



Washington State Juvenile Courts: Workloads and Costs

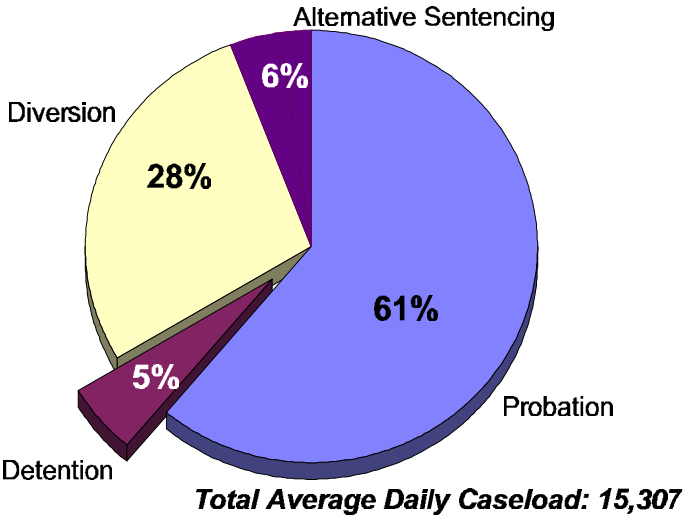
The 1994 Washington State Legislature directed the Washington State Institute for Public Policy to evaluate the costs and benefits of criminal justice policies, violence prevention programs, and other strategies to decrease the rate of "at risk" youth. The Institute is currently developing a model to assess the cost-effectiveness of criminal justice strategies.¹ To establish an accurate measure of the costs of supervising offenders sentenced in juvenile court, the Institute recently conducted a survey of the 33 juvenile courts in Washington.² The courts provided actual caseload and expenditure data, giving estimated figures when necessary.

On an average day in 1995, Washington State juvenile courts supervised **15,307** youth. Figure 1 displays the distribution of youth supervised by juvenile courts.

The courts' average daily caseload consisted of:

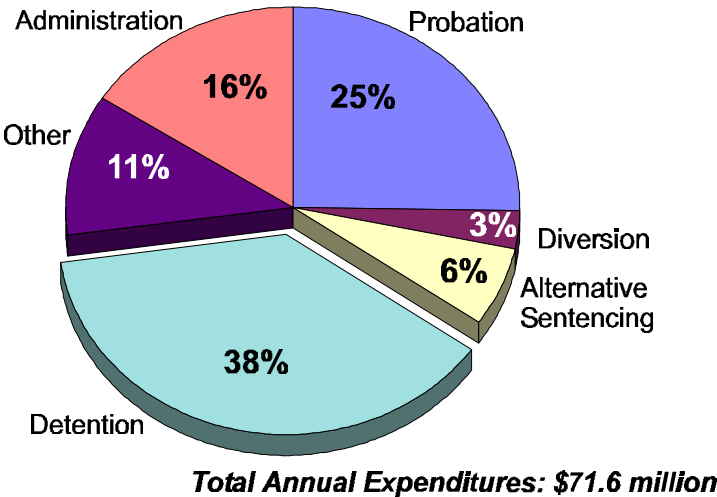
- 9,364 juveniles on probation (61 percent),
- 4,244 youths with diversion agreements (28 percent),
- 896 youth under alternative sentencing (6 percent); and
- 803 juveniles held in county detention facilities (5 percent of all supervised youth).

Figure 1: Washington State Juvenile Court 1995 Caseload Distribution



As shown in Figure 2, Washington State courts reported spending \$71.6 million to operate programs for juvenile offenders in 1995. While only 5 percent of the juvenile court's total caseload included youth in detention, the cost of operating detention centers accounted for over 38 percent of the court's total expenditures (\$27.3 million). Probation services cost an estimated \$18 million in 1995, totaling 25 percent of the budget for local juvenile courts. Expenses for dependency, youth at-risk petitions, and other services totaled 11 percent of the court's budget (\$8.1 million) in 1995. Alternative sentencing options (described on page 4) accounted for 6 percent of the court's budget.

Figure 2: 1995 Washington State Juvenile Court Expenditures



¹ See, *Identifying Cost-Effective Strategies for the Criminal Justice System in Washington State*, WSIPP, January 1997.

² The survey was designed in cooperation with the Washington Association of Juvenile Court Administrators; a total of 32 juvenile courts responded to the survey.

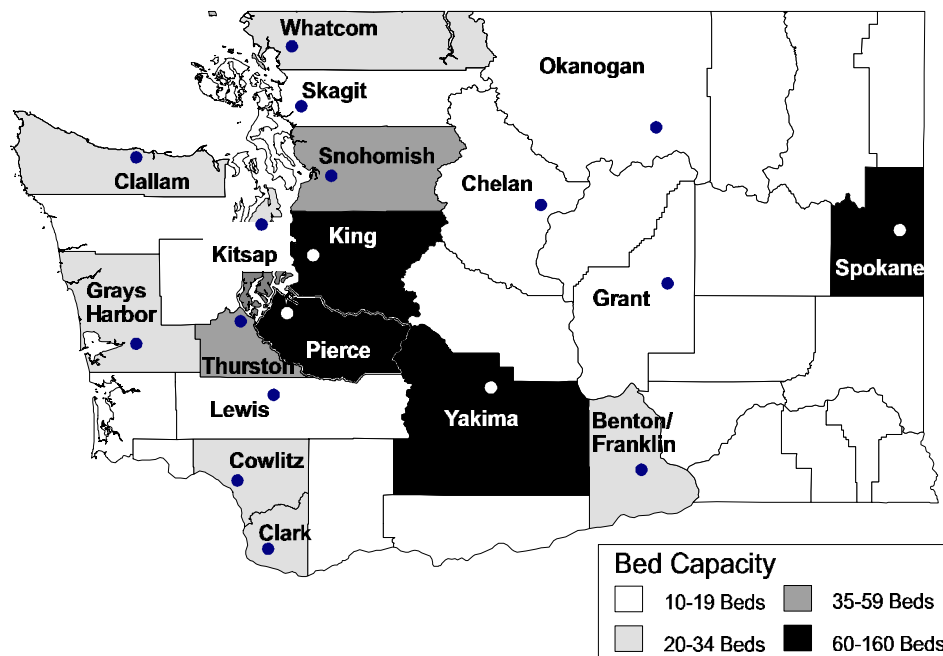
Juvenile Detention Facilities: Caseload Data

Detention facilities for all youth in the state are provided by 18 juvenile courts. Both sentenced offenders and juveniles awaiting trial are confined in local detention centers. Table 1 displays the total costs and average daily populations (ADP) in 1995 for the 18 detention facilities in Washington State. The annual statewide average cost for each juvenile in detention was **\$34,039**. The total capacity of detention facilities range from ten beds (Okanogan County) to 160 beds (King County). More detention capacity is being built or planned in many locations in Washington.

Table 1: Washington State Juvenile Detention Caseload and Costs, 1995

Detention Center	Bed Capacity	Average Daily Population (ADP)	Percent Capacity	Total Cost	Average Annual Cost per ADP	Average Daily Cost per ADP
Okanogan	10	21.9	219%	\$615,601	\$28,110	\$ 77.01
Skagit	12	12.7	106%	\$435,823	\$34,317	\$ 94.02
Chelan	13	15.8	122%	\$555,227	\$35,141	\$ 96.28
Grant	18	18.0	100%	\$650,000	\$36,111	\$ 98.93
Lewis	18	13.6	76%	\$530,992	\$38,929	\$106.65
Clark	23	40.0	174%	\$975,716	\$24,393	\$ 66.83
Cowlitz	23	26.9	117%	\$684,419	\$25,443	\$ 69.71
Kitsap	23	31.0	135%	\$883,538	\$28,501	\$ 78.08
Clallam	24	17.8	74%	\$692,435	\$38,901	\$106.58
Benton/Franklin	28	45.0	161%	\$989,259	\$21,984	\$ 60.23
Whatcom	32	32.0	100%	\$854,168	\$26,693	\$ 73.13
Grays Harbor	33	28.5	86%	\$835,000	\$29,298	\$ 80.27
Snohomish	35	40.0	114%	\$1,600,000	\$40,000	\$109.59
Thurston	37	54.0	146%	\$1,088,054	\$20,149	\$ 55.20
Spokane	60	51.5	86%	\$1,840,976	\$35,747	\$ 97.94
Yakima	94	57.4	61%	\$1,447,985	\$25,226	\$ 69.11
Pierce	110	126.0	115%	\$3,656,000	\$29,016	\$ 79.50
King	160	170.6	107%	\$8,988,109	\$52,685	\$144.34
State Totals	753	802.7	107%	\$27,323,302	\$34,039	\$93.26

Figure 3: Washington State County Juvenile Detention Facilities: Average Daily Population and Capacity, 1995

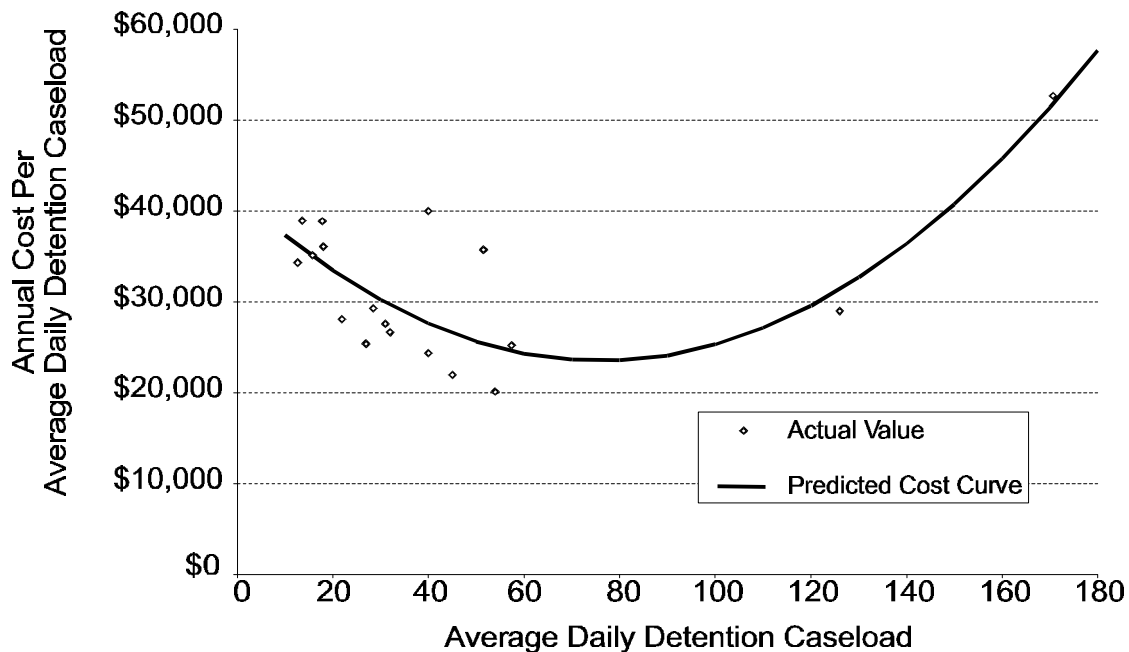


Juvenile Detention Facilities: Average Costs

The average cost of detaining a juvenile depends largely on the size of the detention facility's daily population. The variability in average costs for juvenile detention facilities is depicted in Figure 4. Each dot on the graph indicates the *actual* average cost for a detention facility in 1995. The smooth curve represents the *predicted* average cost of detention centers according to the size of their daily population. This average cost curve was derived from survey data using statistical modeling techniques.

The "u" shaped curve on Figure 4 indicates that changes in average daily population may result in distinctly different fiscal impacts for different detention facilities.

**Figure 4: Average Costs For Juvenile Detention Facilities:
By Size of Caseload, 1995**



By law, juveniles may be held in detention facilities for up to 30 days. According to the survey results, juveniles held prior to adjudication were detained for an average of 7.5 days. Juvenile offenders sentenced to detention (post-adjudication) served an average length of stay of 8.7 days.

In this survey, juvenile courts reported a total average daily population of 803 youth on detention in 1995 (see Table 1, page 2). This estimate of average daily population includes youth being held prior to trial as well as offenders sentenced to detention.

Other data sources in Washington record information on the *annual* total of juveniles in detention facilities, including the Governor's Juvenile Justice Advisory Committee and the Office of the Administrator for the Courts. This report contributes information on the average daily detention population and the average length of stay in detention to these existing figures.

Juvenile Court: Probation Supervision

The majority of juvenile offenders in Washington State are sentenced to community supervision. In 1995, 61 percent of Washington's average daily juvenile offender population was assigned to probation supervision. Youth sentenced to probation are assigned a probation officer who develops a case plan for the juvenile. Juveniles on probation must adhere to their conditions of sentence. Typically, juveniles must attend either a public school or a school operated by the court, without any unexcused absences. Probation officers may also require juveniles to complete community service, enroll in job training, or undergo drug or alcohol counseling. Each court establishes probation conditions based on available local resources.

Table 2 shows the survey results for Washington State probation caseloads. In 1995, the average daily population of youth on probation was 9,364. This translates to a *rate* of 14.9 juveniles on probation per thousand youth aged 10 to 17 years old in Washington. The annual statewide average cost for each youth on the probation caseload was \$1,928 in 1995. Juveniles remained on probation for an average of 6.8 months. Approximately 218 probation officers supervised the youth; on average, each officer maintained a caseload of 43 offenders.

Table 2: Washington State Juvenile Probation Caseload, 1995

Caseload Data	Total
Average Daily Population on Probation	9,364
Number of Probation Officers With Caseloads	218
Average Daily Caseload per Probation Officer	43.0
Average Length of Stay on Probation (months)	6.8
Probation Budget	\$18,049,403
Average Annual Cost per Juvenile on Probation	\$1,928
Average Daily Cost per Juvenile on Probation	\$5.28

Alternative Sentencing Options

In some counties, probation officers are also responsible for supervising youth who are sentenced to alternative sentencing options. Option B is for selected youth who would otherwise be sentenced to a state facility administered by the Juvenile Rehabilitation Administration. Option B sentences involve a combination of detention confinement, community supervision, community service, and fines. In addition, courts can sentence first-time juvenile sex offenders to the Special Sex Offender Disposition Alternative (SSODA) program, where the sentence is suspended and the offender receives outpatient treatment.³ Youth on Option B or SSODA caseloads are not included in the survey figures for probation.

Early Intervention Program

The 1996 Washington State Legislature established the Early Intervention Program for youth placed on probation for the first time and considered at high risk to re-offend. The Early Intervention Program involves intensive supervision, targeted services, and regular contact with juvenile offenders and their families. Each probation officer in this program supervises a reduced caseload of 25 juveniles. The Early Intervention Program is designed to serve 500 juveniles.⁴ Youth in the Early Intervention Program have been included in the survey under regular probation caseloads.

³ The Consolidated Juvenile Services (CJS) provides grant moneys for Option B and SSODA and intensive probation supervision. CJS programs are available in each of the 33 Washington State juvenile courts (representing all 39 counties).

⁴ The following twelve juvenile courts are participating in the Early Intervention Program: Benton/Franklin, Chelan/Douglas, Clallam, Clark, Cowlitz, King, Kitsap, Pierce, Skagit, Snohomish, Spokane and Whatcom.

Juvenile Court: Diversion

First-time juvenile offenders referred to court for a misdemeanor have the opportunity to enter a diversion agreement rather than undergo sentencing in juvenile court.⁵ To be eligible for diversion, the juvenile must not have a record of prior serious offenses. Under this alternative, juveniles meet with a "Community Accountability Board" made up of citizen volunteers and/or court officials. The Community Accountability Board determines the conditions of the youth's diversion agreement.

Diversion agreements require that the juvenile comply with one or more of the following conditions: 1) restitution to victims, 2) performance of community service, 3) payment of fines (up to \$100), and 4) completion of counseling sessions.⁶ If the terms of the diversion agreement are satisfied, no charges are filed in court. If the juvenile refuses diversion or fails to comply with the diversion agreement, the case is referred back to the prosecutor for filing.

Table 3 lists the survey results for Washington State's diversion caseload in 1995. Juvenile courts reported an average daily population of 4,244 youth on diversion in 1995. The average length of stay on diversion was 2.1 months.

Table 3: Washington State Juvenile Diversion Caseload, 1995

Caseload Data	Total
Average Daily Population on Diversion	4,244
Number of Diversion Officers with Caseloads	80
Average Daily Caseload per Diversion Officer	53.4
Average Length of Stay on Diversion (months)	2.1
Diversion Budget	\$2,319,231
Average Annual Cost per Juvenile on Diversion	\$547
Average Daily Cost per Juvenile on Diversion	\$1.50

While an estimated 80 officers were assigned to supervise youth on diversion in Washington during 1995, this figure underestimates the actual level of staffing and costs associated with diversion. Volunteer citizens on diversion boards provide considerable support in the diversion process. The annual statewide average cost for juvenile courts for each juvenile on diversion was \$547.

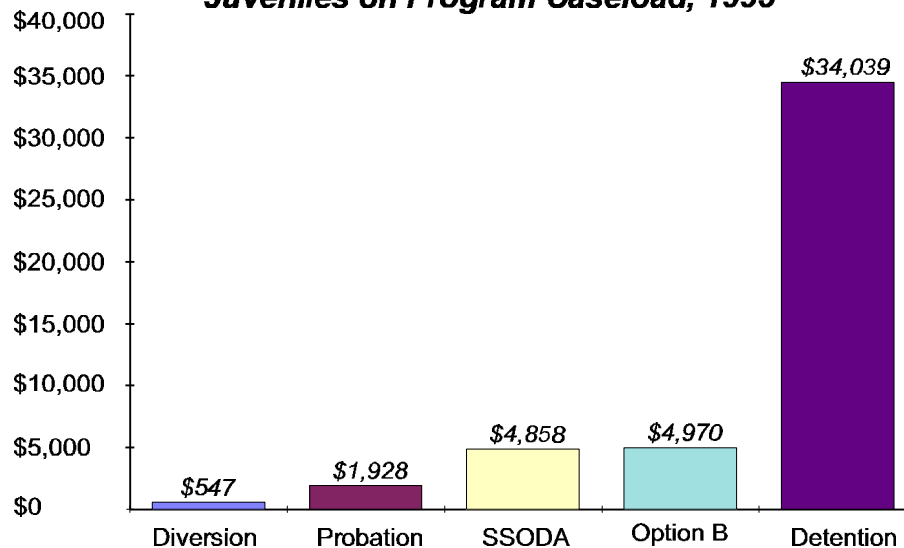
⁵ RCW 13.040.070 (6). First-time offenders referred for misdemeanor offenses must be offered the option of entering into a diversion agreement. Prosecutors have discretion to offer diversion to juveniles referred for the second time for a misdemeanor offense.

⁶ RCW 13.040.080 (2).

Average Costs: Washington State Juvenile Courts

The average annual costs of programs for juvenile offenders are displayed in Figure 5. The average operating cost is based on the annual cost of operating a program for each juvenile on the average daily caseload. According to the Washington Association of Juvenile Court Administrators, these costs are shared by the counties (83%) and the state (17%).

Figure 5: Annual Cost per Average Daily Number of Juveniles on Program Caseload, 1995



The survey totals for annual program expenditures and average daily population are listed in Table 4. The costs are derived from statewide totals of the juvenile courts surveyed. Each of the 33 juvenile courts in Washington administers these supervision programs in a different manner. While state averages provide a reasonable estimate of the cost of supervising juvenile offenders, program costs for each court may vary considerably. For more information, contact Mason Burley or Robert Barnoski at (360) 866-6000, extension 6380.

Table 4: Washington State Juvenile Courts, Workloads and Costs, 1995

Program	Annual Expenditures	Average Daily Population	Annual Average Cost	Daily Average Cost
Diversion	\$ 2,319,231	4,243.6	\$ 547	\$ 1.50
Probation	\$18,049,403	9,364.0	\$ 1,928	\$ 5.28
SSODA ⁷	\$ 2,673,473	550.3	\$ 4,858	\$13.31
Option B ⁷	\$ 1,721,505	346.4	\$ 4,970	\$13.62
Detention	\$27,323,302	802.7	\$34,039	\$93.26

⁷ The Juvenile Rehabilitation Administration and Washington Association of Juvenile Court Administrators have both conducted a detailed analysis of the daily costs for Option B and SSODA. Their average daily cost for Option B is \$16.56, and their daily cost for SSODA is \$20.50.