

## Juvenile Court Offense Referrals

Juvenile court offense referrals are a way to track trends in juvenile crime. A court referral is a listing of a juvenile's name and offense in the juvenile court's legal record keeping system. It is a record that the juvenile was arrested or cited for an offense by a law enforcement agency, and then referred to the prosecutor. A referral is not a conviction.

The number of juvenile court offense referrals is always greater than the number of arrests, because a referral may include other court procedures, such as warrants.

In 2005, the Administrative Office of the Courts converted counties from the previous JUVIS reporting system to a new Juvenile and Corrections System (JCS). The JCS is a major component of the effort to better serve the needs of courts and judges. As a result of the statewide conversion to JCS, pre-2006 data is not comparable. Data for 2007, 2008 and 2009 has been reviewed.

The JCS was developed to support the unique needs of juvenile departments, standardizing data and enabling statewide data sharing with JIS, local court systems and other justice agencies. The new system is Web-based – much more user-friendly than the old code-driven system – and eliminates the need for multiple entries of the same data.

Previously, AOC used four applications to record and process information on each juvenile in their system. These programs - the Judicial Information System (JIS), the Superior Court Management Information System (SCOMIS), the Juvenile Information System (JUVIS), all mainframe-based applications and the Court Automated Proceedings and Scheduling System (CAPS), a web-based application needed to be integrated and simplified to enable customers to decrease duplicate data-entry time, to provide a single consolidated view of as much pertinent information about a youth as possible, and for professionals working on a case to access information easily.

The county prosecutor is responsible for prosecuting juvenile cases. The prosecutor decides whether to divert a case, whether charges should be filed and which offenses should be charged. A juvenile may be involved in more than one case within a year depending on the number of times the juvenile offends. A case may involve

more than one charge/offense depending on the circumstances of the event and the decision of the prosecutor.

Juveniles who commit minor/first offenses may be offered diversion instead of being taken to court. Juveniles who do not complete a diversion agreement, refuse diversion, or are refused diversion are charged in juvenile court.

In 2010, 35,325 cases were referred to the prosecutor for criminal offenses. Cases referred to diversion comprised 41 percent of the cases and charges were filed on 49 percent of the cases; and on eight percent of the cases there was no action taken. The courts remanded juveniles to adult court in less than one percent of the cases charged.

In 2010, just over five percent of the juvenile cases where a youth was found to be guilty were sentenced to the Juvenile Rehabilitation Administration (JRA). Seventy-eight percent of the cases were sentenced to local detention.

During 2010, 177 juvenile cases (less than one half of one percent of those juvenile cases referred to the prosecutor) were transferred to adult court. Counties where ten or more juvenile cases were remanded to adult court were Clark (11), King (56), Pierce (29), Spokane (17), and Yakima (25).

## Race and Ethnic Distribution

Of the cases where race or ethnicity was recorded in 2010, 59 percent of the cases referred to the prosecutor were White, twelve percent were Black, four percent were Native American, eighteen percent were Hispanic, three percent were Asian American, and four percent were unknown/other.

Of the juvenile cases remanded to adult court where race was recorded 30 percent of the juveniles were White, 32 percent were Black, two percent were Native American, 28 percent were Hispanic, and less than one percent were Asian American.

In 2010, 7,484 juvenile cases were sentenced within the local standard range. Of those cases where race or ethnicity was recorded, 55.3 percent were White, 15.8 percent were Black, 3.7 percent were Native American, 22 percent were Hispanic, and 2.4 were Asian American.