

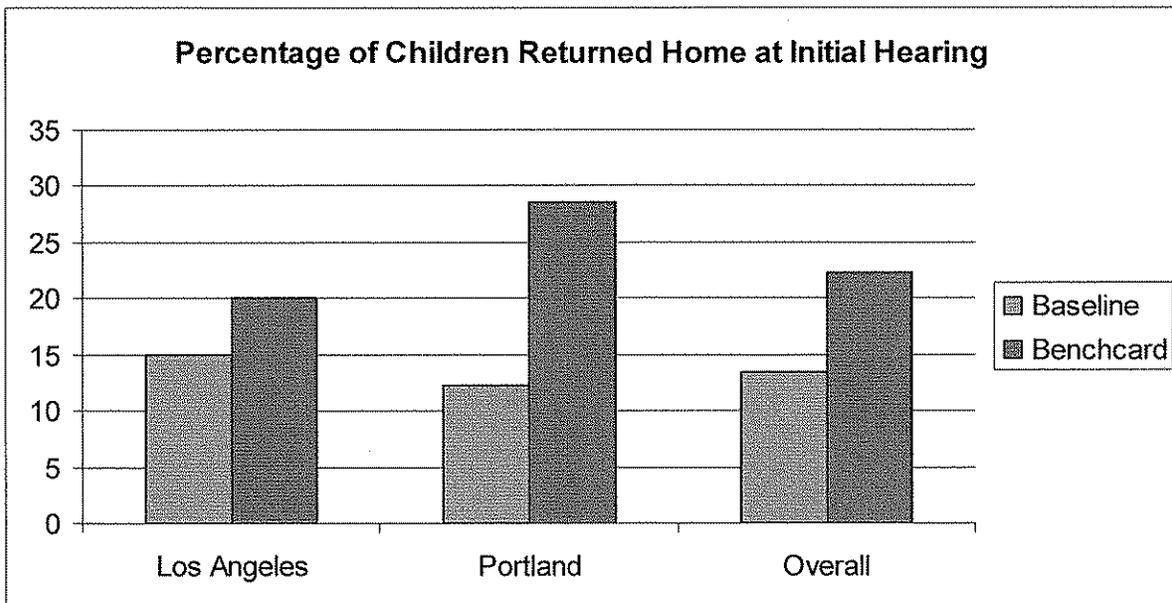
Courts Catalyzing Change Benchcard Research Findings

The PPCD began research in 2009 to assess the effectiveness of the CCC Benchcard in influencing the process and affecting the outcomes of child abuse and neglect cases. The first phase of the study included data collection on case information on 236 children in two sites (a third site will follow). The PPCD has begun an analysis of where disparities might occur within the juvenile dependency system. To assess the effect of the Benchcard, researchers compared case data between a baseline assessment (prior to Benchcard implementation) and a follow-up sample (after judicial officers began using the Benchcard). Data collection has now occurred through adjudication in most cases, allowing for an examination of short-term outcome differences.

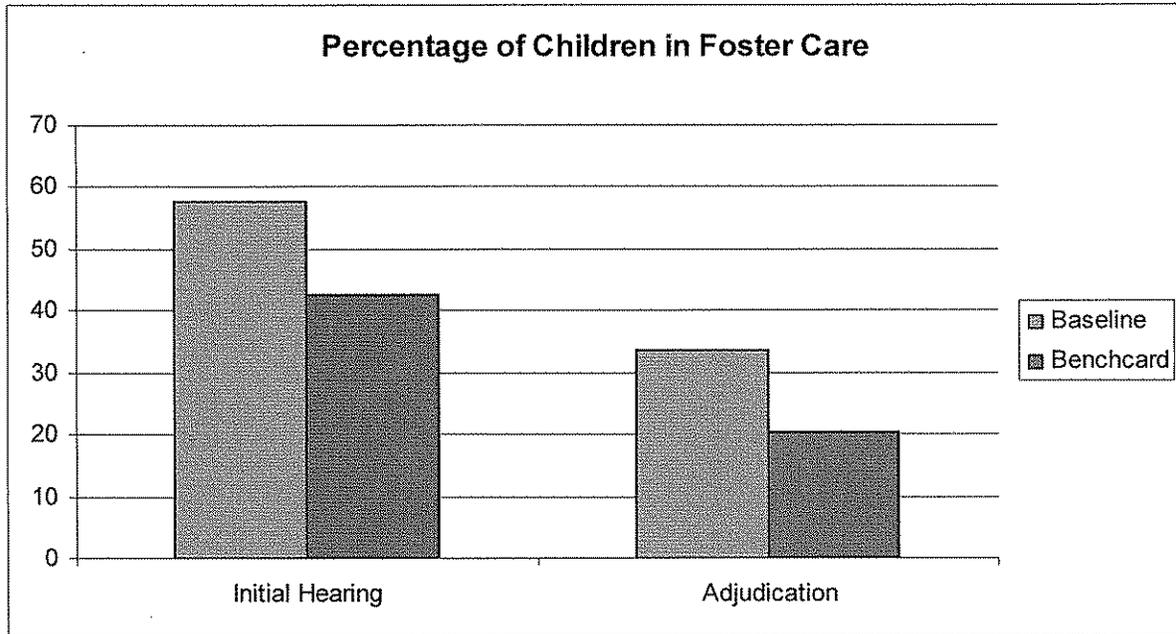
Short-Term Effects of the Benchcard

Results indicated that the biggest difference between cases in each group was in the placement of the children.

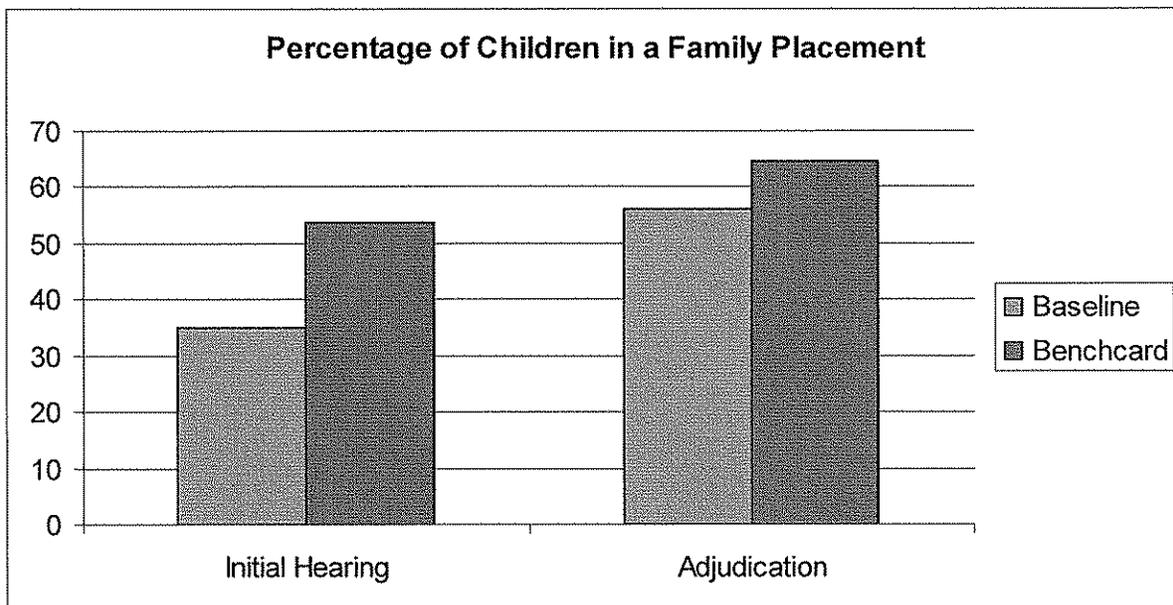
Key Finding #1: *The percentage of children returned home at the initial hearing increased.*
As anticipated, the number of children who were returned home at the initial hearing increased at the follow-up (i.e., Benchcard) assessment.



Key Finding #2: *Benchcard use resulted in fewer children placed in foster care at the initial hearing and even fewer again at adjudication.*

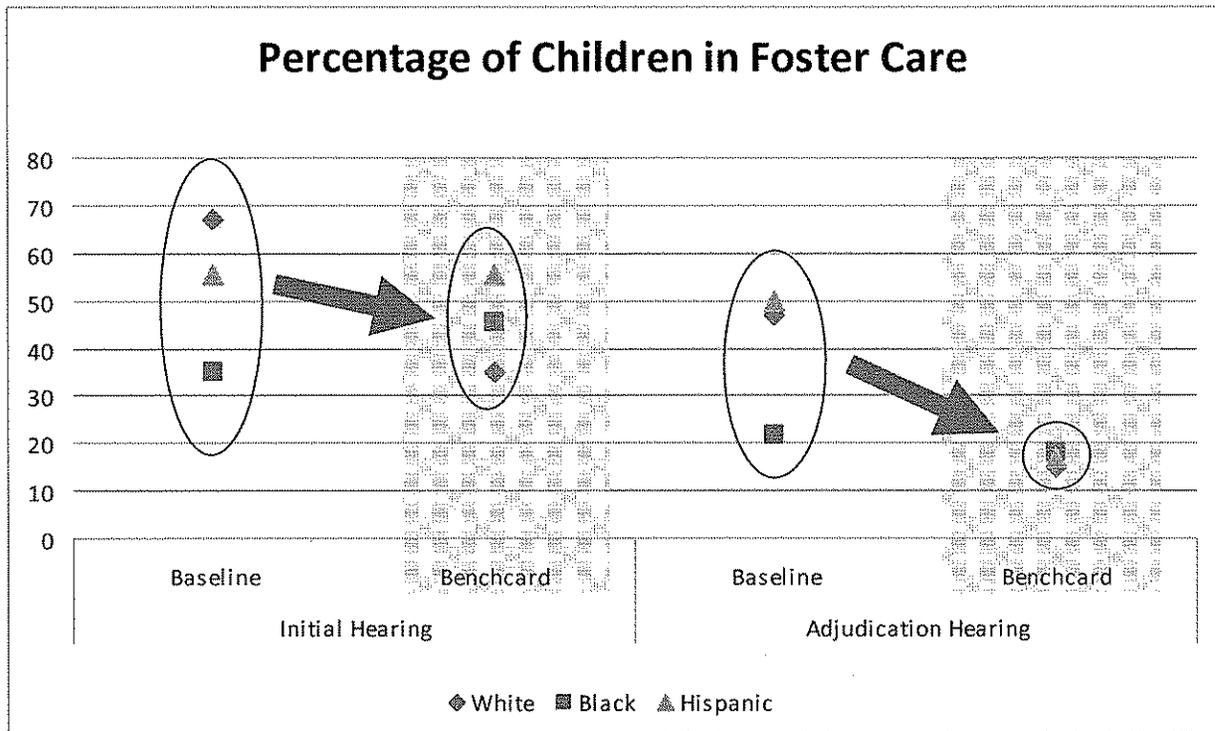


Key Finding #3: *Benchcard use resulted in more family placements (such as being placed with a non-charged parent or with relatives) at the initial hearing and even more again at adjudication.*



Key Finding #4: *Foster care placements vary by race in the baseline group but these differences are reduced in the Benchcard group.*

Key Finding #5: *Differences in foster care percentages converge among all racial groups by adjudication with Benchcard use. Of all the children who enter the system, by adjudication only 20% remain in foster care with Benchcard use.*



Note that the actual percentages of children in foster care in each racial group may not be a robust or very exact finding due to sample size and the numbers of cases in each control group. However, the variances among the groups is a consistent finding and the reduction in that variance is a significant finding.

Also note that the percentages of white children in foster care is higher than the percentage of black children in foster care in the sample. Statistical analysis shows that is due to the greater number of allegations for white mothers than for others.

Disparities

The study found some evidence of disparities in juvenile dependency hearing outcomes, but these findings were generally not robust. There may be some disparities in court decisions, but it will take greater analysis to parse these out.

Key Finding #6: *There are racial disparities in the cases that are brought to court.*

The study did find some clear disparities in who was brought into juvenile dependency court. Specifically, the study found racial disparities in the types of cases brought to court. White mothers (in comparison to minority mothers):

- Were not brought into court unless they had more and more serious allegations
- Faced a higher number of allegations (averaging 3.3 compared to 2.4 for others)
- Were more likely to have allegations of substance abuse, homelessness, and mental health problems
- Were less likely to have their case dismissed

After entering the court system, more services were ordered for white mothers than for others (4.1 on average compared to 2.7). This may represent a greater tendency to offer services to white mothers, but may also simply be indicative of the differences in the seriousness of the allegations.

Services

The study also examined how well services corresponded with allegations. Overall, the study found that approximately 90 percent of services ordered specifically matched up to an initial petition allegation. This matching was slightly decreased when only examining *founded allegations*. Eighty-four percent of all services ordered specifically matched a founded allegation, while 16 percent of services did not appear to match with any allegation. There were no statistically significant differences in this between the Benchcard and baseline groups. This was true both for initial and for founded allegations.

The study also asked if there was a service ordered for each allegation made. Ninety-two percent of all allegations did have at least one corresponding service ordered. Again, there were no statistically significant differences between the two groups on this measure.