

Focus on Thurston County

This *Focus on Thurston County* report is one of a series of automated county reports for Washington State. These quarterly reports mirror the Child Well-Being Data Portal by providing information on three major parts of the child welfare system: Investigations & Assessments, Placement Prevention Services, and Out-of-Home Care. To access the Data Portal and the latest county reports, visit www.partnersforourchildren.org/data-portal.

Overview

The Department of Social and Health Services (DSHS) divides Washington State into three regions. Thurston County is in Region 3, along with Clallam, Clark, Cowlitz, Grays Harbor, Jefferson, Kitsap, Lewis, Mason, Pacific, Pierce, Skamania and Wahkiakum counties. The following report includes basic graphs and tables for Investigations & Assessments, Placement Prevention Services and Out-of-Home Care in Thurston County.

The Investigations & Assessments section (page 2) and the Placement Prevention Services section (page 4) provide household data on, respectively, the total number of investigations and assessments and in-home service cases since 2010, as well as comparative rates for investigations and assessments and in-home service cases for all Region 3 counties.

The Out-of-Home Care section (page 7) provides total counts and comparative rates for the same time periods, but counts children, not households. The Out-of-Home Care section also provides basic graphs depicting safety, permanency outcomes and well-being for children in out-of-home care.

- Safety is measured as the percentage of children who re-entered out-of-home care within two years after already exiting to a permanent placement (i.e., reunification, adoption, and guardianship), with region-level and state-level context.
- Permanency outcomes are measured as the percentage of children who entered out-of-home care and experienced one of the following outcomes after two years: reunification, adoption, guardianship, emancipation, other or still in out-of-home care.
- Well-being is measured as the average percent of time children spent in the care of relatives (kinship care) while in out-of-home care during 2009-2010.

We hope this report serves as a valuable tool for Thurston County.

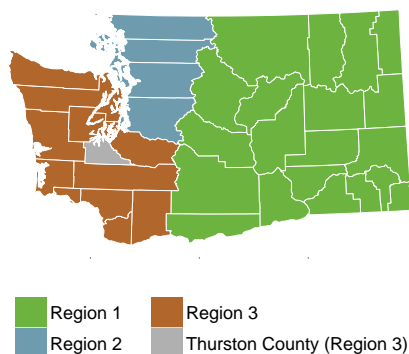
Data highlights for Thurston County:

U.S. Census Bureau (2012)

Total Population	258,332
Percent of Population Under 5 Years	6.1%
Percent of Population Under 18 Years	22.7%

Child Well-Being Data Portal (January 01, 2014)

Number of Open Investigations & Assessments	393
Number of Open In-Home Service Cases	51
Number of Open Out-of-Home Care Cases	284
Percent of Out-of-Home Care Cases: Children Under 5 Years	43%

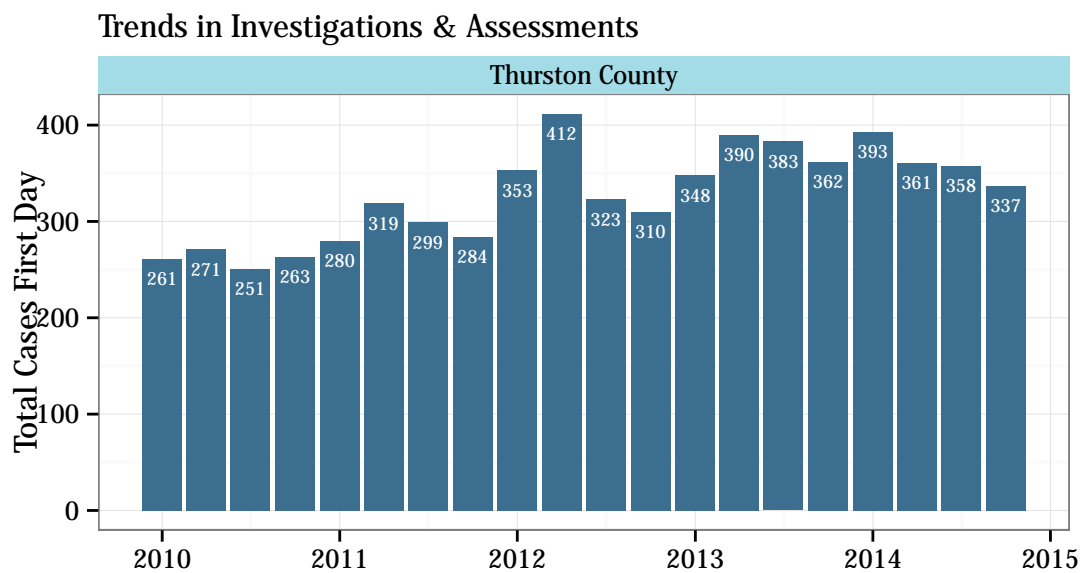


1 Investigations & Assessments

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 not an immediate need for an assessment or investigation.

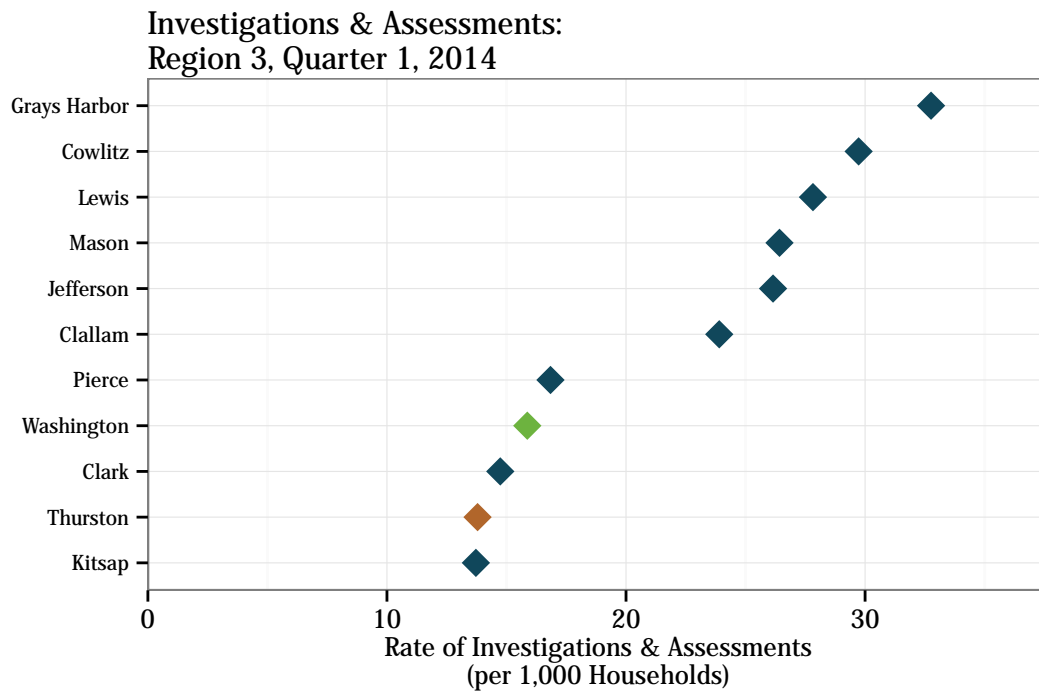
1.1 Investigations & Assessments: Thurston County Focus

The graph displays point-in-time (i.e., first day of the quarter) trends in investigations & assessments cases for Thurston County.



1.2 Investigations & Assessments: Region 3

To give context to the Thurston County offices' trend data, the following plot compares the rate of investigations & assessments on Quarter 1, 2014 for each Region 3 county and for Washington State. Rates, rather than counts (or total numbers), are used because they account for the population differences.

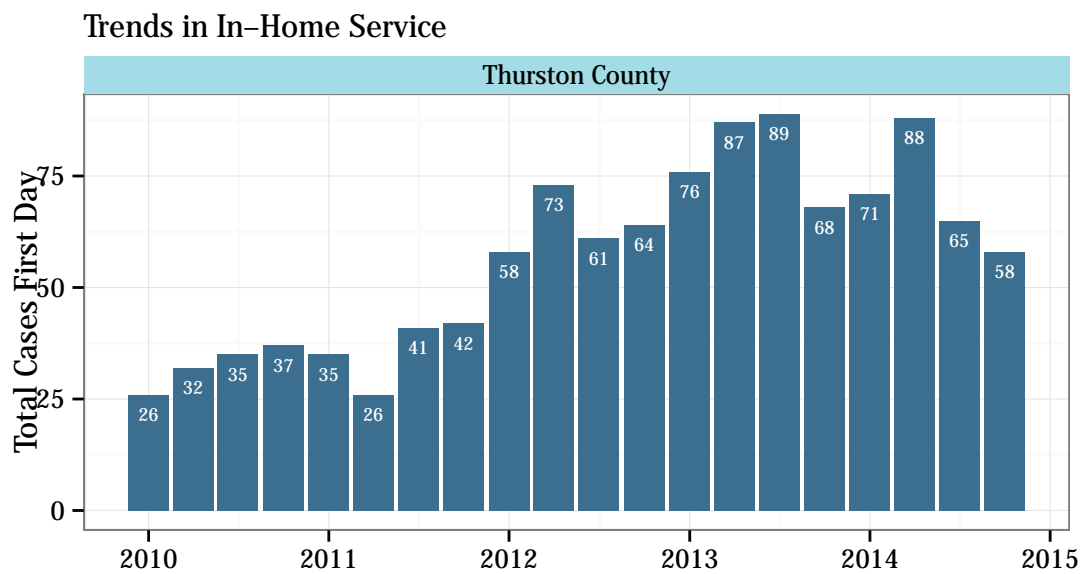


2 Placement Prevention Services

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.).

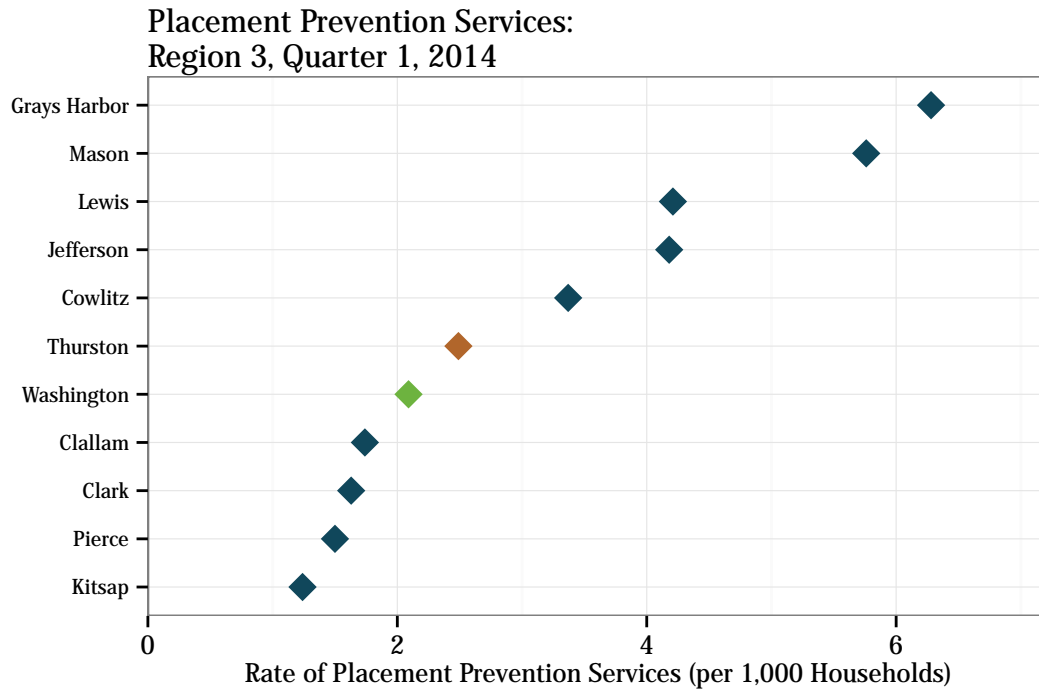
2.1 Placement Prevention Services: Thurston County Focus

The following display point-in-time (i.e., first day of the quarter) trends in Placement Prevention Services cases for Thurston County.



2.2 Placement Prevention Services: Region 3

To give context to the Thurston County office(s') trend data, the following plot compares the rate of Placement Prevention Services in quarter 1 of 2014 for each Region 3 county and for Washington State. Rates, rather than a total number, are used because they account for the population differences.



2.3 Placement Prevention Services: Safety

At times, the Placement Prevention 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 a Placement Prevention 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 Placement Prevention Services. If the Placement Prevention Services are completed and effective, 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. Note that these percentages are totals; that is, the percentage within two years takes into account the percent from the first year.

Table 1: Percent of 2011 Placement Prevention Services Cases
Resulting in Out-of-Home Care Placement

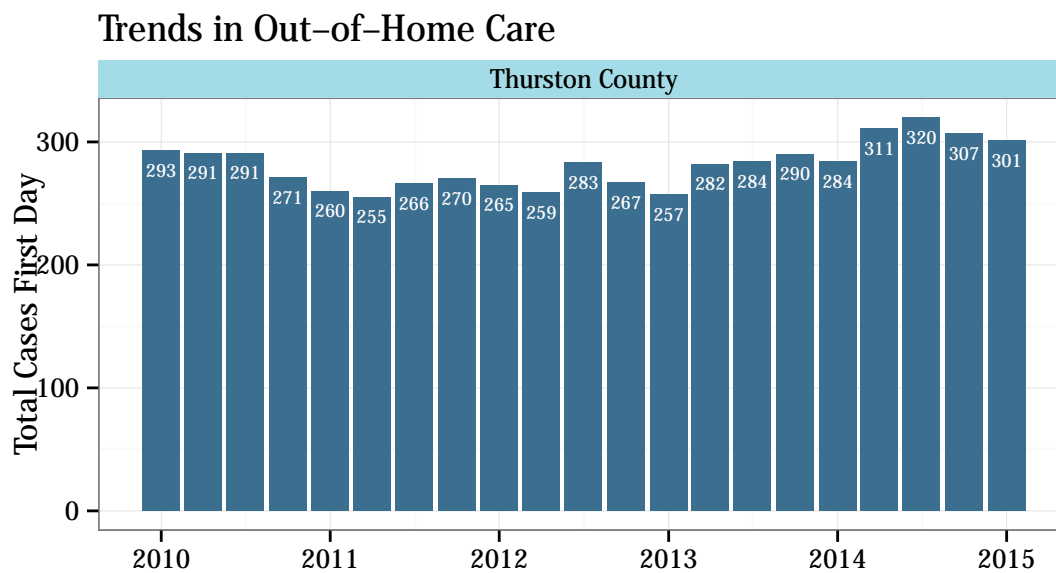
Within 1 Year	Within 2 Years
18%	21%

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).

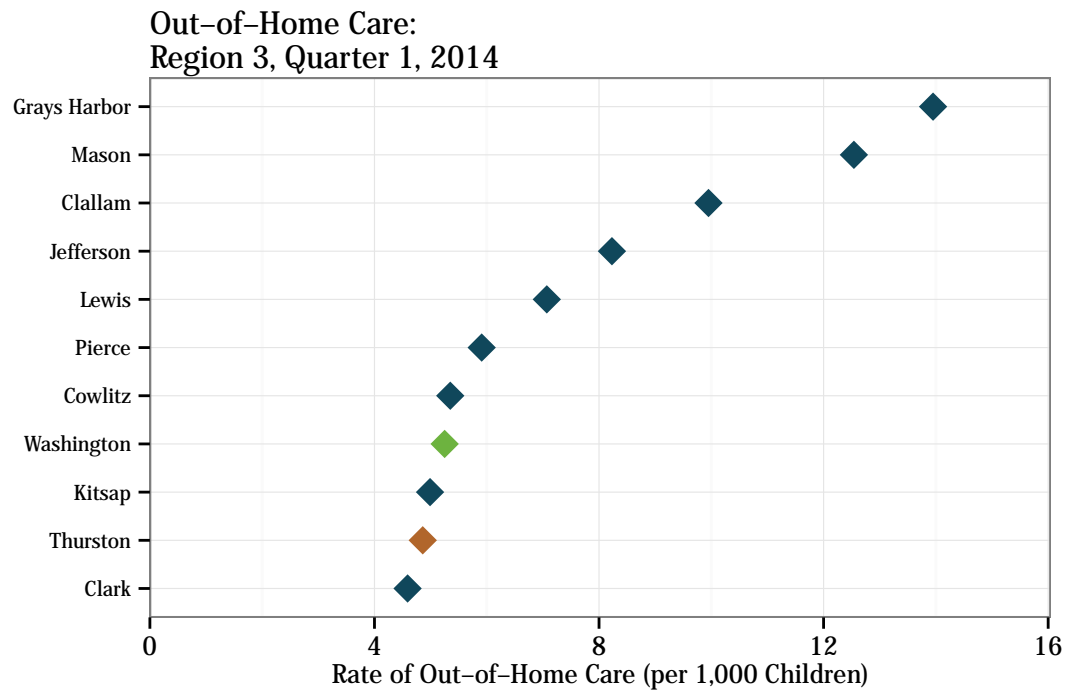
3.1 Out-of-Home Care: Thurston County Focus

The following graphs display point-in-time (i.e., first day of the quarter) trends in out-of-home care cases for Thurston County.



3.2 Out-of-Home Care: Region 3

To give context to the Thurston County trend data, the following plot shows the rate of out-of-home care in quarter 1 of 2014 for Region 3 counties and for Washington State. Rates, rather than counts (or total numbers), 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 permanency outcome after out-of-home placement (e.g., reunification, guardianship, adoption), safety concerns can resurface. In some 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 exiting to a permanent outcome in 2011, by permanency type, for Region 3 counties, as well as for Washington State overall. The higher percentages of re-entry point to the challenges of providing a safe, permanent outcome for the child.

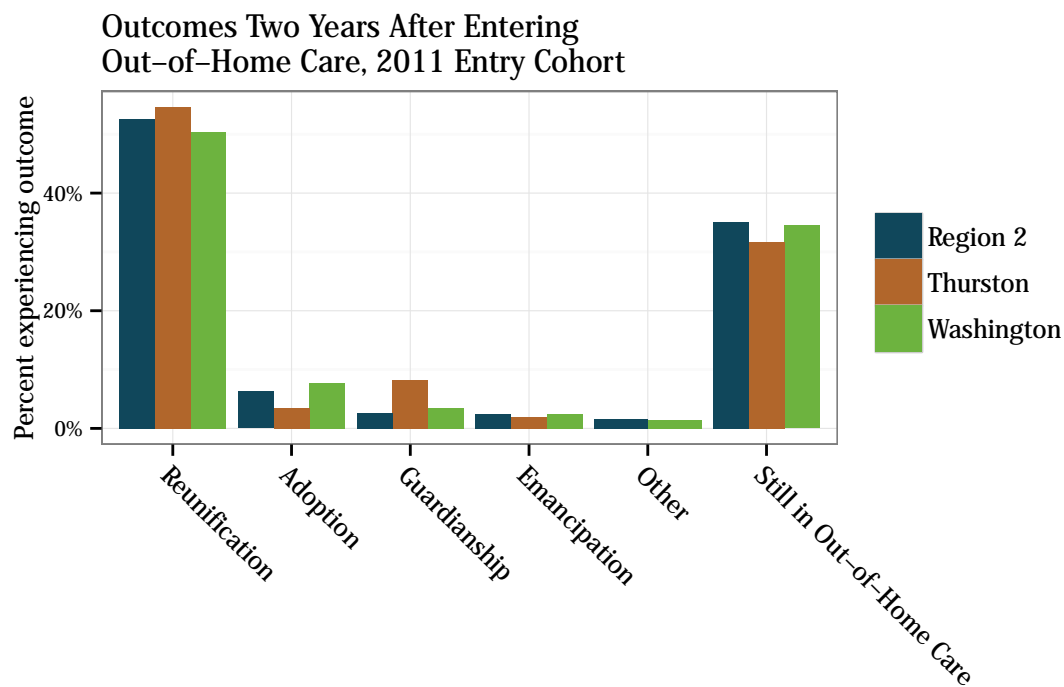
Table 2: Percentage of Children Re-Entering Out-of-Home Care within Two Years of Exiting Out-of-Home Care, 2011 Exit Cohort

	Re-Entry
Washington	14%
Clallam	16%
Clark	18%
Cowlitz	5%
Grays Harbor	12%
Jefferson	9%
Kitsap	12%
Lewis	10%
Mason	4%
Pierce	14%
Thurston	16%

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. When it is safe to do so, the child welfare system first seeks to reunify children with their families. If children are unable to be safely reunified, permanency can be achieved through adoption or guardianship. Some children will also exit the system for other reasons, such as emancipation or transfer of custody to different jurisdictions (e.g., Tribal authorities).

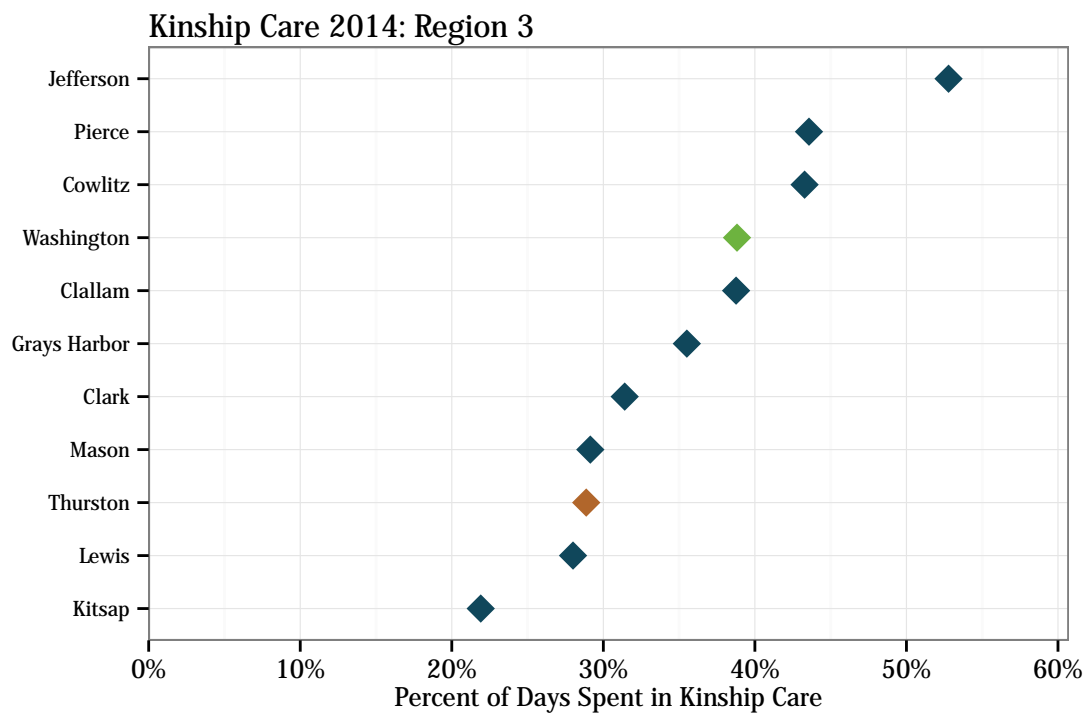
The following bar graph shows the percentage of children in the 2011 entry cohort (those who entered at the same time in 2011) achieving each outcome for Thurston County, Region 3 and Washington State.



3.5 Out-of-Home Care: Well-Being

When placement in out-of-home care is necessary, the physical and psychological needs, as well as the general 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 (i.e., a relative's home) can enhance 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.

Assuming that to some extent kinship care measures child's well-being in an out-of-home setting, the graph below shows the average percent of time that children in out-of-home care spend in kinship care (as opposed to foster care or a non-family setting) for the counties in Region 3. While in out-of-home care, children often stay in different settings. For example, a child can start in a foster home, but then move to kinship care as soon as a willing and able relative is identified. The online Data Portal provides a more detailed look at kinship care, as well as several other measures related to child well-being.



4 Appendix

The table below provides relevant U.S. Census Bureau data for Thurston County and for Washington State.

Table 3: Thurston County Summary

	Thurston County	Washington
Total population (2012)	258,332	6,897,012
Percent change in population (2010 to 2012)	2.4%	2.6%
Population under 5 years	6.1%	6.5%
Population under 18 years	22.7%	23.2%
Population: White alone	84.3%	82.0%
Population: Black alone	3.0%	3.8%
Population: American Indian/Alaska Native alone	1.6%	1.8%
Population: Asian alone	5.4%	7.5%
Population: Native Hawaiian/Other Pacific Islander alone	0.8%	0.7%
Population: Multiracial	5.0%	4.3%
Population: Hispanic or Latino Origin	7.4%	11.6%
Population: Not Hispanic, White alone	78.4%	72.1%
Education: High school graduate (age >25)	93.0%	89.8%
People below poverty line (all ages)	10.5%	12.5%
Population per square mile	349.4	101.2

U.S. Census data is retrieved from the most recent State and County Quickfacts (<http://quickfacts.census.gov/qfd/states/53000.html>).

Note: In this report, data are presented using “unduplicated counts,” meaning each household with at least one open investigation or one open in-home service case on the first day of the quarter was counted. Unduplicated counts for out-of-home care cases means each child 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).