Utah Hearing Quality Improvement
Final Evaluation Report

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December 2024

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Executive Summary

Under the direction of the Utah Courts and the Division of Child and Family Services, we (the Social Research Institute) evaluated the quality of child welfare court hearings before and after the implementation of a judicial bench card statewide. The goals of this evaluation were to 1) assess indicators of the level of bench card utilization and provide feedback to improve fidelity, 2) analyze parent and youth experience, 3) analyze the impact of the bench card on hearing quality after implementation, and 4) evaluate bench card impact on child outcomes.

Methodology

The study involved a review of audio-recorded child welfare court hearings before and after implementing the judicial bench card, administering a survey to youth and parents, and collecting administrative data from DCFS. To assess fidelity, we compared the utilization of bench card components to a 75% benchmark for utilization across 150 observed and coded hearings. We used descriptive statistics to analyze closed-ended questions and an inductive coding approach for open-ended questions. To analyze hearing quality, we analyzed the change in indicators of participant attendance, family engagement, judicial inquiry, and level of hearing discussion from pre- to post-implementation using regression analysis. Finally, we used logistic regression, linear regression, and survival analysis to determine the impact of the bench card on critical outcomes such as permanency, final placement in a family-like setting, reunification, and case length to analyze child outcomes. The first three outcomes were examined overall (by case end) and for timeliness in attaining the outcome.

Findings

The Utah Courts implemented the bench card with partial fidelity with room for improvement in several engagement strategies and discussion of some topics. Youth surveys provided largely positive feedback on their courtroom experience, where parent respondents were mixed, highlighting both areas of strength and areas for improvement. Hearing quality analysis from pre- to post-bench card implementation showed some significantly improved usage in four out of nine engagement strategies and improvement in the overall level of discussion in ten out of thirteen bench card topics assessed. Only two items (related to child safety) significantly improved in judicial inquiry from pre- to post.

Concerning the analysis of child outcomes, we found no significant improvement in overall permanent placement or final placement in a family-like setting. However, we found that timeliness for the two outcomes significantly improved from pre- to post, meaning children reached these placements sooner after bench card implementation. We found a significant

improvement in overall reunification and timely reunification. Case length was also significantly shorter in the post-period after bench card implementation.

Conclusion

Overall, the judicial bench card implementation partially improved hearing quality, reaching fidelity for some items and moderately improving hearing quality related to engagement strategies and topic discussion. However, there is room for improvement in bench card utilization and the family experience in hearings. While the outcome analysis can't isolate the findings to the bench card effort alone, the positive findings support the continued use of the bench card and other DCFS or Utah Court strategies implemented in this timeframe that may have also impacted improved outcomes.

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Introduction

The Utah Administrative Office of the Courts (Utah Courts) conducted a Hearing Quality Project as required by the Court Improvement Program (CIP) grants from the Administration for Children, Youth, and Families under the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. Created in response to a Federal Child and Family Services Review (CFSR) that indicated permanency concerns, this project aimed to enhance family engagement during court hearings and ensure timely and appropriate permanency for children and families by implementing a judicial bench card, a measure that other states have used to improve their hearing quality and practice.

Research has shown that hearing quality can be measured by several criteria, including the breadth of discussion and parental engagement (Macgill, 2014). High-quality hearings, defined by a substantial level of discussion and engagement, can lead to more timely case processing and better permanency outcomes (Summers, 2017). A report from the National Council of Juvenile and Family Court Judges found that after implementing a judicial bench card, more key topics were more thoroughly discussed, more family placements were made, and more children were reunified with their parents (NCJFCJ, 2011). In a study using a judicial checklist created by Casey Family Programs, judges found that not only did the checklists provide guidance and accountability, they also encouraged other judicial stakeholders (e.g., attorneys, GALs, caseworkers) to begin including information in their reports that the checklist would address (Weiss, 2006). Another study that used a bench card designed by the Call to Action Workgroup to reduce implicit bias found that training coupled with the bench card tool was associated with improved placement outcomes, while the training-only improvement diminished over time (Russell, 2013). Finally, a study using an Emancipation Checklist for older foster youths reported that stakeholders found it improved consistency, monitoring, and clarity in their hearings (Shdaimah, 2021).

In collaboration with the Utah Division of Child and Family Services (DCFS) and other state officials, the Utah CIP has developed a document entitled "Guiding Questions on Permanency" (see Appendix A). This guide includes the judicial checklist (bench card) to support high-quality child welfare court hearings and improve permanency outcomes for children and families statewide. Two Utah juvenile court judges began piloting the judicial bench card on September 8, 2020. The statewide implementation of the bench card commenced on July 19, 2021, and concluded on September 13, 2021.

Under the direction of the Utah Courts and DCFS, we (the Social Research Institute) evaluated the quality of child welfare court hearings before and after implementing the judicial bench

card. This evaluation reports on the final stage of the initiative, which began with an evaluation of the pilot phase of the project and continued with the statewide evaluation of the bench card rollout. This evaluation examined factors related to fidelity and hearing quality, such as the engagement of parties present in hearings, the breadth and depth of discussion of bench card topics, judicial inquiry of essential bench card items, and outcomes for children and DCFS cases, including permanency and length of stay in foster care.

Methodology

The goals of this evaluation were to 1) assess indicators of the level of bench card utilization and provide feedback to improve fidelity, 2) analyze stakeholder survey responses, 3) analyze the impact of the judicial bench card on hearing quality after statewide bench card implementation, and 4) evaluate bench card impact on child and case outcomes longer-term.

Evaluation Design

Research Questions

The primary research questions were as follows:
- **Fidelity:** After bench card implementation, to what extent are judges consistently utilizing strategies and questions from the bench card during court hearings?
- **Surveys:** What are the experiences of youth and parents during hearings following bench card implementation?
- **Hearing Quality:** How has hearing quality improved pre- versus post-implementation of the bench card? Such as:
  - Did parent and child attendance increase?
  - Has parent and child engagement improved during court hearings?
  - Did judicial inquiry increase?
  - Has the breadth and depth of discussion of bench card topics improved?
- **Child Outcomes:** Does implementing the judicial bench card improve outcomes for children in out-of-home care? Such as:
  - Permanency
  - Final placement in a family-like setting
  - Reunification with primary caregivers
  - Length of time in care

Components

The study involved a review of child welfare court hearings before and after implementing the judicial bench card, administering a survey to youth and parents, and collecting administrative data from DCFS. The evaluation included the following components:

1. **Bench Card Fidelity -** Post-implementation court hearings were reviewed for the fidelity criteria established in the preparation stage. Post-hearings were analyzed in multiple stages, a midpoint assessment and a final assessment, to help determine fidelity to the bench card. The midpoint assessment was used to provide initial feedback to the Utah Courts on areas needing improvement.

2. **Survey Analysis** - The Utah courts administered surveys to key stakeholders (i.e., youth, parents, and other courtroom participants) to gather their perspectives on court hearings and the use of the bench card. Survey responses were analyzed descriptively for closed-ended questions, and an inductive coding approach was utilized for open-ended questions.

3. **Evaluation of Hearing Quality -** We analyzed the change in indicators of participant attendance, family engagement, judicial inquiry, and level of hearing discussion from pre- to post-implementation using regression analysis.

4. **Child Outcomes Analysis -** We used administrative data from DCFS to evaluate child and case outcomes. Logistic regression, linear regression, and survival analysis were used to determine the impact of the bench card on key outcomes. Each outcome, other than length of stay, was evaluated based on whether the outcome was met within one year and whether the outcome was met overall.

Data Collection and Instruments

This evaluation utilized audio recordings, surveys, and administrative data to accomplish the four study components.

Audio Recordings

The Utah Courts provided audio recordings of child welfare court hearings along with case-specific data about each recorded court hearing. The case-specific data included the case number, hearing date, hearing type, name of the judge presiding over the hearing, and the child's and parent's names; this identifiable information was only used to assist with coding the recorded court hearings using the hearing observation tool (see Appendix B). The data

analysis did not utilize personally identifying information about the children or families who are the subjects of the recorded court hearings.

We randomly sampled court hearings using a cluster sampling methodology from a list of hearings provided by the Utah Courts. The hearing list included indicators for the DCFS Region (Eastern, Northern, Salt Lake Valley, Southwest, and Western) and hearing types (Disposition, Review, and 6-month Review), and we randomly selected equal numbers of hearings within each region and hearing type. The hearing list provided information separately for each child, so siblings were listed separately in the sample. The first child selected in the random sampling process was considered the target child for each hearing where multiple children were involved. Each hearing recording was limited to inclusion in the sample once. Hearings led by judges involved in the project's pilot phase or who otherwise implemented the bench card before September 20, 2021, were excluded from the pre-implementation sample.

Some hearings were sampled and subsequently excluded from analysis due to exclusionary criteria that were sometimes difficult to determine before listening to the recording. These exclusionary criteria included continued hearings, the child not being in an out-of-home placement, duplicate recordings selected due to multiple siblings, and poor audio quality. The random selection process continued until approximately 300 recordings met all criteria for inclusion in the final sample for review across the state. The final reviewed total was 301, including 151 pre-implementation and 150 post-implementation hearings. Specifically, we selected ten of the three hearing types per region for the pre- and post-implementation periods.

Hearing Observation Tool

The Utah Courts, in collaboration with DCFS, designed a hearing observation tool (Appendix B) based on the Guiding Questions on Permanency (Appendix A) as the standard court observation instrument for the collection of hearing quality measures. The evaluators used this tool to code hearing quality measures gathered from audio reviews. All 301 audio recordings were reviewed and coded using the hearing observation tool, and the resulting data was compiled into a dataset to assess bench card fidelity and hearing quality.

Data collected from the hearing observation tool included participant attendance, judicial engagement, and hearing discussion. The tool tracked participant attendance through a binary indicator of who was present at each hearing, including key family members, court personnel, and service providers. A supplemental section for participant attendance included items related to out-of-home caregiver participation and a discussion of missing parties.

The second area of the Hearing Observation Checklist was judicial engagement strategies used with the mother, father, and child. Judicial engagement strategies, including if the judge:
- Clearly explained the purpose of the hearing,
- Spoke directly to the person,
- Addressed the person by name,
- Asked if the person had any questions,
- Identified the next steps to the person,
- Provided the person an opportunity to be heard,
  - Conversely, if the person heard only through the attorney,
- And asked what had gone well since the last hearing.

Engagement strategies were rated on a binary scale of "yes" or "no" if the strategy was used in each recorded hearing. Engagement was rated separately for the mother, father, and target child.

The final component of the Hearing Observation Checklist, the hearing discussion, included indicators for applicability, judicial inquiry, and level of discussion. The main topics of interest included safety, permanency, family time, well-being & kinship, and next steps (see Table 1 for a list of the items rated within each topic area). As not all topics are relevant for every hearing, criteria were developed and established in a codebook for when certain items were "applicable" or "not applicable." A third option, "undetermined," could also be selected for hearings where the rater could not determine relevance based on hearing discussion. As the raters did not receive the information in the court reports and could not review the content of all prior hearings for a child, it was impossible to determine each topic's applicability fully. The judicial inquiry included a binary "yes" or "no" measure for whether the judge actively made a direct inquiry related to the topic item or made a statement inviting active discussion for items applicable to the hearing. The level of discussion was rated on a scale from zero to three and was defined as follows:
- **0 = Item not addressed** (e.g., no statement made at all by anyone in the hearing)
- **1 = One person addresses the discussion topic** (e.g., discussion included only a brief mention of the issue, with little to no detail included in the discussion of the item, or only one person makes a statement on the issue with no input from others)
- **2 = 2 people address a discussion topic** (e.g., at least one statement brought up and confirmed by others, or there is a response to a judge's inquiry)
- **3 = 2 or more people have back and forth discussion** (e.g., the purpose of the conversation is clear, the discussion is conversational and includes multiple statements/detailed discussion)

Table 1. Bench Card Discussion Topics

Topic	Item
Safety	Efforts/Progress to address safety issues
	Barriers to addressing safety issues
Permanency	Permanency goal/efforts since the last hearing
	Concurrent goal/efforts since last hearing
	Is the concurrent goal appropriate?
Family Time	Parent-child visitation
	Sibling visitation
Well-being & Kinship	Child's placement
	Child's education
	Child's other well-being
	Efforts to place with kinship/relative
	Efforts to maintain connections
Next Steps	Identified next steps and who's responsible

Inter-Rater Reliability

We had multiple raters from the SRI team conduct the hearing audio review process. When filling out the hearing observation tool, raters were trained on and referenced the codebook to guide their coding. Our evaluation team, in collaboration with several team members from the Utah Courts and DCFS, developed the codebook during the project's planning and initial audio review phase. During this process, the entire team reviewed multiple hearings with the hearing observation tool and later met to discuss rater differences and make decisions about how to code hearings to best align with the intentions of the bench card. After this initial process, as subsequent questions arose related to coding, the reviewers brought these questions to the larger team for consensus. The results of this process were recorded in the codebook to promote reliability and consistency within and between raters over time.

Human raters inherently introduce a degree of subjectivity in judgment when filling out an observation form or rating scale. As an additional step to ensure consistency between raters, some hearings were reviewed by two raters independently, followed by a consensus process. Due to study feasibility constraints, we could not have all raters review every hearing, so 30%

of the total hearings were randomly selected to be reviewed by two raters. This setup makes this a non-fully crossed design for inter-rater agreement purposes. We calculated a simple percent agreement estimate for each two-rater hearing reviewed as an ongoing measure of inter-rater agreement throughout the study. For each two-rater review, the raters met to compare their reviews using a spreadsheet with their combined responses, then discussed differing items and reached a consensus on the final ratings. Once they resolved all differences, the raters updated the final ratings.

Inter-rater reliability coefficients were calculated for hearing engagement, judicial inquiry, and level of discussion. Reliability was calculated using Krippendorff's alpha, a two-way random effect model that evaluates agreement across multiple raters and can accommodate missing values (Zapf, Castell, Morawietz, and Karch, 2016). Accounting for missing values was important, given that not all reviewers assessed each hearing. Engagement and judicial inquiry items, which were binary values, were treated as nominal data, while discussion items were ordinal data. All topics had Krippendorff's alpha values above 0.70, indicating good reliability (Koo and Li, 2016). Specifically, engagement had an alpha value of 0.812, judicial inquiry had 0.718, and discussion had 0.807.

Surveys

Surveys were utilized to gather the perspectives of parents and youth about court hearings and the use of the bench card. The Utah Courts and DCFS decided eligible participants for the survey would include any parents (mother, father, or guardian on the case) or youth (child on the case 11 years or older) who attended a Utah court hearing related to an out-of-home DCFS case. The youth survey asked for respondents' ages to ensure we did not include responses from anyone under 11 due to concerns about their reading level and ability to understand and respond to survey questions. The adult survey did not ask for respondents' age.

The Utah Courts and DCFS developed two surveys, one for adults and one for youth. Both surveys were mostly closed-ended (multiple choice, yes or no, level of agreement, etc.), with two open-ended questions. Due to the age of youth respondents, a shorter and easier-to-read set of questions was used to assess youth experiences in their most recent court hearing. A complete list of questions used in the youth survey can be found in Appendix C. The adult survey included more questions but still prioritized readability. A complete list of questions used in the adult survey can be found in Appendix D.

Once adult and youth survey questions were finalized, we created both surveys in Qualtrics, a cloud-based platform that allows users to create, distribute, and analyze surveys. Utilizing Qualtrics, we provided the Utah Courts with an anonymous link to both surveys. The Utah

courts sent email invitations with instructions and the corresponding survey link to eligible parents after attending a hearing across all judicial districts. Youth surveys were administered via iPad after in-person hearings with the assistance of the Guardian ad Litem's Office. The Utah Courts collected survey responses over a three-month period to minimize individuals taking the survey multiple times from late February to early May of 2023.

DCFS Administrative Data

DCFS provided administrative data for the outcome analysis from its Comprehensive Child Welfare Information System (CCWIS) for out-of-home cases between March 24, 2004 and June 20, 2024. The data included client demographics, case characteristics, placement history, and case outcomes (e.g., length of stay in foster care, permanency outcomes). An MOU was also put in place with DCFS for the purposes of data sharing and was extended to fit the timeline of phase III. Data was compiled, stored, preprocessed, and analyzed using R statistical software.

Measures

Table 2 includes the list of variables included in the analysis as covariates (predictor variables). The outcome measures we examined from the DCFS administrative data included permanency, placement in a family-like setting, reunification, and case length. We defined these outcomes as follows:

Permanency

The outcome of permanency was defined as whether a child had a permanent placement at the end of their out-of-home services case. As defined by DCFS, permanent placements include reunification with parent(s) or caregiver(s), temporary or permanent custody with relatives or non-relatives, finalized adoption, or non-petitioned release.

Final Placement in Family-Like Setting

Final placements indicated as favorable are a subset of the placements listed for the outcome of permanency. Final favorable placement refers to whether a child was placed in a permanent, family-based care arrangement at the conclusion of their out-of-home services case. These placements include reunification with parents or caregivers, temporary or permanent custody with relatives, custody or guardianship with foster parents or other non-related, finalized adoption, and no more services needed.

Reunification

Reunification refers to whether a child was returned to their parent(s) or primary caregiver(s) at the conclusion of their out-of-home services case. While reunification is

considered within the outcomes of permanency and final favorable placement, it was also analyzed separately in this evaluation.

Length of Case

This outcome was defined as the total number of days from case start to case end for a DCFS out-of-home case.

Table 2. Covariates Used in Analysis

Data field	Description
Bench Card Implementation	An indicator for pre or post-bench card implementation
Allegation Types	An allegation is a report of suspected maltreatment that falls under the broad category of abuse, neglect, or dependency that initiates a CPS investigation. There were 20 original allegation types in the data, which were condensed into three grouped categories for analysis.
Allegation Findings (Supported or unsupported)	A supported allegation is defined as a supported or substantiated allegation that occurs when sufficient evidence of maltreatment is found during a CPS investigation.
DCFS Region	Indicators for the court hearing location by the five DCFS regions (Eastern, Northern, Salt Lake Valley, Southwestern, and Western)
Number of placements	The total number of out-of-home placements during the case. A child may have multiple placements during an out-of-home case.
Permanency goals	Type of permanency goal (reunification, adoption, guardianship with relative or non-relative, individualized permanency) and number of changes to the goal during the case
Number of prior cases by case type	Counts of prior CPS, voluntary in-home services, court-ordered in-home services, and out-of-home cases
Gender	Gender of the child (Male, Female)
Race/Ethnicity	Child Race or Ethnicity including the following categories: American Indian/Alaska Native (AI/AN), Asian, Black/African American (Black/AA), Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander (NH/PI), White Hispanic (Hispanic), White Non-Hispanic (White), two or more races (Multiracial)
Age	The child's age at case start

Data field	Description
Perpetrator relationship	Relationship of the perpetrator(s) of maltreatment to the child
COVID-19 restrictions	Indicator for whether the case took place during COVID-19 restrictions from March 16, 2020, to December 31, 2021

Analysis Techniques

Bench Card Fidelity

We conducted a mid-project fidelity assessment to see how consistently the bench card strategies and topics were used/discussed during court hearings in order to provide early feedback to the agency and additional technical assistance to court personnel if needed. We assessed fidelity again at the end of the project in September 2024. Fidelity is a key component of implementation science and is an indicator of how well a program or intervention is implemented according to the intent of the designers. Good program or intervention implementation is a consistent determinant of program outcomes (Durlack, 2008). For instance, if a program did not achieve its desired outcomes but was not implemented well, the ineffective results may be due to poor implementation rather than program flaws (Dusenbury, 2003).

Bench card fidelity was assessed mid-project on 75 post-implementation hearings held December 8th, 2021-May 15, 2022, including disposition, review, and 6-month review hearings. The reviews were conducted between July 2022 and June 2023 using the Hearing Review Checklist, and the data was analyzed using descriptive statistics to identify bench card strategies and topics that were being used regularly and those that were not.

Engagement strategies and judicial inquiry were analyzed overall by calculating the percentage of hearings in which the strategy or topic was observed. Then, the evaluators utilized a 75% benchmark to identify areas of strength or needing improvement, meaning that strategies or topics observed in at least 75% of hearings were considered strengths of bench card utilization, with those below 75% identified as needing improvement in utilization. The inverse of 75% was considered for one item that was reverse coded, "heard through attorney only," as less than 25%. Fidelity results and initial recommendations were presented to key project stakeholders in July 2023 and subsequently presented in a series of voluntary meetings and brown bag discussions for judges, DCFS administrators, and other court personnel as a means to disseminate initial recommendations through early January 2024.

The hearing discussion was analyzed overall by taking the mean of all hearing scores to identify which topics were discussed more or less frequently in hearings on average. The evaluators interpreted an average of two or above as a good level of discussion, meaning, on average, at least two people participated in the discussion. An average score between one and two represented a moderate level of discussion, meaning, on average, the topic was mentioned but could use some improvement in the depth of discussion. An average discussion score of less than one indicates that the topics were discussed inconsistently across hearings and could use more emphasis in court discussion.

Fidelity was assessed again at the end of the project on the remaining 75 post-hearing reviews using the same methodology as the mid-point assessment. The 75 hearings were conducted between 1/8/2024 and 4/17/2024. Hearing reviews were conducted from May to July 2024. At this stage of the fidelity assessment, we were able to descriptively compare fidelity levels before and after the feedback given mid-project.

Survey Analysis

Qualitative and quantitative methods were used to analyze responses to both the youth and adult engagement surveys. The youth engagement survey had in total nine questions, seven closed-ended and two open-ended. The adult engagement survey had a total of eleven questions, nine closed-ended and two open-ended. As the close-ended questions in the youth and adult engagement surveys differed in number and complexity, their responses cannot be compared to each other. Regardless of survey type, youth or adult, closed-ended questions were analyzed descriptively using the statistical software R. Open-ended questions (i.e., suggestions to make the court better) were thematically coded by two reviewers.

Quantitative

For the youth survey, we descriptively analyzed respondents' ages by calculating the average age and creating a frequency distribution table. For dichotomous and individual Likert questions, we calculated the percentage of respondents who selected each response option (i.e., yes or no) and generated bar charts to visualize these results. The adult survey included dichotomous, multiple-choice, and grouped Likert questions. For each question type, we calculated the percentage of respondents who selected each response option. We generated bar charts to visualize dichotomous and multiple choice questions and net stacked distribution charts for the grouped Likert questions.

Qualitative

We used an inductive coding approach to analyze responses to the two open-ended questions in the adult and youth surveys. The questions were:

1. What else would you like us to know about your most recent experience in court?
2. What suggestions do you have for how to make court better?

Textual responses were thematically coded separately by two reviewers to establish preliminary codes. The two reviewers then met to compare preliminary codes and develop a final set of named and defined codes. The finalized coding system included major themes relating to the type of response (i.e., type of court experience or type of recommendation) and sub-themes of additional details. Using the finalized coding system (Tables 3 & 4), each reviewer coded responses again and then met a final time to formalize the codes assigned to responses.

Table 3. Themes and Sub-Themes for Q1 Experience Responses

Inconclusive	Positive	Negative
● No response ● "Nothing or N/A" ● Other	● About Judge ● Positive Adjective	● Inadequate handling ● Broken System ● Engagement concerns ● Biased ● Harmful ● Other

Table 4: Themes and Sub-Themes for Q2 Recommendation Responses

Inconclusive	Experience	Recommendations
● No response ● "Nothing or N/A" ● Other	● Inadequate handling ● Broken System ● Engagement concerns ● Biased ● Harmful ● Other	● Engagement ● Improve investigation ● Case management ● Fix system ● Unbiased ● Improve sensitivity ● Other

Eleven responses to Q2 shared further details about the respondents' experience with the child welfare system, which did not always relate to the recommendations they provided. This led reviewers to develop major themes of "Experience" and "Recommendations" to better analyze the entire response to Q2. When respondents recounted experiences with the child welfare system when answering Q2, they described negative experiences, and the same sub-themes developed in the "Negative Experience" theme from Q1 were utilized. Using this method, a single response to Q2 could be coded as both an "Experience" and a "Recommendation."

However, because the same respondents who recounted negative experiences for Q1 utilized Q2 to share further details, the 11 Experience responses from Q2 were not added to the overall percentage of responses counted for the Negative major theme for Q1 to avoid double counting a similar response by the same person twice. We added the sub-themes from these 11 responses to the overall count of negative sub-themes for Q1 to demonstrate how many unique respondents recounted these types of experiences. To do so, we compared the two responses to each question for each respondent, and only additional insight provided by the response to the second question was included in the total for each Experience sub-theme. For example, if a respondent mentioned something relating to the "broken system" subtheme in their response to the first and second questions, it was only counted once. However, if that same respondent mentioned something that falls under the sub-theme of "harmful" for the second question, then it was counted because it was a new sub-theme not discussed in their response to the first question.

Hearing Quality Analysis

We conducted a quantitative analysis to determine if hearing quality improved after the implementation of the bench card on September 20, 2021. We analyzed data collected from the hearing observation tool on the 301 audio reviews conducted using logistic and linear regression to compare pre-implementation to post-implementation bench card hearing quality. This included 151 pre-implementation and 150 post-implementation hearings. Analysis was conducted using R version 4.2.2. The questions evaluated for hearing quality included: 1) Did parent and child attendance increase? 2) Has the parent and child engagement improved during court hearings? 3) Did judicial inquiry increase? and 4) Has the level of discussion of bench card topics improved?

Family Attendance at Court Hearings

We examined changes in mother, father, and child attendance pre to post-implementation using logistic regression, as attendance was measured on a binary scale. Logistic regression is a common statistical technique used to predict the probability of a binary outcome, such as attendance (yes/no; Bewick, Cheek, & Ball, 2005). It should be noted that child attendance may only sometimes be appropriate depending on their age, and the child may be excused from the hearing. Overall, children were less likely to be present compared to mothers or fathers.

We also accounted for region and hearing type as covariates in the models to assess if there were differences in outcomes by region or hearing type. We included categorical variables in the model as dummy variables where categories are converted into a series of binary (0/1) indicators. With dummy variables, one category is selected as a reference category and

excluded from the statistical model. Excluding one category avoids the issue of perfect multicollinearity, where the variables perfectly predict one another in the model (Allen, 1997). As such, the effect of the reference category is absorbed into the model's intercept, and the coefficients (estimated effect) of the remaining variables are interpreted in relation to the reference category. DCFS Region was a categorical variable representing the five DCFS regions; these were included in the model as four dummy variables, with the Salt Lake Valley region selected as the reference group. Hearing type was a categorical variable representing the three hearing types reviewed. Hearing type was included in the model as two dummy variables, with disposition hearings as the reference group.

Use of Engagement Strategies

We analyzed the change in the use of engagement strategies from pre to post-bench card implementation using a logistic regression model for each strategy for mothers, fathers, and children. There were eight engagement strategies rated on a binary (yes/no) scale, including if the judge:
- Clearly explained the purpose of the hearing,
- Spoke directly to the person,
- Addressed the person by name,
- Asked if the person had any questions,
- Identified the next steps to the person,
- Provided the person an opportunity to be heard, and conversely
    - If the person was heard through the attorney only (reverse coded)
- Asked what had gone well since the last hearing.

Engagement items were only considered in the analysis for hearings where the specific party was marked as present. We similarly accounted for region and hearing type as covariates in these models. Some engagement items were discussed so rarely that there was not sufficient sample size to determine if the differences from pre- to post were significant.

Judicial Inquiry

We analyzed changes in judicial inquiry from pre- to post-implementation using logistic regression. In the hearing review process, bench card topics (listed in Table 1) were rated for judicial inquiry on a binary (yes/no) scale. Hearings were included in the model for each topic where the topic was indicated as applicable. Similar to other research questions, we accounted for region and hearing type as covariates in the models. Some topics were discussed so infrequently that there was not sufficient sample size to determine if the differences from pre- to post were significant.

Level of Discussion of Bench Card Topics

We analyzed the level of discussion of bench card topics using linear regression. Linear regression is typically used when the outcome is on a continuous scale where data points can take on any value within a specified range (Schneider, Hommel, & Blettne, 2010). The discussion level ratings from the hearing observation tool used an ordinal scale from zero to three, as described previously for each of the 13 bench card topics (see Table 1). On an ordinal scale, items are ordered or ranked, but the intervals between the items may not be equal. While there is some debate as to the appropriateness of using parametric statistics (such as linear regression) on ordinal data, we decided to use this method due to its ease of use and interpretation. There is also research support demonstrating that parametric statistics are robust enough to use with ordinal data (Norman, 2010).

Hearings were included in the model for each topic where the topic was indicated as applicable. Similar to the prior questions, we accounted for region and hearing type as covariates in the level of discussion models. Some topics were discussed so infrequently that there was not sufficient sample size to determine if the differences from pre- to post were significant.

Outcomes Analysis

We conducted a quantitative analysis to determine if case outcomes improved after implementing the bench card on September 20, 2021. We used DCFS administrative data to analyze 3,792 out-of-home cases using logistic regression, linear regression, and survival analysis to compare outcomes between pre-implementation and post-implementation of the bench card. This included 2,108 out-of-home cases in pre-implementation and 1,684 out-of-home cases in post-implementation. Analysis was conducted using R version 4.2.2. The outcomes evaluated included: 1) Did the likelihood of permanent placements increase? 2) Did the likelihood of final placement within a family-like setting increase? 3) Did the likelihood of reunification increase? and 4) Did the average length of the case decrease?

To ensure the timeframes for the pre- and post-implementation periods were comparable, we ensured the timeframes were equal, each spanning 1,003 days (the most extended timeframe the available data would allow). To avoid the potential impact of the COVID-19 lockdown on case outcomes, we excluded the timeframe after March 16, 2020, from the pre-implementation period. This exclusion left a gap between the pre- and post-periods from approximately March 2020 to September 2021, where any cases that overlapped with this timeframe were excluded from the analysis. As some COVID-19 restrictions were still in place when the Utah Courts implemented the bench card statewide in September 2021, we included a COVID-19 indicator in the regression models for the first few months of the post-period. The final

Pre-implementation period spanned between June 17, 2017, and March 16, 2020; post-implementation spanned between September 20, 2021, and June 19, 2024.

Additionally, out-of-home cases were included for complete cases only, meaning if the case had a case end date within the timeframe of the data and had one year of follow-up data available. Asian children were removed from the data due to the low sample size. DCFS region, race and ethnicity, perpetrator relationship, and most recent case goal indicator covariates were included as dummy variables, with one category selected as a reference group. Specifically, DCFS regions were compared to the Salt Lake Valley region, BIPOC children were compared to White non-Hispanic children, perpetrator relationships were compared to cases that were missing perpetrator relationship information, and current case goals were compared to cases where reunification was the most recent goal. Multicollinearity among covariates was evaluated using variation inflation factors (VIF). Checking for multicollinearity is important because it can increase the standard errors of a regression model, increasing the risk of failing to detect the true effect (Menard, 1995). In some outcome models, the number of perpetrators was multicollinear, depending on whether the perpetrator was a relative, and the number of perpetrators was removed from the stepwise selection process. The stepwise selection process begins with a regression model that includes all variables. Then, the variables with the least significant p-values are systematically removed or reintroduced one at a time until the model with the lowest Akaike Information Criterion (AIC) value is identified (Heinze, Wallisch, & Dunkler, 2018). The AIC measures how well a regression model explains the data, with the best-fitting model having the lowest AIC value (Burnham & Anderson, 2002).

Placement Outcomes

We analyzed permanent placement, final placement in a family-like setting, and reunification in two ways: 1) Was the outcome met within one year of case start? 2) Was the outcome met at the end of the case, regardless of case length? We used logistic regression to evaluate for differences in the odds of outcomes pre- and post-implementation of the bench card. Odds ratios are derived by exponentiating the estimates of a logistic regression model, where an odds ratio greater than one indicates increased odds, and an odds ratio less than one indicates decreased odds (Hosmer, Lemeshow, & Sturdivant, 2013). Odds ratios can also be interpreted using percentages; for example, an odds ratio of 1.25 represents a 25% increase in the odds of an outcome, and an odds ratio of 0.75 represents a 25% decrease in the odds of an outcome. In addition, the final variable selection for each outcome model was determined via stepwise selection to determine the best-fitting model.

Most out-of-home cases ended with permanent placement. Therefore, we used exact logistic regression to evaluate permanent placement with 20,000 Monte Carlo simulations to account

for the sparse distribution of cases that did not reach permanent placement. Exact logistic regression is useful in evaluating small or unbalanced binary data (Mehta & Patel, 1995), and simulations are useful when data cannot be analyzed using standard analytical methods (Harrison 2010). In addition, each placement outcome was evaluated using survival analysis or time-to-event analysis. Survival analysis plots are useful in analyzing patterns and visualizing the differences in meeting an outcome within one year of case start and meeting the outcome regardless of case length (Rai, Mishra, and Ghoshal, 2021).

Length of the Case

The length of the case was evaluated using linear regression. The length of the case was defined as the number of days between case start and case end. The final variable selection for the outcome model was determined via stepwise selection to determine the best-fitting model.

Findings

Bench Card Fidelity

Engagement Strategies

We evaluated bench card engagement strategies descriptively, and we calculated the percentage of hearings observed for each strategy using a benchmark greater than 75% as an indicator of a strategy used consistently, with a benchmark of less than 25% for the reverse-coded strategy.

Mid-point Assessment

At the mid-point assessment, three strategies ("provide an opportunity to be heard," "speak directly to the person," and "heard through an attorney only") reached the benchmark of 75% for consistency for mothers, fathers, and children (see Figures 1, 2, & 3). One other strategy, "address by name," exceeded the benchmark for mothers only. The strategy "identifying next steps" reached a moderate usage of 66.7% for mothers and fathers but less for children at 33.3%.

The remaining strategies were used inconsistently at less than 25% of the time for mothers, fathers, and children, including if the judge asked if the person understood the next steps, clearly explained the purpose of the hearing, asked if the person had any questions, and asked what had gone well since the last hearing. The least utilized strategy was if the judge asked, "What has gone well since the last hearing?" which was used less than 5% of the time for mothers, fathers, and children. These results suggest that items related to speaking directly to

the person and using their name were easily adopted by judges compared to strategies related to ensuring family understanding and focusing on what was going well.

Final Assessment

After initial fidelity feedback, three strategies ("provide an opportunity to be heard," "speak directly to the person," and "Address the person by name") reached the 75% benchmark for mothers and fathers (see Figures 1, 2, and 3). A fourth strategy reached the benchmark for fathers only: "Identify next steps to the person." No strategies reached the benchmark for children in the final assessment. Overall, these findings indicate that the final assessment for fidelity was not markedly improved from the midpoint assessment for judge use of engagement strategies aside from some improvement for use of strategies with fathers for several items. There was a slight negative trend for "clearly explaining the purpose of the hearing" and in the number of individuals being heard through their attorney only. However, it should be noted that due to small sample sizes, a small change in numbers can greatly impact the percentage, so results should be interpreted cautiously.

Figure 1. Fidelity Assessment: Use of Engagement Strategies with Mothers
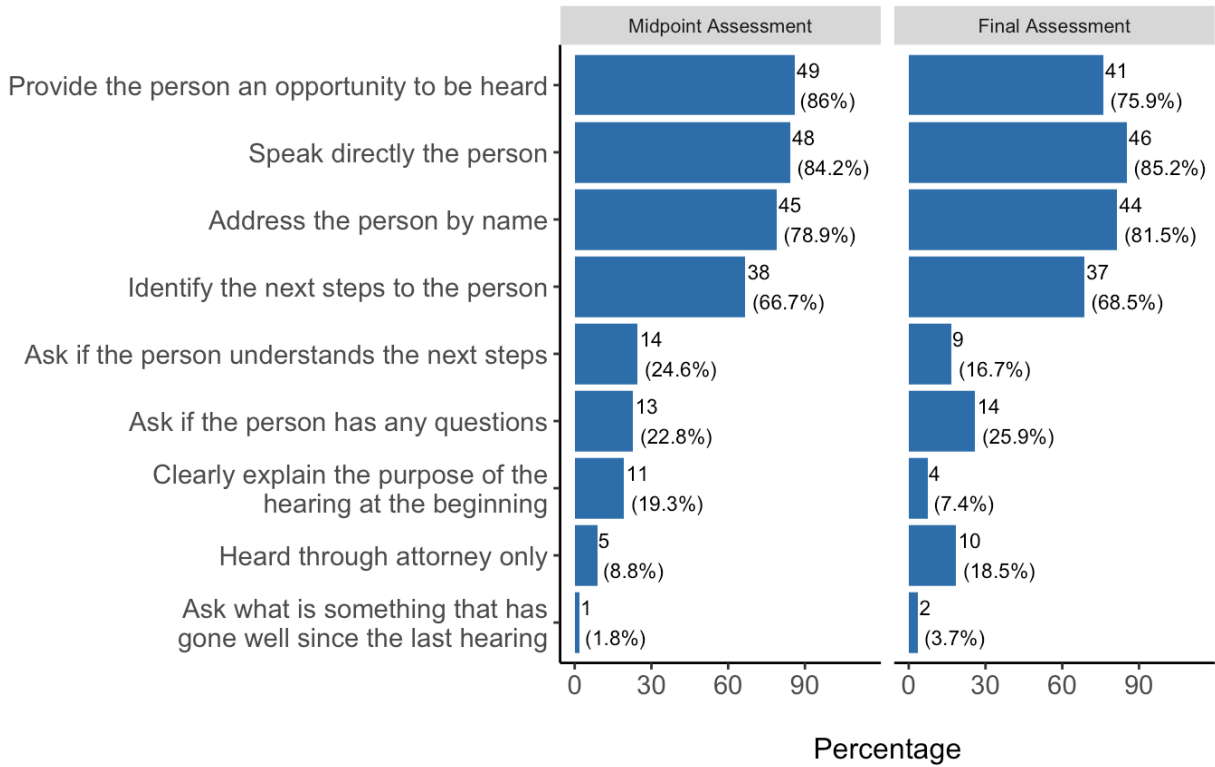
Figure 2. Fidelity Assessment: Use of Engagement Strategies with Fathers
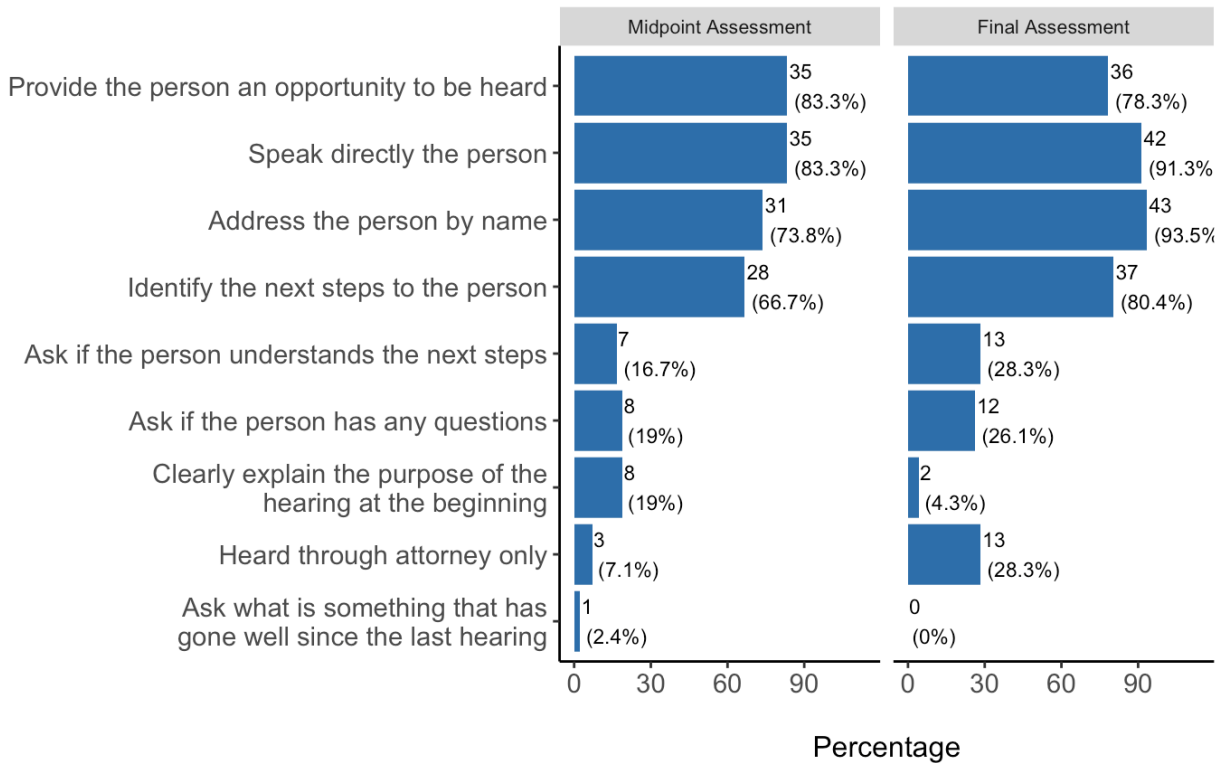
Figure 3. Fidelity Assessment: Use of Engagement Strategies with Children
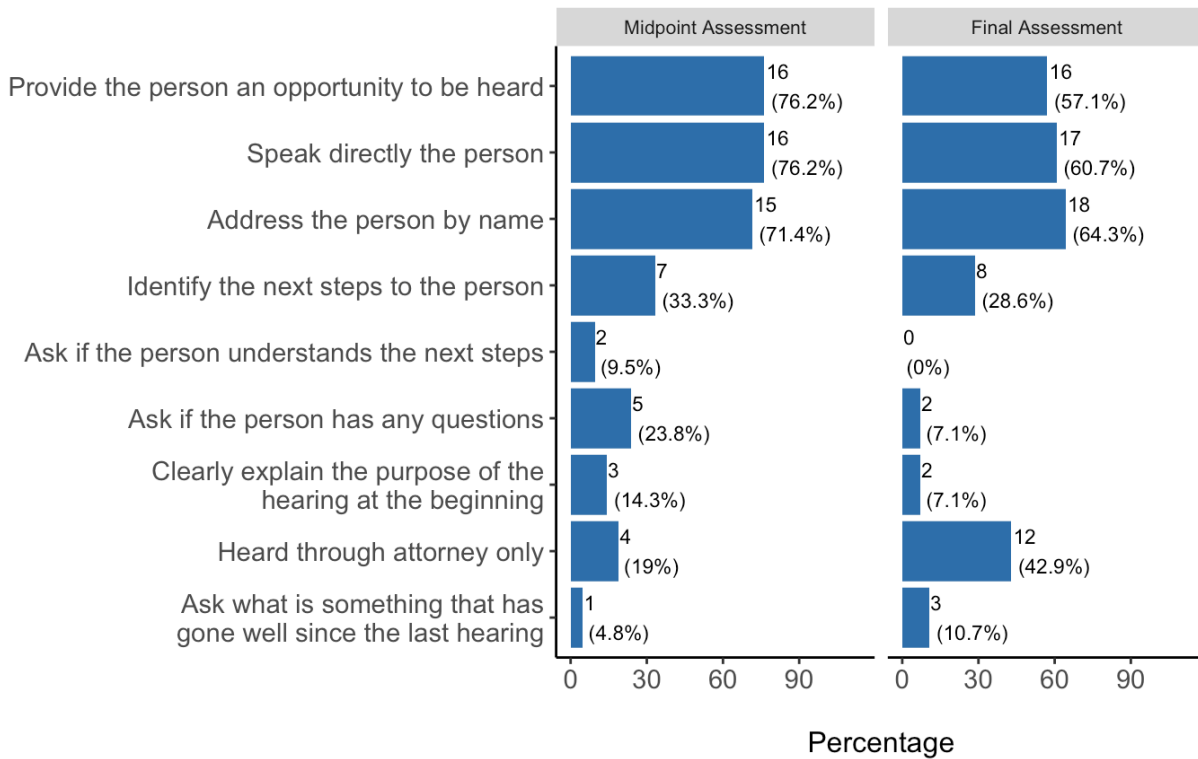
*Note: Heard through attorney only is reverse-coded

Judicial Inquiry

We evaluated judicial inquiry on bench card topic items descriptively based on the percentage of hearings where a judge actively made a direct inquiry related to the topic or made a statement inviting active discussion for items marked as applicable to the hearing. For a measure of fidelity, we calculated the percentage of hearings with judicial inquiry observed for each item using a benchmark greater than 75% as an indicator of an item being used consistently. We considered item applicability in the analysis.

Midpoint Assessment

At the midpoint assessment, the topics with the most active judicial inquiry were first, identifying next steps at 89.3%; second, permanency goal efforts at 64.9%; and third, the child's placement at 36.5%. All other items were led by judicial inquiry in 32% or less of the hearings reviewed (see Figure 4). The lowest three items were efforts to maintain connections (6.2%) and discussion of the concurrent goal appropriateness and efforts (9.5% each). Low discussion of these items could indicate that these items were not as often prioritized for discussion as other items or were not consistently viewed as relevant to the hearing.

Final Assessment

At the final assessment of fidelity, for the 75 hearing reviews conducted after providing feedback from the midpoint assessment, we had mixed findings. We saw increases in judicial inquiry for six items, including identifying next steps (96%), permanency goal (72%), child's placement (37.8%), child's other well-being (36%), parent-child visitation (35.9%), and child's education (25%). We saw decreases in the remaining seven items related to addressing safety issues (21.5%) and barriers (10.8%), efforts to place with kin (13.2%), concurrent goal progress (8.8%) and appropriateness (5.9%), sibling visitation (0%), and maintaining connections (2.8%). See Figure 4 for details on fidelity for all topic items. Similar to the midpoint assessment, only one item exceeded the 75% benchmark, identifying the next steps, though permanency goal efforts reached a close 72%.

Figure 4. Fidelity Assessment: Judicial Inquiry
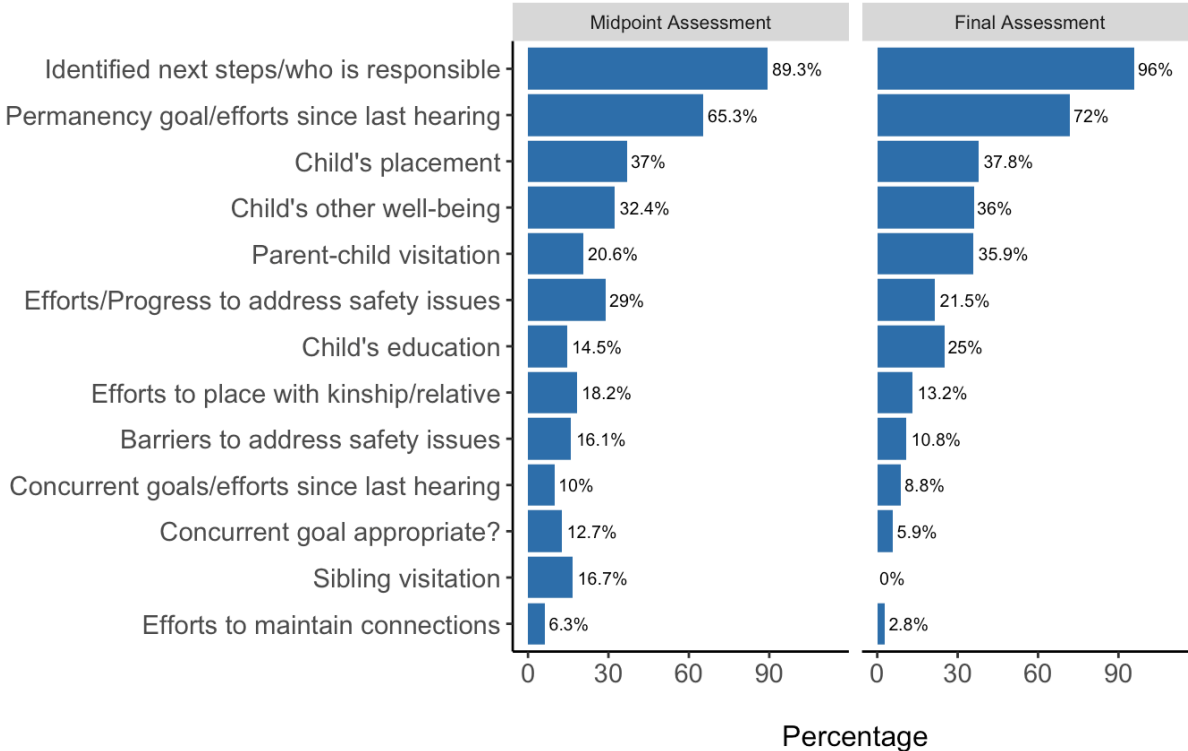
Hearing Discussion

Hearing discussion fidelity was analyzed descriptively. We considered items with an average discussion below one as a low level of discussion, item averages between 1-2 as a moderate level, and above two as a good level of discussion on average.

Midpoint Assessment

The results for hearing discussion quality largely mirrored the findings from judicial inquiry, where items with higher judicial inquiry tended to have higher average discussion scores and vice versa. The findings of the average hearing discussion score are found in Figure 5. The top three discussion items with the highest level of discussion were identifying the next steps (2.35), permanency goal efforts (2.24), and the child's placement (1.57). The three discussion items with the lowest level of discussion were concurrent goal appropriateness (.39), efforts to maintain connections (.37), and sibling visitation (.27). The remaining items had average discussion scores between .47 and 1.29. Only two items had an average score above two, and seven items had an average score below one (including items related to concurrent goals, maintaining connections, safety, and placement with kin), indicating there is room for improvement in the quality of courtroom discussion of many of the topics and items.

Final Assessment

The findings of the final assessment were similar to the midpoint assessment in which items stood out as having a good, moderate, or low level of discussion across hearings (see Figure 5). Six items showed an increase in average scores in the final assessment, and seven items showed a decrease. Items that increased included items that already had a moderate to good level of discussion, including identifying next steps (2.68), permanency goal (2.53), child's placement (1.92), child's other well-being (1.71), parent-child visitation (1.64), and child's education (.96). The items that decreased included addressing safety issues (.83) and barriers (.35), efforts to place with kin (.55), concurrent goal progress (.6) and appropriateness (.24), sibling visitation (.1), and maintaining connections (.18). These findings mirrored the increases and decreases observed in the judicial inquiry final assessment (see Figure 4).

Figure 5. Fidelity Assessment: Level of Discussion
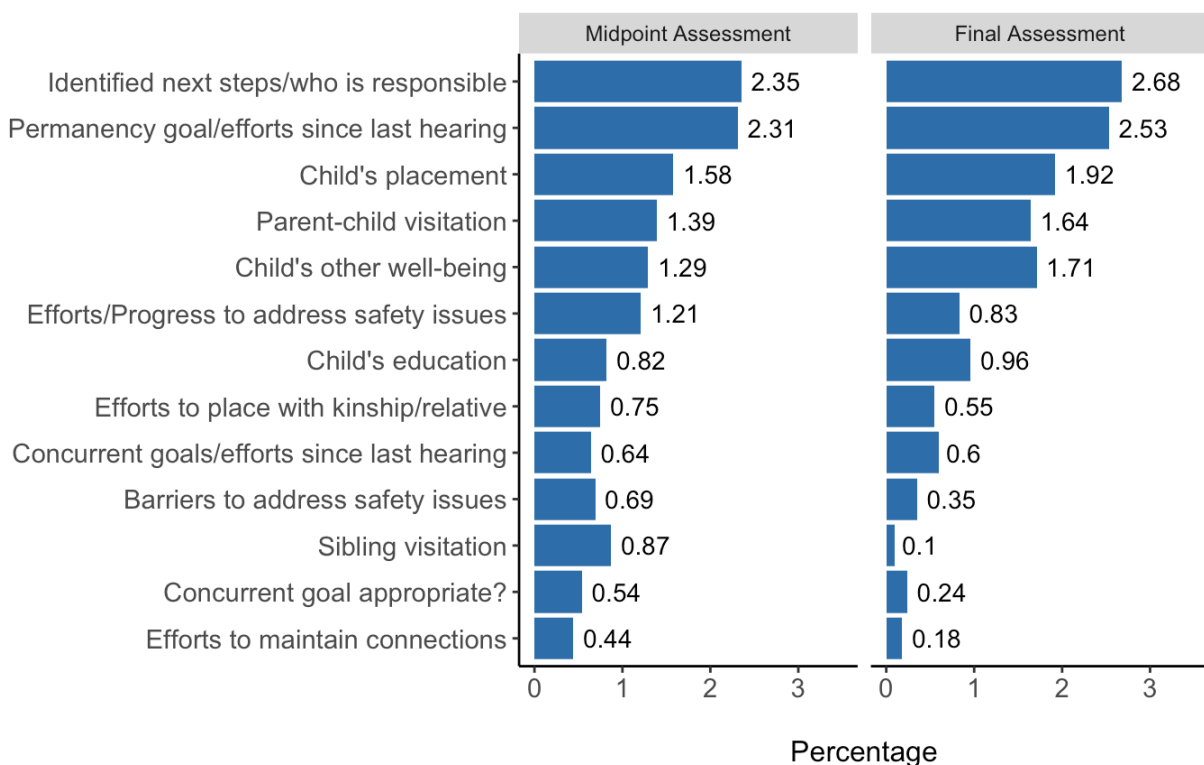
Survey Analysis

Quantitative Analysis

We descriptively evaluated youth and adult survey responses to closed-ended, yes/no, and multiple-choice questions. However, because the youth and adult surveys differed in types of questions, the results from one cannot be compared to the other. Therefore, quantitative findings for the youth survey are presented first, followed by adult survey findings. For a complete list of questions asked for each survey type, see Appendix C for youth survey questions and Appendix D for adult survey questions.

Youth Survey

The youth survey had 43 respondents with an average age of 15. The minimum age of respondents was 12, and the maximum age was 20. When asked to think of their most recent court experience, 86% of respondents reported attending court in person, and 21.4% identified it as their first time attending court.

Youth were asked three simple yes or no questions to measure their perceived engagement to account for their young age and varied reading levels. The majority of youth respondents

reported being engaged during the hearing. 86% of respondents indicated the judge explained what the court hearing was about, 90.7% indicated the judge asked how they were doing, and 95.3% indicated they spoke during the hearing (see Figure 6).

Figure 6. Youth Survey Perceived Engagement

Youth Survey
n = 43

Yes ▪ No ▪

- Did the judge explain what court was about?
  - Yes: 86%
  - No: 14%
- Did the judge ask how you are doing?
  - Yes: 90.7%
  - No: 9.3%
- Did you get to talk?
  - Yes: 95.3%
  - No: 4.7%

Percentage (0, 20, 40, 60, 80, 100)
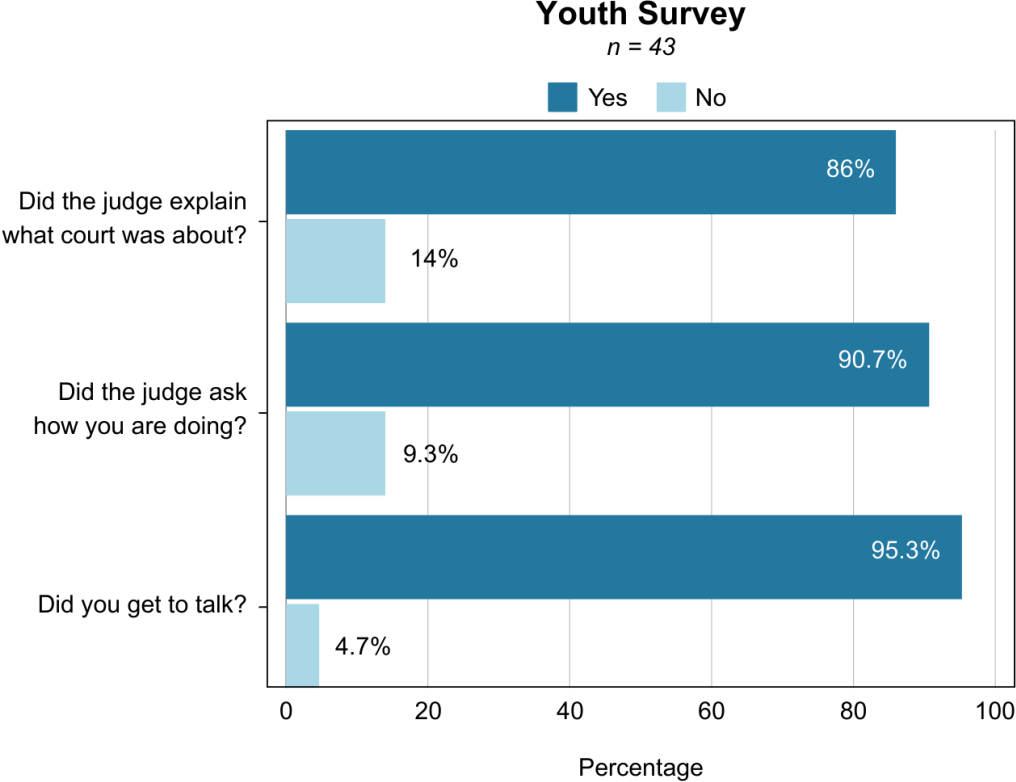
The youth's opinion about their most recent court hearing was evaluated descriptively. Again, to account for age and varied reading levels, a single Likert question utilizing emoticons that matched answer choices was used to measure how youth viewed their most recent court hearing (Figure 7). Overall, 81.4% of respondents felt their most recent hearing was positive (either good or very good), 16.3% felt it was neutral (neither bad or good), and 2.3% felt it was negative (very bad). Interestingly, no respondents reported that their most recent hearing was "bad" (Figure 8).

Figure 7. Youth Survey Question Measuring Opinion About Court

How was court?

Very Bad   Bad   Neither Bad or Good   Good   Very Good

Figure 8. Youth's Opinion About Court

Opinion	Percentage
Very Good	30.2%
Good	51.2%
Neither Bad or Good	16.3%
Bad	0%
Very Bad	2.3%
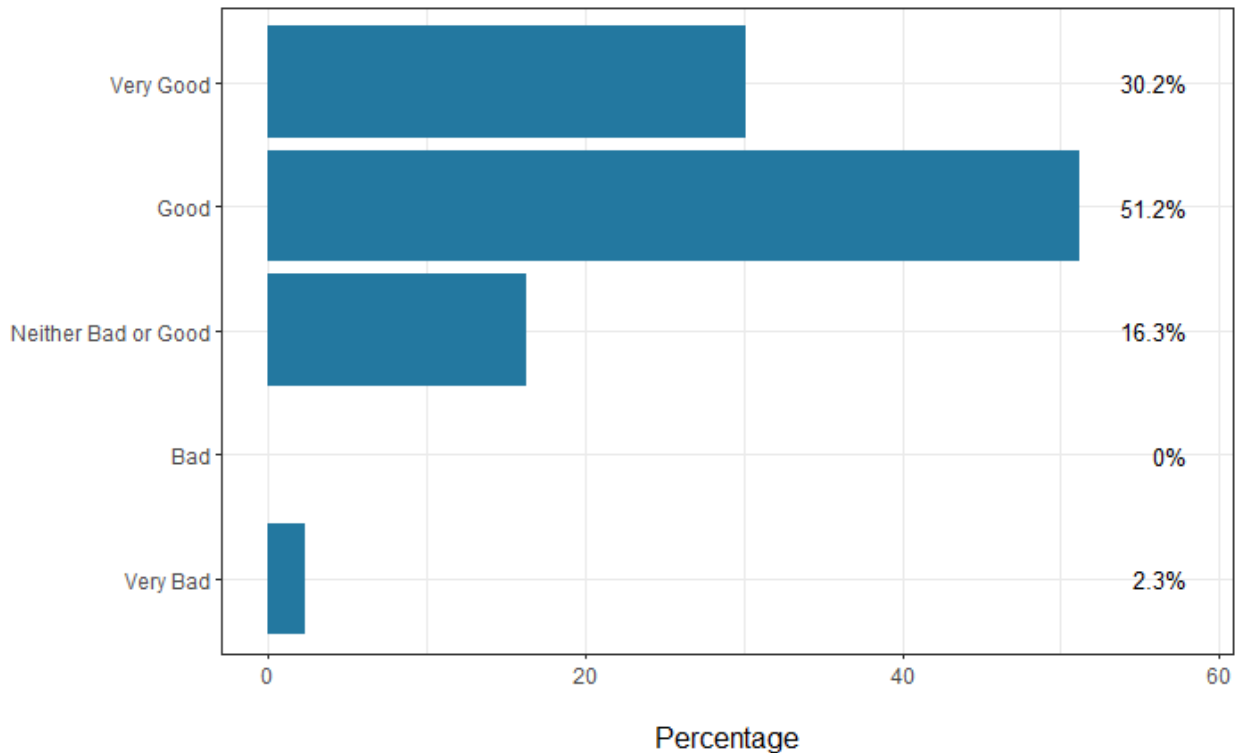
Adult Survey

In total, the adult survey had 62 respondents. When asked to think of their most recent court experience, 54.1% of respondents reported attending court in person, with the remaining 45.9% attending virtually. The majority of respondents (64.5%) identified as the mother, 33.9% as the father, and 1.6% as a guardian (Figure 9). Respondents reported twenty-one unique judges overseeing their most recent hearing, with Judges Nielsen (20.7%), Sipes (13.8%), and Bartholomew (13.8%) listed as respondents' judges most often (Figure 10).

Figure 9. Adult Survey Respondents' Role in Case
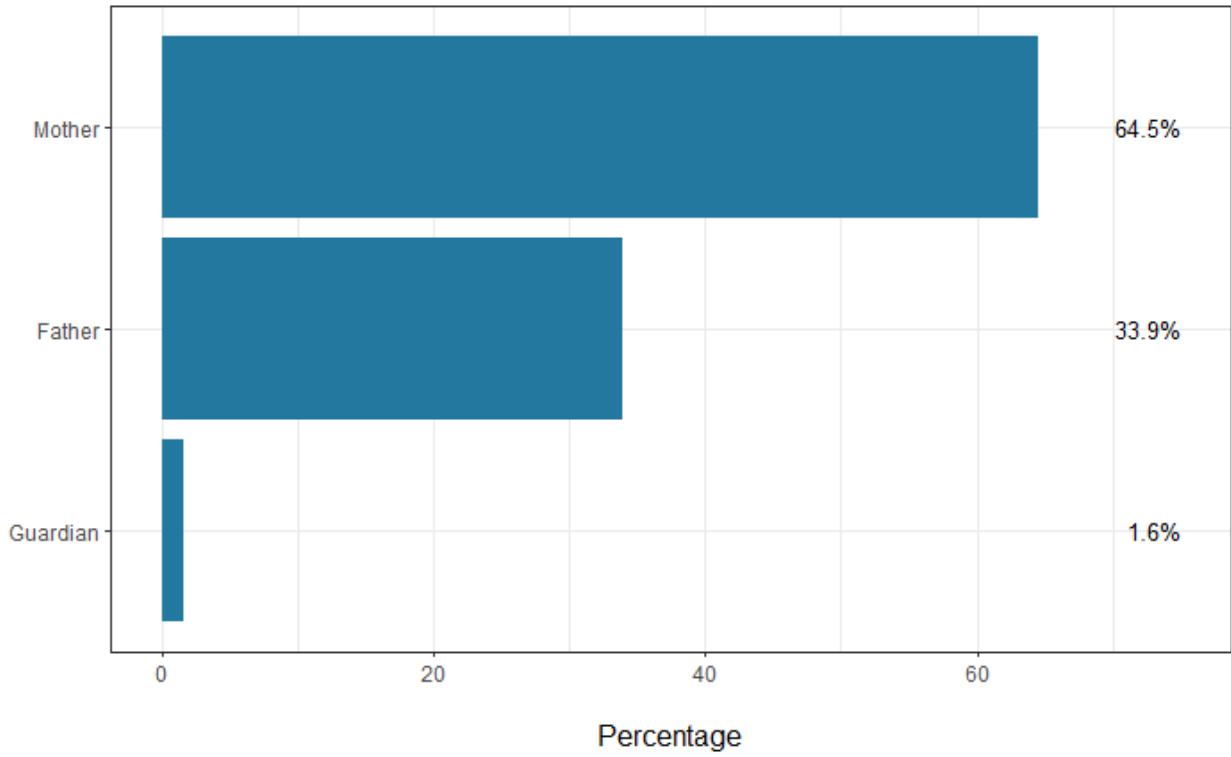
Figure 10. Adult Survey Respondents' Judge
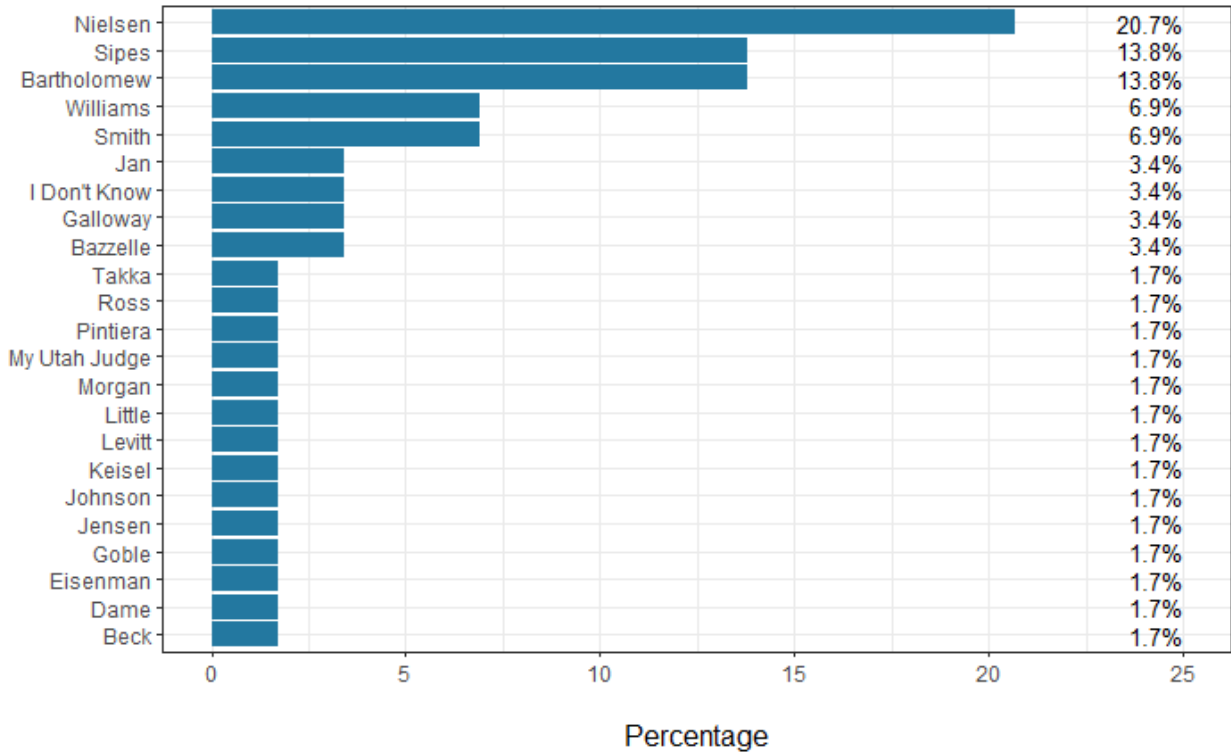
*Judges names listed were provided by survey respondents without correction

Adult respondents were asked two sets of 5-point Likert scale questions to measure their level of agreement about what occurred during their most recent court hearing. The first set of Likert questions measured a respondent's perception of engagement strategies used by their judge. Judges' use of engagement strategies, as reported by adults, varied. 81% of adult respondents agreed (either agree or strongly agree) that their judge spoke directly to them, 72% agreed their judge treated them with respect, 63% agreed their judge listened to them, and 61% agreed their judge explained the reason for the decision. While only 56% of respondents agreed they were given the opportunity to ask questions, 54% agreed they had a chance to say everything they wanted, and 52% agreed they had input on the decision for their case. Respondents' level of agreement with each statement about engagement strategies is shown in Figure 11.

Figure 11. Adult Survey Respondents' Level of Agreement - Engagement Strategies Used
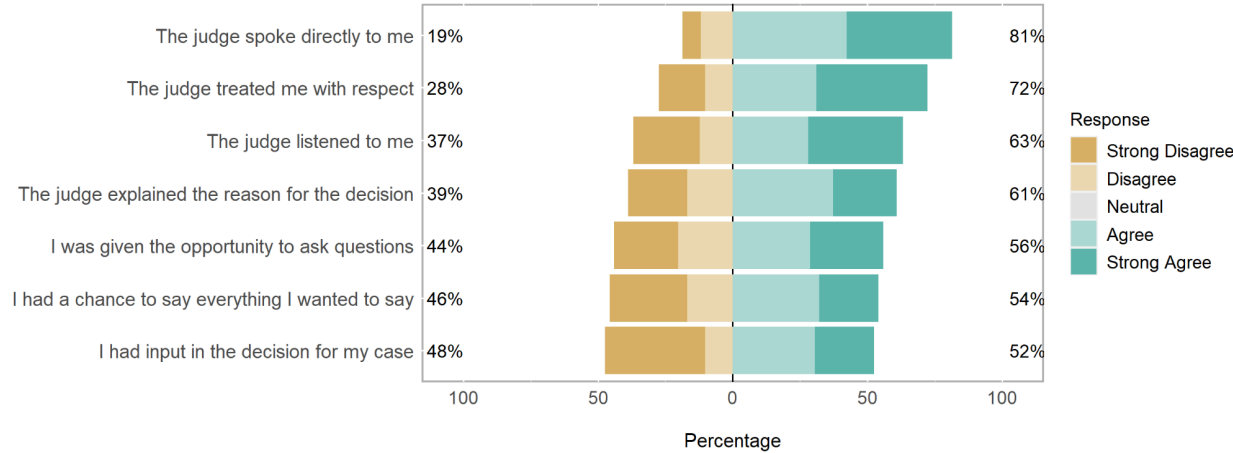
The second set of Likert questions measured respondents' level of agreement with statements about key hearing outcomes. Adult respondents' level of agreement varied by statement. The statements with the highest level of agreement were "I understand what happened in court"- 68% of respondents agreed (either selected agree or strongly agree), and "I understand what the permanency goal for my child(ren) is"- 66% agreed. Statements with moderate levels of agreement included, "I understand what I'm supposed to do next"- 62% of respondents agreed, and "I understand what needs to happen before my children return home"- 61% agreed. The statements with the lowest level of agreement were, "I understand what the concurrent goal for my child(ren) is"- only 57% of respondents agreed, and "the court hearing discussed challenges and solutions"- 52% agreed. Respondents' level of agreement with each statement about hearing outcomes is shown in Figure 12.

Figure 12. Adult Survey Respondents' Level of Agreement - Hearing Outcomes
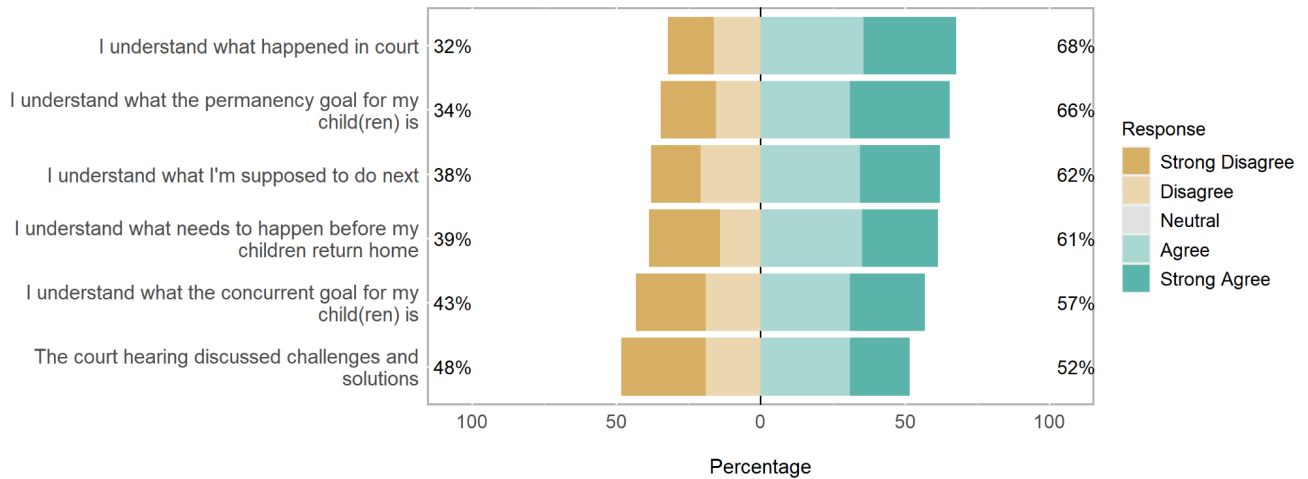
Respondents' perceptions of topics discussed during their most recent hearing are shown in Figure 13. According to respondents, the topics discussed in hearings vary, but without knowing the details of each case, we cannot conclude if these topics should have been discussed in every hearing. The topics respondents reported as most discussed, or had the highest percentage of respondents selecting yes, were permanency goals (56%), how my child is doing (55%), and visitation (53%). The topics respondents reported as least discussed, or had the highest percentage of respondents selecting no, were the possibility of the child staying in a relative home (64%), the possibility of the child visiting with relatives (62%), and safety issues (58%). Interestingly, compared to all other topics, the topic of concurrent goal had the highest number of respondents (16%) selecting "I don't know." when asked if it was discussed, suggesting respondents may have been unsure what this question was asking or what a concurrent goal is. Conversely, the topic of visitation had the lowest number of respondents (4%) selecting "I don't know".

Figure 13. Adult Survey Respondents' Perception of Topics Discussed
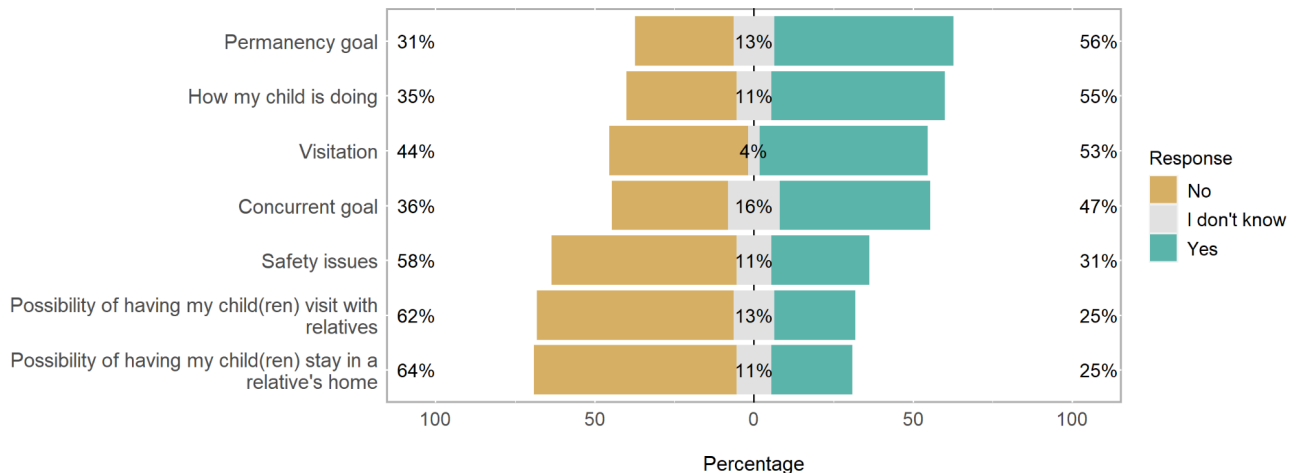
Adult respondents were asked two yes or no questions to measure their engagement. The majority of respondents reported being engaged during the hearing. 72.4% of respondents indicated they spoke during court, and 93.1% reported they would attend their next hearing (Figure 14).

Figure 14. Adult Survey Reported Engagement
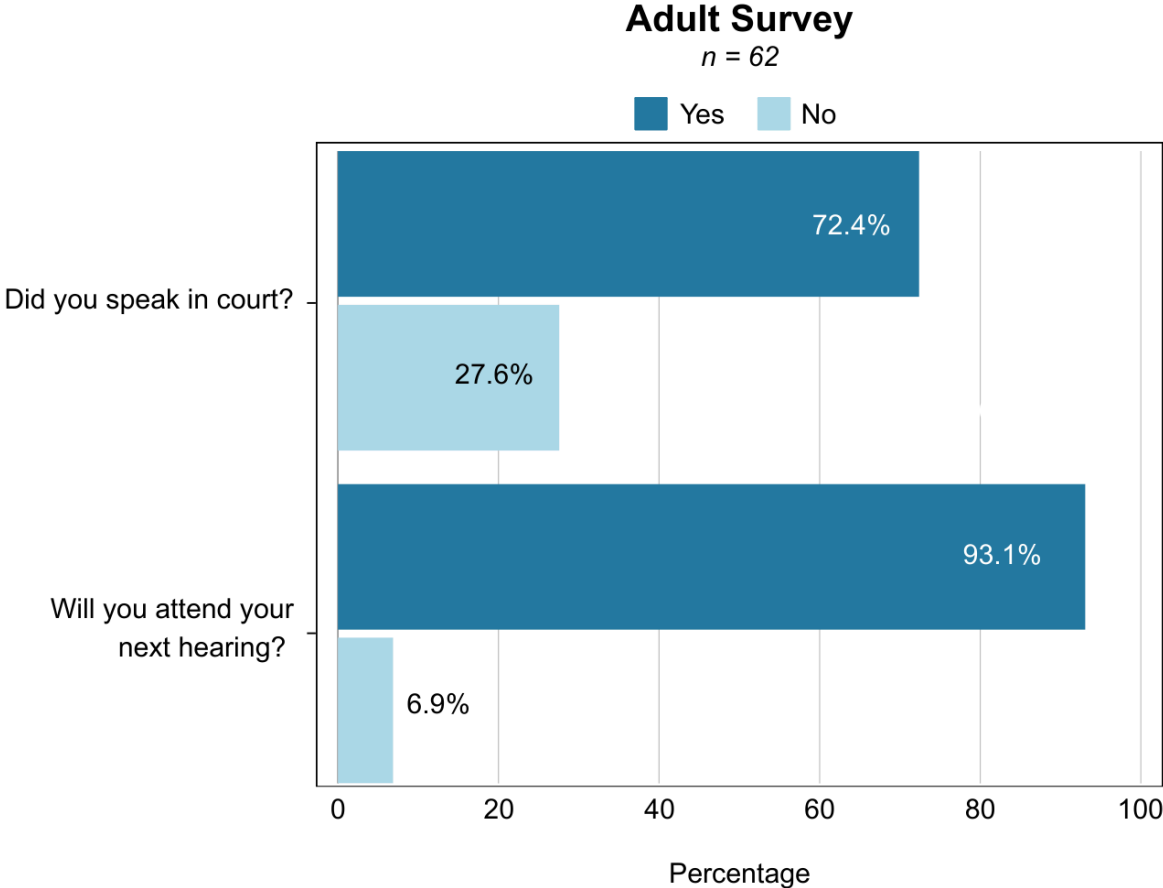
Adult Survey
n = 62

Qualitative Analysis

The youth and adults were each asked the same two open-ended questions in their corresponding surveys. While they were asked the same questions, their responses greatly differed. For the first question, "What else would you like to tell us about the last time you were in court?" the tone of youth responses ranged from 30.2% positive, 9.3% mixed, and 60.5% inconclusive (Table 5). Meanwhile, the tone of adult responses to the same question was 11.9% positive, 38.71% negative, and 50% inconclusive (Table 6). While the majority of responses from youth and adults were inconclusive, the youth who chose to provide feedback had more positive responses, and the adults who chose to provide feedback had more negative

responses. This implies that youth have a neutral or positive court experience, while fewer adults have a positive experience, and some adults have a negative experience.

Table 5. Youth Survey - Experience Themes

Youth Court Experience Themes (n=43) *What else would you like to tell us about the last time you were in court?*					
Inconclusive (60.5%)	**26**	**Positive (30.2%)**	**13**	**Mixed (9.3%)**	**4**
Wrote "nothing"	10	About Judge	4	Neutral Adjective (i.e., fine or ok)	2
No response	9	Positive adjective	6	Hard but worthwhile	2
Wrote, "I don't know."	3	Engagement	2		
Another statement not relevant to the question	4	Outcome specific	1		

For the second question, eleven adult respondents included further information about their experience in court and were coded using the same themes/subthemes as the first question. These supplemental responses were considered in the count of responses aligning with each negative sub-theme, as demonstrated in Table 6.

Table 6. Adult Survey - Experience Themes

Adult Court Experience Themes (n=62) *What else would you like to tell us about the last time you were in court?*							
Inconclusive (50%)		**Positive (11.29%)**		**Negative (38.71%)**			
					Q1	**Q2**	**Total**
No response	26	About Judge	5	Inadequate handling	17	1	18
Wrote "nothing" or "NA"	2	Positive adjective	2	"Broken system"	10	2	12
Another irrelevant statement	3			Engagement Concerns	6	2	8
				Biased	11	2	13

Adult Court Experience Themes (n=62) *What else would you like to tell us about the last time you were in court?*							
Inconclusive (50%)		Positive (11.29%)		Negative (38.71%)			
					Q1	Q2	Total
				Harmful	7	3	10
				Other	1	0	1

To better understand the frequency and detail provided in these negative experience responses, the descriptions for each sub-theme are included in Table 7 below:

Table 7. Adult Survey Negative Experience Sub-Themes

Negative Experience Sub-Themes Explained	
Label	**Description**
Inadequate handling	Eighteen respondents mentioned concerns about how their case was handled. Such as inadequate investigation, inadequate caseworker or legal representation, lack of due diligence by courts, unavailability of or inability to access quality services, and inefficient/slow processes.
Broken System	Twelve respondents described a lack of trust in the child welfare system. Such as accusations of lying or twisting words by the courts, DCFS, or others, feeling like the system failed them or their kids, and accusations of the system being corrupt, bad, or lacking accountability.
Engagement concerns	Eight respondents mentioned concerns that are directly related to the engagement section of the bench card. Such as feeling unheard, not being involved as much as they would like, not being asked enough questions, and feeling confused/unsure of what is going on.
Biased	Thirteen respondents described bias or uneven consideration of perspective. Such as courts or the system taking someone else's side over their own, feeling disrespected, disregarded, or judged, and feeling how they were perceived or labeled impacted their outcome.
Harmful	Ten respondents mentioned their child welfare involvement caused harm. Such as causing trauma, a trauma-informed approach was not used, or that court decisions caused their child harm.
Other	One respondent mentioned other concerns that were not applicable to other sub-themes.

Similarly, responses to question 2, about what could make court better, greatly varied between youth and adults. 18.6% of youth responses indicated no change was needed, 23.3% offered

ideas about how to improve court, and 58.1% were inconclusive (Table 8). Meanwhile, 0% of adult responses indicated no change was needed, 45.2% offered ideas about how to improve courts, and 54.8% were inconclusive (Table 9).

Table 8. Youth Survey - Improvement Themes

Youth Improvement Themes (n=43) *What could make court better?*						
Inconclusive (58.1%)	**25**	**No Change Needed (18.6%)**	**8**	**Recommendations (23.3%)**	**10**
Wrote "nothing" or "N/A"	13	Nothing, because it is good	4	Environmental	6
No response	9	Positive adjective	4	Procedural	2
Wrote, "I don't know."	3			Beyond courts control	2

Table 9. Adult Survey - Improvement Themes

Adult Improvement Themes (n=62) *What could make court better?*						
Inconclusive (54.8%)	**34**	**No Change Needed (0%)**	**0**	**Recommendations (45.2%)**	**28**
No response	27			Improve engagement	11
Wrote "nothing or "NA."	5			Improve investigation	10
A statement not relevant to the question	3			Improve case management	6
				Fix system	8
				Improve impartiality	11
				Improve sensitivity	4
				Other	3

Additionally, the types of recommendations offered between youth and adults had stark differences. Recommendations made by youth largely focused on improving the environment of the court by making it less stressful (Table 10). Meanwhile, recommendations made by adults were less specific to court (often mentioning caseworkers, guardian ad litem, foster families, etc.) and provided ideas that could improve the broader child welfare system. Adult recommendation sub-themes mentioned by most respondents were "improve engagement," "improve impartiality," and "improve investigation." See Table 11 for a more detailed description of each adult recommendation sub-theme and the number of unique respondents who mentioned it.

Table 10. Youth Survey - Recommendation Sub-themes

Youth Recommendations Sub-themes Direct Quotes		
Environmental (6)	Procedural (2)	Beyond Courts Control (2)
● "Make it a less stressful environment." ● "Fun" ● "In person" ● "Food" ● "Coloring books" ● "Some color in the room."	● "Getting a chance to be more private with them and not have everyone in there." ● "If there was more forwarding good news."	● "Both parents present." ● "I didn't have it."

Table 11. Adult Survey - Recommendation Sub-themes

Adult Recommendation Sub-Themes Explained	
Label	Description
Improve Engagement (11)	Recommendations that are directly related to the engagement section of the bench card and could improve hearing engagement. Such as acknowledging parents' progress, explaining the next steps, ensuring the next steps are understood by all parties, providing an opportunity to be heard for anyone attending the hearing, and speaking in terms parents can understand.
Improve Investigation (10)	Recommendations that could improve investigations done by DCFS and/or courts. Such as taking more time to explore information, exploring the truth of claims made by all parties, requiring evidence for allegations/accusations, considering parents separately, not allowing one party to dominate the discussion, and providing an opportunity to respond to what the opposition has stated.
Improve Case Management (6)	Recommendations that could improve case management or how hearing is managed. Such as improved communication between all parties, more timely communication, consideration of children's concerns and desires, and attempts to resolve issues outside of court.

Adult Recommendation Sub-Themes Explained	
Label	**Description**
Fix System (8)	Recommendations that could improve trust in the child welfare system. Such as having judges that are more representative of the families served, considering and preventing conflicts of interest judges might have, having a standard of "innocent until proven guilty," acknowledging flaws of the system and not punishing parents for them, and improving the quality of representation available to parents.
Improve Impartiality (11)	Recommendations that could improve impartiality. Such as having an unbiased view of families, not making assumptions about individuals (based on race, ethnicity, education, income, etc.), weighing equally all parties' statements, being open-minded, and holding the division to the same standards as parents (especially around timely completion of orders).
Improve Sensitivity (4)	Recommendations that could improve sensitivity. Such as incorporating trauma-informed practices, being understanding of and making reasonable accommodations for trauma history, not violating or altering protective orders, having divorced parents in separate rooms, and acknowledging and minimizing the trauma that comes from child welfare involvement.
Other (3)	Concerns specific to respondent and not applicable to other sub-themes.

Adults and youth report different experiences in court. However, they seem to agree that improving engagement strategies listed on the bench card, such as 1) discussing what has gone well since the last hearing, 2) asking if a person has input or questions, 3) asking if the person understands the next steps, and 4) clearly explain the purpose of the hearing, would improve court.

Hearing Quality Analysis Results

We analyzed individual strategies and topic items from the hearing observation tool for change from pre- to post-implementation using logistic and linear regression techniques. These included engagement strategies for mothers, fathers, and children, judicial inquiry, and level of discussion. Out of a potential 53 items modeled, eight were not run due to sample size limitations for the outcomes. We interpret the items with small outcome occurrences as showing no detectable change pre- to post. Full result tables for the hearing quality analysis are found in Appendix E.

Parent Attendance

Pre-implementation of the bench card, mothers were present in 80.1% of reviewed hearings (n = 121), and in the post-period, they were present 72.7% of the time (n = 109; see Figure 15).

Fathers were present in pre-implementation hearings 51% of the time and 59.3% of the time post-implementation (n = 89). Children were present in 25.2% of the hearings in the pre-implementation period (n = 38) and 31.3% of the hearings in the post-period (n = 47). One significant difference was found in hearing type on child attendance, with children more likely to be at attendance in review hearings (see Table E1 in Appendix E). No other significant differences were found by region or hearing type related to attendance.

Figure 15. Family Attendance Pre to Post-Change
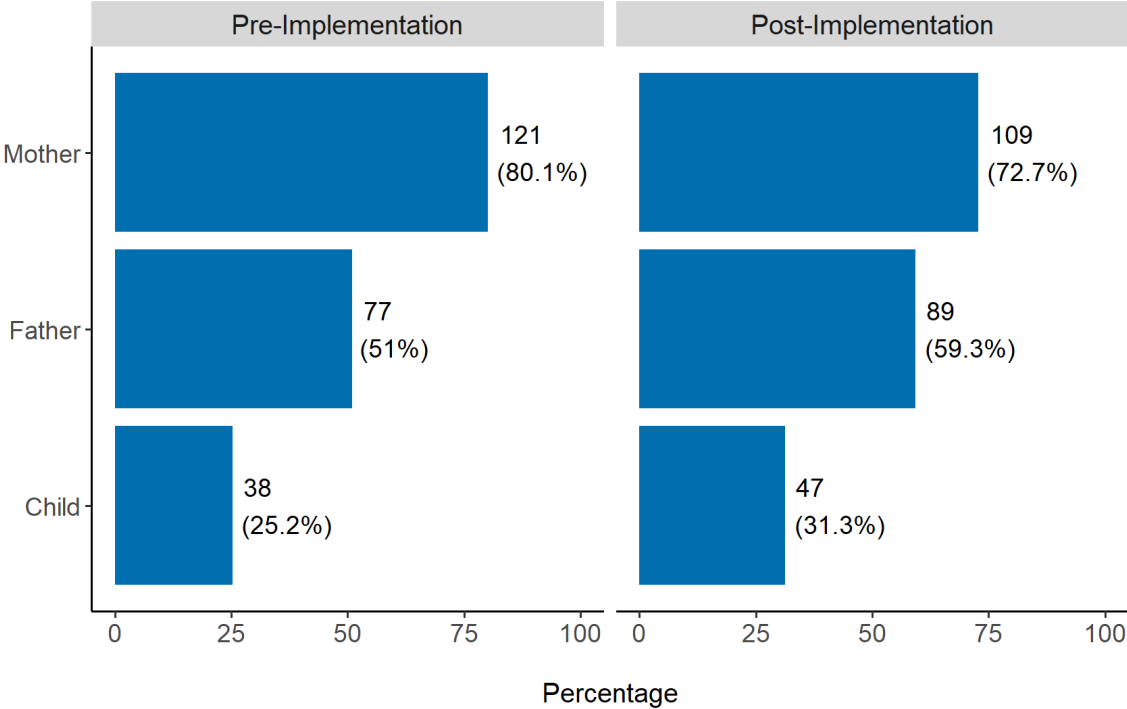
Engagement Strategies

The results of the logistic regression models evaluating engagement strategies pre- to post were mixed. For mothers, four items significantly improved from the pre to the post periods, including "address the person by name," "identify next steps to the person," "ask if the person has any questions," and "ask if the person understands the next steps" (see Figure 16). The other five strategies showed no statistically meaningful differences in the post-period. These results indicate that bench card implementation improved the use of some strategies but not others for mother engagement.

For the use of engagement strategies with fathers, three strategies, "identify the next steps to the person," "ask if the person has any questions," and "ask if the person understands the next steps," showed statistically meaningful improvement in the post period, while the remaining

strategies showed no difference from the pre to the post period (see Figure 17). These results indicate that the implementation of the bench card improved the use of some strategies but not others for father engagement.

The use of engagement strategies for children showed no differences for any strategy from the pre- to the post-period (see Figure 18). The results for children do not support the idea that bench card implementation improved the use of engagement strategies; however, a smaller sample size for children may have also contributed to decreased statistical power to detect meaningful pre- to post-differences, particularly for lesser-used strategies. In some cases, there was too small of a sample size for the strategy to run models, which was the case for one strategy with mothers, one strategy with fathers, and four strategies for children, so we were unable to detect a change from pre to post for those models. One other reason we may not see significant improvement from the pre- to the post is if the utilization of the strategy was high in the pre-implementation period, which means there is less room for improvement in the post-period.

Figure 16. Use of Engagement Strategies with Mothers
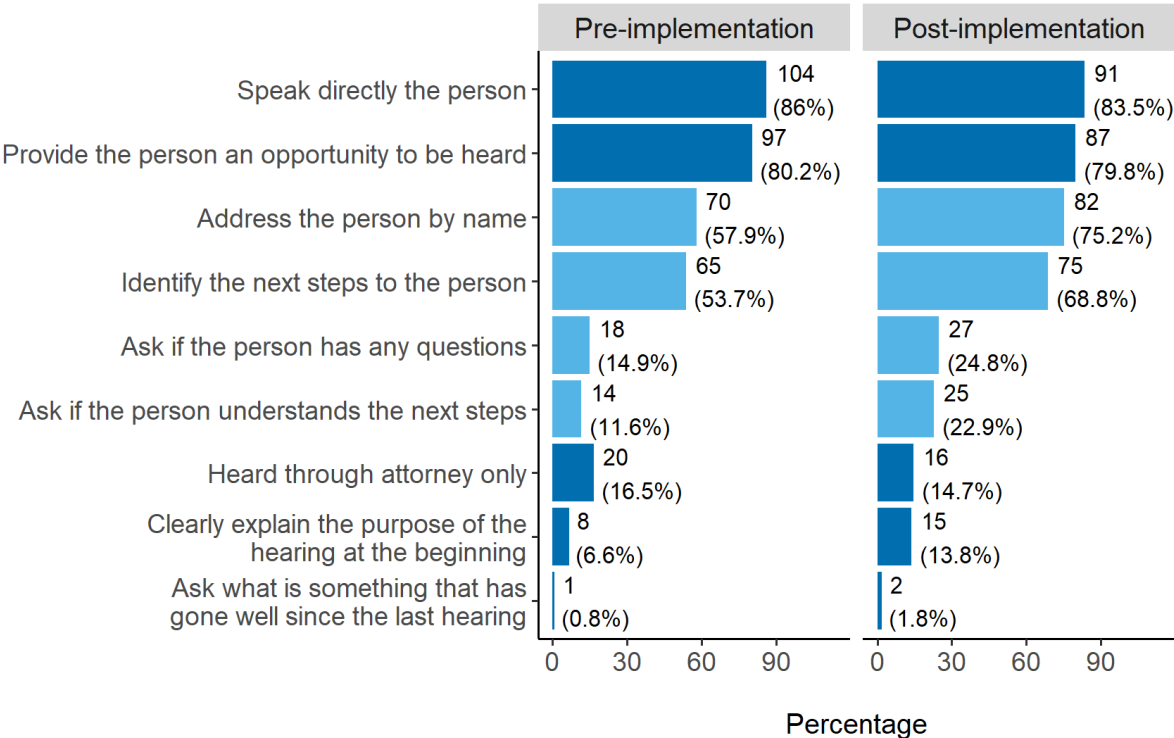
Note: Light blue indicates a significant change from pre- to post

Figure 17. Use of Engagement Strategies with Fathers
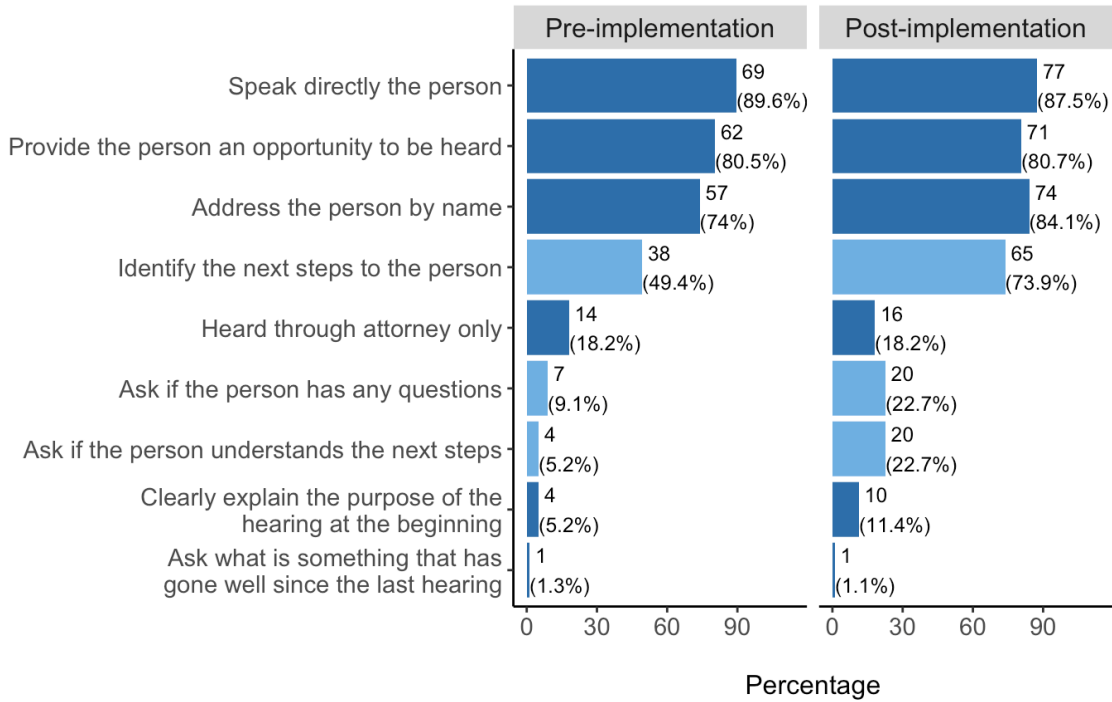
Note: Light blue indicates a significant change from pre- to post

Figure 18. Use of Engagement Strategies with Children
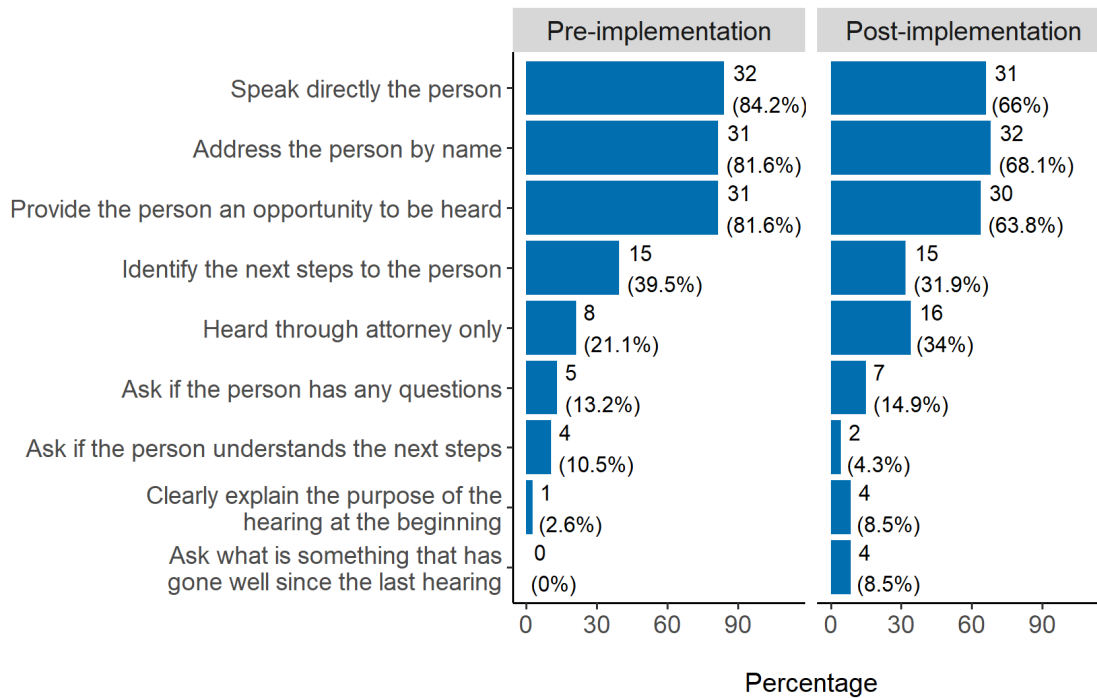
The model results showed significant differences in engagement strategies by region and hearing type (See Appendix E). However, the majority of items showed no significant difference by region or hearing type. The following strategies stood out for region and hearing type:

- For the use of strategies with mothers
  - **Heard through attorney only**
    - More likely to occur in the Eastern region
  - **Ask if the mother has questions**
    - Less likely to be observed in review and 6-month review hearings
  - **Identify the next steps to the person**
    - Less likely to be observed in review hearings
  - **Explain the purpose of hearing**
    - Less likely to observe in review hearings
- For Fathers
  - **Identify the next steps to the person** -
    - Less likely to observe in review and 6-month review hearings
- For Children
  - **Address person by name**
    - Less likely to be observed in the Western region
  - **Heard through attorney only**
    - More likely to be observed in the Western region
    - Less likely to observe in review hearings

Judicial Inquiry

The results of the logistic regression models looking at differences in judicial inquiry from pre to post-bench card implementation had a couple of topic items that demonstrated increased judicial inquiry. However, most items showed no statistically significant differences (see Figure 19). Only the two items related to safety, including "efforts to address safety issues" and "barriers to address safety issues," showed increased judicial inquiry. All other items were not statistically different in the post-period compared to the pre-period.

Figure 19. Judicial Inquiry Pre- to Post-Change

	Pre-implementation	Post-implementation
Identified next steps/who is responsible	95.4%	93.3%
Permanency goal/efforts since last hearing	71.8%	70.1%
Child's placement	32.7%	36.6%
Child's other well-being	24.5%	31.5%
Parent-child visitation	24.6%	27.2%
Efforts/Progress to address safety issues	13.3%	26%
Child's education	12.3%	20.4%
Efforts to place with kinship/relative	13.2%	14.7%
Sibling visitation	7.1%	11.8%
Concurrent goals/efforts since last hearing	9.4%	8.7%
Barriers to address safety issues	5.2%	12.6%
Concurrent goal appropriate?	7.3%	9.2%
Efforts to maintain connections	1.4%	3.9%

Percentage

Note: Light blue indicates a significant change from pre- to post

The model results showed some significant differences by region and by hearing type for judicial inquiry (see Appendix E). However, the majority of items showed no significant difference by region or hearing type. The following strategies stood out in observed hearings for region and hearing type:

- **Efforts and barriers to address safety issues**
  - More likely to be observed in the Southwest region
- **Concurrent goal efforts and appropriateness**
  - Less likely to be observed during review and 6-month review hearings
- **Parent-child visitation**
  - Less likely to be observed in Eastern, Northern, and Western regions
  - More likely to observe in 6-month review hearings
- **Efforts to place with kin/relative**
  - Less likely to observe in 6-month review hearings

Level of Discussion

Where judicial inquiry only looks at the judge's participation in bench card topics, the level of discussion rates the courtroom discussion, including all participants. In examining courtroom discussion overall, most items trended upwards in the level of discussion from pre to post, with

ten items reaching statistically significant improvement (see Figure 20). Items that showed significant improvement included:

1. Identified next steps
2. Child's placement
3. Child's other well-being
4. Efforts to address safety issues
5. Child's education
6. Efforts to place with kin/relative
7. Concurrent goal efforts
8. Barriers to addressing safety issues
9. Concurrent goal appropriateness
10. Efforts to maintain connections

Three items did not reach statistically significant improvement, including permanency goal efforts, parent-child visitation, and sibling visitation.

Figure 20. Level of Discussion Pre to Post-Change
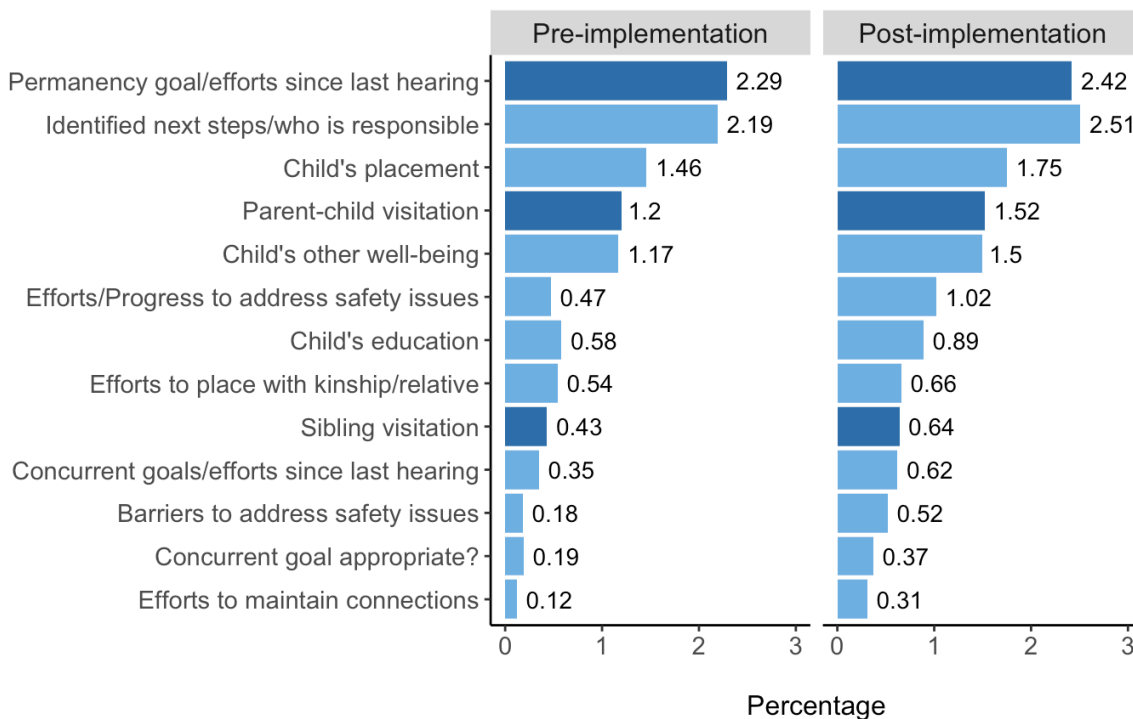
Note: Light blue indicates a significant change from pre- to post

The model results showed some significant differences in the level of discussion by region and by hearing type (see Appendix E). The following strategies stood out in observed hearings for region and hearing type:

- **Efforts to address safety issues**

- ○ Higher discussion level discussion in the Southwest region
- **Barriers to addressing safety issues**
  - ○ Higher discussion level in the Southwest region
  - ○ Higher discussion level in 6-month review hearings
- **Concurrent goal efforts since the last hearing**
  - ○ Lower discussion level in Eastern and Northern regions
  - ○ Lower discussion in review and 6-month review hearings
- **Concurrent goal appropriateness**
  - ○ Lower discussion in the Northern region
  - ○ Lower discussion in review and 6-month review hearings
- **Parent-child visitation**
  - ○ Lower discussion in Eastern, Northern, and Western regions
  - ○ Higher discussion in review and 6-month review hearings
- **Child well-being for placement, education, and other well-being**
  - ○ Higher discussion in review and 6-month review hearings
- **Efforts to place with kin/relative**
  - ○ Lower discussion in review hearings
- **Identified next steps**
  - ○ Lower discussion in review hearings

Outcomes Analysis

Child Demographics

We saw similar distributions of child age groups between pre- and post-implementation. Children ages 0 to 5 were the most common age group, where 1,121 (53.2%) children in pre-implementation were between ages 0 and 5 and 809 (48%) children in post-implementation were between ages 0 and 5, as seen in Figure 21. The next most common age group was ages 10 to 14, where 403 (19.1%) children in pre-implementation were between ages 10 and 14, and 350 (20.8%) children in post-implementation were between the ages of 10 and 14.

Figure 21. Child Age Pre- and Post-Implementation
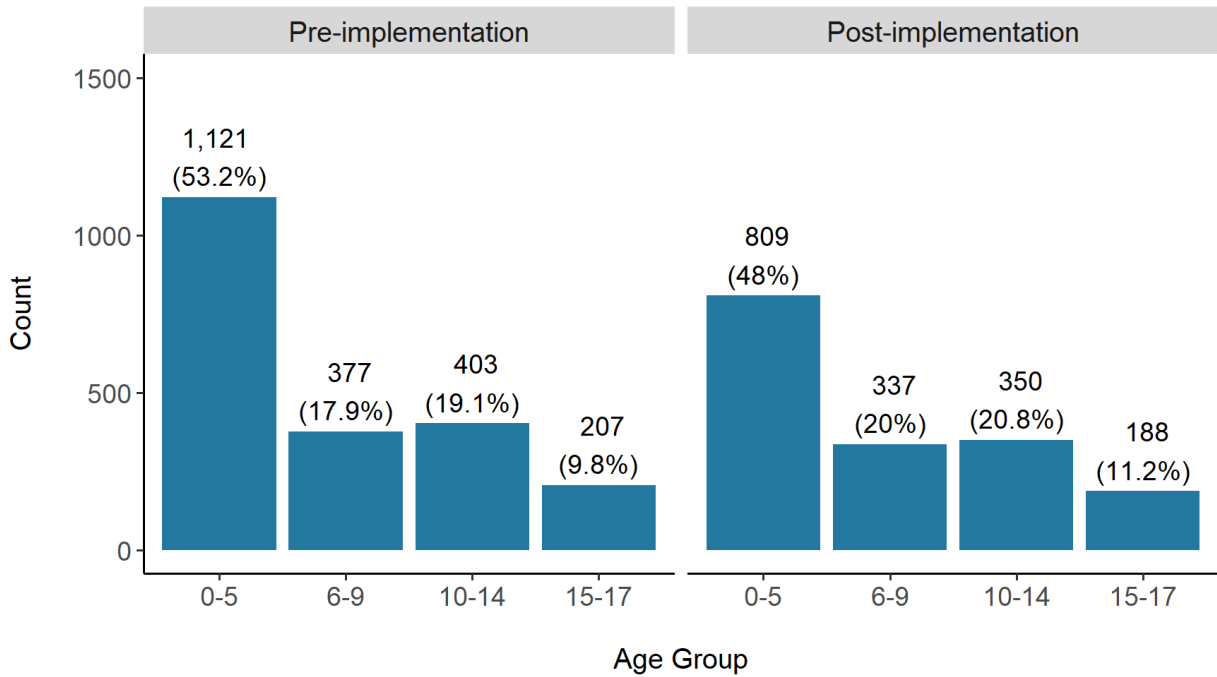
We also saw a similar distribution in the gender of the children between pre- and post-implementation. There were 1,026 (48.7%) female children in pre-implementation and 863 (51.2%) female children in post-implementation, as shown in Figure 22. In addition, there were 1,082 (51.3%) male children in the pre-implementation and 821 (48.8%) male children in the post-implementation.

Figure 22. Child Gender Pre- Post-Implementation
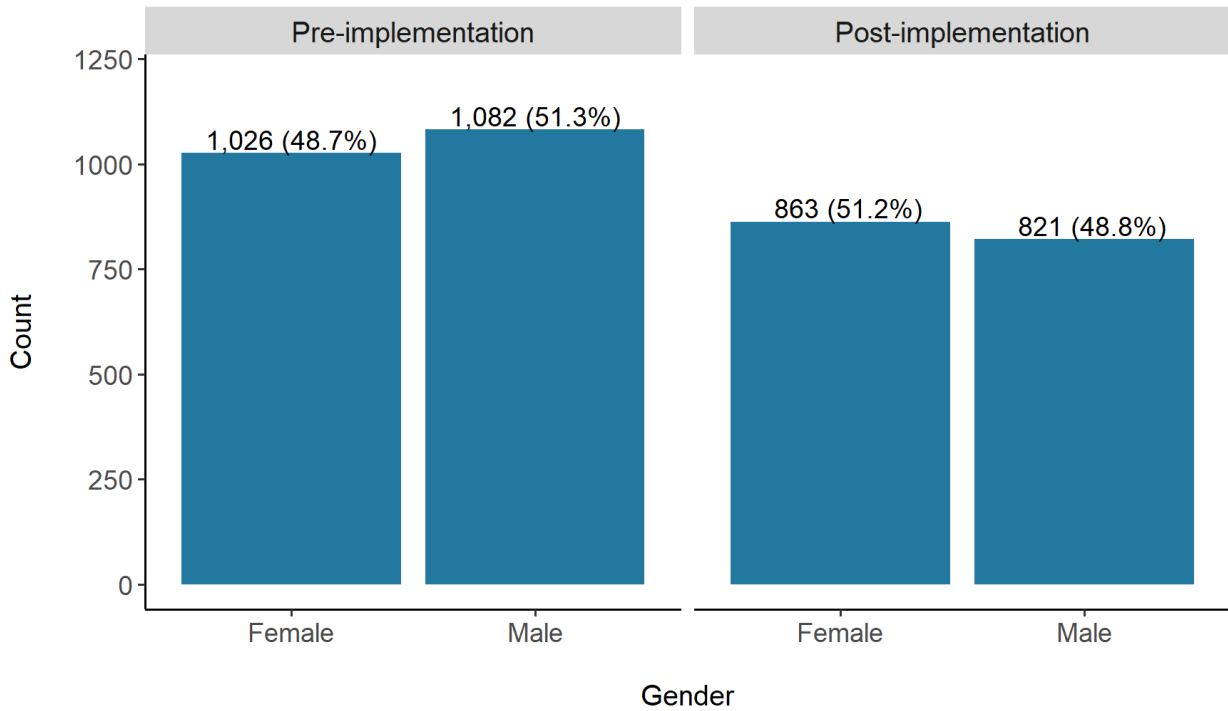
The most common child race and ethnicity was White non-Hispanic for pre- and post-implementation. There were 1,368 (64.9%) White non-Hispanic children in pre-implementation and 1,050 (62.4%) White non-Hispanic children in post-implementation, as shown in Figure 23. The second most common child race and ethnicity was Hispanic-only, with 423 (20.1%) Hispanic-only children in pre-implementation and 332 (19.7%) in post-implementation. The least common race and ethnicity group was Asian, with 2 (0.1%) children in pre-implementation and 5 (0.3%) children in post-implementation were Asian.

Figure 23. Child Race and Ethnicity by Pre- Post-Implementation
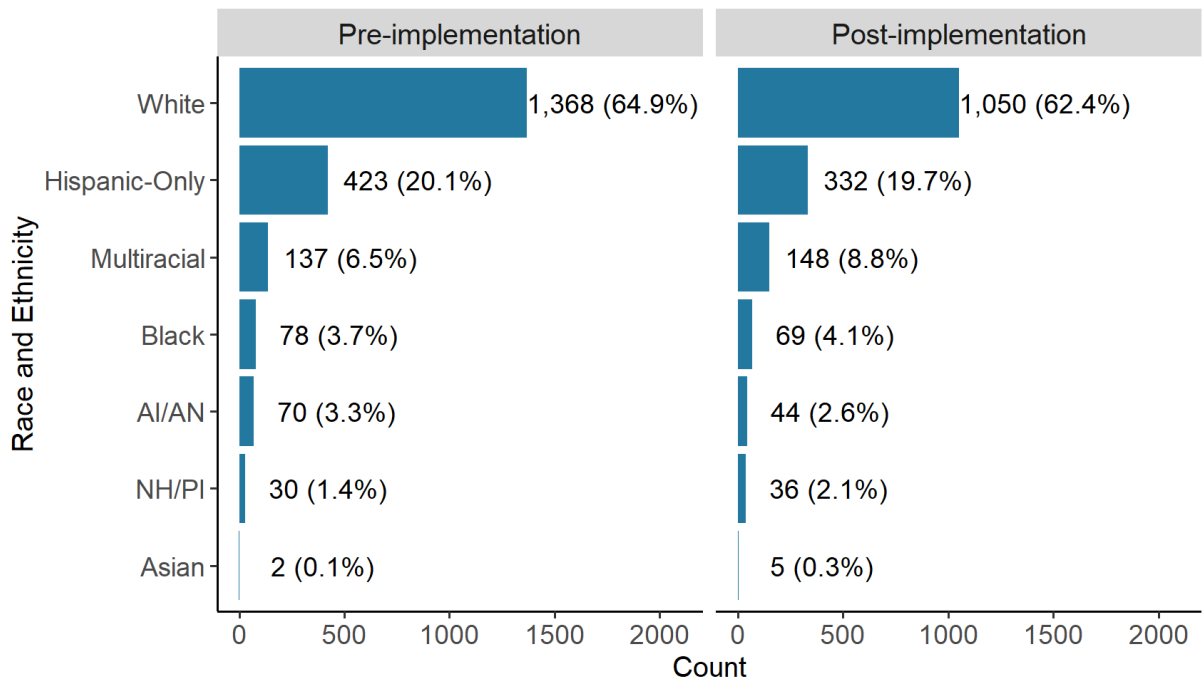
The most common region for pre- and post-implementation was Salt Lake Valley. There were 703 (33.3%) children in the Salt Lake Valley in pre-implementation and 574 (34.1%) children in the Salt Lake Valley in post-implementation, as shown in Figure 24. The second most common region was Northern, with 637 (30.2%) children in pre-implementation and 426 (25.3%) in post-implementation. The least common region was Eastern, with 157 (7.4%) children in pre-implementation and 122 (7.2%) children in post-implementation.

Figure 24. Child by Region Pre- Post-Implementation
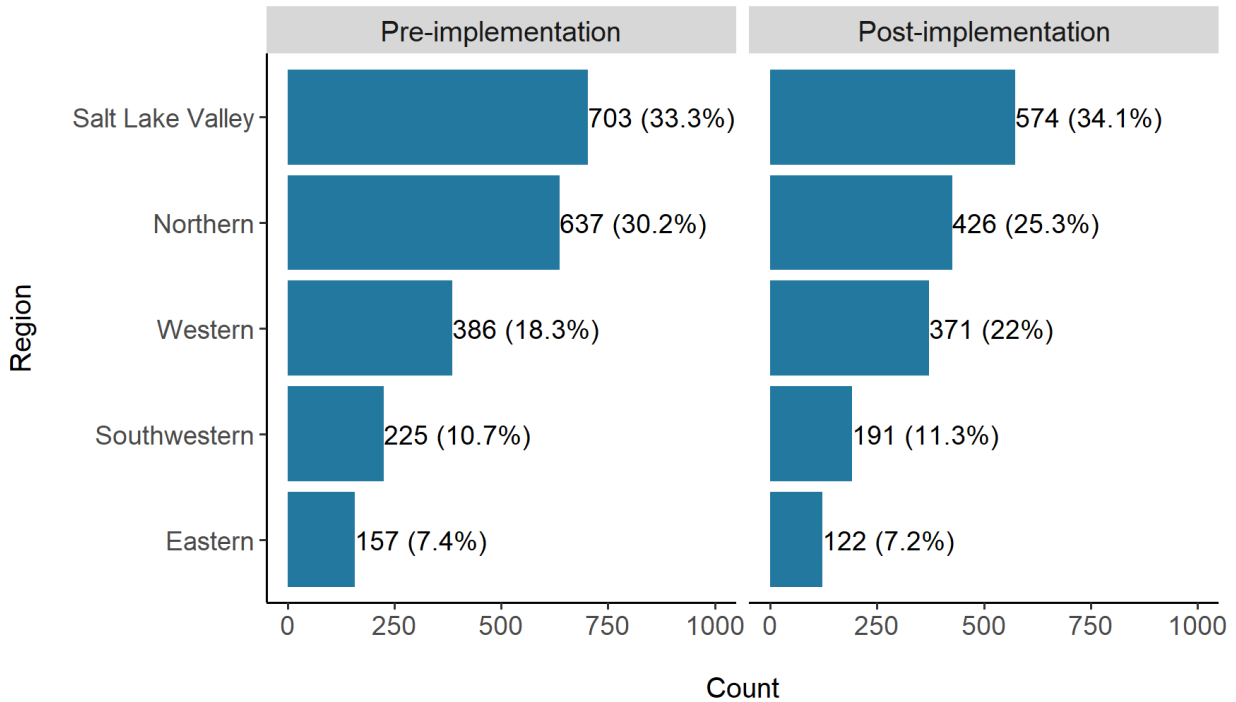
Permanent Placement

Most out-of-home cases in pre- and post-implementation had a permanent placement at the case end. As shown below in Table 12, 2,009 (95.3%) cases in pre-implementation and 1,593 (94.6%) cases in post-implementation had permanent placement.

Table 12: Permanent Placement Pre- Post-Implementation

	Pre-implementation	Post-implementation
Permanent Placement	2,009 (95.3%)	1,593 (94.6%)
No Permanent Placement	99 (4.7%)	91 (5.4%)

In the Salt Lake Valley region, 666 (94.7%) children in pre-implementation and 538 (93.7%) children in post-implementation had permanent placement, as shown in Figure 25. The region with the highest percentage of permanent placement was Northern, with 627 (98.4%) children in pre-implementation and 411 (96.5%) children in post-implementation. The region with the lowest percentage of permanent placement in pre-implementation was Eastern, with 143 (91.1%) children in pre-implementation and 116 (95.1%) in post-implementation.

Figure 25. Permanent Placement by Region and Pre- Post-Implementation
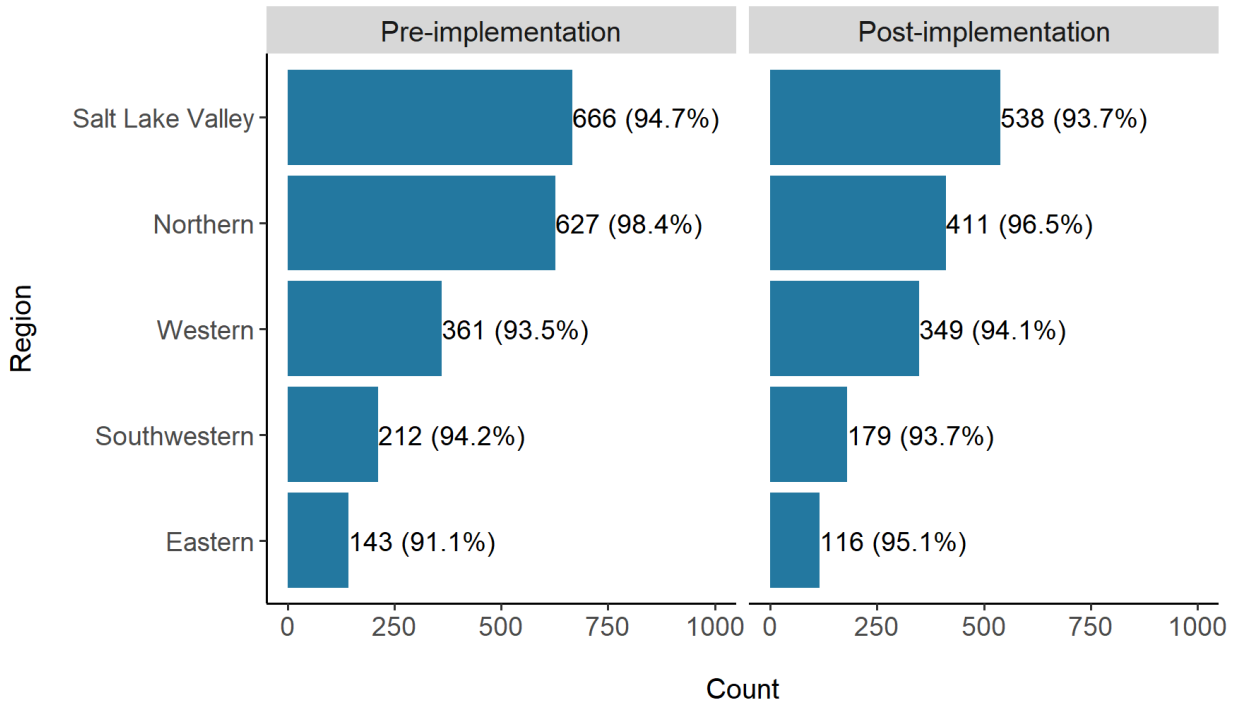
We utilized exact logistic regression to account for the sparse distribution of permanent placement (most children achieve permanency). The results of the exact logistic regression models are shown in Table 13 below. Compared to pre-implementation, children in post-implementation were slightly less likely to have a permanent placement. However, this difference was not statistically significant (p-value = 0.201).

Table 13. Permanent Placement Exact Logistic Regression Results

	Estimate (95% Confidence Interval)	P-value	P-value Standard Error
Post-Implementation	-0.346 (-2.318, 0.177)	0.201	0.065

Time to permanent placement was also assessed using survival analysis. On average, pre-implementation cases had a permanent placement within 333 days, and post-implementation cases had a permanent placement within 280 days, as seen in Table 14. Additionally, the median number of days to permanent placement was 348 days in pre-implementation and 280 days in post-implementation. Figure 26 is an inverted survival plot that shows the percentage of cases over time for pre- and post-implementation. The lines show that post-implementation cases reached permanent placement sooner than pre-implementation cases. The gap in the percentage of permanent placement between pre-

and post-implementation was wider, between 100 and 700 days. Additionally, the lines converge around 800 days, which helps explain the lack of a statistically significant difference in overall permanent placements.

Table 14. Mean and Median Time to Permanent Placement by Implementation

	Pre-implementation	Post-implementation
Mean days to permanent placement	333 days	280 days
Median days to permanent placement	348 days	280 days

Figure 26. Time to Permanent Placement
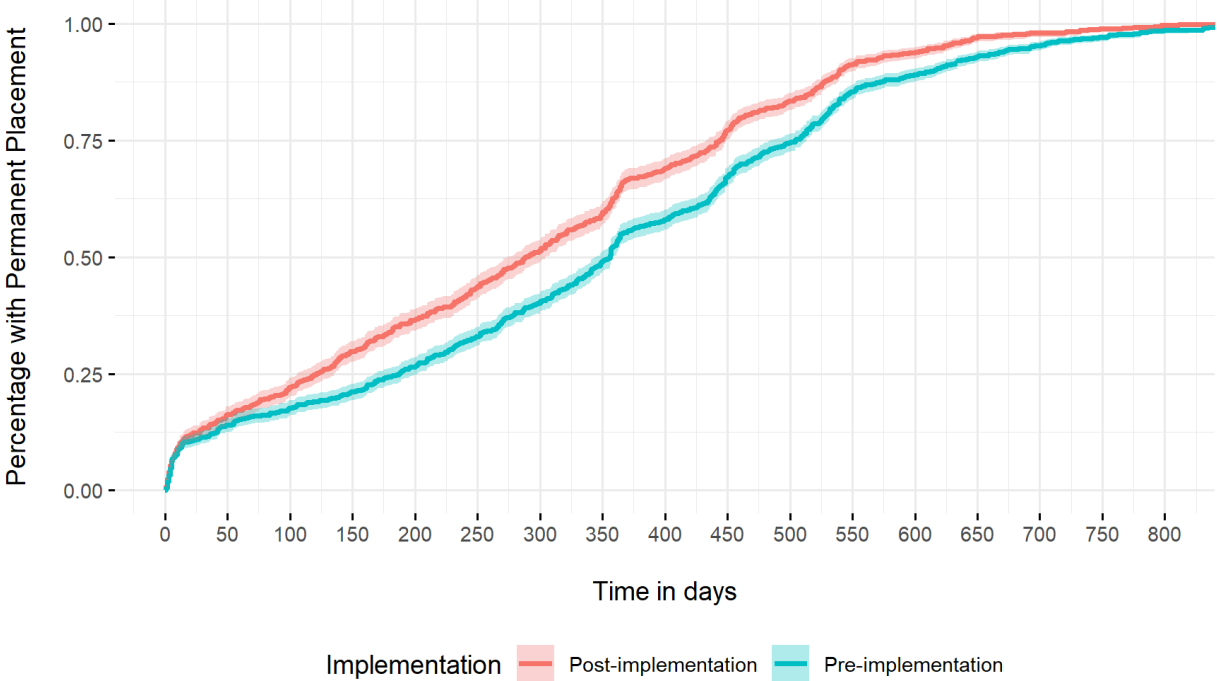
There was a significant difference in time to permanent placement, as shown in the survival analysis results in Table 15. Post-implementation cases were 42.2% more likely to have permanent placement than pre-implementation cases. This percentage is calculated by exponentiating the post-implementation estimate in Table 15. Specifically, the exponent of 0.352 is an odds ratio of 1.422 or a 42.2% increase in the odds of permanent placement. In addition, a few regions had statistically significant differences compared to the Salt Lake Valley: the Northern region was 12.0% less likely, and the Western region was 12.2% less likely to have permanent placement.

In this analysis, several covariates stood out as having an influence on timely permanency, including race. Two races had statistically significant differences compared to White children: American Indian or Alaska Native children were 23.7% less likely, and Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander children were 40.1% more likely to have a permanent placement. Cases with supported abuse allegations were 19.5% more likely to have a permanent placement. Cases with a perpetrator that was a guardian, adopted parent, or foster parent were 32.1% less likely to have permanent placement than cases with missing perpetrator information. In addition, cases with a perpetrator who was a relative were 15.7% less likely to have permanent placement. For each additional placement, the odds of permanent placement decreased by 11.7%. For each additional goal change, the odds of permanent placement decreased by 7.0%. Lastly, compared to cases with a goal of reunification, cases with a goal of adoption are 59.3% less likely, cases with a goal of guardianship with a relative are 46.0% less likely, cases with a goal of guardianship with a non-relative are 67.0% less likely, and cases with a goal of individualized permanency are 92.7% less likely to have a permanent placement.

Table 15. Time to Permanent Placement Survival Analysis Results

	Estimate	Std. Error	Z-value	P-value
Region: Eastern	-0.111	0.076	-1.469	0.142
Region: Northern	-0.127	0.047	-2.700	0.007*
Region: Southwest	0.033	0.066	0.504	0.614
Region: Western	-0.130	0.053	-2.475	0.013*
Number of prior court-ordered in-home cases	-0.004	0.029	-0.131	0.896
Child age at case start	-0.004	0.004	-1.057	0.290
Gender: Female	-0.015	0.036	-0.410	0.682
Child race: American Indian, Alaska Native	-0.271	0.122	-2.217	0.027*
Child race: Black, African American	0.017	0.101	0.165	0.869
Child race: Hispanic	-0.030	0.047	-0.641	0.521
Child race: Multiracial	0.069	0.073	0.951	0.342
Child race: Native Hawaiian, Pacific Islander	0.337	0.142	2.372	0.018*

	Estimate	Std. Error	Z-value	P-value
Any supported abuse allegation	0.178	0.054	3.289	0.001*
Perpetrator was a relative	-0.171	0.062	-2.760	0.006*
Perpetrator was the guardian, adopted parent, or foster parent	-0.387	0.148	-2.611	0.009*
Perpetrator was non-related	-0.132	0.093	-1.420	0.156
Perpetrator was unknown	-0.080	0.121	-0.661	0.509
Number of placements	-0.124	0.013	-9.364	< 0.001*
Number of goal changes	-0.072	0.029	-2.534	0.011*
Most recent goal: Adoption	-0.898	0.049	-18.137	< 0.001*
Most recent goal: Guardianship to relative	-0.616	0.090	-6.861	< 0.001*
Most recent goal: Guardianship to non-relative	-1.110	0.236	-4.703	< 0.001*
Most recent goal: Individual permanency	-2.611	0.338	-7.716	< 0.001*
Post-Implementation	0.352	0.041	8.601	< 0.001*

* Indicates statistically significant results

Permanent Placement within One Year

More than half of out-of-home cases in pre- and post-implementation had a permanent placement within one year of case start. As shown below in Table 16, 1,142 (54.2%) cases in pre-implementation and 1,076 (63.9%) cases in post-implementation had permanent placement within one year.

Table 16. Permanent Placement within One Year by Implementation

	Pre-implementation	Post-implementation
Permanent Placement within One Year	1,142 (54.2%)	1,076 (63.9%)
No Permanent Placement within One Year	966 (45.8%)	608 (36.1%)

In the Salt Lake Valley region, 387 (55%) children in pre-implementation and 367 (63.9%) children in post-implementation had permanent placement within one year, as shown in Figure 27. The region with the highest percentage of permanent placement within one year was Southwestern, with 136 (60.4%) children in pre-implementation and 131 (68.6%) children in post-implementation. The region with the lowest percentage of permanent placement within one year in pre-implementation was Western, with 185 (47.9%) children in pre-implementation and 254 (68.5%) in post-implementation.

Figure 27. Permanent Placement within One Year by Region and Pre- Post-Implementation
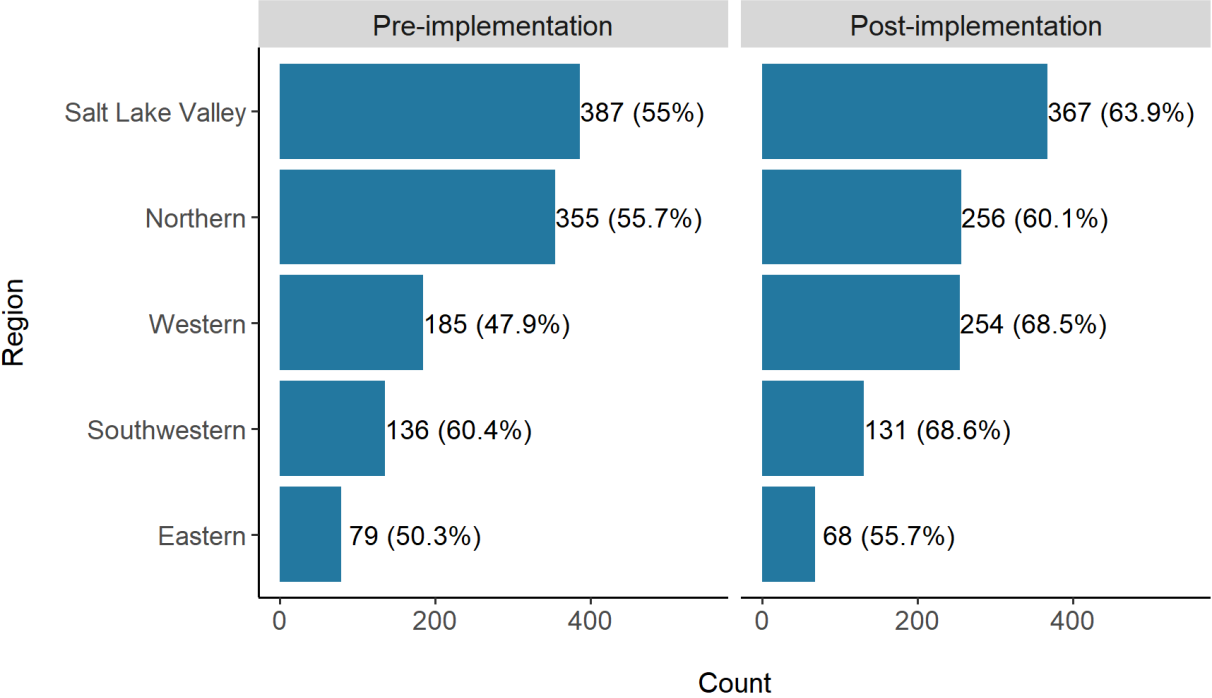
There was a significant difference in permanent placement within one year, as shown in the logistic regression results in Table 17. Post-implementation cases were 94.0% more likely to have a permanent placement within one year than pre-implementation cases. The Northern region was 17.7% less likely to have a permanent placement within one year, and the Western region was 23.7% less likely to have a permanent placement within one year than the reference region. For each additional previous CPS case, the odds of permanent placement within one year decreased by 9.0%. For each additional previous foster case, the odds of permanent placement within one year increased by 29.7%. American Indian and Alaska Native children were 46.4% less likely to have a permanent placement within one year.

For each additional supported allegation, the odds of permanent placement within one year increased by 7.4%. Cases with supported dependency allegations were 33.6% less likely to have

a permanent placement within one year compared to cases without supported dependency allegations. For each additional perpetrator, the odds of permanency within one year decreased by 22.4%. For each additional placement, the odds of permanency within one year decreased by 14.4%. For each additional goal change, the odds of permanent placement decreased by 13.5%. Compared to cases with a goal of reunification: cases with a goal of adoption are 69.2% less likely, cases with a goal of guardianship with a relative are 38.5% less likely, cases with a goal of guardianship with a non-relative are 71.6% less likely, and cases with a goal of individualized permanency are 95.2% less likely to have a permanent placement within one year. Lastly, cases that occurred during COVID-19 restrictions were 52.0% less likely to have permanent placement within one year compared to cases that didn't happen during COVID-19 restrictions.

Table 17. Permanent Placement within One Year Logistic Regression Results

	Estimate	Std. Error	Z-value	P-value
Region: Eastern	-0.226	0.154	-1.465	0.143
Region: Northern	-0.195	0.099	-1.973	0.048*
Region: Western	-0.271	0.110	-2.457	0.014*
Region: Southwest	0.155	0.140	1.109	0.267
Number of prior CPS cases	-0.098	0.018	-5.244	< 0.001*
Number of prior foster cases	0.260	0.097	2.665	0.008*
Number of prior voluntary in-home cases	0.193	0.102	1.895	0.058
Gender: Female	0.118	0.076	1.556	0.120
Child age at case start	0.017	0.009	1.886	0.059
Child race: American Indian, Alaska Native	-0.623	0.242	-2.570	0.010*
Child race: Black, African American	-0.220	0.202	-1.088	0.277
Child race: Hispanic	-0.086	0.099	-0.867	0.386
Child race: Multiracial	0.121	0.154	0.785	0.433
Child race: Native Hawaiian, Pacific Islander	0.613	0.342	1.789	0.074

	Estimate	Std. Error	Z-value	P-value
Number of supported allegations	0.071	0.034	2.067	0.039*
Any supported abuse allegation	0.209	0.107	1.947	0.052
Any supported neglect allegation	-0.158	0.093	-1.700	0.089
Any supported dependency allegation	-0.410	0.203	-2.024	0.043*
Number of perpetrators	-0.253	0.077	-3.305	0.001*
Number of placements	-0.155	0.027	-5.778	< 0.001*
Number of goal changes	-0.145	0.051	-2.859	0.004*
Most recent goal: Adoption	-1.178	0.097	-12.180	< 0.001*
Most recent goal: Guardianship with relative	-0.485	0.171	-2.837	0.005*
Most recent goal: Guardianship with non-relative	-1.258	0.450	-2.797	0.005*
Most recent goal: Individualized permanency	-3.034	0.532	-5.707	< 0.001*
COVID-19 restrictions	-0.733	0.130	-5.652	< 0.001*
Post-Implementation	0.663	0.091	7.302	< 0.001*

* Indicates statistically significant results

Final Placement in a Family-like Setting

Most out-of-home cases in pre- and post-implementation had a final placement in a family-like setting. As shown below in Table 18, 1,942 (92.1%) cases in pre-implementation and 1,546 (91.8%) cases in post-implementation had final placement in a family-like setting.

Table 18. Final Placement in a Family-like Setting by Implementation

	Pre-implementation	Post-implementation
Final Placement in a Family-like Setting	1,942 (92.1%)	1,546 (91.8%)
No Final Placement in a Family-like Setting	166 (7.9%)	138 (8.2%)

Salt Lake Valley region had the highest percentage of final placement in a family-like setting for pre-implementation, with 656 (93.3%) children in pre-implementation and 518 (90.2%) children in post-implementation, as shown in Figure 28. The region with the lowest percentage of final placement in a family-like setting for pre-implementation was Southwestern, with 197 (87.6%) children in pre-implementation and 174 (91.1%) in post-implementation.

Figure 28. Final Placement in a Family-like Setting by Region and Pre- Post-Implementation

There was no significant difference in the odds of final placement in a family-like setting between pre- and post-implementation, as shown in the logistic regression results in Table 19. However, other covariates that were statistically significant. Compared to the Salt Lake Valley, the Northern region was three times more likely, and the Southwest region was 2.7 times more likely to have a final placement in a family-like setting. For each additional prior foster case, the odds of final placement in a family-like setting decreased by 48.7%. For each increase in

age by one year, the odds of final placement in a family-like setting decreased by 23.2%. A few races and ethnicities showed statistically significant differences compared to white children: American Indian and Alaskan Native children were 77.0% less likely, Black and African American children were 67.2% less likely, and Multiracial children were 61.5% less likely to have final placement in a family-like setting.

Cases, where the perpetrator was the guardian, foster parent, or adopted parent were 61.6% less likely to have final placement in a family-like setting than cases that were missing perpetrator relationship information. In addition, cases where the perpetrator was unknown were 81.3% less likely to have a final placement in a family-like setting than cases with missing perpetrator information. For each additional placement, the odds of final placement in a family-like setting decreased by 12.6%. Lastly, compared to cases where the current goal was reunification, cases, where the current goal was guardianship with a non-relative were 78.5% less likely, and cases where the current goal was individualized permanency were 98.2% less likely to have a final placement in a family-like setting.

Table 19. Final Placement in a Family-like Setting Logistic Regression Results

	Estimate	Std. Error	Z-value	P-value
Region: Eastern	0.367	0.405	0.907	0.364
Region: Northern	1.086	0.340	3.197	0.001*
Region: Southwest	0.973	0.421	2.309	0.021*
Region: Western	0.449	0.291	1.546	0.122
Number of prior foster cases	-0.668	0.178	-3.761	< 0.001*
Child gender: female	0.420	0.225	1.871	0.061
Child age at case start	-0.264	0.030	-8.695	< 0.001*
Child race: American Indian, Alaskan Native	-1.469	0.469	-3.132	0.002*
Child race: Black, African American	-1.114	0.420	-2.651	0.008*
Child race: Hispanic	0.115	0.314	0.365	0.715
Child race: Multiracial	-0.955	0.381	-2.507	0.012*
Child race: Native Hawaiian, Pacific Islander	1.590	1.157	1.374	0.169

	Estimate	Std. Error	Z-value	P-value
Any supported allegations of abuse	0.591	0.303	1.947	0.052
Any supported allegations of neglect	0.419	0.272	1.538	0.124
Perpetrator was a relative	-0.463	0.347	-1.335	0.182
Perpetrator was guardian, adopted parent, or foster parent	-0.957	0.427	-2.243	0.025*
Perpetrator was non-related	-0.751	0.399	-1.884	0.060
Perpetrator was unknown	-1.676	0.464	-3.616	< 0.001*
Number of placements	-0.135	0.035	-3.813	< 0.001*
Number of goal changes	0.409	0.216	1.889	0.059
Most recent goal: Adoption	-0.232	0.368	-0.630	0.529
Most recent goal: Guardianship to relative	0.194	0.394	0.492	0.623
Most recent goal: Guardianship to non-relative	-1.536	0.521	-2.948	0.003*
Most recent goal: Individual permanency	-3.992	0.467	-8.543	< 0.001*
Post-Implementation	-0.055	0.227	-0.242	0.809

* Indicates statistically significant results

Figure 29 is an inverted survival plot that shows the percentage of final placement in a family-like setting over time for pre- and post-implementation, where post-implementation cases reached placement in a family-like setting sooner than pre-implementation cases. The gap in the percentage of final placement in a family-like setting between pre- and post-implementation was wider between 100 and 650 days. Additionally, the lines converge around 700 days, which explains the lack of a statistically significant difference in overall final placement in a family-like setting.

Figure 29. Time to Final Placement in a Family-like Setting Survival Analysis Results

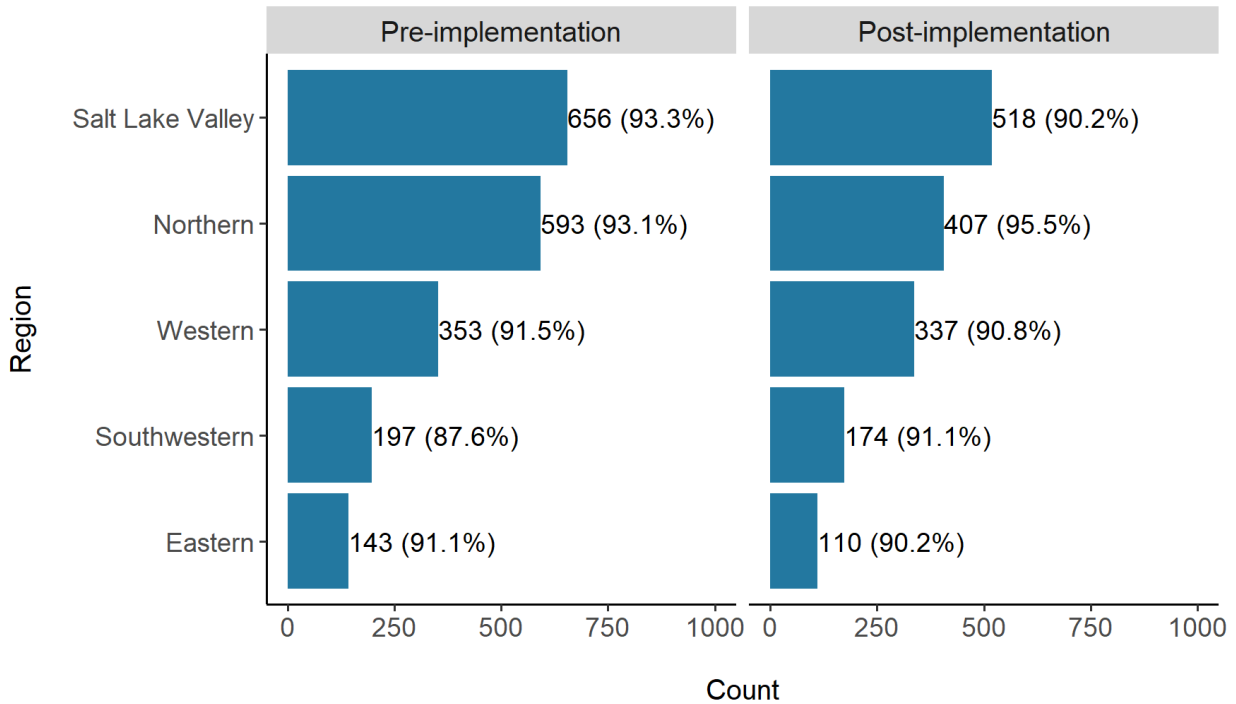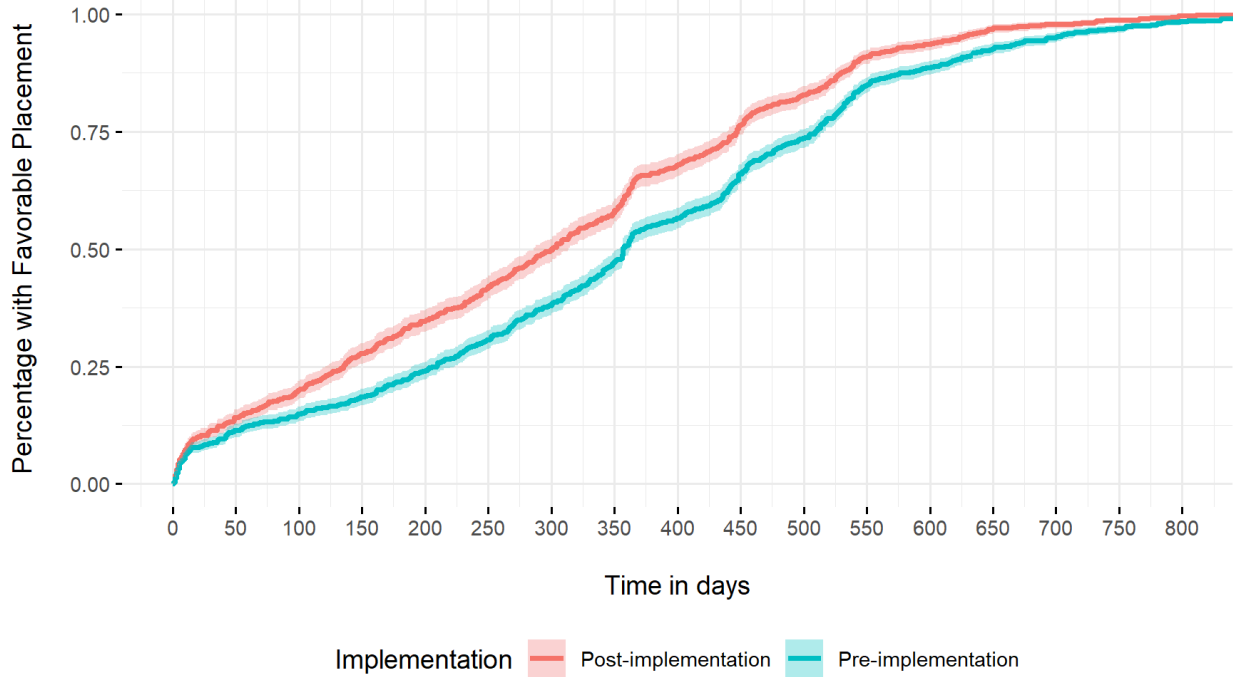## Final Permanent Placement in a Family-like Setting within One Year

More than half of out-of-home cases in pre- and post-implementation had a final placement in a family-like setting within one year. As shown below in Table 20, 1,076 (51.0%) cases in pre-implementation and 1,030 (61.2%) cases in post-implementation had final placement in a family-like setting within one year.

Table 20. Final Placement in a Family-like Setting within One Year by Pre- Post-implementation

	Pre-implementation	Post-implementation
Final Placement in a Family-like Setting Within One Year	1,076 (51.0%)	1,030 (61.2%)
No Final Placement in a Family-like Setting Within One Year	1,032 (49.0%)	654 (38.8%)

The Salt Lake Valley and Southwestern regions had the highest percentage of final placement in a family-like setting within one year in pre-implementation. In the Salt Lake Valley region, 378 (53.8%) children in pre-implementation and 348 (60.6%) children in post-implementation had final placement in a family-like setting within one year, as shown in Figure 30. The

Southwestern region had 121 (53.8%) children in pre-implementation, and 126 (66%) children in post-implementation had final placement in a family-like setting within one year. The region with the lowest percentage of final placement in a family-like setting within one year in pre-implementation was Western, with 177 (45.9%) children in pre-implementation and 242 (65.2%) in post-implementation.

Figure 30. Final Placement in a Family-like Setting within One Year by Region and Pre- and Post-Implementation
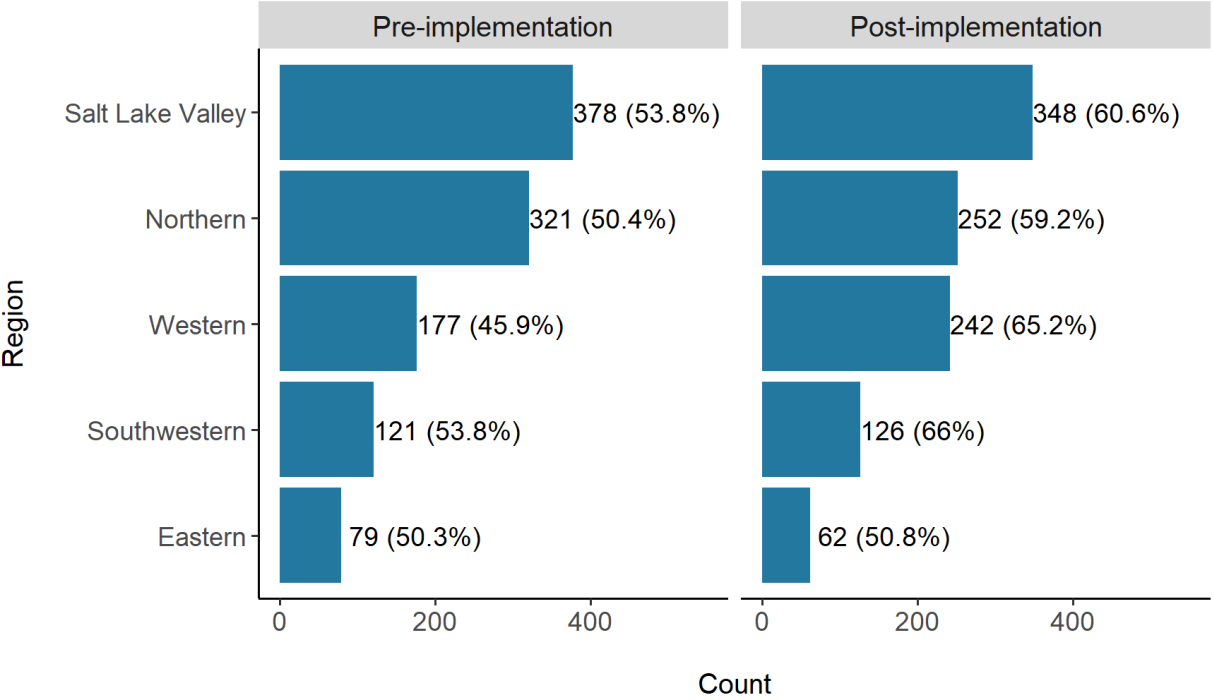
There was a significant difference in the odds of final placement in a family-like setting within one year between pre- and post-implementation, as shown in Table 21. Post-implementation placements were 89.1% more likely to have final placement in a family-like setting within one year compared to pre-implementation. Cases in the Northern region were 21.5% less likely to have final placement in a family-like setting within one year than cases in the Salt Lake Valley. Cases in the Western region were 27.0% less likely to have final placement in a family-like setting within one year than cases in the Salt Lake Valley. For each additional CPS case, the odds of final placement in a family-like setting within one year decreased by 9.2%. For each additional previous court-ordered in-home services, the odds of final placement in a family-like setting within one year increased by 14.3%. American Indian or Alaska Native children were 45.8% less likely to have final placement in a family-like setting within one year than White children. For each additional supported allegation, the odds of final placement in a family-like setting within one year increased by 7.8%.

Cases with supported abuse allegations were 24.3% more likely to have final placement in a family-like setting within one year compared to cases without supported abuse allegations. Cases with supported dependency allegations were 33.0% less likely to have final placement in a family-like setting within one year compared to cases without supported dependency allegations. For each additional perpetrator, the odds of final placement in a family-like setting within one year decreased by 21.6%. For each additional placement, the odds of final placement in a family-like setting within one year decreased by 13.7%. For each additional goal change, the odds of final placement in a family-like setting decreased by 13.0%. Compared to cases where the current goal was reunification, cases with a current goal of adoption were 69.1% less likely, cases with a current goal of guardianship with a relative were 38.7% less likely, cases with a current goal of guardianship with a non-relative were 71.9% less likely, and cases with a current goal of individualized permanency were 95.0% less likely to have a final placement in a family-like setting within one year. Lastly, cases during the COVID-19 restrictions were 51.0% less likely to have final placement in a family-like setting within one year compared to cases that didn't occur during COVID-19 restrictions.

Table 21. Final Placement in a Family-like Setting within One Year Logistic Regression Results

	Estimate	Std. Error	Z-value	P-value
Region: Eastern	-0.248	0.154	-1.612	0.107
Region: Northern	-0.242	0.099	-2.443	0.015*
Region: Southwest	0.111	0.140	0.795	0.426
Region: Western	-0.315	0.111	-2.839	0.005*
Number of previous CPS cases	-0.097	0.018	-5.294	< 0.001*
Number of prior voluntary in-home cases	0.159	0.102	1.566	0.117
Number of prior court-ordered in-home cases	0.134	0.062	2.152	0.031*
Child age at case start	0.017	0.009	1.906	0.057
Child gender: female	0.130	0.076	1.714	0.087
Child race: American Indian, Alaska Native	-0.613	0.241	-2.540	0.011*
Child race: Black, African American	-0.195	0.202	-0.966	0.334

	Estimate	Std. Error	Z-value	P-value
Child race: Hispanic	-0.066	0.099	-0.669	0.504
Child race: Multiracial	0.120	0.153	0.779	0.436
Child race: Native Hawaiian, Pacific Islander	0.624	0.343	1.818	0.069
Number of supported allegations	0.075	0.035	2.175	0.030*
Any supported abuse allegation	0.218	0.109	1.994	0.046*
Any supported neglect allegation	-0.145	0.093	-1.555	0.120
Any supported dependency allegation	-0.401	0.204	-1.968	0.049*
Number of perpetrators	-0.244	0.077	-3.152	0.002*
Number of placements	-0.148	0.027	-5.522	< 0.001*
Number of goal changes	-0.139	0.051	-2.743	0.006*
Most recent goal: Adoption	-1.174	0.096	-12.203	< 0.001*
Most recent goal: Guardianship to relative	-0.490	0.171	-2.869	0.004*
Most recent goal: Guardianship to non-relative	-1.270	0.453	-2.807	0.005*
Most recent goal: Individual permanency	-2.988	0.531	-5.622	< 0.001*
COVID-19 restrictions	-0.713	0.130	-5.502	< 0.001*
Post-Implementation	0.637	0.091	7.034	< 0.001*

* Indicates statistically significant results

Reunification

Almost half of out-of-home cases in pre-implementation had reunification, and more than half of out-of-home cases in post-implementation had reunification. As shown below in Table 22, 1,010 (47.9%) cases in pre-implementation and 898 (53.3%) cases in post-implementation had reunification.

Table 22. Reunification by Pre- Post-Implementation

	Pre-implementation	Post-implementation
Reunification	1,010 (47.9%)	898 (53.3%)
No reunification	1,098 (52.1%)	786 (46.7%)

The region with the highest percentage of reunification was Southwestern, with 122 (54.2%) children in pre-implementation and 123 (64.4%) children in post-implementation, as shown in Figure 31. The region with the lowest percentage of reunification in pre-implementation was Salt Lake Valley, with 318 (45.2%) children in pre-implementation and 297 (51.7%) children in post-implementation.

Figure 31. Reunification by Region and Pre- Post-Implementation
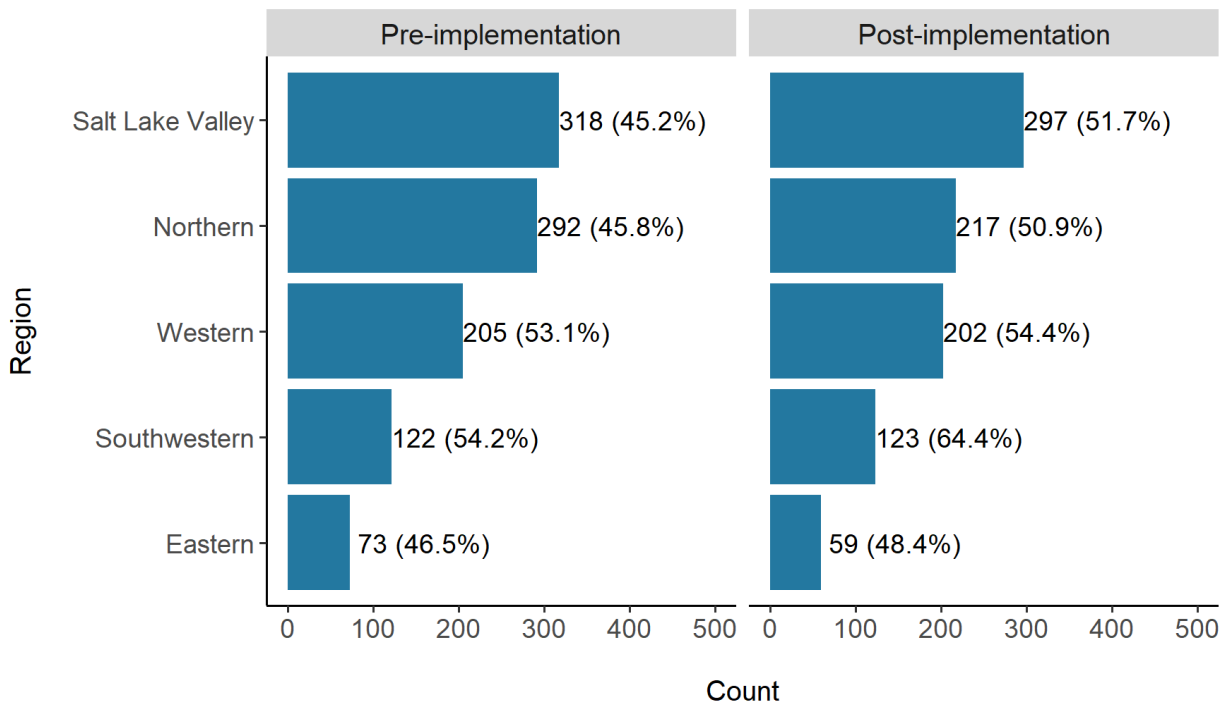
There was a significant difference in the odds of reunification between pre- and post-implementation, as shown in Table 23. Post-implementation cases were 16.2% more likely to have reunification than pre-implementation cases. A few regions had statistically significant differences compared to the reference region: the Southwest region was 57.0% more likely, and the Western region was 32.4% more likely to have reunification. For each additional previous voluntary in-home service, the odds of reunification increased by 19.0%. For each additional one-year increase in child age, the odds of reunification decreased by 1.35%. Female children were 14.4% less likely to have reunification than male children. Black and African

American children were 35.8% less likely than White children to have reunification. Native Hawaiian and Pacific Islander children were 2.4 times more likely to have reunification compared to White children. For each additional placement, the odds of reunification increased by 15.2%. Lastly, cases during the COVID-19 restrictions were 20.3% less likely to have reunification compared to cases that didn't occur during COVID-19 restrictions.

Table 23. Reunification Logistic Regression Results

	Estimate	Std. Error	Z-value	P-value
Region: Eastern	0.001	0.138	0.009	0.993
Region: Northern	0.013	0.085	0.151	0.880
Region: Southwest	0.451	0.118	3.833	< 0.001*
Region: Western	0.280	0.095	2.943	0.003*
Number of prior voluntary in-home cases	0.174	0.084	2.069	0.039*
Child age at case start	-0.014	0.006	-2.139	0.032*
Child gender: female	-0.155	0.066	-2.344	0.019*
Child race: American Indian, Alaska Native	-0.324	0.201	-1.613	0.107
Child race: Black, African American	-0.443	0.179	-2.479	0.013*
Child race: Hispanic	0.141	0.085	1.657	0.098
Child race: Multiracial	0.182	0.128	1.421	0.155
Child race: Native Hawaiian, Pacific Islander	0.873	0.275	3.179	0.001*
Number of perpetrators	0.068	0.045	1.520	0.129
Number of placements	0.141	0.022	6.388	< 0.001*
COVID-19 restrictions	-0.227	0.112	-2.025	0.043*
Post-Implementation	0.150	0.075	1.998	0.046*

* Indicates statistically significant results

Figure 32 is an inverted survival plot that shows the percentage of reunification over time for pre- and post-implementation, where post-implementation cases reached reunification sooner than pre-implementation cases. The gap in the percentage of reunification between pre- and post-implementation begins around 100 days into a case, and the lines do not converge again. This explains the statistically significant difference in reunification overall.

Figure 32. Time to Reunification
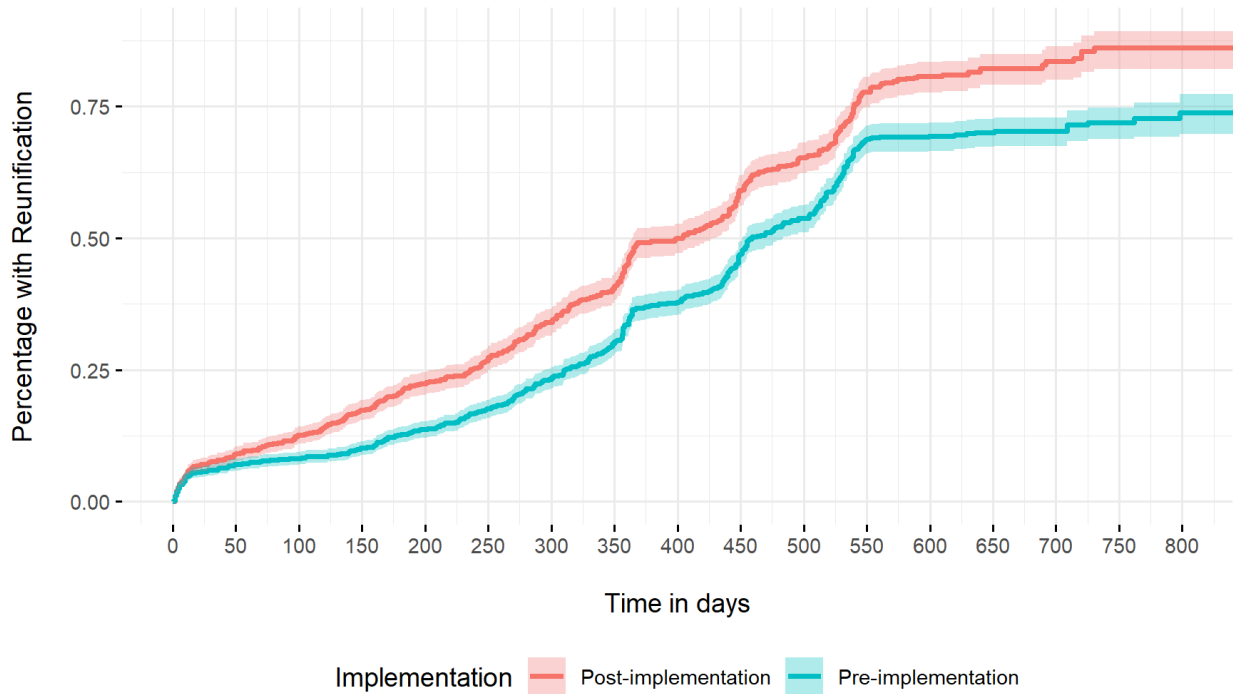
Reunification Within One Year

The number of children that had reunification within one year of case start for pre- and post-implementation is shown below in Table 24. In total, 625 (29.6%) cases during pre-implementation and 639 (37.9%) cases during post-implementation had reunification within one year.

Table 24: Reunification Within One Year by Implementation

	Pre-implementation	Post-implementation
Reunification within one year	625 (29.6%)	639 (37.9%)
No reunification within one year	1,483 (70.4%)	1,045 (62.1%)

The region with the highest percentage of reunification within one year was Southwestern, with 85 (37.8%) children in pre-implementation and 106 (55.5%) children in post-implementation, as shown in Figure 33. The region with the lowest percentage of reunification within one year in pre-implementation was Northern, with 181 (28.4%) children in pre-implementation and 137 (32.2%) children in post-implementation.

Figure 33. Reunification within One Year by Region and Pre- and Post-Implementation
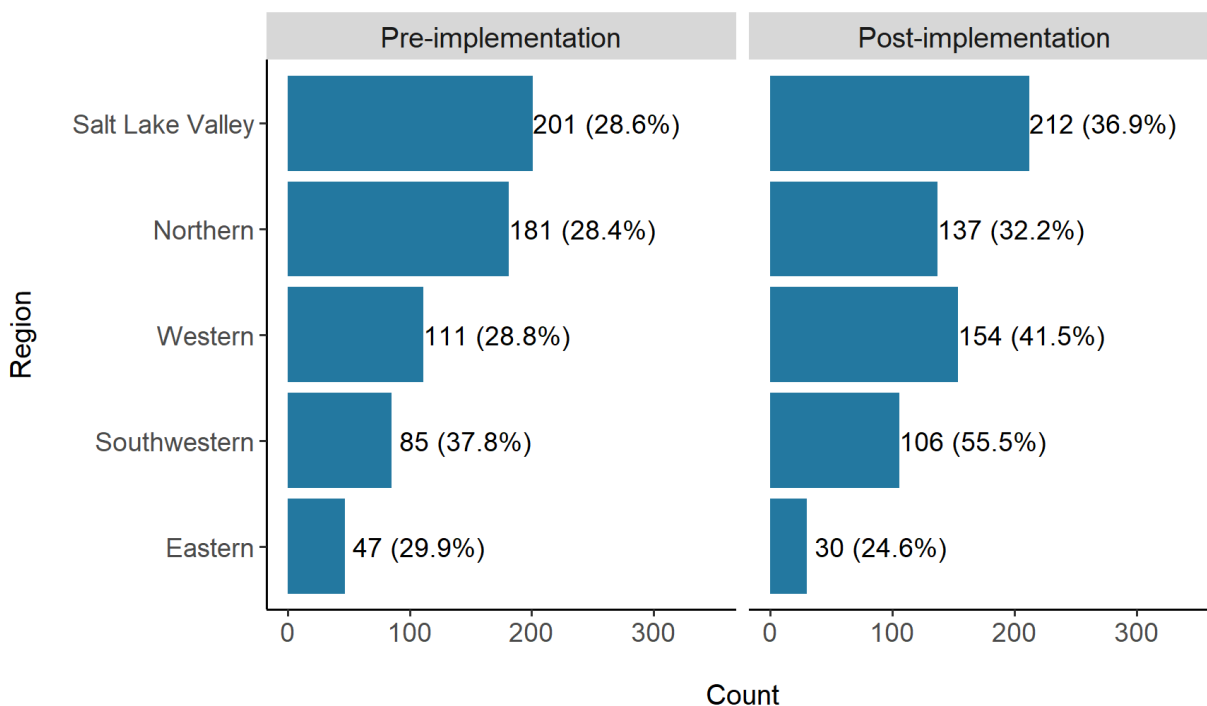
There was a significant difference in the odds of reunification within one year between pre- and post-implementation, as shown in the logistic regression results in Table 25. Post-implementation cases were 60.2% times more likely to have reunification within one year than pre-implementation cases. The Southwest region was 85.4% more likely to have reunification within one year than the Salt Lake Valley. For each additional previous CPS case, the odds of reunification within one year decreased by 5.7%. For each additional voluntary in-home service, the odds of reunification within one year increased by 50.6%. American Indian or Alaska Native children were 54.6% less likely to have reunification within one year compared to White children. Additionally, Native Hawaiian and Pacific Islander children were 2.7 times more likely to have reunification within one year than White children. For each additional supported allegation, the odds of reunification within one year increased by 11.3%. For cases with supported allegations of neglect, the odds of reunification within one year decreased by 20.6% compared to cases without supported allegations of neglect. For cases with supported allegations of dependency, the odds of reunification within one year decreased by 42.2% compared to cases without supported allegations of dependency. For each additional

goal change, the odds of reunification within one year decreased by 61.8%. Cases that occurred during COVID-19 restrictions were 29.2% less likely to have reunification within one year compared to cases that didn't happen during COVID-19 restrictions.

Table 25. Reunification Within One Year Logistic Regression Results

	Estimate	Std. Error	Z-value	P-value
Region: Eastern	-0.123	0.166	-0.743	0.458
Region: Northern	-0.203	0.106	-1.911	0.056
Region: Southwest	0.617	0.137	4.518	< 0.001*
Region: Western	0.075	0.112	0.668	0.504
Number of previous CPS cases	-0.059	0.016	-3.662	< 0.001*
Number of prior voluntary in-home cases	0.409	0.103	3.995	< 0.001*
Child race: AI/AN	-0.790	0.302	-2.619	0.009*
Child race: Black, African American	-0.190	0.222	-0.856	0.392
Child race: Hispanic	-0.007	0.105	-0.063	0.950
Child race: Multiracial	0.231	0.153	1.511	0.131
Child race: Native Hawaiian, Pacific Islander	0.990	0.295	3.359	0.001*
Number of supported allegations	0.107	0.035	3.019	0.003*
Any supported neglect allegation	-0.231	0.098	-2.344	0.019*
Any supported dependency allegation	-0.548	0.216	-2.540	0.011*
Number of perpetrators	-0.064	0.072	-0.894	0.371
Number of goal changes	-0.962	0.088	-10.889	< 0.001*
COVID-19 restrictions	-0.345	0.136	-2.540	0.011*
Post-Implementation	0.471	0.088	5.333	< 0.001*

* Indicates statistically significant results

Length of the Case

The average and median length of out-of-home care placement are shown below in Table 26. Pre-implementation had an average of 335 days in out-of-home care, and post-implementation had an average of 279 days in out-of-home care. Additionally, pre-implementation had a median out-of-home care length of 349 days, and post-implementation had a median out-of-home care length of 278 days.

Table 26. Length of the Case by Pre- Post-Implementation

	Pre-implementation	Post-implementation
Days in out-of-home care (average)	335 days	279 days
Days in out-of-home care (median)	349 days	278 days

The region with the longest average and median days in out-of-home care in pre-implementation was Western, with an average and a median of 364 days in pre-implementation and an average of 248 days and a median of 216 days in post-implementation, as shown in Table 27. The region with the shortest average and median days in out-of-home care in pre-implementation was Southwestern with an average of 301 days and a median of 295 days in pre-implementation and an average of 265 days and a median of 271 days in post-implementation.

Table 27. Length of the Case by Region and Pre- and Post-Implementation

Region		Pre-implementation	Post-implementation
Salt Lake Valley	Days in out-of-home care (average)	331 days	276 days
	Days in out-of-home care (median)	337 days	268 days
Northern	Days in out-of-home care (average)	328 days	303 days
	Days in out-of-home care (median)	348 days	314 days
Western	Days in out-of-home care (average)	364 days	248 days

	Days in out-of-home care (median)	364 days	216 days
Southwestern	Days in out-of-home care (average)	301 days	265 days
	Days in out-of-home care (median)	295 days	271 days
Eastern	Days in out-of-home care (average)	355 days	324 days
	Days in out-of-home care (median)	357 days	346 days

There was a significant difference in case lengths between pre- and post-implementation, as shown in Table 28. Post-implementation cases were 82 days shorter, on average, than pre-implementation cases. A few regions showed statistically significant differences compared to the reference region: the Eastern region cases were 29 days longer, cases in the Northern region were 32 days longer, and cases in the Western region were 25 days longer, on average. For each additional CPS case, the average case length was seven days longer. For each additional previous out-of-home case, the case length was 22 days shorter, on average. For each additional voluntary in-home service, the case length was 21 days shorter, on average. For each increase in age by one year, case length decreased by three days, on average. Native Hawaiian and Pacific Islander children, on average, had cases that were 53 days shorter, on average, than White children. Cases with supported allegations of abuse were 26 days shorter, on average, than cases without supported allegations of abuse. For each additional perpetrator on a case, the length of a case increases by 17 days, on average. For each additional placement on a case, the length of a case increases by 11 days, on average. For each additional goal change on a case, the length of a case increases by 32 days, on average. Cases that occurred during COVID-19 restrictions were 81 days longer, on average, than cases that did not happen during COVID-19 restrictions.

Table 28. Length of the Case Linear Regression Results

	Estimate	Std. Error	t-value	P-value
Region: Eastern	28.995	12.124	2.392	0.017*
Region: Northern	31.771	7.716	4.118	< 0.001*
Region: Southwest	12.722	10.874	1.170	0.242
Region: Western	24.726	8.626	2.866	0.004*
Number of prior CPS cases	6.867	1.354	5.071	< 0.001*
Number of prior out-of-home cases	-21.502	7.381	-2.913	0.004*
Number of prior voluntary in-home cases	-21.119	7.862	-2.686	0.007*
Child age at case start	-3.240	0.659	-4.915	< 0.001*
Child race: American Indian, Alaska Native	18.305	19.014	0.963	0.336
Child race: Black, African American	-14.965	15.841	-0.945	0.345
Child race: Hispanic	-0.200	7.806	-0.026	0.980
Child race: Multiracial	-18.383	11.847	-1.552	0.121
Child race: Native Hawaiian, Pacific Islander	-53.407	23.651	-2.258	0.024
Any supported abuse allegation	-25.551	7.906	-3.232	0.001*
Number of perpetrators	16.890	4.976	3.395	0.001*
Number of placements	10.520	1.518	6.928	< 0.001*
Number of goal changes	31.583	3.545	8.908	< 0.001*
COVID-19 restrictions	80.713	10.111	7.982	< 0.001*
Post-Implementation	-81.972	6.854	-11.961	< 0.001*

* Indicates statistically significant results

Discussion

This evaluation sought to determine the impact of bench card implementation on bench card fidelity, hearing quality, the experience of parents and youth in hearings, and child outcomes. Overall, many of the findings for fidelity and hearing quality were mixed with some positive findings and other findings identifying areas for improvement. While youth survey respondents tended to provide positive feedback on their court experience, adult survey respondents were more mixed overall. For child outcomes, we saw an improvement in timely outcomes across the board for permanency, placement in a final setting, and reunification. We saw an overall improvement in reunification in the post-period. We also found cases were significantly shorter in the post-period. We found some differences in results based on factors such as region and hearing type for hearing quality change, and we saw differences in many factors for child outcomes. These findings yield essential insights into uncovering the impact of the bench card and identifying areas of focus for continued quality improvement of hearings in the future.

Hearing Observation Review and Family Surveys

Parent Attendance

The hearing quality analysis findings demonstrated that parent and youth attendance did not increase at hearings after implementing the bench card. This finding indicates there may be more the Utah Courts and DCFS could do to reach this goal. That could be by exploring additional ways to improve the usage of bench card strategies and discussion topics. Still, it may also be worth exploring what efforts outside of the bench card could increase family attendance at hearings. We found that children were more likely to attend review hearings, which could indicate that ensuring children participate in review hearings is a greater focus than disposition hearings.

Bench Card Engagement Strategies

The hearing reviews with the observation tool and adult and youth surveys yielded important information about the fidelity of bench card usage and hearing quality improvement compared to before the bench card. Bench card fidelity after implementation was mixed at both the midpoint and final fidelity assessments, with some items seeing good levels of usage and other items seeing low levels related to the assessed areas of engagement strategies, judicial inquiry of bench card topics, and level of hearing discussion of bench card topics.

Items that reached a high level of fidelity/utilization or more of hearings for mother and father engagement included:

1. Providing the person an opportunity to be heard
2. Speaking directly to the person
3. Addressing the person by name
4. Identifying the next steps for the person (fathers only)
5. Not being heard through attorney only (mothers only)

The top five identified fidelity items also tended to be the most utilized engagement strategies before the bench card, indicating that these strategies may have already been incorporated pre-bench card implementation or are easiest for judges to use. These items represent areas of strength related to fidelity, though usage varied for mothers, fathers, and children. Identifying the next steps reached fidelity for use with fathers only, with use for mothers reaching near fidelity at 68% and children at 28.5% usage. Mothers were least likely to be "heard through attorney only," followed by fathers, then children. Engagement with children did not reach fidelity for any strategy. This finding could indicate that child age plays a role in the level of engagement as it may not always be appropriate for a very young child to participate equally in a hearing compared to an older child. There may also be a limitation in assessing fidelity for children as they were less likely to be present, leading to a smaller sample size for analysis.

Findings were similarly mixed from the hearing quality analysis from the pre to post-implementation periods. Four out of the nine strategies showed significant improvement. The strategies that did not reach significance were at similarly high or low utilization levels before and after bench card utilization. Of the top utilized strategies, we observed significant improvement in four strategies for parents, including:

1. Addressing the person by name (mothers only)
2. Identifying the next steps for the person
3. Asking if the person has questions
4. Asking if they understood the next steps

We found no significant improvement in the use of strategies for children. These findings indicate that the bench card and related training influenced improving the use of these four strategies for parents but not for children. The first two strategies (addressing the person by name and identifying the next steps) also reached a high level of fidelity for parents. The other two (asking if the person had questions and understood the next steps) may still be underutilized, as they were observed in less than 32% of reviewed hearings for parents and children post-implementation.

There were also mixed responses from the adult survey related to parent's understanding of the next steps and asking questions. While a majority of adult survey respondents indicated they understood what happened in court, the case goals, or what they needed to do next (between 57% to 68%), a decent number still indicated they did not have a good understanding of these areas (between 32% to 43%). Some of the other responses from adults indicated that they may not have had a chance to say everything they wanted to say, did not feel heard or understood or did not feel they had input on the case. Many of the top recommendation themes from the adult survey were around improved engagement in these areas. As such, it may be worth exploring how to improve engagement even further related to ensuring parents' understanding of the next steps and providing opportunities for family members to ask questions.

Engagement strategies that were utilized the least related to fidelity included
1. Asking what has gone well since the last hearing
2. Clearly explaining the purpose of the hearing

These strategies had low utilization before and after the hearing showing and showed no significant improvement from pre- to post. For "clearly explaining the purpose of the hearing," we did employ strict criteria in the review process where judges had to go beyond more than simply the type of hearing to meet the criteria for this strategy. While in some cases, family members may not have needed a full explanation, we did not have a way to assess parents' understanding of what would happen in court that day. The adult surveys indicate that most respondents (68%) felt they understood what happened in court, but the remaining 30% were unsure. This finding suggests that there may still be some value in ensuring family understanding by explaining the purpose of the hearing.

The "ask what has gone well since the last hearing" strategy was observed in less than 11% of hearings for all key family members. Perhaps this strategy is less likely to be a priority during hearings as courtroom discussion tends to focus more on improving the areas identified as concerns for the family. Some adult respondents in the survey recommended more focus on acknowledging parents' progress. Since this strategy may prove beneficial if utilized more frequently, we recommend that the Utah Courts and DCFS investigate more into the barriers behind using this engagement strategy.

There were some differences in the use of engagement strategies by region and hearing type, though the majority of models ran for the analysis showed no meaningful differences. For the region, we were more likely to observe Eastern and Western region hearings, with at least one family member being "heard through attorney only," which is a negative trend. The Western

region was less likely to address children by name. No other significant differences were found between regions regarding the use of engagement strategies.

For hearing type, in review or 6-month review hearings, judges were less likely to identify the next steps, explain the purpose of the hearing, or ask the person if they had questions for at least one individual in the family. This could indicate that an assumption may be made that there is more of a shared understanding later in the case process since review and 6-month reviews occur later on compared to disposition hearings. Children were less likely to be "heard through the attorney only" in review hearings, indicating that there may be more emphasis on the child in review compared to disposition hearings.

Bench Card Discussion Topics

We found mixed findings from the analyses of audio reviews and surveys related to judicial inquiry and the level of discussion of courtroom topics. Findings from the surveys also showed similar patterns to what we observed from the reviewed hearings related to courtroom topics. Top areas of discussion in hearings both for judicial inquiry and overall discussion level included:

1. Identifying the next steps and who is responsible
2. Permanency goal efforts since the last hearing
3. Child's placement
4. Child's well-being
5. Efforts and progress to address safety issues

The first two steps related to the next steps and progress towards the permanency goal had high levels of judicial inquiry and discussion before and after the bench card implementation. A high utilization pre-bench card may explain why no significant improvement was detected (as there was little room for improvement). This finding also indicates that these two topics tend to dominate courtroom discussion more naturally and that these topics were already strengths related to discussing important topics before the bench card implementation. Items three, four, and five on the top topics list were discussed less frequently but were mentioned at least briefly in the many hearings, with an average level of one or higher for courtroom discussion. Judges inquired about these three topics in 26% to 36.6% of hearings overall, indicating room for improvement.

Topic items with the lowest judicial inquiry and level of discussion included (from highest to lowest):

1. Child's education
2. Efforts to place with kinship/relative

3. Concurrent goal efforts
4. Barriers to addressing safety issues
5. Concurrent goal appropriateness
6. Efforts to maintain connections

Judges inquired on these topic items in less than 21% of reviewed hearings, and the level of discussion was less than an average of one, indicating that these topics may not have been regularly discussed in hearings. In presenting mid-project feedback to judges, we got some feedback from judges about assessing the relevance of each topic to the current hearing. While we did account for the applicability of topics, we were limited in our ability to do so for our review of court hearings as we did not have all the same information related to a family case that was available to the judges, attorneys, and caseworkers in the courtroom such as context from prior hearings or information contained in the court report. It is worth examining further the extent to which these topics should be discussed regularly in hearings, as a 75% benchmark may be too high for some topics. That being said, topic relevance is only one explanation for why these topics may not be discussed as frequently; there may be other barriers to discussing these topics, such as perceived discomfort in discussing topics such as the concurrent goal or perceived barriers to focusing on building a child's existing relationships with siblings and other important connections. Since these were all topics identified as important during the process of developing the bench card, we recommend future investigation into the barriers to the discussion of the least discussed topic items to explore how to improve the discussion of these topics.

While most topic items did not reach the benchmark of 75% for fidelity, most of the bench card topic items improved in level of discussion from pre- to post, which is a sign that bench card implementation had an impact in enhancing hearing quality by improving the level of discussion of bench card topics overall. Only two items (related to child safety) significantly improved in judicial inquiry from pre- to post. Findings from judicial inquiry and level of discussion for fidelity and pre to post-improvement tended to mirror one another as the topics with higher judicial inquiry also had higher levels of discussion. These findings reflect that judges are a driving factor in influencing courtroom discussion. However, since we found much more significant improvement in the overall discussion level, other court members are likely incorporating bench card principles beyond the judge's efforts alone. Ten of the thirteen topic items we assessed showed significantly improved discussion levels post-implementation. This finding reflects the importance of all courtroom participants in improving the quality of courtroom discussion.

There were some differences in the discussion of bench card topics by region and hearing type. Southwest region had a higher level of discussion for the two items related to child safety. In

contrast, Western, Eastern, and Northern had lower levels of discussion for between one to three topics, respectively (related to concurrent goals and parent-child visitation). Since the majority of topics showed no regional differences by topic, it is difficult to discern how meaningful these differences are overall. We would recommend further investigation to yield greater insights into region differences by topic.

Review hearings and/or 6-month review hearings had lower levels of concurrent goal discussion, efforts to place with kin, and identifying next steps but higher levels of discussion related to child well-being topic items, parent-child visitation, and barriers to safety. Since review and 6-month review hearings occur later in the course of an out-of-home case compared to disposition hearings, there may be some trends in shifting focus over time that may explain some of these trends. For instance, it may be more likely that courtroom personnel feel that some topics are less relevant or that individuals are more likely to have a shared understanding of some topics later in the case process. There may also be a natural tendency to focus more on child well-being and parent-child visitation later in the case.

Non-Bench Card Related Survey Feedback

Some of the responses to the surveys provided open-ended feedback that did not directly relate to items on the bench card. From the adult survey, those included improved sensitivity, including empathy, incorporating trauma-informed approaches, and being mindful of assumptions or bias about parents, and Improved investigation, including exploring the truth of all claims and exploring all sides of a story. From the youth survey those included making the court experience more fun and less stressful. While not directly related to the points on the bench card, it may still be valuable to consider this feedback.

Child Outcomes Analysis

To assess change in child outcomes from pre- to post-implementation, we looked at four outcomes: permanent placement, final placement in a family-like setting, reunification, and the length of the out-of-home case. The first three outcomes are related to one another as placement in a family-like setting and reunification are subsets of permanent placement. We examined those three outcomes in three ways: overall (by case end), time to permanency, and permanency within one year of case start. This allowed us to not only look at outcomes at the end of the case but also to see if outcomes were occurring sooner in the post-implementation period for the bench card. Both permanent placement and placement in a family-like setting did not show improvement overall in the post-period. This is likely due to the fact that in both the pre- and the post, over 90% of cases obtained these outcomes by case end.

In examining timely permanency and permanency within one year, however, we did see a change in the post-period. Post-implementation cases were 42.2% more likely to have permanent placement and 94% more likely to have permanent placement within one year than pre-implementation cases. Similarly, for final placement in a family-like setting, post-implementation cases were 89.1% more likely to have a final placement in a family-like setting within one year than pre-implementation cases. In addition, post-implementation cases were 16.2% more likely to have reunification by the end of the case, 60.2% more likely to have reunification within one year, and were shorter by 82 days, on average, than pre-implementation cases. These are positive findings that indicate DCFS and the Utah Courts are improving in their desired goals to improve timely child outcomes. These findings are promising and support the continued use of the bench card. The Utah Courts and DCFS should support continued efforts to improve the utilization of bench card strategies and topics in court hearings.

One limitation of the study design is that we did not have a comparison group; this does make it difficult to isolate the effect of the bench card alone as the sole contributor to the improved findings, as other interventions or policy changes implemented at the same time could also have an impact. It may be worth considering other changes implemented by the Utah Courts and/or DCFS that may have also contributed positively to these findings. Despite this limitation, improved outcomes after implementation provide promising evidence to support the hearing quality bench card.

We found some differences by region in the analysis of case outcomes. Northern and Western regions had some mixed findings, which showed better outcomes in some areas and worse outcomes in other areas compared to the Salt Lake Valley (the reference category). Cases in the Northern region were 12% less likely to have permanent placement overall, 17.7% less likely to have permanent placement within one year, 21.5% less likely to have final placement in a family-like setting, and were 32 days longer, on average. However, cases in the Northern region were three times more likely to have final placement in a family-like setting by case end. Cases in the Western region were 12.2% less likely to have permanent placement overall, 23.7% less likely to have permanent placement within one year, 27% less likely to have final placement in a family-like setting within one year, and were, on average, 25 days longer. However, cases in the Western region were 32.4% more likely to have reunification overall compared to those in the Salt Lake Valley Region.

The Southwest region stood out positively for some of the outcomes. Cases in the Southwest region were 2.7 times more likely to have final placement in a family-like setting, 57% more likely to have reunification, and 85.4% more likely to have reunification within one year. The

Eastern region only stood out as having a longer length of case on average by about 29 days. While the reasons behind these regional differences were unknown, it may be valuable for the Utah Courts and DCFS to examine factors why regions stand out in one way or another. For instance, the Southwest region had one of the judges included in the pilot study; perhaps this helped the region incorporate bench card principles more easily.

We also found some differences in various outcomes by race and ethnicity. Cases involving American Indian/Alaska Native children, Black/African American Children, or Multiracial children stood out as having worse outcomes in some areas compared to White children (the reference group). Cases involving American Indian or Alaska Native children were 23.7% less likely to have a permanent placement, 46.4% less likely to have permanent placement within one year, 77% less likely to have final placement in a family-like setting, 45.8% less likely to have final placement in a family-like setting within one year, and 54.6% less likely to have reunification within one year. Similarly, cases involving Black or African American children were 67.2% less likely to have final placement in a family-like setting and 35.8% less likely to have reunification. Cases involving Multiracial children were 61.5% less likely to have overall final placement in a family-like setting. It is not unusual across the nation for American Indian/Alaska Native children and Black/African American children to stand out as having worse outcomes. Future evaluation should study the experiences of children and families in these racial groups to better understand how to improve their outcomes.

On the other hand, cases involving Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander children were 40.1% more likely to have permanent placement, 2.4 times more likely to have reunification, 2.7 times more likely to have reunification within one year, and were 53 days shorter, on average, than cases. There may be some positive protective factors in these communities that could be contributing to these outcomes. In addition, there were no statistically significant differences in outcomes with cases involving Hispanic children.

Our analysis revealed several other significant factors influencing case outcomes for children in out-of-home care. Child age was found to be an important factor, with each additional year in age associated with a 23.2% decrease in the odds of final placement in a family-like setting, a 1.35% reduction in the odds of reunification, and an average case length reduction of three days. Older children may present more complex needs or have extended histories within the child welfare system, potentially contributing to the challenges in achieving family-like placements or reunification.

Regarding supported allegations, each additional allegation increased the odds of permanent placement within one year by 7.4%. Specifically, supported abuse allegations made cases 19.5%

more likely to achieve permanent placement, 24.3% more likely to have family-like placement within one year, and shortened the average case length by 26 days. In contrast, supported dependency allegations decreased the likelihood of permanent placement within one year by 33.6% and decreased the likelihood of family-like placement within one year by 24.3%.

Prior DCFS case history was another important factor related to prior CPS cases, out-of-home cases, and voluntary in-home services. Each prior CPS case was linked to a 9% reduction in the odds of permanent placement within one year, a 9.2% decrease in the odds of family-like placement, and a 5.7% decrease in reunification likelihood, with case lengths increasing by an average of seven days. Conversely, each additional out-of-home case increased the odds of permanent placement within one year by 29.7% but significantly reduced the likelihood of family-like placement by 48.7%. Previous voluntary in-home services improved reunification odds, while court-ordered in-home services increased the chances of family-like placements within one year.

Perpetrator involvement also played a role. Cases with more perpetrators were less likely to result in permanent or family-like placements, particularly if the perpetrator was a guardian, adoptive, or foster parent. In addition, cases involving a relative as the perpetrator were 15.7% less likely to have a permanent placement, while those with an unknown perpetrator were 81.3% less likely to achieve a family-like placement.

Additional placements during a case negatively impacted outcomes, reducing the likelihood of permanent placement, family-like settings, and case closure within one year, though they were associated with a 15.2% increase in reunification odds. Similarly, each goal change reduced the likelihood of permanent or family-like placements, reduced reunification, and extended the average case length by 32 days.

Finally, cases occurring during COVID-19 restrictions in 2021 faced substantial challenges, with reductions in permanent placements within one year (52%), family-like settings (51%), and reunifications (20.3%), along with an average increase of 81 days in case length compared to cases outside the pandemic period.

The significant influence of many covariates reflects the fact that many factors contribute, either positively or negatively, to child outcomes related to permanency, placement in a family-like setting, reunification, and case length. This suggests that a comprehensive approach to improving outcomes and the experience of families involved with the child welfare system could benefit from consideration of many factors.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of this evaluation, we developed the following recommendations for the next steps related to improving hearing quality:

1. Continue to support the use of the hearing quality bench card in court hearings to support positive outcomes for children.
2. Improve the usage of and explore barriers to the usage of lesser-used bench card engagement strategies, including:
    a. Discuss what has gone well since the last hearing
    b. Ask if the person has questions or input
    c. Ask if the person understands the next steps
    d. Clearly explain the purpose of hearing
3. Improve the discussion of bench card topics with lower levels of discussion and judicial inquiry. This will likely include supporting bench card topic discussion with all key members of the courtroom, including judges, attorneys, and caseworkers. The topics with the most room for improved discussion include:
    a. Concurrent goal discussion (hearing reviews and adult surveys)
    b. Maintaining connections and exploring kinship placement (hearing reviews and adult surveys)
    c. Barriers to safety
    d. Child's education
4. Explore what other measures implemented by Utah courts or DCFS during the time of bench card implementation that may have also contributed to improved child outcomes to yield greater insight.
5. Explore further the reasons behind differences by region, hearing type, and other factors that were found to have an impact on child outcomes positively and negatively. Find ways to strengthen protective factors and reduce risk factors.
6. Investigate additional strategies beyond the bench card to help improve parent and child attendance at hearings.

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Appendix A. Hearing Quality Checklist

HEARING CHECKLIST

OPENING STATEMENT

- Explain type and purpose of the hearing, including any relevant permanency time frames
- Ask parents/caregivers and children: What is something that has gone well since the last hearing
- Are the right people present? Who is missing, and if so, why? Are all parties identified, located, and notified?

ENGAGEMENT OF PARTIES

- Address parents by name
- Provide parents and children with an opportunity to be heard (not only through attorney)
- Use understandable language

SAFETY & CONDITIONS TO RETURN HOME (ONLY REUNIFICATION)

- What are the specific safety issues preventing the child(ren) from returning home today?
- What is being done to address the safety issues? What progress has been made? Any barriers?

FAMILY TIME

- How is family visitation going?
- Can there be unsupervised visits with the parents? If not, what is the plan to move to unsupervised visits?
- Are the siblings placed together? If not, why not and are they spending time together?

PERMANENCY GOAL

- What has been accomplished towards the permanency goal since the last hearing? Any barriers?

CONCURRENT GOAL

- Is the concurrent goal still appropriate?
- What efforts have been made towards the concurrent goal since the last hearing?

KINSHIP

- Is the child placed with appropriate relatives? If not, what efforts have been made to identify and place the child with appropriate relatives since the last hearing?
- What efforts have been made to maintain relative connections?

CHILD WELL-BEING

- Does the child have any unmet needs (i.e. physical, social, educational, mental health)? If so, what is being done or needs to be done?
- *Maintain child's significant connections (i.e. cultural and community connections, social/emotional connections, school, sports, extracurricular activities) and refer to Education Court Report*

NEXT STEPS

- What must be accomplished before the next hearing? Who is responsible for what?

Appendix B. Hearing Observation Tool

Hearing Quality Project - Hearing Observation Tool		Coder	

Case No.		Hearing Continued? Y N	Judge		Hearing Type SH PT ADJ DISP 6R R
Hearing Date		Reason Given to Continue Hearing	Judicial District		Other Hearing Type
Hearing Length					
					Permanency Goal? R A G IP
Parties Present					Concurrent Goal? R A G IP NA

Parties Present					
Mother	Y NA	Caseworker	Y NA	Relative	Y NA
Father	Y NA	AAG	Y NA	-->	M P UD
Child	Y NA	GAL	Y NA	Interpreter	Y NA
Guardian	Y NA	Mother Atty	Y NA	Tribal Rep.	Y NA
Foster Parent	Y NA	Father Atty	Y NA	Tx Provider	Y NA
Kin Caregiver	Y NA			Other	

Any discussion about missing parties?	Y N
Out of home caregiver given opportunity to be heard?	Y N

Engagement – Did the judge...	Mother	Father	Child
Clearly explain purpose of hearing?	Y N NA	Y N NA	Y N NA
Speak directly to the person?	Y N NA	Y N NA	Y N NA
Address the person by name?	Y N NA	Y N NA	Y N NA
Ask if the person has any questions?	Y N NA	Y N NA	Y N NA
Identify the next steps to the person?	Y N NA	Y N NA	Y N NA
Provide the person an opportunity to be heard?	Y N NA	Y N NA	Y N NA
--> Heard through attorney only?	Y N NA	Y N NA	Y N NA
Ask what is something that has gone well since the last hearing?	Y N NA	Y N NA	Y N NA

Judicial Findings & Orders	
Reasonable Efforts Finding	Y N
Active Efforts Finding	Y N NA
ICWA Applicability Finding	Y N NA
Contrary to Welfare Finding	Y N
RE Finding - detailed finding?	Y N

Category	Item		Judicial Inquiry	Discussion 0= No discussion, 1=Statement, 2=>Statement
Parties Present	Are the right people present?		Y N	0 1 2
Safety	Preventing the child from returning home today?	NA	Y N	0 1 2
Safety	Efforts/Progress to address safety issues	NA	Y N	0 1 2
Safety	Barriers to address safety issues	NA	Y N	0 1 2
Safety	Conditions to return home?	NA	Y N	0 1 2
Family Time	Parent-child visitation	NA	Y N	0 1 2
Family Time	Discussion of why supervision required?	NA	Y N	0 1 2
Family Time	Sibling visitation	NA	Y N	0 1 2
Permanency Plan	Permanency goal/efforts since last hearing		Y N	0 1 2
Permanency Plan	Concurrent goal/efforts since last hearing	NA	Y N	0 1 2
Permanency Plan	Barriers to achieving permanency		Y N	0 1 2
Well-Being/Kinship	Current placement meets child's needs	NA	Y N	0 1 2
Well-Being/Kinship	Child's educational needs	NA	Y N	0 1 2
Well-Being/Kinship	Child's physical health/development		Y N	0 1 2
Well-Being/Kinship	Child's mental health needs		Y N	0 1 2
Well-Being/Kinship	Child - other well-being		Y N	0 1 2
Well-Being/Kinship	Possibility of kinship/relative placement	NA	Y N	0 1 2
Well-Being/Kinship	Maintain relative significant connections		Y N	0 1 2
Well-Being/Kinship	Maintain significant other connections		Y N	0 1 2
Next Steps	Identified next steps/who is responsible		Y N	0 1 2

NOTES:

Appendix C. Youth Engagement Survey

 We would like to hear about how you were treated the last time you were in court. Your answers will be used to help make court better. Your answers will not affect your case in any way, and no one will know how you answered.

 Thank you for taking time to complete this survey.

_____

1 How old are you?

      _____

2 How did you attend court?

     ○ In-person

     ○ Virtually (using computer, phone, or tablet)

3 Was this your first time attending court?

     ○ Yes

     ○ No

 4 Did the judge explain to you what court was about?

     ○ Yes

     ○ No

5 Did the judge ask you how you are doing?

     ○ Yes

     ○ No

6. How was court?

     ○ Very Bad

○ Bad

○ Neither Bad or Good

○ Good

○ Very Good

7 Did you get to talk in court?

○ Yes

○ No

8 What else would you like to tell us about the last time you were in court?

_____

9 What could make court better?

_____

Appendix D. Adult Engagement Survey

We are interested in your opinion of how you were treated the last time you attended court. Your answers to these questions will be used to help improve the court system.

Responses to the questions are completely anonymous. The information you choose to provide cannot be connected back to you, and your answers will not affect your case in any way. The Social Research Institute at the University of Utah is responsible for storing and analyzing responses and will only share an overview of the results with the Utah Courts.

We appreciate you taking 10-15 minutes to complete this survey.

_____

1 Date of most recent hearing (mm/dd/yyyy)

_____

2 Please select your role in the case:

○ Mother

○ Father

○ Other (please specify) _____

3. How did you attend the hearing?

○ In-person

○ Virtually (using computer, phone, or tablet)

4. Who is the judge in your case?

_____

5. Thinking about your most recent court hearing, please indicate your level of agreement with each statement below

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
I had a chance to say everything I wanted to say	○	○	○	○
The judge listened to me	○	○	○	○
The judge spoke directly to me	○	○	○	○
The judge treated me with respect	○	○	○	○
I was given the opportunity to ask questions	○	○	○	○
I had input in the decision for my case	○	○	○	○
The judge explained to me the reason for his/her decision	○	○	○	○

6. Please indicate your level of agreement with each statement below

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
I understand what happened in court	○	○	○	○
I understand what I am supposed to do next	○	○	○	○
The court hearing discussed challenges and potential solutions	○	○	○	○
I understand what needs to happen before my child/children return home	○	○	○	○
I understand what the permanency goal (primary plan) for my child/children is	○	○	○	○
I understand what the concurrent goal (back-up plan) for my child/children is	○	○	○	○

7. Were the following topics discussed during your most recent court hearing?

	Yes	No	I don't know
Permanency goal (primary plan for my child/children)	○	○	○
Concurrent goal (back up plan for my child/children)	○	○	○
Safety issues in my home preventing child/children from returning home	○	○	○
Visitation (parent-child time) with my child/children	○	○	○
Possibility of having my child/children stay in a relative's home	○	○	○
Possibility of having my child/children visit with relatives	○	○	○
How my child is doing	○	○	○

8. Did you speak during your most recent court hearing?

○ Yes

○ No

9 Will you come to your next court hearing?

○ Yes

○ No

10 What else would you like us to know about your most recent experience in court?

_____

11 What suggestions do you have for how to make court better?

_____

Appendix E. Hearing Quality Analysis Tables

Regression Estimates for Attendance

Table E1. Attendance with Mothers, Fathers, Children Pre- to Post-Change

Engagement Strategy	Pre to Post	Region (Compared to Salt Lake Valley)				Hearing Type (Compared to Disposition)	
	Post	Eastern	Northern	Southwest	Western	Review	6 Month Review
Was the mother present?	-0.31	-0.18	0.28	-0.003	0.53	-0.21	0.02
Was the father present?	0.34	0.28	0.25	0.45	0.58	-0.29	0.18
Was the child present?	0.43	0.38	0.32	0.56	-0.89	1.34*	0.66

Significant finding at P<.05

Regression Estimates for Use of Engagement Strategies

Table E2. Engagement Strategies with Mothers Pre- to Post-Change

Engagement Strategy	Pre to Post	Region (Compared to Salt Lake Valley)				Hearing Type (Compared to Disposition)	
	Post	Eastern	Northern	Southwest	Western	Review	6 Month Review
Clearly explain purpose of hearing.	0.86	-0.03	-1.16	-0.31	0.13	**-1.50***	-0.54
Speak directly to the person.	-0.23	-0.55	0.36	0.07	-0.64	-0.02	0.34
Address the person by name.	**1.06***	0.83	-0.32	0.31	-0.58	-0.28	0.48
Ask if the person has any questions.	**0.77***	1.00	0.45	1.04	0.56	**-2.17***	**-1.42***
Identify the next steps to the person.	**0.60***	0.29	-0.10	0.19	-0.18	**-0.80***	-0.35
Ask if the person understands the next steps.	**0.75***	-0.21	-0.89	0.28	-0.27	-0.73	**-0.98***
Provide the person an opportunity to be heard.	-0.03	-1.01	0.33	-0.12	-0.66	-0.14	0.78
--> Heard through attorney only.	-0.34	**1.16***	0.21	-0.33	0.67	0.44	-0.34
Ask what has gone well since the last hearing.	*NA*	*NA*	*NA*	*NA*	*NA*	*NA*	*NA*

Significant finding at P<.05
Note: If the entire row is NA, it indicates that the sample size for the outcome was too small to run a model.

Table E3. Engagement Strategies with Fathers Pre- to Post-Change

Engagement Strategy	Pre to Post	Region (Compared to Salt Lake Valley)				Hearing Type (Compared to Disposition)	
	Post	*Eastern*	*Northern*	*Southwest*	*Western*	*Review*	*6 Month Review*
Clearly explain purpose of hearing.	1.00	1.81	-0.23	1.06	0.68	-1.23	-0.55
Speak directly to the person.	-0.43	0.45	18.12	1.41	-0.41	-0.71	-0.45
Address the person by name.	0.56	0.82	0.55	1.45	-0.45	-0.53	0.41
Ask if the person has any questions.	**1.18***	1.3	0.83	1.55	0.52	-1.15	-0.73
Identify the next steps to the person.	**1.09***	-0.04	0.62	-0.40	-0.12	**-1.25***	**-1.05***
Ask if the person understands the next steps.	**1.84***	1.15	0.39	0.53	-0.50	-0.79	-0.69
Provide the person an opportunity to be heard.	-0.08	0.10	1.32	1.10	-0.08	-0.75	0.28
--> Heard through attorney only.	-0.50	-0.25	-0.75	-0.91	-0.15	0.42	-0.26
Ask what has gone well since the last hearing.	*NA*	*NA*	*NA*	*NA*	*NA*	*NA*	*NA*

*Significant finding at P<.05
Note: If the entire row is NA, it indicates that the sample size for the outcome was too small to run a model.

Table E4. Engagement Strategies with Children Pre- to Post-Change

Engagement Strategy	Pre to Post	Region (Compared to Salt Lake Valley)				Hearing Type (Compared to Disposition)	
	Post	Eastern	Northern	Southwest	Western	Review	6 Month Review
Clearly explain purpose of hearing.	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
Speak directly to the person.	-0.61	1.02	1.04	18.07	-1.93	0.71	1.23
Address the person by name.	-0.01	-1.28	-0.18	17.13	**-3.52***	1.37	0.93
Ask if the person has any questions.	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
Identify the next steps to the person.	-0.01	-0.77	-1.20	-0.74	-1.76	-0.93	-1.14
Ask if the person understands the next steps.	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
Provide the person an opportunity to be heard.	-.74	1.01	0.41	18.08	-0.88	0.40	1.18
--> Heard through attorney only.	-0.18	-0.39	-0.31	-1.04*	**1.89***	**-1.44***	-0.79
Ask what has gone well since the last hearing.	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA

Significant finding at P<.05
Note: If the entire row is NA, it indicates that the sample size for the outcome was too small to run a model.

Regression Estimates for Judicial Inquiry

Table E5. Judicial Inquiry Pre to Post- Change

Topic Item	Pre to Post	Region (Reference: Salt Lake Valley)				Hearing Type (Reference: Disposition)	
	Post	Eastern	Northern	Southwest	Western	Review	6 Month Review
Efforts/Progress to address safety issues	**0.81***	1.03	0.20	**1.36***	0.51	-0.09	-0.14
Barriers to addressing safety issues	**1.09***	1.49	0.04	**1.99***	0.54	0.83	1.03
Permanency goal/efforts since the last hearing	-0.14	-0.14	0.04	0.06	-0.08	-0.34	-0.08
Concurrent goal/efforts since last hearing	-0.01	0.004	-1.60	1.28	0.16	**-2.65***	**-3.54***
Is the concurrent goal appropriate?	0.27	0.25	-0.59	0.86	0.21	**-2.20***	**-3.10***
Parent-child visitation	0.17	**-1.16***	**-1.30***	-0.26	**-1.61***	0.75	**0.95***
Sibling visitation	0.74	-1.46	-17.09	-0.95	-0.06	-0.89	0.29
Child's placement	0.21	0.16	0.34	0.74	0.20	0.25	-0.13
Child's education	0.66	0.25	0.43	0.66	-0.77	0.69	**1.01***
Child's other well-being	0.49	0.55	0.59	1.23*	0.08	0.81*	0.56
Efforts to place with kinship/relative	-0.13	-0.06	-0.22	-0.11	-0.40	-0.94	**-1.22***
Efforts to maintain connections	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
Identified next steps/who is responsible	-0.49	-2.08*	-0.01	-1.14	-1.90	-0.97	-1.10

Significant finding at P<.05
Note: If the entire row is NA, it indicates that the sample size for the outcome was too small to run a model.

Regression Estimates for Level of Discussion

Table E6. Level of Discussion Pre to Post- Change

Topic Item	Pre to Post	Region (Compared to Salt Lake Valley)				Hearing Type (Compared to Disposition)	
	Post	Eastern	Northern	Southwest	Western	Review	6 Month Review
Efforts/Progress to address safety issues	0.55*	0.14	0.01	0.45*	0.29	-0.02	-0.18
Barriers to addressing safety issues	0.34*	0.23	-0.06	0.42*	0.10	0.12	0.24*
Permanency goal/efforts since the last hearing	0.14	-0.16	-0.07	0.001	0.08	-0.14	0.004
Concurrent goal/efforts since last hearing	0.29*	-0.30*	-0.28*	0.08	0.10	-0.72*	-0.71*
Is the concurrent goal appropriate?	0.20*	-0.22	-0.32*	-0.12	-0.08	-0.57*	-0.53*
Parent-child visitation	0.30*	-0.72*	-0.58*	-0.37	-0.58*	0.40*	0.41*
Sibling visitation	0.25	-0.35	-0.26	-0.49	-0.04	0.07	-0.07
Child's placement	0.30*	-0.28	0.03	0.10	0.16	0.47*	0.41*
Child's education	0.32*	0.07	0.18	-0.08	-0.16	0.53*	0.38*
Child's other well-being	0.32*	-0.06	0.06	0.17	-0.18	.63*	0.39*
Efforts to place with kinship/relative	-0.03	-0.03	0.03	-0.08	-0.13	-0.34*	-.28
Efforts to maintain connections	0.19*	-0.07	-0.02	-.16	0.08	-0.02	0.02
Identified next steps/who is responsible	0.33*	-0.18	-0.15	0.07	-0.05	-0.28*	-0.16

Significant finding at P<.05
Note: If the entire row is NA, it indicates that the sample size for the outcome was too small to run a model.