

Focus on Pierce County

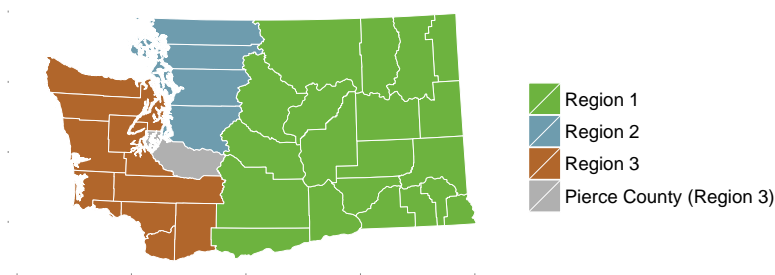
This *Focus on Pierce County* report is one of a series of automated county reports. The quarterly reports mirror the Child Well-Being Data Portal by providing information on three major parts of the child welfare system: Investigations & Assessments, In-Home Services, and Out-of-Home Care. To access the Data Portal and the latest county reports, visit www.partnersforourchildren.org/child-well-being. If you are viewing this document on an Internet-connected device, light blue boxes indicate hyperlinks.

Overview

The Department of Social and Health Services (DSHS) divides Washington State into three regions. Pierce County is in Region 3, along with Clallam, Clark, Cowlitz, Grays Harbor, Jefferson, Kitsap, Lewis, Mason, Pacific, Skamania, Thurston, and Wahkiakum counties.

This *Focus on Pierce County* report provides graphs that depict the following:

- Trend data for the number of Investigations & Assessments since Quarter 1, 2009 in the Pierce County DCFS (Division of Children and Family Services) offices or office groups.
- The comparative rate of Investigations & Assessments per 1,000 households in Quarter 4, 2012 for all Region 3 offices/office groups, as well as Washington State.
- Trend data for the number of In-Home Services cases since Quarter 1, 2009 in the Pierce offices or office groups.
- The comparative rate of In-Home Services per 1,000 households in Quarter 4, 2012 for all Region 3 offices/office groups, as well as Washington State.
- Trend data for the number of children in out-of-home care since Quarter 1, 2009 in Pierce County.
- The comparative rate of children in out-of-home care per 1,000 children in Quarter 4, 2012 for all Region 3 counties, as well as Washington State.
- The percentage of children in each Region 3 county who re-entered out-of-home care within two years of a discharge in 2010 to a permanent placement (i.e., reunification, adoption, and guardianship).
- The percentage of children in Pierce County, Region 3, and Washington State who entered out-of-home care in 2010 and experienced one of the following outcomes after two years: reunification, adoption, guardianship, emancipation, other, or still in out-of-home care.
- Of all the days children spent in out-of-home care from Quarter 1, 2009 to Quarter 4, 2010, the percentage of days spent in kinship care in each Region 3 county and in Washington State.

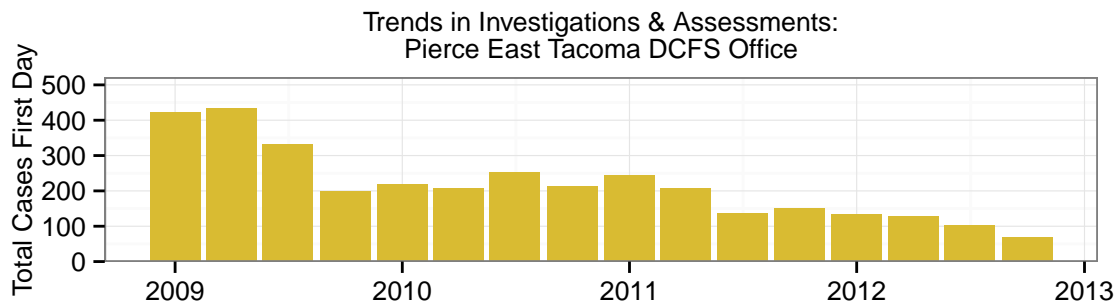
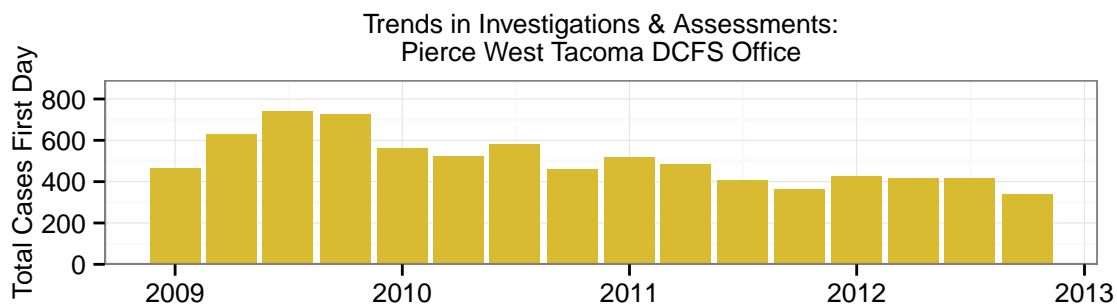


1 Investigations & Assessments

When professionals and community members report suspected instances of child abuse or neglect to the child welfare system, some of the reports are investigated, some are assessed only (e.g., Family Reconciliation Services), and some are screened out because the information reported (if true) does not meet the statutory definition of child abuse or neglect and there is no need for an assessment.

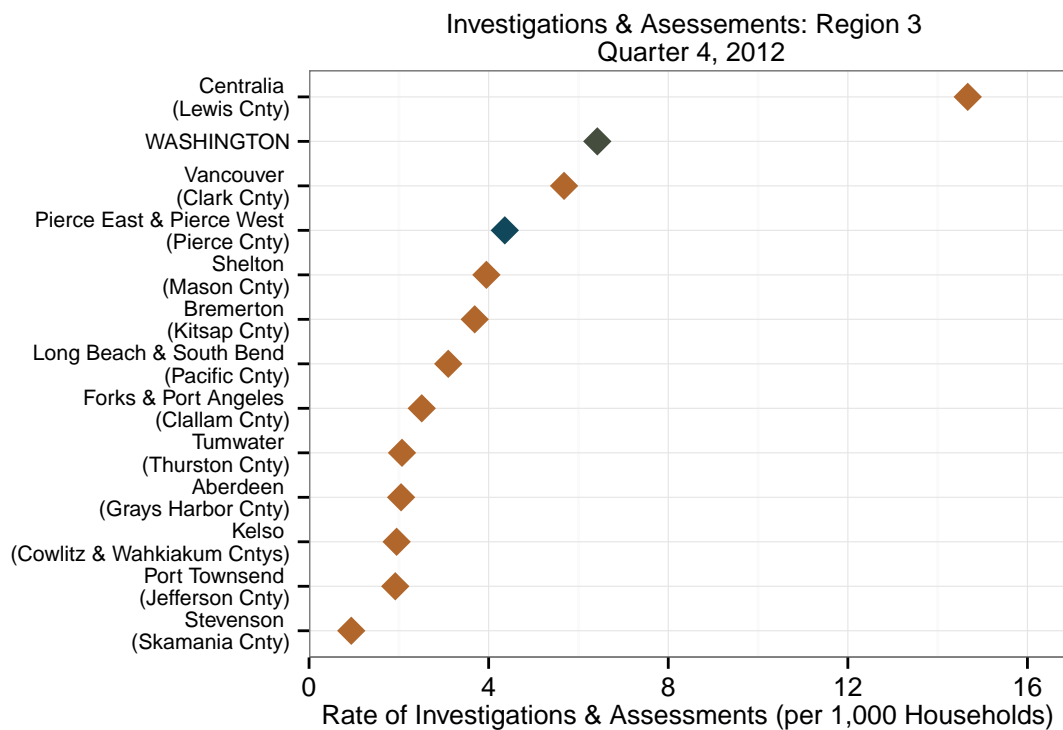
1.1 Investigations & Assessments: Pierce County Focus

The following graphs display point-in-time (i.e., first day of the quarter) trends in Investigations & Assessments for the DCFS offices/office groups in Pierce County. Data are presented using "unduplicated counts," meaning each household with at least one open investigation on the first day of the quarter was counted (see Technical Bulletin: Interpreting the Type of Count Filter for more information).



1.2 Investigations & Assessment: Region 3

To give context to the Pierce County offices' trend data, the following plot compares the rate of Investigations & Assessments in Quarter 4, 2012 for each Region 3 office and Washington State. Rates are used because they account for the population differences across Washington State counties.

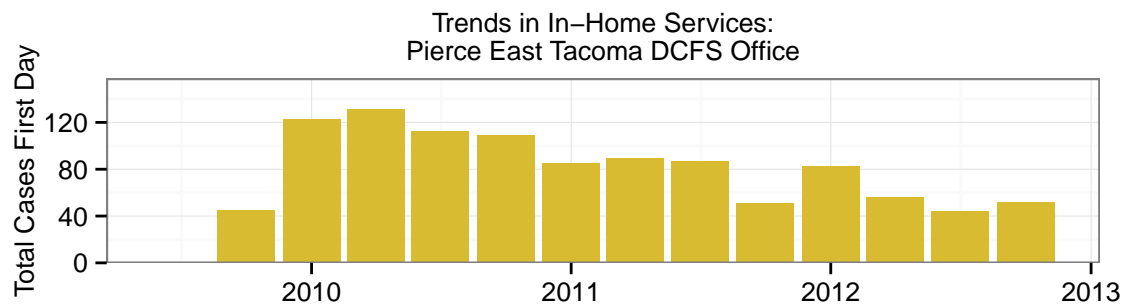
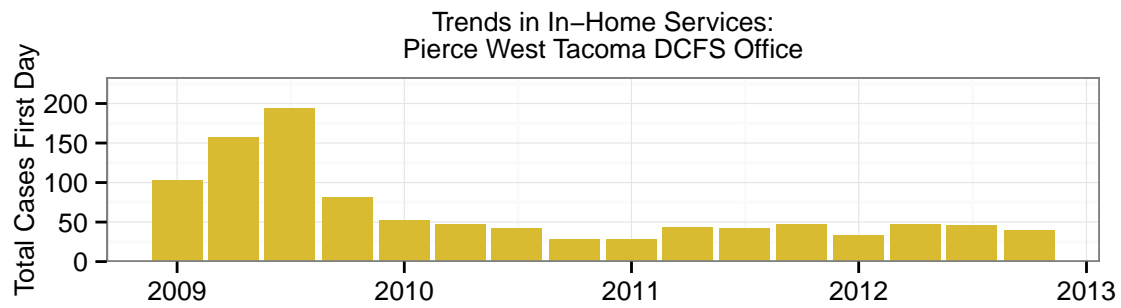


2 In-Home Services

When an investigation identifies a threat to a child's safety, case workers will first determine if the child can be kept safely at home through a safety plan. If so, the family and child may be provided with various services that range from concrete support (e.g., food, appliance repair, etc.) to referrals to community services (e.g., drug and alcohol assessments, etc.).

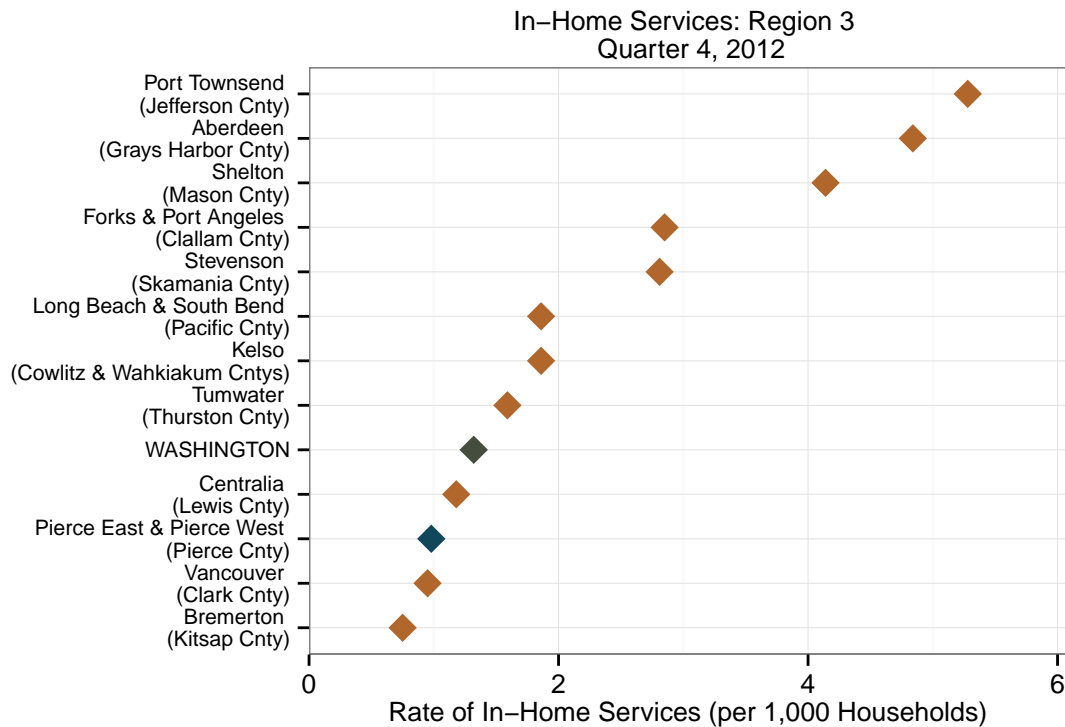
2.1 In-Home Services: Pierce County Focus

The following graphs display point-in-time (i.e., first day of the quarter) trends in In-Home Services for the DCFS offices in Pierce County. Data are presented using "unduplicated counts," meaning each household with at least one open in-home service case on the first day of the quarter was counted (see Technical Bulletin: Interpreting the Type of Count Filter for more information).



2.2 In-Home Services: Region 3

To give context to the Pierce County offices' trend data, the following plot compares the rate of In-Home Services in Quarter 4, 2012 for each Region 3 office and Washington State. Rates are used because they account for the population differences across Washington State counties.



2.3 In-Home Services: Safety

At times, the in-home services provided to families do not, or cannot, adequately address the issues identified during the investigation. Other times, new issues are raised during the course of an in-home services case. Either way, when the case worker decides that it is not possible for the child to remain safely in their home, steps will be taken to place the child in out-of-home care.

The measurements in Table 1 identify placement into Out-of-Home Care among families and their children who have received In-Home Services for one year and for two years. If the in-home services are completed effectively, and/or circumstances become such that the child can remain in-home safely, there should be no need to place the child in out-of-home care. Thus, in general, the lower percentages indicate better outcomes.

Table 1: Percent of In-Home Service Cases Resulting in Out-of-Home Care Placement.

| | Within 1 Year | Within 2 Years |
|--------------------|---------------|----------------|
| WASHINGTON | 18% | 20% |
| Pierce West Tacoma | 21% | 25% |
| Pierce East Tacoma | 23% | 24% |

3 Out-of-Home Care

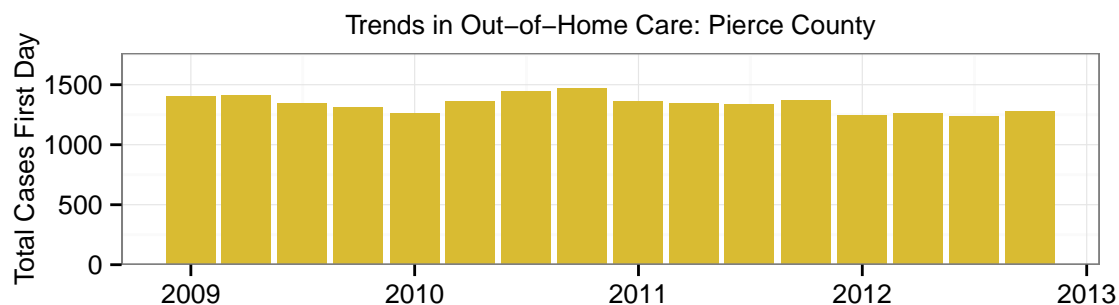
When children cannot remain safely in their home, they are placed in out-of-home care. Once a child is removed, the child welfare system works to find a safe and permanent home for the child. Most children ultimately reunify

with their parents after all safety concerns have been addressed; however, some children exit to other permanency outcomes (e.g., adoption, guardianship, etc.).

Note that Garfield, Lincoln, San Juan, Wahkiakum, Skamania, and Columbia counties are omitted from comparisons in the Out-of-Home Care section due to a small number of out-of-home placements.

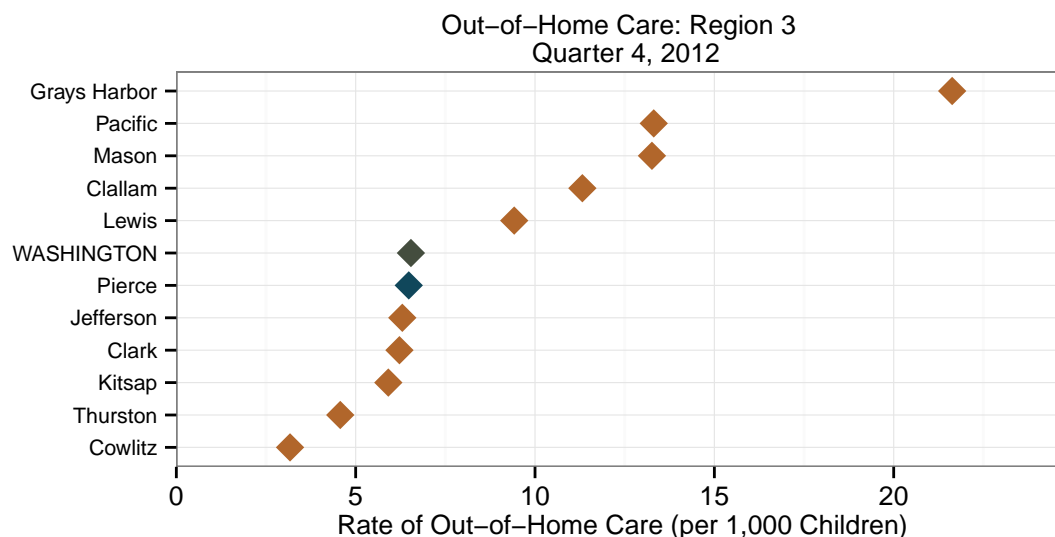
3.1 Out-of-Home Care: Pierce County Focus

The following graphs display point-in-time (i.e., first day of the quarter) trends in Out-of-Home Care for Pierce County. Data are presented using "unduplicated counts," meaning each child/youth in out-of-home care on the first day of the quarter was counted (see Technical Bulletin: Interpreting the Type of Count Filter for more information).



3.2 Out-of-Home Care: Region 3

To give context to the Pierce County trend data, the following plot shows the rate of Out-of-Home Care in Quarter 4, 2012 for Region 3 counties and Washington. Rates are used because they account for the population differences across Washington State counties.



3.3 Out-of-Home Care: Safety

Sometimes, when children experience a given permanency outcome (e.g., reunification, guardianship, adoption), safety concerns resurface in the child's home. In such circumstances, these safety concerns can be severe enough that the child needs to re-enter out-of-home care.

Table 2 identifies the percentage of children re-entering out-of-home care within two years of discharge in 2010, by discharge type, for all of the counties in Region 3, as well as for Washington State overall. The higher percentages of re-entry point to the challenges of providing a safe permanent placement for the child.

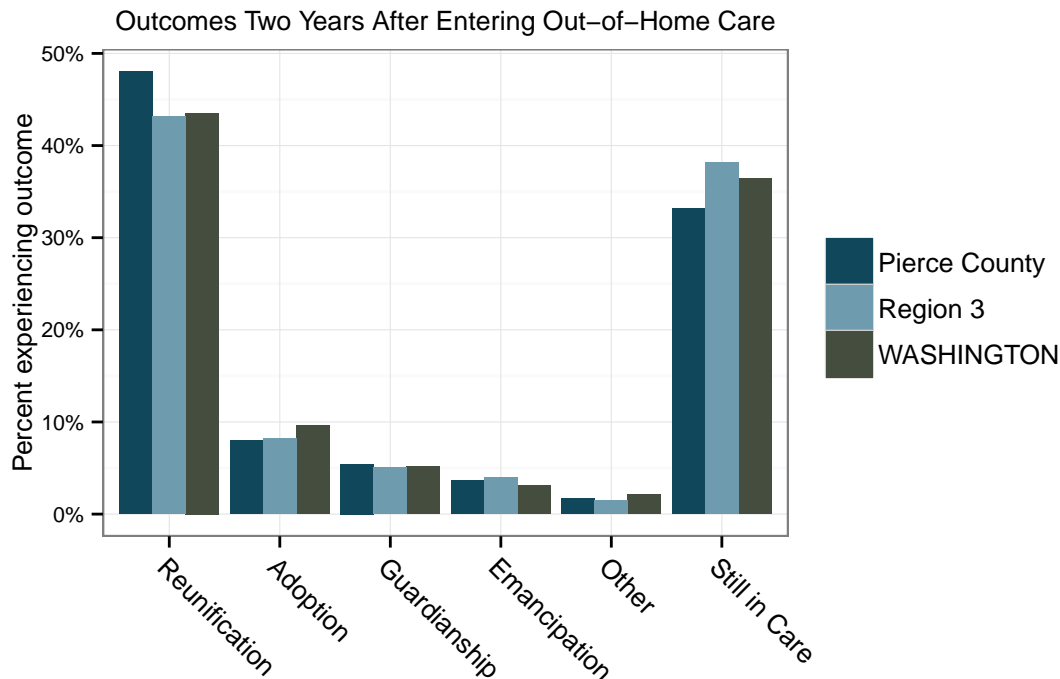
Table 2: Percentage of Children Re-Entering Out-of-Home Care within Two Years of Discharge

| | Reunification | Adoption | Guardianship |
|---------------|---------------|----------|--------------|
| Jefferson | 37.5% | 0% | 0% |
| Clallam | 31.8% | 0% | 0% |
| Thurston | 22.2% | 1.9% | 11.1% |
| Pacific | 16.7% | 0% | 0% |
| Grays Harbor | 15% | 0% | 0% |
| Pierce | 13.2% | 2.1% | 1.1% |
| Clark | 13.1% | 1.8% | 4.3% |
| WASHINGTON | 12.8% | 1.5% | 5.7% |
| Kitsap | 9.7% | 0% | 27.3% |
| Mason | 8.8% | 0% | 0% |
| Cowlitz | 6.9% | 0% | 0% |
| Lewis | 6.5% | 0% | 33.3% |

3.4 Out-of-Home Care: Outcomes

Under the Adoption and Safe Families Act of 1997 (ASFA), the goal of the child welfare system is to ensure that children are placed in safe and permanent homes as quickly as possible. The child welfare system seeks to first reunify children with their families when it is safe to do so. If children are unable to be safely reunified, permanency is achieved through adoption or guardianship. Some children exit from the system for other reasons such as emancipation or transfer of custody to different jurisdictions.

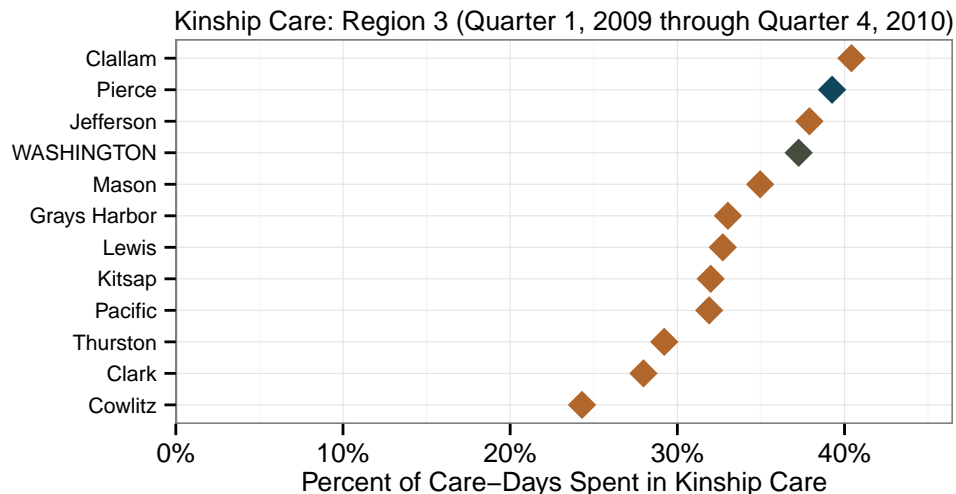
The following bar graph shows the percentage of children in the 2010 entry cohort achieving each outcome for Pierce County, Region 3, and Washington State.



3.5 Out-of-Home Care: Well-Being

When placement in out-of-home care is necessary, the physical and psychological needs and well-being of the child must be considered. While individual needs vary, and well-being is difficult to measure directly, research has shown that placement in kinship care enhances a child's physical and emotional health. Yet, in some cases, the child's best interests necessitate placement in a non-family setting. For example, a child may need specialized services to accomplish a specific therapeutic goal. In such cases, a child may be placed in a non-family setting until those therapeutic goals are met.

As a summary measurement of child well-being, the next graph shows the percent of care-days spent in kinship care for the counties in Region 3 from Quarter 1, 2009 through Quarter 4, 2010.



Appendix

The table below provides relevant Census data for Pierce County and Washington State. Census data for the total population and for the number of children under 18 years of age are used in the calculation of the rates in the *Region 3* sections.

Table 3: Pierce County Summary

| | Pierce County | Washington |
|--|---------------|------------|
| Total population (2012) | 811,681 | 6,897,012 |
| Percent change in population (2010 to 2012) | 2.1% | 2.6% |
| Population under 5 years | 6.9% | 6.5% |
| Population under 18 years | 24.3% | 23.2% |
| Population: White alone | 77.3% | 82.0% |
| Population: Black alone | 7.1% | 3.8% |
| Population: American Indian/Alaska Native alone | 1.6% | 1.8% |
| Population: Asian alone | 6.2% | 7.5% |
| Population: Native Hawaiian/Other Pacific Islander alone | 1.4% | 0.7% |
| Population: Multiracial | 6.4% | 4.3% |
| Population: Hispanic or Latino Origin | 9.4% | 11.6% |
| Population: Not Hispanic, White alone | 70.1% | 72.1% |
| Education: High school graduate (age >25) | 90.1% | 89.8% |
| People below poverty line (all ages) | 11.6% | 12.5% |
| Population per square mile | 476.3 | 101.2 |