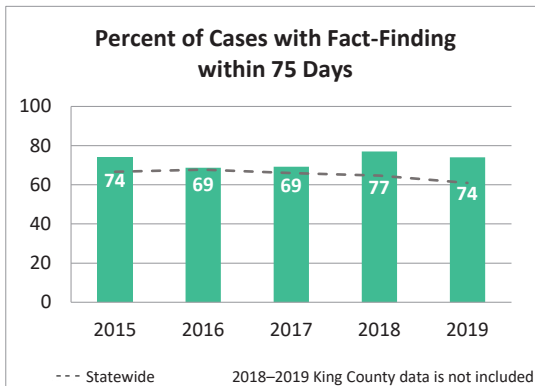
This year's Family and Juvenile Court Improvement Program (FJCIP) Report will provide highlights for 2019. Detailed information regarding the FJCIP can be found in the [2018 FJCIP Report to the Legislature](#).

FJCIP Courts in Washington State



Ten of the 39 counties in Washington State receive state funding to provide FJCIP Coordinators, who deliver court case management, resulting in improved court performance on dependency timeliness measures. FJCIP Coordinators also convene dependency stakeholder groups to identify trends impacting dependency cases and develop and implement ideas for system improvement. The efforts of FJCIP Coordinators result in better outcomes for our most vulnerable children and families.

Due to the enhanced attention FJCIP Coordinators provide these cases, overall, FJCIP counties outperform the rest of the state in dependency timeliness measures. The following graphs compare the performance of FJCIP counties (with the exception of King County in 2018–2019) to the rest of the state regarding dependency timeliness indicators. King County Superior Court transitioned to a locally-implemented and maintained case management system that impacted the ability to merge their dependency data with other counties' dependency data needed for analysis and state-level results. We anticipate the 2020 report will include King County data.



*Data included through September 2019.

Data Highlights for 2019

Fact Finding within 75 Days

FJCIP courts'* compliance was 13% higher than the statewide average. This year, FJCIP courts noticed a small decrease in fact finding compliance, as did the rest of the state. FJCIP Coordinators looked at cases that were non-compliant and identified the following:

- In smaller counties, one family with a lot of children, if out of compliance, can skew the numbers.
- Clallam County had a large increase in filings, which caused a rise in attorney caseloads and issues with scheduling hearings. This was in addition to a change in judiciary, parent attorneys, and assistant attorneys general.
- When parents enter into an agreed dependency or relinquishment, sometimes these cases aren't coded in a way to reflect compliance with this measure. FJCIP Coordinators are looking into a better way to code these types of cases.
- Thurston County noticed exceptional circumstances to go beyond the 75th day were found in all but one of the non-compliant cases, and the one case was only 11 days late.

First Dependency Review Hearing within 6 Months

FJCIP courts'* compliance was 12% higher than the statewide average. Both experienced a small decrease in compliance.

Permanency Planning Hearing within 12 Months

FJCIP courts'* compliance was 10% higher than the statewide average.

Termination of Parental Rights (TPR) within 15 Months

FJCIP courts'* compliance was 26% higher than the statewide average. While FJCIP courts performed better than non-FJCIP courts in the rest of the state, both had decreased overall compliance in 2019.

- In Snohomish, Spokane, and Thurston counties, compliance rates increased due to a specific focus on compliance in those counties.
- Coding issues continue to be a problem. FJCIP Coordinators can review cases listed as non-compliant, and where good cause findings have been made, court clerks can make corrections.
- While data for King County is not available for this report, the coordinator identified there has been a reduction in the number of termination filings due to a large turnover in the Attorney General's Office.

*Excluding King County data

Adoption within 6 Months

FJCIP courts'* compliance is slightly higher than the statewide average. Both FJCIP courts* and the rest of the state improved in compliance.

- FJCIP Coordinators have been working with the Department of Children, Youth, and Families (DCYF) adoption workers and several created adoption workgroups. Significant additional DCYF resources have been allocated, which appears to have a positive impact on cases and compliance.
- Several FJCIP courts are also working on improving court process regarding legally free children:
 - Chelan County reported that adoption social workers are present more often during hearings of legally free youth. Compliance increased by 11% and the number of completed adoptions also increased in 2019.
 - Snohomish County hosted a Permanency Summit in 2018 where the primary focus was improving time to adoption. County compliance for adoption within six months improved from 30% in 2018 to 34% in 2019, which is well above state compliance averages.
 - Spokane County is in the process of scheduling both the legally free hearings and termination hearings with the same judge in order to tighten up the process from termination/relinquishment to adoption.
 - Thurston County developed a new Permanency Protocol and Case Schedule to individually track legally free cases and set three review hearings during the six month period after becoming legally free, to allow the court to review the progress of the case more often. A Permanency Report was also developed which, upon filing a report that indicates that the case is on track to reaching adoption within six months, triggers the striking of the upcoming review hearing. Using this report allows those cases on track to come to court less often, as a review hearing is only held on those cases that are not on track. More cases are expected to achieve adoption within the six month timeline due to more stringent oversight by the court and the parties.

Permanency within 15 Months

FJCIP courts'* compliance was 3% higher than the statewide average. FJCIP compliance remained the same, while the state compliance rate decreased 2% in 2019. In FJCIP counties, adoptions and guardianships occur one month earlier than the state as a whole (based on median months).

- Housing is identified as a continuing challenge for families seeking permanency.
- Addiction is prevalent in the vast majority of dependency cases and the time involved to access treatment can be a barrier.
- Access to services, especially in rural areas, is also challenging.

*Excluding King County data

FJCIP Community

In addition to the resources provided to individual counties, we have developed the FJCIP community over the past few years, where coordinators share ideas and problem solve together through monthly online community of practice meetings and semi-annual site visits. These venues provide an opportunity to share innovative ideas to improve practice and processes that can expand to other courts and local communities. Two examples of FJCIP projects that have expanded are: Finding Fathers in Dependency, which provides rapid DNA testing for alleged fathers in dependency cases; and Protein for All, which provides resources to families navigating the legal system while experiencing food insecurity and high levels of stress.

2019 FJCIP Community of Practice Meeting Topics

- Tools and Tips for Meetings and Projects
- DCYF Service Transformation – Performance-Based Contracting for In-Home Services
- Timely Adoptions
- Implementation of Finding Fathers in Dependency Program
- Family Partnership – Building Bridges between Parents and Caregivers
- Children’s Bureau Child Welfare Virtual Expo
- Continuances of Dependency Court Cases
- Parents for Parents Program Evaluation

2019 FJCIP Site Visits

- May 2019
Chelan County provided a presentation of the CASA program; a tour of the juvenile detention facility and secure crisis residential center; and Dr. Julie Rickard, Executive Director of Parkside-American Behavioral Health Systems, shared information regarding the Parkside Crisis Stabilization Unit for helping local families in need.
- October 2019
Thurston County provided a tour of the Family and Juvenile Courthouse, including the Juvenile Seeds of Change: Give Back Garden, which grows more than vegetables, where youth collaborate as a team, build competency and skills, and give back to the community, providing a sense of belonging; a group of youth attorneys shared information regarding a holiday gift project for children and families in the foster care system; met the courthouse dog, Marshal, and received information on obtaining courthouse support dogs; and received detailed information regarding the Thurston County Dependency Transformation Project, sharing the development and implementation of trauma-specific policies and protocols, including improvements to the Family Recovery Court.

If you are interested in participating in an FJCIP Site Visit in 2020 to see for yourself the great projects and process improvements these courts provide, please contact fjcup@courts.wa.gov.

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					<i>Developing</i>					✓
Family Time (Visitation) Focus			✓			✓		✓	✓	✓
Finding Fathers in Dependency Cases	✓	<i>Developing</i>	<i>Developing</i>	<i>Developing</i>		✓	✓	✓	<i>Developing</i>	✓
Parents for Parents	<i>Developing</i>	✓	<i>Developing</i>	<i>Developing</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Protein for All	✓				✓	✓	✓	<i>Developing</i>	✓	✓
Reunification Celebrations	✓				✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Totes for Kids								✓		

Detailed descriptions of each program are provided in [2018 FJCIP Report to the Legislature, Appendix E](#).

FJCIP Coordinator Success Stories

In their own words

Chelan County Story

Our adult felony drug court recently celebrated its first graduate. The graduate is also involved in a dependency, and when he entered drug court, the filing to terminate parent rights was expected in the very near future. We were very excited and proud to acknowledge his accomplishments when the family was honored during our first annual reunification ceremony, which coincided with the beginning of their trial return home period. We are happy to report that the family is doing great and the dependency is expected to be dismissed at the end of this year. As a part of this process, an order granting concurrent jurisdiction was granted and although the dependency attorney graciously assisted in obtaining a dissolution of marriage and temporary parenting plan on behalf of the father, our FJCIP Coordinator (who is also a part of the drug court team) has been able to assist the team and the father with questions regarding the intersection of the family court and dependency processes and our family court navigator will be a resource in establishing the final parenting plan which was reserved for entry to coincide with the dismissal of the dependency.

Island County Story

In 2018 only 18% of our termination petition filings met the deadline of 15 months, though many of those cases did have a finding of good cause not to file stated in the preceding order. After investigating this and working with our clerk's office, we determined that the numbers pulled in March were due to a coding error, and we have since been able to correct the coding. We are now seeing (in September) that we achieved 72% compliance in filing termination petitions within 15 months. Our clerk's office updated the coding for 2016 and 2017 also, which caused an improvement in those years as well.

Pierce County Story

Pierce County continues to convene an Adoption Workgroup approximately every six weeks to continue addressing barriers to timely adoption. Despite this effort, Pierce County has experienced a decline in overall Adoption Timeliness. I track all legally free cases from becoming legally free through adoption and barriers to timely adoption. In order to complete an Adoption within six months, it is important that cases come to the Adoption Unit with an approved unified (adoption) home study, as it takes approximately 90 days to complete a home study from start to finish. In 2019, the adoption unit reported 69% of legally free children come to adoptions with an approved home study, however it is often recognized after case transfer that the home study needs to be updated. The workgroup is examining ways to ensure cases are coming to adoptions without barriers that may impede timely adoption.

I documented case specifics and created the chart below, which identified the importance of having ‘task oriented’ social workers assigned to the adoption unit, who are committed to timely permanence, as each worker impacts adoption timeliness.

Social Worker	Total Adoptions	Adoptions within 6 months	Adoptions 6 mo.+	Case came to Adoptions w/HS	Compliance	ICPC	Appeals	BRS	Guard./Other
A	22	17	5	16	77%	0	0	0	0
B	13	10	3	11	77%	0	0	0	1
C	24	6	18	11	25%	0	0	0	0
D	2	2	0	2	100%	0	0	0	0
E	28	20	8	21	71%	0	0	0	0
F	17	0	17	7	0%	0	1	0	0
G	15	0	15	14	0%	0	0	0	0
H *retired 7/2019	17	2	15	13	12%	1	5	0	0
I *started 8/1/19	0	0	0	0	0%	0	0	0	0
Overflow/Other	13	4	9	9	31%	0	0	1	3
Totals	151	61	90	104	40%	1	6	1	4

Thurston County Story

I worked closely with the Dependency Transformation Project Team to implement time specific calendaring. Dependency Docket days were moved from Friday to Wednesday. Hearings are now scheduled on the hour rather than at 9:00 for the morning session and 1:30 for the afternoon session. Making this scheduling change has decreased wait times for families, fewer people are in the building during court times and noise has been greatly reduced in the courtrooms and hallways. These changes have improved the experience of the families appearing in court by reducing wait time for their hearing and spending less time in court and reducing court congestion. These changes have also improved the environment for court staff inasmuch as the number of people requiring assistance from staff at the same time is reduced.

Snohomish County Story

In 2017, Snohomish County’s compliance rate with adoption within six months of legally free had dropped to 22%. With support from the AOC and participation by more than 100 individuals who work in dependency*, a Permanency Summit was held in September 2018. The primary focus of the summit was on improving time to adoption. Based on input from the summit, multiple changes have been implemented across the system. While still early to assess overall impact and implications, the improvement in compliance from 22% to 25% in 2018 and 36% in 2019 appears to be a positive indicator, along with a significant decrease in the median months to adoption from 9.6 in 2017 to 7.9 in 2019.

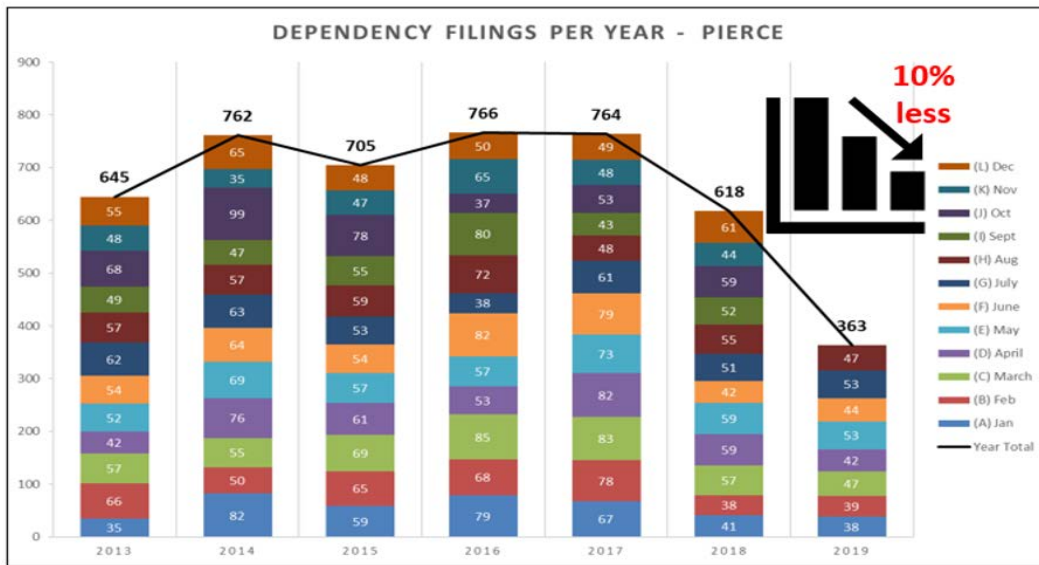
*Representatives from DCYF, Attorney General’s Office, Snohomish County Superior Court judges and staff, CASAs, parent and child attorneys, and parent allies.

FJCIP Data Monitoring and Collaboration

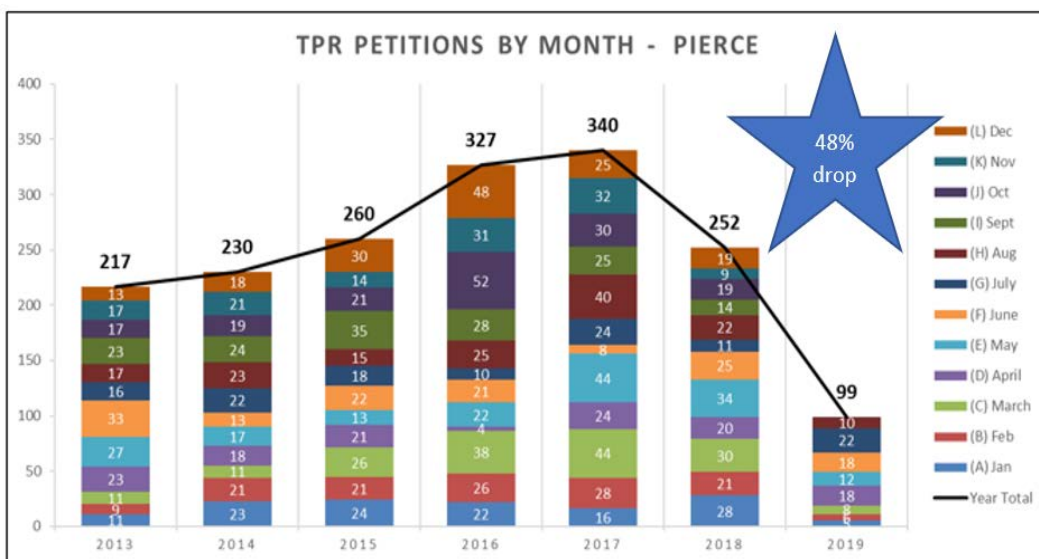
The court is only a part of the dependency system. The Department of Children, Youth, and Families (DCYF) plays a big role in timeliness measures. The following is an example shared by the Pierce County FJCIP Coordinator, who noticed a change in data and discussed the changes with DCYF.

Decrease in Dependency and Termination Filings

Pierce County continues to experience a decrease in dependency filings in comparison to the same data point in time (8/2018 – 8/2019).



Pierce County's termination filings continue to decrease. In 2019, Pierce County is experiencing a 48% decrease over last year's termination filings (8/2018 – 8/2019).



In March 2019, Dr. Joel Odimba, DCYF Regional Administrator (Region 3), attributed the significant decrease in both dependency and termination filings to a shift in practice. Dr. Odimba explained this shift in the following summary:

Decreases in dependency filing and TPRs can be attributed to a few things we're doing and will continue to do. We started this back in 2016/2017 and are now starting to realize the benefits.

Factors Impacting Decrease in Dependency Filings

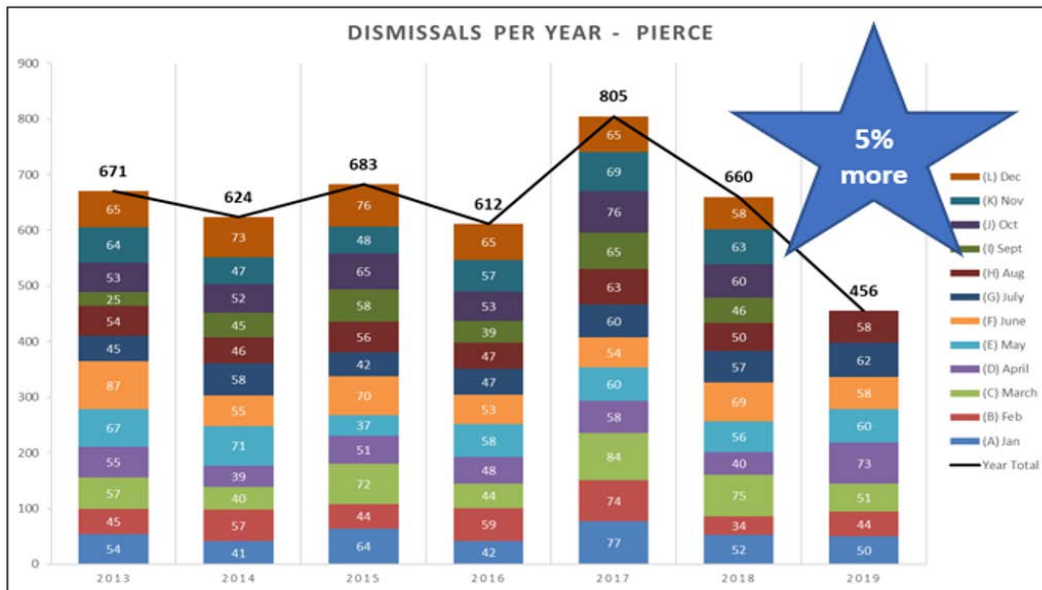
- Secondary reviews by Area Administrators of all dependency petitions. Supervisors are more closely reviewing all petitions. Assistant Attorneys General are also more closely reviewing the petitions for legal sufficiency and are following up with offices as needed.
- Increased efforts to prevent removals and providing services that best target the risk factors or parental deficiencies.
- Use of Voluntary Placement Agreements (VPAs) when indicated and necessary to temporarily remove kids from unsafe home conditions while the parent(s) address the risks. Many of these cases resolve without the need to file.
- Strengthening our practice around Family Assessment Response (FAR) families – providing appropriate services and oversight to ensure progress. Many of these cases resolve without a need to change them to investigations which may require removal and filing.
- Providing practice supports through our Quality Practice Specialists to strengthen social worker understanding of the Child Safety Framework and making decisions based on resources and guides.
- Using our Triage and Consultation resource developed in 2014 to guide decision making in complex case situations.

Factors Impacting Decrease in TPRs

- Strict adherence to Adoption and Safe Families Act (ASFA) timelines through quality assurance, monitoring and practice expectations for timely filing of TPRs or documentation of compelling reasons.
- Hiring of Permanency Outcomes Facilitators whose sole responsibility is to track all Child and Family Welfare Services (CFWS) cases for timeframes; identification of barriers to permanency; coaching new staff; moving cases to safe reunifications and guardianships.
- Ensuring clear understanding and utilization of the Child Safety Framework in CFWS.
- Working to increase social worker knowledge of Conditions for Return Home.

All of the above translate into more reunifications and guardianships and fewer terminations.

Pierce County experienced a 5% increase in dismissals, in comparison to the same data point in time 2018 (8/2018 – 8/2019).



In summary, when FJCIP Coordinators work on system improvement in collaboration with DCYF and other court partners, children and families benefit from those efforts. Counties that do not have the resources to hire a coordinator to track dependency cases, assist with family law coordination, and work on system improvement do not experience the benefit of the Family and Juvenile Court Improvement Program. An increase in legislative funding for FJCIP will be requested in the FY 2021–2022 budget to provide opportunities for FJCIP resources statewide.



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 and submit it to the appropriate committees of the Legislature. When state funding for the FJCIP Program was cut 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 reimbursed due to lack of funding.

The “Actual Expenditures” listed below show the actual cost to counties for the FJCIP Coordinator salaries 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 full 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 FY2019

County	Actual Expenditures		Spending Plan
	Cost to Counties	Reimbursed by AOC	Contracts
Chelan	\$43,546.00	\$19,325.00	\$19,325.00
Clallam	\$38,530.10	\$30,947.00	\$29,673.00
Island	\$19,980.00	\$19,980.00	\$19,989.00
Jefferson	\$14,861.00	\$14,483.00	\$14,420.00
King	\$110,760.83	\$88,858.00	\$85,175.00
Kitsap	\$104,490.00	\$92,210.00	\$90,146.00
Pierce	\$123,045.14	\$110,302.00	\$108,160.00
Snohomish	\$118,723.00	\$97,511.00	\$93,946.00
Spokane	\$79,504.54	\$59,382.00	\$56,000.00
Thurston	\$81,013.53	\$65,819.00	\$63,265.00
TOTAL	\$734,454.14	\$598,817.00	\$580,099.00