

## Facts About Child Welfare and Juvenile Justice in Washington State



### CHILD WELFARE

- Each year, more than 19,000 Washington children spend at least one day in foster care. At any given time, some 9,600 children live in out-of-home placement; of those, some 3,600 are cared for by relatives, while 6,000 are with unrelated caregivers. (Source: *Children's Administration, Washington Department of Social and Health Services, 2006*)
- African-American children make up 4.2 percent of the general population in Washington, but 10.5 percent of children in foster care. (Source: *Children's Administration, Washington Department of Social and Health Services, 2006*)
- Native American children make up 2 percent of the child population and 8.4 percent of children in foster care. (Source: *National Indian Child Welfare Association and Kids Are Waiting, 2007*)
- In King County, African-American and Native American children are over-represented at nearly every decision point in the child welfare system. Although these two groups represent only 8% of the child population in King County, they account for one-third of all children removed from their homes, and one half of children in foster care for more than four years. (Source: *King County Coalition on Racial Disproportionality, 2005*)
- In 2005, more than one-third of children in foster care had been there for longer than two years. This represents a decrease from 1997, when 44% of foster children had been in care more than two years. (Source: *Children's Administration, Washington Department of Social and Health Services, 2005*)
- One in six children in foster care was moved to three or more homes within the first year. (Source: *Children's Administration, Washington Department of Social and Health Services, 2005*)
- About 400 children a year “age out” of foster care, meaning they turn 18 years old without having been adopted or reunited with their birth families. (Source: *Washington Education Foundation, 2006*)
- A study of foster care “alumni” from the Northwest found that the majority faced significant challenges in the areas of mental health, education, employment and finances. More than half of the 659 alumni studied had clinical levels of at least one mental health problem; one in four experienced post-traumatic stress disorder in the prior year; only 16% completed a vocational degree; more than one in five experienced homelessness; and one-third had no health insurance. (Source: *“The Northwest Foster Care Alumni Study,” Casey Family Programs, 2005*)
- An estimated 50% to 75% of school-aged children who enter foster care must leave their school districts because foster care is not available near their homes. Academic experts estimate that children lose four to six months of progress each time their education is disrupted by a change of schools. (Source: *Wa. Education Foundation, 2006*)
- Foster care children have more serious and complex physical health, mental health and developmental problems than children who are not in foster care. An estimated 30% to 80% of foster children have chronic medical conditions, with an estimated 25% of foster children having three or more chronic conditions. (Source: *“Comprehensive Assessments for Children Entering Foster Care: A National Perspective”, Pediatrics, July 2003*)
- In 2007, more than one in every four foster children moved more than two times between foster homes. Two of five foster children are unable to reside in the same home with all their siblings. (Source: *Braam Performance Report, FY05-FY07, www.braampanel.org*)

## **JUVENILE JUSTICE**

- About 1,000 youth are committed annually to the state's Juvenile Rehabilitation Authority (JRA) by county juvenile courts. Approximately 825 are in JRA residential programs on any given day and 750 are on parole. (Source: *Juvenile Rehabilitation Authority, Washington State Dept. of Social and Health Services, 2008*)
- The average age of those confined to residential programs is 16.5, but some are as young as 12. Nearly nine out of 10 are boys and nearly one-third are first-time offenders. (Source: *Juvenile Rehabilitation Authority, Washington State Dept. of Social and Health Services, 2008*)
- Two-thirds of the youth in JRA residential care need help with drug or alcohol dependence and three out of five have mental health issues. (Source: *Juvenile Rehabilitation Authority, Wa. State Dept. of Social and Health Services, 2006*)
- On any given day youth of color account for approximately 45% of JRA's population. This is almost twice the proportion of youth of color in Washington state. (Source: *Juvenile Rehabilitation Authority, Washington State Dept. of Social and Health Services, 2008*)
- Truants are between two and eight times more likely to become involved in delinquent behavior. Nine out of 10 kids in detention for criminal offenses have been truant. (U.S. *Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, 2007*)
- About one-third of the youth in the state's juvenile justice system either are or have been in the foster care system. (Source: *Juvenile Rehabilitation Authority, Washington State Dept. of Social and Health Services, 2008*)
- Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender and Questioning youth make up between 4 and 10 percent of the total detained youth population, and the actual percentage may be even higher. Many have entered the system as a direct result of the discrimination and lack of support because of their sexual orientation or gender identity. Once in the system, LGBTQ youth are too often subject to further discrimination or harassment at the hands of juvenile justice staff. (Source: *National Network of Runaway and Youth Services, 2006*)
- More girls are committing crimes today. In 1995, girls accounted for 19.6 percent of the overall detention population in Washington State. By 2005, that percentage had increased to 29.2. (Source: *Washington State Governor's Juvenile Justice Advisory Committee, 2005*)
- More than nine out of 10 incarcerated girls have experienced one or more forms of physical, sexual or emotional abuse before entering the juvenile justice system. More than 45% have been beaten or burned at least once; 40% have been raped; and 32% have chronic health problems. (Source: *GJJAC Policy Brief: At Risk and Delinquent Girls in the Juvenile Justice System, March 2008*)
- Seven of every 10 cases involving Caucasian girls are dismissed, compared with only three of every 10 cases involving African-American girls. (Source: *Girls Incorporated, Act 4 Juvenile Justice, 2008*)

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