



2022 REPORT TO THE GOVERNOR AND THE
LEGISLATURE, PURSUANT TO SECTION 112-A (3)
OF THE DOMESTIC RELATIONS LAW, CONCERNING EXPEDITED
CALENDARING OF ADOPTION PROCEEDINGS

HON. TAMIKO AMAKER

Acting Chief Administrative Judge

January, 2023

INTRODUCTION

This report is submitted by the Chief Administrative Judge pursuant to chapter 294 of the Laws of 1993, which added Section 112-a to the Domestic Relations Law. Chapter 294, effective September 19, 1993, required the Chief Administrator of the Courts to promulgate court rules to expedite the calendaring and disposition of authorized agency adoptions in Family and Surrogate's Courts and to submit annual reports to the Governor and Legislature regarding the implementation and impact of the rules. This report documents implementation of the rules in the Family and Surrogate's Courts for the calendar year 2022.¹

SUMMARY OF THE PROVISIONS OF SECTION 112-A OF THE DOMESTIC RELATIONS LAW AND IMPLEMENTING COURT RULES

In an effort to expedite adoptions filed by authorized agencies, the Legislature, in Chapter 294 of the Laws of 1993, added a new Section 112-a to the Domestic Relations Law. That section provides that an adoption proceeding is deemed "filed" upon receipt by the Clerk of the Surrogate's or Family Court of the documents required by statute and court rule,² as well as an "affidavit of readiness" from the petitioning agency's attorney. D.R.L. §112-a(1).

Once these documents are filed, the Surrogate's or Family Court is required to

¹ Data covers the 13 terms of 2022, starting on January 3, 2022 and ending on January 2, 2023.

² Domestic Relations Law §§112(2), (3), (5) and (7), as implemented in Section 207.55 of the *Uniform Rules of the Surrogate's Court* and Section 205.53 of the *Uniform Rules for the Family Court*, set forth the documents required to be submitted in an adoption proceeding, in addition to the affidavit of readiness required by Domestic Relations Law §112-a(1).

schedule the proceeding for a "review...to determine if there is adequate basis for approving the adoption." D.R.L. §112-a(2). If an adequate basis is found, the Court is required to direct the appearance of the adoptive parents and child for approval of the adoption; if not, the Court "shall direct such further hearings, submissions or appearances as may be required, and the proceedings shall be adjourned as required for such purposes." D.R.L. §§112-a(2)(a),(b). The review, appearances for approval of the adoption and any adjournments for further hearings, submissions or reviews are required to take place within time frames established by court rules. D.R.L. §112-a(3). The Chief Administrator is required to report annually to the Governor and Legislature "on the implementation of such rules and their impact upon adoptions from authorized agencies." *Id.*

This legislation was part of a broader initiative to encourage and expedite the adoption of children by foster parents with whom they have formed bonds. Chapter 294 of the Laws of 1993 also amended Sections 383-c and 384-b of the Social Service Law to require attorneys for authorized agencies to notify prospective adoptive parents promptly of their rights to commence adoption proceedings upon court approval of voluntary surrenders of children and transfers of guardianship and custody through termination of parental rights, respectively. S.S.L. §§383-c(8), 384-b(10). The agencies are directed to advise prospective adoptive parents of the procedures for adoption and cooperate "in the provision of necessary documentation." *Id.* The vast majority of prospective adoptive parents approved by authorized agencies for the adoption of children -- generally more than 90% -- are caring for such children as foster parents.

The Chief Administrative Judge promulgated rules for the Family and Surrogate's Court to implement Chapter 294, effective September 22, 1993, which generally establish a 90-day time frame for completion of authorized agency adoptions, absent adjournments for extenuating circumstances. Section 205.59 of the *Uniform Rules for the Family Court* and Section 207.62 of the *Uniform Rules for the Surrogate's Court* require that the initial review by the court to determine the adequacy of the petition and required documentation, including the affidavit of readiness, shall occur within 60 days of the filing of the documents. If the documentation is deemed adequate and the petition is deemed ready for approval, the court is directed to schedule the appearance of the adoptive parent(s) and child within 30 days of the review. If the petition is not ready for finalization, the court must specify what further hearings, submissions or appearances are necessary and adjourn the proceedings "as required for such purposes." 22 N.Y.C.R.R. §§205.59, 207.62.

SURVEY OF FAMILY AND SURROGATE'S COURT PRACTICES

Although the continued pandemic has impeded the judiciary's efforts to process the full complement of agency adoptions statewide on an expedited basis, the experience of the Family and Surrogate's Courts in 2022 once again underscored the effectiveness of the calendaring rules in assuring timely completion of adoptions once the required documentation has been filed. As summarized below, a survey of Family and Surrogate's Courts in all 13 Judicial Districts revealed no problems in judicial compliance with the rules, although some problems persist with respect to incomplete filings by attorneys for prospective adoptive parents and agencies, as well as delays occasioned by the need to obtain up-to-date criminal history, medical and child abuse registry information. As summarized in the following chart, reflecting significant productivity increases over calendar year 2021, 1484 agency adoption petitions were filed and 1334 were finalized during the 13 terms of calendar year 2022 in

Family and Surrogate’s Courts statewide. Notwithstanding the challenges facing the courts as they recover from the effects of the pandemic, 96.63% of the adoption petitions filed were in compliance with the requirement that agency adoption filings be reviewed by court staff within 60 days. In data exceeding the percentage in the pre-pandemic 2019 calendar year; 37.55% of the finalized petitions were able to be completed within 30 days of the staff review. In an improvement over both calendar years 2019 and 2021, 31.03% of the adoptions finalized had been pending in excess of 90 days prior to finalization.

**Expedited Adoptions Report: Terms 1-13, 2022 (Jan. 3, 2022-Jan. 2, 2023)
SUMMARY: ALL DISTRICTS**

DISTRICT	# Agency Adoptions Filed	#Agency Adoptions Finalized	# Agency Adoptions Reviewed by Court Staff Within 60 Days of Filing	# Agency Adoptions Finalized Within 30 Days of Staff Review	# Agency Adoption Finalizations Delayed Beyond 90 Days From Filing Due to Missing Documentation
NYC: 1, 2, 11, 12 AND 13	543	477	499	25	209
THIRD	70	73	69	29	22
FOURTH	163	153	153	124	29
FIFTH	144	135	144	92	27
SIXTH	90	68	90	45	31
SEVENTH	125	119	115	88	31
EIGHTH	204	169	204	21	17
NINTH	93	81	108	26	40
TENTH	52	59	52	51	8
TOTAL	1484	1334	1484	501	414

The following charts provide information by county, court (Surrogate’s and Family Courts) and judicial district:

**Expedited Adoptions Report: Terms 1-13, 2022 (Jan. 3, 2022 - Jan. 2, 2023)
Judicial District: New York City (1st, 2nd, 11th, 12th+ 13th Jud. Districts)**

COUNTY	# Agency Adoptions Filed	#Agency Adoptions Finalized	# Agency Adoptions Reviewed by Court Staff Within 60 Days of Filing	# Agency Adoptions Finalized Within 30 Days of Staff Review	# Agency Adoption Finalizations Delayed Beyond 90 Days From Filing Due to Missing Documentation*
<u>Bronx County</u> Family	169 0	153 0	163 0	2 0	77 0
<u>Kings Co.</u> Family Surrogate's	126 1	108 0	94 1	0 0	55 0
<u>NY County</u> Family Surrogate's	114 5	106 2	113 1	8 1	35 1
<u>Queens Co.</u> Family Surrogate's	96 0	80 0	95 0	13 0	33 0
<u>Richmond Co.</u> Family Surrogate's	32 0	28 0	32 0	1 0	8 0
TOTAL: NYC	543	477	499	25	209

* **Most frequent reason(s) for delay in finalizing adoption:** NYC Family Court reported delays in submission by attorneys of updates on medical information and home studies and of State Central Registry and criminal history clearances.. NY County Surrogate's Court reported delays by attorneys despite reminders from the Court, as well as pandemic-related delays.

Snapshot NYC-wide [Agency Adoptions Pending Jan. 2, 2023]: 219 (NYC Fam. Ct.); 1 (NY Co. Surr. Ct.)

Adoption Initiatives: --NY Co. Surr. Ct.: expediting fingerprinting to obtain criminal history reports.

- **NYC Family Court:** Adoption Days, as part of National Adoption Month, were convened in Nov., 2022, in Family Courts in Kings and Queens Counties, where 30 and 16 adoptions were finalized, respectively. In Kings, children were given framed star maps depicting the alignment of the stars on the day of their adoptions, as well as personal notes from the Supervising Judge, and in Queens, banners and balloons in the courthouse marked the festivities. The Administrative Judge marked Adoption Month at the NYC ACS program and the court's monthly newsletter highlighted the importance of adoption as a permanency option with photos and data. .

**Expedited Adoptions Report: Terms 1-13, 2022 (Jan. 3, 2022 - Jan. 2, 2023)
Third Judicial District**

COUNTY	#Agency Adoptions Filed	#Agency Adoptions Finalized	# Agency Adoptions Reviewed by Court Staff Within 60 Days of Filing	# Agency Adoptions Finalized Within 30 Days of Staff Review	# Agency Adoption Finalizations Delayed Beyond 90 Days From Filing Due to Missing Documentation*
<u>Albany Co.</u> Family Surrogate's	17 1	23 1	17 1	0 1	4 0
<u>Columbia Co.</u> Family Surrogate's	5 0	6 0	5 0	3 0	5 0
<u>Greene Co.</u> Family Surrogate's	3 0	2 0	3 0	2 0	1 0
<u>Rensselaer Co.</u> Family Surrogate's	9 0	7 0	9 0	2 0	2 0
<u>Schoharie Co.</u> Family Surrogate's	13 0	12 0	12 0	12 0	0 0
<u>Sullivan Co.</u> Family Surrogate's	10 0	7 0	10 0	4 0	5 0
<u>Ulster Co.</u> Family Surrogate's	12 0	15 0	12 0	0 0	5 0
TOTAL	70	79	69	29	22

* **Most frequent reason(s) for delay in finalizing adoption:** Missing or incorrect paperwork from local Depts. of Social Services and adoptive parents' attorneys.

Snapshot [Agency Adoptions Pending as of Jan. 2, 2022: 30 [Albany Family Ct: 2; Rensselaer Family Ct: 1; Columbia Family Ct: 3; Schoharie Family Ct: 4; Sullivan Family Ct: 2; Ulster Family Ct: 7]

Adoption initiatives: Ulster County Family Court calls and emails the local dept. of social services and attorneys to obtain needed documents and, once documents are submitted, finalizations are scheduled within 2 to 3 weeks.

Expedited Adoptions Report: Terms 1-13, 2022 (Jan. 3, 2022 - Jan. 2, 2023)

Fourth Judicial District

COUNTY AND COURT	# Agency Adoptions Filed	# Agency Adoptions Finalized	# Agency Adoptions Reviewed by Court Staff Within 60 Days of Filing	# Agency Adoptions Finalized Within 30 Days of Court Staff Review	# Agency Adoption Finalizations Delayed Beyond 90 Days From Filing Due to Missing Documentation*
<u>Clinton Co.</u> Family Surrogate's	22 0	22 0	22 0	22 0	0 0
<u>Essex Co.</u> Family Surrogate's	0 5	0 2	0 5	0 2	0 3
<u>Franklin Co.</u> Family Surrogate's	13 0	13 0	13 0	9 0	1 0
<u>Fulton Co.</u> Family Surrogate's	0 0	0 0	0 0	0 0	0 0
<u>Hamilton Co.</u> Family Surrogate's	0 0	0 0	0 0	0 0	0 0
<u>Montgomery Co.</u> Family Surrogate's	4 0	4 0	4 0	0 0	0 0
<u>St. Lawrence Co.</u> Family Surrogate's	68 0	63 0	61 0	54 0	16 0
<u>Saratoga Co.</u> Family Surrogate's	31 0	32 0	31 0	29 0	3 0
<u>Schenectady Co.</u> Family Surrogate's	17 0	13 0	13 0	7 0	5 0
<u>Warren Co.</u> Family Surrogate's	0 0	1 0	1 0	0 0	1 0
<u>Washington Co.</u> Family Surrogate's	3 0	3 0	3 0	1 0	0 0
TOTAL	163	153	153	124	29

* **Most frequent reason(s) for delay in finalizing adoption:** Delays by DSS and adoptive parents' attorneys in submitting required documents.

Snapshot District-wide [Agency adoptions pending as of Jan. 1, 2023]: 33.

Adoption initiatives: An Adoption Day was convened in St. Lawrence Co. Fam. Ct., in which nine children were adopted by five families. Two of the children were members of the St. Regis-Mohawk tribe and were adopted by tribal members and three were adopted by a Canadian tribe. The St. Regis-Mohawk tribal chief performed a blanket ceremony, In Franklin Co. Fam. Ct., the Dept. of Social Services is immediately contacted upon filing and follow-up contacts are made every 2-3 weeks to ensure submission of required documents.

**Expedited Adoptions Report: Terms 1-13, 2022 (Jan. 3, 2022 - Jan. 2, 2023)
Fifth Judicial District**

COUNTY	# Agency Adoptions Filed	# Agency Adoptions Finalized	# Agency Adoptions Reviewed by Court Staff Within 60 Days of Filing	# Agency Adoptions Finalized Within 30 Days of Staff Review	# Agency Adoption Finalizations Delayed Beyond 90 Days From Filing Due to Missing Documentation*
<u>Herkimer Co.</u> Family Court Surrogate's Court	11 0	10 0	11 0	10 0	0 0
<u>Jefferson Co.</u> Family Court Surrogate's Court	26 0	27 0	26 0	16 0	0 0
<u>Lewis Co.</u> Family Court Surrogate's Court	4 0	4 0	4 0	4 0	0 0
<u>Oneida Co.</u> Family Court Surrogate's Court	10 0	1 0	10 0	1 0	8 0
<u>Onondaga Co.</u> Family Court Surrogate's Court	61 0	61 0	61 0	29 0	19 0
<u>Oswego Co.</u> Family Court Surrogate's Court	32 0	32 0	32 0	32 0	0 0
TOTAL	144	135	144	92	27

Most frequent reason(s) for delay in finalizing adoption: The most frequent delay(s) continue to involve issues relating to adoptive parents medical history, Interstate Compact and Subsidy Agreement issues (between the Department of Children and Family Services and the adoptive family) and issues centered on child abuse/indicated reports and criminal history of adoptive parents. The pandemic continued to severely impede finalizations.

Adoption Initiatives: Permanency planning hearings continue to be used to monitor the progress of adoptions. An active participant in national Adoption Day for over 20 years, the Fifth Judicial District celebrated a virtual Adoption Day in Nov., 2022, at which District Administrative Judge James P. Murphy, Hon. Edwina Mendelson, Deputy Administrative Judge for Justice Initiatives, and Hon. Ann Rooney, Deputy Onondaga County Executive and Congressman John Katko spoke. After the formal celebration, judges handled the adoptions individually.

**Expedited Adoptions Report: Terms 1-13, 2022 (Jan. 3, 2022 - Jan. 2, 2023)
Sixth Judicial District**

COUNTY	#Agency Adoptions Filed	#Agency Adoptions Finalized	# Agency Adoptions Reviewed by Court Staff Within 60 Days of Filing	# Agency Adoptions Finalized Within 30 Days of Staff Review	# Agency Adoption Finalizations Delayed Beyond 90 Days From Filing Due to Missing Documentation*
<u>Broome Co.</u> Family Surrogate's	35 0	27 0	35 0	12 0	15 0
<u>Chemung Co.</u> Family Surrogate's	10 0	12 0	10 0	6 0	6 0
<u>Chenango Co.</u> Family Surrogate's	0 6	0 2	0 6	0 2	0 2
<u>Cortland Co.</u> Family Surrogate's	0 5	0 4	0 5	0 4	0 1
<u>Delaware Co.</u> Family Surrogate's	5 0	4 0	5 0	4 0	1 0
<u>Madison Co.</u> Family Surrogate's	0 0	0 0	0 0	0 0	0 0
<u>Otsego Co.</u> Family Surrogate's	0 2	0 2	0 2	0 1	0 1
<u>Schuyler Co.</u> Family Surrogate's	0 6	0 5	0 6	0 4	0 1
<u>Tioga Co.</u> Family Surrogate's	0 5	0 5	0 5	0 5	0 0
<u>Tompkins Co.</u> Family Surrogate's	0 16	0 7	0 16	0 7	0 4
TOTAL	90	68	90	45	31

Snapshot District-wide (Agency adoptions pending as of Jan.1, 2023): 34 [18- Broome Family; 2-Chemung Family; 3-Chenango Surrogate's; 1-Cortland Surrogate's; 1-Delaware Surrogate's; 9-Tompkins Surrogate's]

Most frequent reasons for delay: missing documents from attorneys, including home study, appeal status, adoption registry form, State Central Registry and criminal clearances; coordinating schedule with companion adoption; need for new attorney for child.

Adoption initiatives: Otsego Co. Surrogate's and Delaware Co. Family Court conduct weekly reviews of cases.

**Expedited Adoptions Report: Terms 1-13, 2021 (Jan. 4, 2021 - Jan. 2, 2022)
Seventh Judicial District**

COUNTY AND COURT	#Agency Adoptions Filed	#Agency Adoptions Finalized	# Agency Adoptions: Preliminary Review by Court Staff Within 60 Days of Filing	# Agency Adoptions: Finalized Within 30 Days of Preliminary Court Staff Review	# Agency Adoption Finalizations Delayed Beyond 90 Days From Filing Due to Missing Documentation or other reasons*
<u>Cayuga Co.</u> Family Surrogate's	0 11	0 11	0 11	0 11	0 0
<u>Livingston Co.</u> Family Surrogate's	5 0	6 0	5 0	4 0	1 0
<u>Monroe Co.</u> Family Surrogate's	69 3	72 1	59 3	23 0	16 0
<u>Ontario Co.</u> Family Surrogate's	7 0	6 0	7 0	6 0	0 0
<u>Seneca Co.</u> Family Surrogate's	5 0	4 0	5 0	4 0	0 0
<u>Steuben Co.</u> Family Surrogate's	14 0	14 0	14 0	4 0	7 0
<u>Wayne Co.</u> Family Surrogate's	0 1	0 0	0 1	0 0	0 1
<u>Yates Co.</u> Family Surrogate's	10 0	5 0	10 0	0 0	3 0
TOTAL	125	119	115	88	31

* Most frequent reason(s) for delay in finalizing adoption [specify, e.g., delay in receiving criminal history, child abuse registry or home study or other reason]: missing documentation from the agency or attorney, including home studies, verified schedules, and other missing legal documents on behalf of the adoptive parents.

Adoptions pending as of Jan. 2, 2022: 13 (Monroe Co. Fam. Ct.)

Adoption initiatives: Livingston Co. Fam. Ct. convened its first Adoption Day since 2019, attended by 30 families whose adoptions had been finalized during the pandemic, as well as five families for new finalizations.

**Expedited Adoptions Report: Terms 1-13, 2021 (Jan. 4, 2021 - Jan. 2, 2022)
Eighth Judicial District**

COUNTY	# Agency Adoptions Filed	# Agency Adoptions Finalized	# Agency Adoptions Reviewed by Court Staff Within 60	# Agency Adoptions Finalized Within 30 Days of Review	# Agency Adoption Finalizations Delayed Beyond 90 Days from Filing Due to Missing Documentation*
<u>Allegany Co.</u> Family Surrogate's	0 2	0 2	0 2	0 2	0 0
<u>Cattaraugus Co.</u> Family Surrogate's	8 0	8 0	8 0	8 0	0 0
<u>Chautauqua Co.</u> Family Surrogate's	17 0	14 0	17 0	9 0	0 0
<u>Erie Co.</u> Family Surrogate's	130 5	107 5	130 5	0 0	N/A 3
<u>Genesee Co.</u> Family Surrogate's	17 0	15 0	17 0	0 0	0 0
<u>Niagara Co.</u> Family Surrogate's	23 0	17 0	23 0	1 0	11 0
<u>Orleans Co.</u> Family Surrogate's	6 0	0 0	6 0	0 0	3 0
<u>Wyoming Co.</u> Family Surrogate's	1 0	1 0	1 0	1 0	0 0
TOTAL	204	169	204	21	17

Most frequent reasons for delay in finalizing adoptions: Genessee Fam. Ct: most adoptions are completed within 45 days; delays largely due to home studies. Niagara Co., Fam. Ct.: delays in receiving documents from agencies and attorneys; Orleans Co. Fam. Ct.: delays in home studies and other documents.

Adoptions pending as of Jan. 2, 2022: 2 [Erie Co. Surr. Ct]; 61 (Erie Co. Fam. Ct.); 6 (Orleans Co. Fam. Ct).

Adoption initiatives: The courts have collaborated with the agencies and attorneys to complete as many adoptions as possible, notwithstanding the pandemic. Orleans Co. Family Court monitors cases on a bi-weekly basis and contacts attorneys regarding required documents.

**Expedited Adoptions Report: Terms 1-13, 2021 (Jan. 4, 2021 - Jan.2, 2022)
Ninth Judicial District**

County	#Agency Adoptions Filed	#Agency Adoptions Finalized	# Agency Adoptions Reviewed by Court Staff Within 60 Days of Filing	# Agency Adoptions Finalized Within 30 Days of Review	# Agency Adoption Finalizations Delayed Beyond 90 Days from Filing Due to Missing Documentation*
<u>Putnam Co.</u> Family Surrogate's	0 0	0 0	0 0	0 0	0 0
<u>Rockland</u> Family Surrogate's	1 0	0 0	1 0	0 0	0 0
<u>Orange Co</u> Family Surrogate's	30 0	19 0	30 0	1 0	14 0
<u>Dutchess Co</u> Family Surrogate's	21 0	29 0	36 ³ 0	6 0	9 0
<u>Westchester Co.</u> Family Surrogate's	41 0	33 0	41 0	19 0	17 0
TOTAL	93	81	108	26	40

Snapshot of pending adoptions as of Jan. 1, 2022: 1 [Rockland Co. Fam. Ct.]; 6 [Dutchess Co. Fam.Ct.

Most frequent reason(s) for delay in finalizing adoptions: Dutchess Co. Family Court: delays in receiving documents from agency and attorneys and fingerprint records on adults in home; Orange Co. Fam. Ct.: document delays..

Adoption Initiatives: Rockland Co. Family Court court attorney referees convene permanency hearings to closely monitor and expedite cases and continues to collaborate with the local Dept. of Social Services to ensure that documents are submitted timely. Dutchess Co. Family Court conducts status review within 60 days of filing and has experienced success in e filing and finalizations from its participation in the LEAN initiative.

³ Includes 15 cases filed in 2021 and finalized in 2022.

**Expedited Adoptions Report: Terms 1-13, 2021 (Jan. 4, 2021 - Jan. 2, 2022)
Tenth Judicial District**

COUNTY	# Agency Adoptions Filed	# Agency Adoptions Finalized	# Agency Adoptions Reviewed by Court Staff Within 60 days	# Agency Adoptions Finalized Within 30 days of Review	# Agency Adoption Finalizations Delayed Beyond 90 Days From Filing Due to Missing Documentation*
<u>Nassau</u> Family Surrogate's	11 1	11 0	11 1	11 0	0 0
<u>Suffolk</u> Family Surrogate's	40 0	48 0	40 0	40 0	8 0
TOTAL	52	59	52	51	8

Agency adoptions pending as of Jan. 2, 2022: 20 [Suffolk Co. Family Court];

Most frequent reason(s) for delay in finalizing adoptions: Interstate Compact on Placement of Children reports (Suffolk Co. Fam. Ct.)

Adoption initiatives: Judges review open adoptions every 90-days to monitor progress and expedite finalizations. National Adoption Day was held in person in Suffolk Co. Fam. Ct. on Nov. 18, 2022 and was a great success with a face painter, balloon artist and lots of goodies for the children. The non-profit Jockey Backpack Program supplied initialed backpacks, stuffed animals, a blanket and resource materials for every child adopted, along with any siblings in the home, as well as post adoption resource materials for the adoptive parents. An Adoption Day was also held in Nassau Co. Fam. Ct.

CONCLUSION

In 2022, Family and Surrogate's Courts in New York State continued to recover from the disruptions of proceedings occasioned by the pandemic, thus finalizing a smaller number of agency adoptions on an expedited basis than had been typical pre-pandemic. However, in 96.63 percent of its cases, the Unified Court System was nonetheless able to comply with the court rules requiring court staff review of agency adoption proceedings within 60 days of filing. In many instances convening proceedings via the Microsoft Teams virtual platform, once all documents were submitted to the courts, cases were promptly calendared for finalization—in fact, at a higher rate than in the pre-pandemic calendar year 2019 – and a significant reduction occurred in the number of finalizations of adoptions in excess of 90 days from filing.

These successes under difficult conditions reflect the judiciary's continued rigorous efforts to realize the goals of the landmark federal and state legislation aimed at expediting the

movement of children out of foster care back to their own families, to adoptive homes or to other permanent living arrangements.

The intensive inter-agency efforts to bring adoptions to finalization quickly have continued to produce impressive results. As in past years, apart from the pandemic-related challenges, to the extent that delays have been encountered, these have been related to the persistent problem of failures by petitioners' attorneys and authorized agencies to submit complete documentation at the outset, as required by statute and rule, including clearances from the State Central Register of Child Abuse and Maltreatment, original documents from other states, home studies and criminal history reports from the New York State Division of Criminal Justice Services.

The prompt resolution of children's cases, whether through family reunification, adoption, guardianship or other alternative, remains a priority for the Unified Court System as it implements federal and New York State legislation. Efforts have been revived to continue the legacy of the late Chief Judge Judith S. Kaye's "Permanency Now" initiative, inaugurated in late 2002, reflecting a continued commitment on both a State and local level to collaborate to expedite adoptions of children freed for adoption, the vast majority of whom have not yet had adoption petitions filed on their behalf, and, importantly, to expedite family- and kinship-based permanent homes for children in care.

The rapid phases of child development --particularly the inexorable process by which children form vital bonds and attachments with their caretakers, the critical needs of children for stability and their unique senses of time, require expeditious movement of children out of the limbo of foster care into permanent homes, as what may appear to be modest delays are magnified in the lives of children. The successful implementation of the legislation and court rules requiring prompt calendaring and completion of adoption proceedings, as outlined in this report, has furthered the goal of expediting these important cases.

January, 2023