

HOW DO COURT CONTINUANCES INFLUENCE THE TIME CHILDREN SPEND IN FOSTER CARE?

BACKGROUND

The 2001 Washington State Legislature directed the Washington State Institute for Public Policy (Institute) to investigate how reductions in court delays may influence foster care costs.¹

When children and their families are in crisis due to child abuse or neglect, or because of a child's behavior or parent's disability, the Department of Social and Health Services (DSHS) Children's Administration (CA) is called upon to protect children and provide services to families. This intervention may result in the removal of a child from the home. If the perceived level of risk to the child warrants ongoing placement, the Attorney General petitions the court to establish a dependency.²

In the courts, child dependency cases range in duration from a single day to five years or more. Over the course of a case, children may be placed in multiple, temporary settings. Logic suggests that the longer a dependency is open in the court, the more time children will spend in state-paid foster care. Court continuances (the postponement of hearings or trials) could be expected to extend the life of a court case, and hence, the time a child spends in foster care.

¹ The 2001 Washington State budget (section 114, chapter 7, Laws of 2001 2nd sp. sess.) directed the Office of Public Defense to undertake several activities regarding dependency and termination cases. In addition, the Washington State Institute for Public Policy was directed to undertake a study: "If sufficient funds are available, the office of public defense shall contract with the Washington state institute for public policy to research how reducing dependency and termination case delays affects foster care..."

² "A dependency is a process, involving the Department of Social and Health Services (DSHS), Superior Court, families, and children alleged to be abandoned, abused or neglected, or without a parent capable of adequately caring for him or her. The process concerns a determination of the child's status as either, abandoned, abused or neglected, or without a parent capable of adequately caring for him or her (a dependency finding) and then what steps must be taken to protect the child. The court may reunite the family, order services, or require placement of the child out-of-home. The process may also result in the filing of a petition to terminate parental rights." *A Legislator's Guide to the Child Dependency Statutes*, Senate Human Services and Corrections Committee Staff, Washington State Senate, 1999, <<http://www.leg.wa.gov/senate/scs/hsc/briefs/dependency.pdf>>.

SUMMARY

This study examines how court continuances in dependency cases affect the time children spend in state foster care. It also examines the effects of continuances on the length of dependency and termination cases. A *dependency case* is commonly initiated in the courts when a child has been removed from home due to child abuse or neglect and remains open until the child is in a permanent legal setting. A *termination case* may be opened concurrently to resolve the single question of whether to terminate the parent-child relationship.

To examine how continuances (postponements of scheduled hearings and trials) influence time in foster care, statewide court records for children in dependency cases filed and closed between July 1997 and December 2002 were combined with DSHS placement records for the same children. The analyses represent a sample of 1,991 cases where the court case was completed, the docket records had not been archived, and the records were matched with children across the legal and social service databases.

We found that, on average:

Continuances increase the duration of dependency and termination cases.

- Dependency cases are lengthened by 31.8 days per continuance.
- Termination cases are lengthened by 26 days per continuance.

Continuances in dependency cases increase the time children spend in foster care.

- Children receive an additional 11.9 days of foster care per continuance.
- Dependency cases average 2.7 continuances; that translates to an additional 32.1 days in foster care associated with continuances.
- At \$24 per day for foster care, continuances are associated with \$772 in additional foster care costs.

Continuances early in dependency cases account for most of the effects of continuances on foster care. Continuances prior to fact-finding (when the court decides whether to declare the child dependent) add a total of 20.2 days of foster care at a cost of \$486.

Conclusion

To reduce the time children spend in foster care, particular efforts could be made by all parties to reduce the likelihood of continuances prior to the fact-finding hearing.

Court delays in dependency and termination cases have taken on greater significance since the federal Adoption and Safe Families Act (ASFA) of 1997 established stringent timelines for dependency cases. Under ASFA, with some exceptions, states must begin proceedings to terminate the parent-child relationship when a child has been in out-of-home care for 15 of the previous 22 months.

The federal government reviews states' compliance with ASFA. To date, the Children's Bureau has published reviews for 33 states and territories; none is in compliance with an outcome related to permanency and stability in the lives of children removed from their families. The criteria for this outcome include timeliness of reunification and adoption. Court delays are cited in 23 of 33 reviews as contributing to the failure to meet permanency outcomes.³

The federal review of Washington's system was published in February 2004; it reported Washington also was out of compliance with the permanency and stability outcome. Washington's report cited court delays as a barrier to achieving permanency for children in a timely manner.⁴

In recent years, Washington State initiated the following efforts to reduce court continuances in dependency and termination cases:

1. Washington's Dependency and Termination Equal Justice Committee (DTEJC) was established at legislative direction to:
 - Establish criteria for a statewide program to improve legal defense for parents in dependency and termination cases;
 - Examine the impacts of improved court practices on court caseloads; and
 - Identify more efficient methods for the delivery of expert services and the means by which parents may effectively access services.⁵

In its two years of meetings, one of the three DTEJC subcommittees was devoted exclusively to developing strategies for reducing court

continuances. The group's recommendations are published in its final report.⁶

2. In 2002, the Office of Public Defense, as part of a pilot program to improve legal defense for parents,⁷ held retreats in the two pilot courts to develop no-cost changes in procedures to reduce court delays, while ensuring adequate services and representation for parents. Those attending included court personnel, prosecutors, defense attorneys, guardians ad litem, and DSHS social workers and supervisors.
3. Since 1995, a portion of the Administrative Office of the Courts' Juvenile Court Improvement grants has funded annual, one-day symposia in each of the six DSHS regions. Reduction of court delays has been a frequent topic at the symposia.⁸

SCOPE OF STUDY

The Legislature directed the Institute to study the effects of *court delays* on foster care. For our purposes, "delays" are continuances: postponements of hearings or trial. To add to the policy context, the scope was broadened to include analysis of the effects of continuances in *dependency* cases on the following:

- Court case duration;
- Time children spend in foster care; and
- Outcomes, specifically whether the child is found to be dependent, and whether the child is ultimately reunified with his or her family.

Similar analyses were conducted to evaluate the effects of *termination* case continuances on case duration and case outcomes. Because these cases normally run concurrently with corresponding dependency cases, it was not possible to evaluate effects of continuances on foster care in termination cases.

⁶ *Dependency and Termination Equal Justice Committee Report, 2003* (Olympia: Washington State Office of Public Defense, December 2003), see: <<http://www.opd.wa.gov/Report%202.htm>>.

⁷ The Dependency and Termination Parents' Equal Representation Pilot Project was begun in 2000 in the Pierce and Benton/Franklin judicial districts. The pilot program is still underway.

⁸ *Washington State Court Improvement Program, Final Report for FFY01, Annual Report for FFY02*, (Olympia: Washington State Administrative Office of the Courts, August 2003); and Katherine Cahn, University of Washington School of Social Work, personal communication.

³ See Appendix D. State reports available at <<http://www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/cb/cwrp/staterpt/index.htm>>.

⁴ The Washington child welfare review is available at <<http://www1.dshs.wa.gov/ca/pdf/cfsrReport.pdf>>.

⁵ ESSB 6153, section 114(4)(d), chapter 7, Laws of 2001 2nd sp. sess.

This report will answer the following questions:

- How do continuances affect case duration?
- How do continuances affect time in foster care?
- Do the effects of continuances on foster care depend on when they occur?
- Do continuances affect outcomes of dependency cases?
- In termination cases, how is case duration affected by continuances?
- Are the outcomes of termination cases affected by the number of hearings and continuances?

The computerized court records do not allow us to identify the type of hearing that is continued. Therefore, we cannot address the effects of continuing specific types of hearings. We can, however, distinguish between continuances that occur before and after fact-finding hearings, so this variable is addressed.

DEFINITIONS AND DECISION POINTS

For readers unfamiliar with dependency cases, explanations of key decision points in dependency cases are in Appendix A, with a visual diagram of court and DSHS events in Appendix B.

Definitions of terms used in the analysis are included in Appendix C.

RESEARCH DESIGN

Dependency Cases

To examine how continuances in dependency cases influence time in foster care, we combined information from two sources.

1. Electronic court records for all dependency cases filed and closed statewide between July 1, 1997, and December 31, 2002, provided by the Administrative Office of the Courts (AOC). These records supply information on hearings, continuances, and legal outcomes.

2. Child placement records in the Case Management and Information System (CAMIS) for all placements initiated between July 1, 1997, and December 31, 2002, provided by DSHS. These records provide information on the types and length of placement and such outcomes as family reunification and adoption.

Between July 1, 1997, and December 31, 2002, 21,789 dependency cases were filed in Washington State. However, it was necessary to limit our analyses to cases where legal activity had been concluded. In this period, 10,831 cases were filed and closed (completed).

The analysis was further limited to cases with docket records. While the AOC keeps electronic case summary records indefinitely, docket records are archived after cases have been closed for six months. Archived dockets could not be retrieved for this analysis. We matched 5,844 cases with dockets to placement episodes in CAMIS.

While the average duration for all closed cases was 598 days, there was a large difference in case duration between closed cases (453 days) which had been archived and those for which we had dockets (723 days). Also, the proportion of cases with archived records varied by court. To avoid biasing the analysis in favor of longer lasting cases and toward the courts more likely to retain dockets, a sample was pulled from the closed cases with dockets and a CAMIS match. Sampling was based on the court where the case was filed and the case duration. The final sample of 1,991 cases averaged 608 days from filing to completion. (See Appendix E for a summary of this sample.)

Termination Cases

Our analysis of these cases was limited to the effects of continuances on case duration and whether parental rights were terminated. As with dependency cases, this analysis only included cases where the dockets had not been archived.

FINDINGS

Hearings and Continuances in Dependency Cases

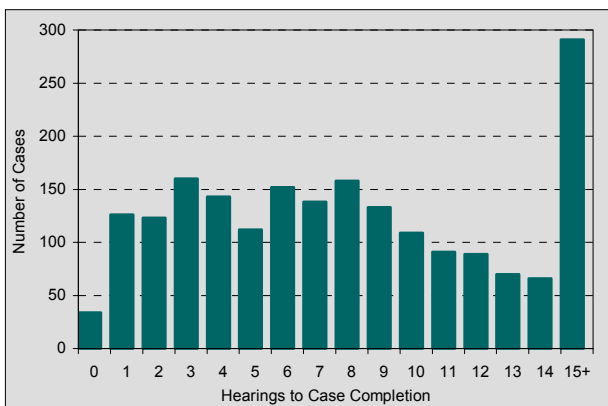
On average, dependency cases involve 8.6 hearings with 2.7 continuances per case. Cases average 1.1 continuances prior to the fact-finding hearing.

Exhibit 1
Hearings and Continuances in
Dependency Cases (N = 1,991)

	Average	Range
Number of Hearings	8.6	0–79
Continuances		
All Continuances	2.7	0–20
Continuances Before Fact-Finding	1.1	0–12

The total number of hearings and continuances in a dependency case varies considerably. This variation is primarily influenced by case complexity; courts across the state also show variations in practices (see Appendix F). Exhibit 2 illustrates the distribution of cases by number of hearings. In this sample, nearly 15 percent of dependency cases took more than 15 hearings to case completion.

Exhibit 2
Number of Hearings to Case Completion
Dependency Cases Only

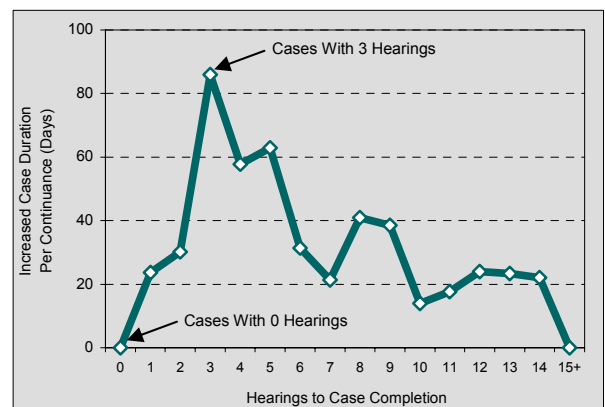


How Do Continuances Affect Case Duration?

The more hearings required to complete a case, the longer the case lasts. Therefore, the impact of continuances on case duration was examined separately by the number of hearings in the case. In other words, we examined the effects of continuances for cases with one hearing, cases with two hearings, and so on, while controlling for other factors known to affect length of time in foster care (child age, child race, the nature of the abuse or neglect, whether the child received any care by relatives), and resources of the individual courts (superior court filings per judge in 2001).

- On average, a dependency case lasts 608 days.
- One continuance increases the length of a dependency case by 31.8 days.
- Exhibit 3 indicates that, for cases completed without any hearings, continuances obviously have no effect on the case's duration. However, in cases completed in three hearings, each continuance increases case duration by an average of 86 days. As the number of hearings to case closure increases beyond three hearings, the effect of a single continuance declines.
- For the most complex cases, those requiring 15 or more hearings, continuances have no discernable effect on case duration.
- The effect of a continuance depends on when it occurs. On average, continuances before fact-finding add 36 days to the length of a case; continuances after fact-finding add 28 days.

Exhibit 3
Effect of Continuances on Court Duration by
Hearings Required Until Case Completion
Dependency Cases Only



How Do Continuances Affect Time in Foster Care?

In 75 percent of dependency cases, children receive some foster care; children in the other 25 percent of cases receive no foster care and are usually placed with relatives. Among children receiving foster care, the average time in foster care is 377 days. Averaged across all dependency cases, the average time in foster care is 283 days.

In cases with foster care that are concluded in three to six hearings, continuances are related to significantly longer time in foster care. No significant effects of continuances were observed in cases completed in fewer than three or more than six hearings (see Exhibit 4).

Exhibit 4
Relationship Between Continuances and Days in Foster Care
Cases With Any Foster Care Only

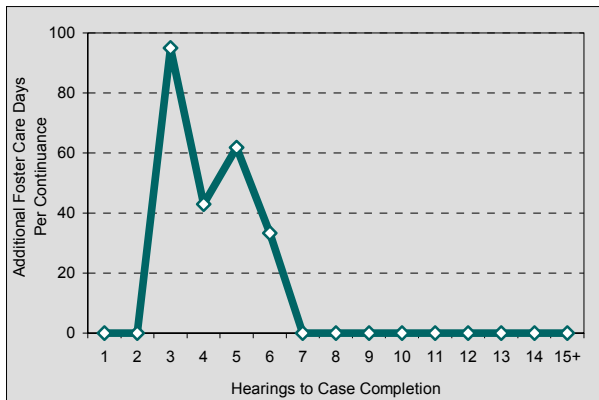


Exhibit 5 displays the overall effect of continuances on time in foster care. Averaging the significant effects of continuances observed in cases requiring three to six hearings across all cases with foster care, a continuance is associated with an additional 15.8 days in foster care. Across all dependency

cases, including the 25 percent of cases where children receive no foster care, a continuance is associated with an additional 11.9 days in foster care. Assuming an average of \$24⁹ per day for foster care, one court continuance increases total foster care costs by \$286.

Exhibit 5
Effects of Continuances on Foster Care

	Number of Cases	Additional Foster Care Days Per Continuance
Cases With Any Foster Care	1,494	15.8
Cases Without Any Foster Care	497	0
Total Closed Cases	1,991	11.9
		Foster Care Costs
Average Daily Cost for Foster Care		\$24
Foster Care Costs Per Court Continuance		\$286

Do the Effects of Continuances on Foster Care Depend on When They Occur?

As we have learned, the effects of continuances on foster care are significant only in cases requiring relatively few hearings. Since the early hearings precede the fact-finding hearing, we examined the effects of continuances before fact-finding.¹⁰

Continuances occurring before the fact-finding hearing have a larger impact on the total days in foster care than continuances in general. The effects of continuances prior to fact-finding are significant only in cases completed in three, four, or five hearings (see Exhibit 6). A continuance in this early period increases foster care by 18.4 days, averaged across all cases, for a cost of \$442 per child (see Exhibit 7).

⁹ Children's' Administration estimate of daily cost for foster care.

¹⁰ Sometimes all parties agree to a dependency and the court does not hold fact-finding or disposition hearings. In these cases, the date of the last order of dependency is taken as the fact-finding date.

Exhibit 6
Relationship Between Continuances Before Fact-Finding and Days in Foster Care
Cases With Any Foster Care Only

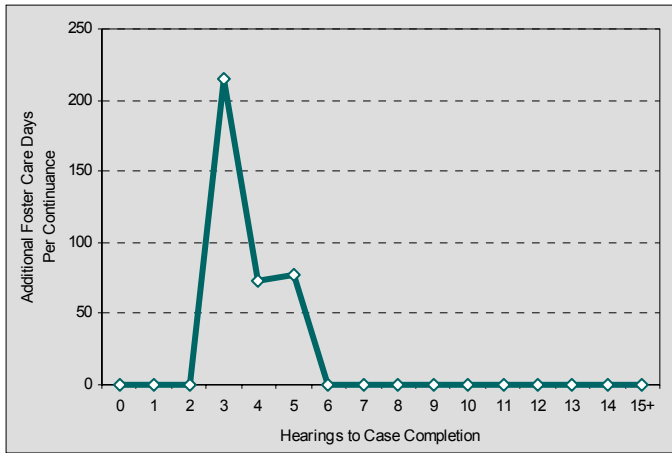


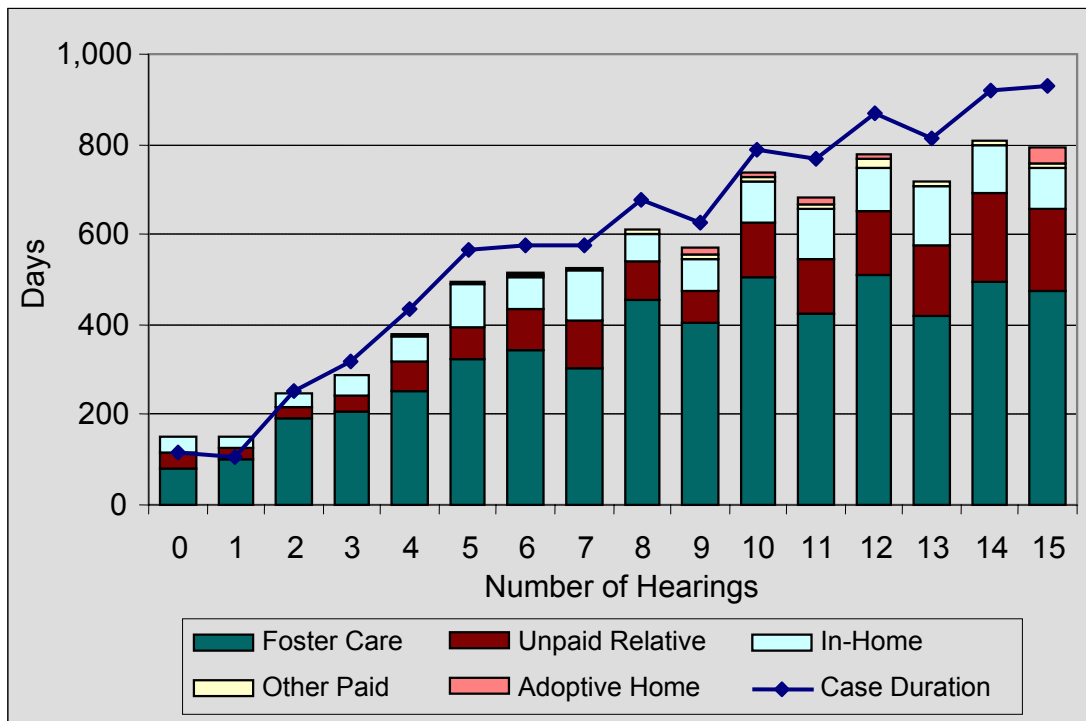
Exhibit 7
Effects of Continuances Occurring Before Fact-Finding on Foster Care

	Number of Cases	Additional Foster Care Days Per Continuance
Cases With Any Foster Care	1,494	24.5
Cases Without Any Foster Care	497	0
Total Closed Cases	1,991	18.4
		Foster Care Costs
Average Daily Cost for Foster Care		\$24
Foster Care Costs Per Court Continuance Before Fact-Finding		\$442

Why are the effects on foster care most pronounced in cases completed in relatively fewer hearings? The line in Exhibit 8 shows how the average case duration increases with the number of hearings in a case. As the number of hearings increases, the days spent with a relative, or in the home of a

parent, represent a slightly greater proportion of care. Late in a case, children are also more likely to be reunified with parents (in-home care), although the court case may remain open. Therefore, continuances early in a case are more likely to involve foster care.

Exhibit 8
Days in Care and Case Duration
Children With Any Foster Care



Do Continuances Affect the Outcomes of Dependency Cases?

We analyzed the effects of continuances on two outcomes of dependency cases:

- Whether the case was dismissed without a finding of dependency, and
- Whether the family was ultimately reunified.

Dismissal without an order of dependency—the child was found not to be dependent—occurred in 23 percent of cases. Children were ultimately reunified with parents in 54 percent of cases. Controlling for case characteristics, we found no significant impact of court continuances on either outcome. However, continuances prior to the fact-finding hearing reduce the likelihood of dismissal.

In Termination Cases, How Is Case Duration Affected by Continuances?

The analysis of termination cases was conducted using court records only. We used all termination cases filed and closed between July 1997 and December 2002, where dockets were available.

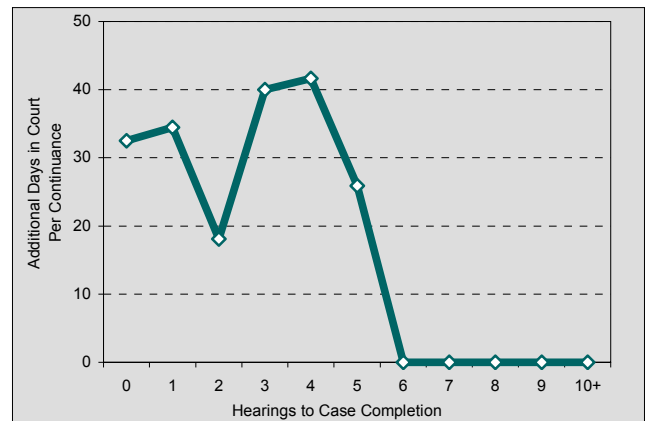
The number of hearings and continuances observed in these cases is displayed in Exhibit 9.

Exhibit 9
Among the 2,448 Closed Termination Cases With Dockets

	Average	Range
Number of Hearings	3.2	0–22
Continuances	1.0	0–12

Taking the same approach used to analyze dependency cases, we observed that, in termination cases completed in five hearings or less, continuances increased case duration. On average, termination cases lasted 377 days. Each continuance increased termination case duration by 26 days.

Exhibit 10
Relationship Between Continuances and Additional Days in Court Case Termination Cases Only



Are the Outcomes of Termination Cases Affected by the Number of Hearings and Continuances?

Termination cases are filed to resolve a single question: Should the parent-child relationship be terminated? This analysis used closed termination cases, where dockets were not archived, to determine the effect of continuances on the likelihood the parental rights would be terminated.

In this sample, the petition to terminate was approved (or the parent agreed to relinquish parental rights) in 89.7 percent of cases. In 10.3 percent of cases, the petition was dismissed—parental rights were *not* terminated. Overall, the more hearings required to complete the case, the less likely the petition was to be dismissed. On the other hand, continuances were associated with an increased likelihood of dismissal.

SUMMARY OF RESULTS

- Continuances increase the duration of dependency and termination cases.
 - ✓ In dependency cases, one court continuance increases the average duration of a case by 31.8 days.
 - ✓ Dependency cases average 2.7 continuances; therefore, the average length of dependency cases is increased by 86 days, due to continuances.
 - ✓ In termination cases, a court continuance adds 26 days to the duration of the case.
- Continuances increase the time children spend in foster care.
 - ✓ One continuance is associated with an additional 11.9 days in foster care.
 - ✓ At \$24 per day for foster care, one continuance adds \$286 in foster care costs.
 - ✓ Since dependency cases average 2.7 continuances, the total additional foster care costs attributable to continuances is \$772.
- Continuances prior to fact-finding account for most of the effects of continuances on foster care.
 - ✓ Each continuance prior to fact finding was associated with an additional 18.4 days in foster care.
 - ✓ At \$24 per day for foster care, one continuance prior to fact finding adds \$442 in foster care costs.
 - ✓ Since dependency cases average 1.1 continuances prior to fact finding, the total additional foster care costs attributable to these early continuances is \$486.
- The effects of continuances on time in foster care are negligible in cases requiring seven or more hearings to completion. In cases requiring more hearings, proportionately more of the care is provided by relatives. Late in a case, children are also more likely to be reunified with parents, although the court case may remain open.

- Continuances in dependency cases had no effect on the two case outcomes we evaluated.
 - ✓ About 23 percent of cases were dismissed without an order of dependency, regardless of continuances.
 - ✓ In 54 percent of cases, children were reunified with parents at the end of the case, regardless of continuances.
- In termination cases, continuances are associated with a greater likelihood that the petition to terminate will be dismissed—that is, parental rights are not terminated.

CONCLUSION

To reduce the time children spend in foster care, particular efforts could be made by all parties to reduce the likelihood of continuances prior to the fact-finding hearing.

The reasons for continuances were not available for this analysis. Future studies could investigate whether distinctions among the types of continuances reveal differential effects on foster care or case outcomes, such as a finding of dependency or family reunification. For example, are the effects of a continuance due to lateness of a necessary evaluation different than a continuance because a parent fails to appear in court? Are the effects of continuing a fact-finding hearing different than continuing a review hearing?

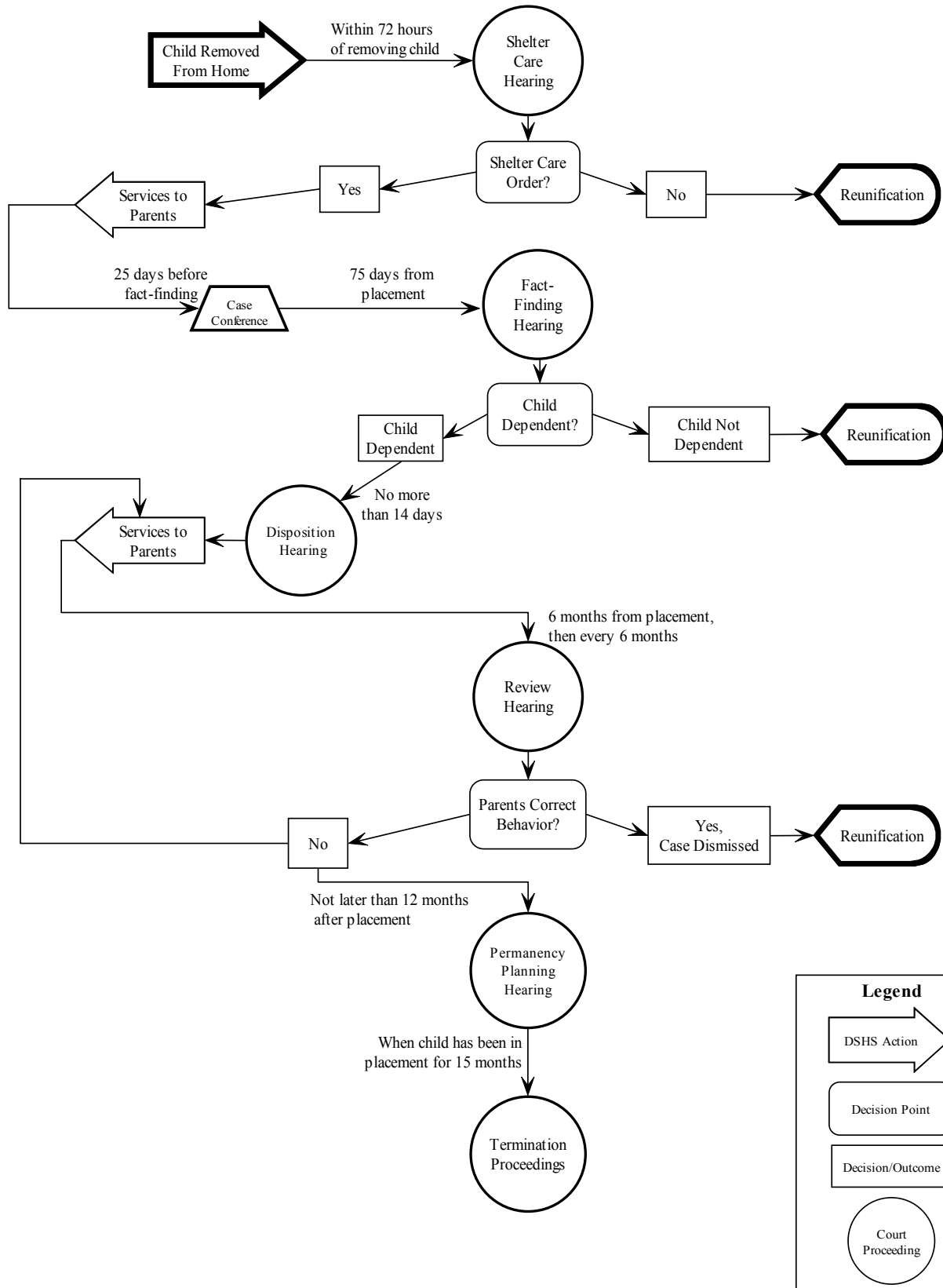
For more information, please contact Marna Miller at (360) 586-2745 or millerm@wsipp.wa.gov.

APPENDIX A: DECISION POINTS IN DEPENDENCY CASES

Several key decision points occur during a dependency case (see Appendix B for a visual display of events):

- **Shelter Care Hearing.** Held within three days after the child is placed to justify the placement and to petition the court to find the child dependent.
- **Fact-Finding Hearing.** Seventy-five days after filing the dependency petition, the court hears evidence regarding the petition. If the case is not dismissed, the court issues the order of dependency at this hearing.
- **Disposition Hearing.** No more than 14 days after the fact-finding hearing, the court determines the services and care that should be provided to parents and children.
- **Review Hearings.** The court determines whether court supervision should continue. The first review hearing is held 90 days after disposition or six months after placement, whichever comes first. Thereafter, review hearings are held at least every six months.
- **Termination Proceedings.** These proceedings may terminate the parent-child relationship. In some courts this issue is addressed within the dependency case; in most courts, a separate case is opened to resolve this issue

APPENDIX B: COURT EVENTS AND DECISION POINTS IN CHILD DEPENDENCY CASES



APPENDIX C: EXPLANATION OF TERMS

For this analysis, we use the following definitions for key words and phrases:

- **Court Case Duration.** The total number of days the case stays open. Specifically, the number of days from the filing of the dependency petition in the court to the last date where any entries were made about a case (i.e., the last docket date).
- **Continuances.** Postponements of previously scheduled hearings recorded in the docket records of the court. Common reasons for continuances include scheduling conflicts for attorneys or parents; necessary documentation (for example, the Individual Services and Safety Plan [ISSP] or reports from evaluators) not filed on time; or parents have not accessed ordered services.
- **Docket Records.** Detailed records of court events including hearings, document filings, orders, and continuances.
- **Placement Episode:** The location of the child while under the jurisdiction of DSHS from the beginning of department involvement until the court case is completed or the child is in a permanent living arrangement. A *placement episode* may consist of multiple *placement events*, such as moving from one foster home to another or from a foster home to a relative's home.
- **Foster Care.** Care paid for by Children's Administration, including family foster care, group care, crisis residential care, and supervised independent living programs, but *not* care by unpaid relatives¹¹ or care in the child's home. If children had multiple foster care events, the days spent in all those events were added to give the total days in foster care.
- **Other Paid Care.** Care in hospitals or juvenile detention.
- **Adoptive Home.** This term is used occasionally by DSHS to denote the home where a child is placed prior to adoption. An adoptive home may be a foster home, a foster-adopt home, or a relative home where an adoption is in progress.

¹¹ Relatives providing care for children may be eligible for a child-only grant under Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF).

APPENDIX D: STATES AND TERRITORIES WITH COMPLETED CHILD WELFARE REVIEWS*

None of the 34 states and territories listed here was in substantial compliance with Permanency Outcome 1: Children have permanency and stability in their living situations.

State or Territory	State Cited Court Delays	Notes From State Reviews
Alabama	Yes	Continuances delay permanency (particularly adoption)
Alaska	Yes	At some sites, continuances delay hearings/permanency/TPR
Arizona	Yes	Continuances delay permanency hearings
Arkansas	No	
California	Yes	At some sites, court continuances delay reviews
Colorado	No	
Connecticut	Yes	Continuances and crowded dockets delay TPR
Delaware	Yes	Extensive continuances and appeals delay TPR
District of Columbia	No	
Florida	Yes	Frequent delays and continuances in one county
Georgia	Yes	Court continuances and delays barrier to 6-month reviews, to permanency planning, and TPR
Indiana	No	
Kansas	No	
Kentucky	Yes	Continuances and appeals for TPR delay permanency
Massachusetts	Yes	Continuances and too few attorneys to represent parents/children delay permanency
Michigan	Yes	Continuances delay some permanency hearings, review hearings, and TPR
Minnesota	No	
Montana	Yes	Hearings may be set multiple times because of continuances and dockets
Nebraska	Yes	Continuances delay permanency hearings
New Mexico	No	
New York	Yes	Scarcity of attorneys; high turnover of legal aid attorneys leads to delay in permanency hearings, TPR
North Carolina	Yes	Terminations are delayed because of limited court dockets and continuances
North Dakota	Yes	Requests by parents for an attorney often result in continuances of permanency hearings
Ohio	Yes	TPR hearings often delayed because defense attorneys request continuances
Oklahoma	No	
Oregon	Yes	Court continuances due to unprepared defense attorneys
Pennsylvania	Yes	Routine continuances and appeals delay TPR
South Dakota	No	
Tennessee	Yes	Frequent continuances and delays in the court process
Texas	No	
Vermont	Yes	Court backlogs prevent timely hearing of TPR; change of parent lawyers means disposition without proper adjudications
Washington**	Yes	Court delays present a barrier to achieving permanency for children in a timely manner
West Virginia	Yes	Court delays present barriers to timely adoption
Wyoming	Yes	Court delays in processing contested termination cases

TPR = Termination of Parental Rights

* As of March 2004, the Children's Bureau had published reviews of 33 states and territories. These reports are available at <http://www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/cb/cwrp/staterpt/index.htm>.

** In February 2004, the report for Washington was published by DSHS and is available at <http://www1.dshs.wa.gov/ca/pdf/cfsrReport.pdf>.

APPENDIX E: SAMPLING DEPENDENCY CASES FILED AND COMPLETED BETWEEN JULY 1997 AND DECEMBER 2002

	Number of Cases	Average Case Duration (Days)
All dependency cases filed between July 1997 and December 2002	21,789	
Cases still open in the courts	9,454	N/A
Archived cases (closed, no docket available)	4,987	453
Cases with dockets	16,802	
After excluding change of venue and voluntary placement	15,912	
Keeping only the first case for a child ¹	15,625	
Keeping only closed cases	6,171	
Keeping closed cases matching to CAMIS ²	5,844	723
All closed cases (archived cases plus closed cases with dockets and matching to CAMIS records)	10,831	598
Sample of closed cases with dockets³	1,991	608

¹ A small percentage of children had more than one dependency case. To increase the likelihood that the case was closed, we selected the earliest case on record.

² Placement records recorded in DSHS' Case Management and Information System were matched to court records for dependency cases on child identifiers.

³ To avoid biasing analysis in favor of cases of long duration, a sample of 1,991 cases was pulled from the closed cases with dockets matching CAMIS. The sampling strategy was such that the sample for analysis more closely resembled all cases opened and closed in this period, based on court and case duration.

APPENDIX F: COURT LEVEL DATA OF DEPENDENCY CASES USED IN ANALYSIS

County or Judicial District	Closed Cases With Dockets	Hearings	All Continuances	Continuances Prior to Fact-Finding	Case Duration (Days)	Filings Per Judicial Officer ¹	Defense Cost Per Case ²
Adams	3	5.3	1.7	1.0	401	632	\$263
Asotin/Garfield/Columbia	14	4.4	0.0	0.0	298	957	\$810
Benton/Franklin	70	8.2	1.7	0.4	593	1,409	\$674
Chelan	25	10.3	0.4	0.1	494	933	N/A
Clallam	42	11.0	4.2	1.8	563	1,195	\$519
Clark	84	9.6	3.3	2.1	594	1,476	\$420
Cowlitz	56	9.5	2.5	1.4	560	1,539	\$380
Douglas	1	4.0	1.0	0.0	65	926	\$1,000
Ferry/Stevens/Pend Oreille	33	5.6	2.6	1.3	565	1,012	\$397
Grant	27	10.0	0.8	0.3	531	1,208	\$602
Grays Harbor	45	6.0	2.8	0.8	583	1,410	\$443
Island/San Juan	30	12.0	1.7	0.5	627	1,147	\$57
Jefferson	7	10.6	4.7	2.1	774	517	N/A
King	437	5.9	3.6	1.2	591	1,204	\$799
Kitsap	91	15.5	0.9	0.3	621	1,312	\$619
Kittitas	10	5.2	0.5	0.5	452	1,030	\$385
Klickitat/Skamania	12	10.3	1.3	0.8	666	1,177	\$748
Lewis	58	7.0	1.7	0.4	680	1,020	\$244
Lincoln	7	4.1	3.7	1.0	475	3,369	\$384
Mason	29	9.3	2.2	0.8	484	989	\$741
Okanogan	14	6.1	1.1	0.3	471	1,239	\$382
Pacific/Wahkiakum	14	7.9	0.2	0.1	551	974	N/A
Pierce	179	12.3	2.5	1.2	708	1,328	\$485
Skagit	20	10.3	2.8	1.4	493	1,306	N/A
Snohomish	236	12.4	3.6	1.3	674	1,447	\$777
Spokane	200	4.2	3.5	2.0	692	1,182	\$466
Thurston	58	10.4	2.5	0.6	629	1,304	\$354
Walla Walla	34	4.5	1.6	0.8	445	975	\$169
Whatcom	29	7.1	1.6	0.9	597	1,051	\$1,040
Whitman	8	7.6	6.5	2.5	517	908	N/A
Yakima	118	7.6	1.2	0.5	476	1,210	\$308
All Courts	1,991	8.6	2.7	1.1	608	1,250	N/A

¹ Total superior court filings per judicial FTEs in the court or judicial district, obtained from "Superior Court 2002 Annual Caseload Report." See: <<http://www.courts.wa.gov/caseload/superior/ann/atbl02.pdf>>.

² Data obtained by Office of Public Defense, *Costs of Defense and Children's Representation in Dependency and Termination Cases*, 1999. See: <<http://www.opd.wa.gov/Report%202.htm>>.

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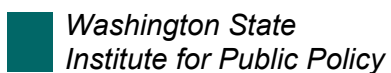
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John Miller at the Institute processed the administrative data used for this study.

Reports published by the Institute are available at www.wsipp.wa.gov.

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