



**2023 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. JOSEPH A. ZAYAS**

**Chief Administrative Judge**

**January, 2024**

## **INTRODUCTION**

This report is submitted by the Chief Administrative Judge pursuant to Domestic Relations Law Section 112-a, which requires 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 2023.<sup>1</sup>

### **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, Section 112-a to the Domestic Relations Law 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,<sup>2</sup> as well as an "affidavit of readiness" from the petitioning agency's attorney. D.R.L. §112-a(1).

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<sup>1</sup> Data covers the 13 terms of 2023, starting on January 3, 2023 and ending on January 2, 2024.

<sup>2</sup> 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).

Once these documents are filed, the Surrogate's or Family Court is required to 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), 112-a(2)(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.*

In an effort to encourage and expedite the adoption of children by foster parents with whom they have formed bonds, sections 383-c and 384-b of the Social Services Law 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 further 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 Courts 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**

The experience of the Family and Surrogate's Courts in 2023 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 2023, 1,663 agency adoption petitions were filed and 1,633 were finalized during the 13 terms of calendar year 2023 in Family and Surrogate's Courts statewide. Ninety-eight percent of the adoption petitions filed were in compliance with the requirement that agency adoption filings be reviewed by court staff within 60 days and 34% of the finalized adoptions were able to be completed within 30 days of the staff review. One-quarter of the adoptions finalized had been pending in excess of 90 days prior to finalization.

**Expedited Adoptions Report: Terms 1-13, 2023 (Jan. 3, 2023-Jan. 2, 2024)  
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	614	590	574	35	199
THIRD	71	76	71	26	16
FOURTH	155	155	162	89	43
FIFTH	182	175	182	109	32
SIXTH	147	128	151	83	39
SEVENTH	115	108	107	36	27
EIGHTH	250	248	250	69	31
NINTH	66	59	72	24	20
TENTH	63	43	64	63	5
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>1,663</b>	<b>1,582 (95%)</b>	<b>1,633 (98%)</b>	<b>534 (34%)</b>	<b>412 (26%)</b>

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

**Expedited Adoptions Report: Terms 1-13, 2023 (Jan. 3, 2023 - Jan. 2, 2024)  
Judicial District: New York City (1<sup>st</sup>, 2<sup>nd</sup>, 11<sup>th</sup>, 12<sup>th</sup>+ 13<sup>th</sup> 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 Surrogate's	157 0	144 0	150 0	5 0	52 0
<u>Kings Co.</u> Family Surrogate's	162 0	160 0	141 0	3 0	43 0
<u>NY County</u> Family Surrogate's	127 7	129 5	118 7	8 0	31 5
<u>Queens Co.</u> Family Surrogate's	103 0	107 0	102 0	13 0	48 0
<u>Richmond Co.</u> Family Surrogate's	58 0	45 0	56 0	6 0	20 0
<b>TOTAL: NYC</b>	<b>614</b>	<b>590</b>	<b>574</b>	<b>35</b>	<b>199</b>

\* **Most frequent reason(s) for delay in finalizing adoption:** NYC Family Court reported delays in submission of receipt of OCA form and information regarding back-up guardians. NY County Surrogate's Court reported delays by attorneys in submitting required documents within 90 days, despite reminder letters from the Court.

**Snapshot NYC-wide [Agency Adoptions Pending Jan. 2, 2024]: 198 (NYC Fam. Ct.); 1 (NY Co. Surr. Ct.)**

**Adoption Initiatives:**

**NY Co. Surr. Ct.:** The court expedited fingerprinting to obtain criminal history reports.

**NYC Family Court:** The New York City Family Court finalized 585 agency adoptions in 2023. This reflects a 23% increase from the 475 agency adoptions finalized in 2022. In recognition of Adoption Month 2023, 65 agency adoptions were finalized in November city-wide. In addition, some of the counties held adoption month events as described below.

-- Queens County Family Court celebrated National Adoption Month on November 14, 2023.

Adoptions for 11 children were finalized in Queens County Family Court in the month of November. As part of the celebration of Adoption Month, two tables were decorated on the first and fifth floors of the building with signs denoting National Adoption Month. In addition, small age-appropriate gifts were distributed to the children who were present for their adoptions.

-- In Manhattan Family Court, an Adoption Day was held on November 16, 2023. Six agency adoptions were finalized on that day and a total of 17 agency adoptions were finalized in the month of November. The Adoption Clerk and the Court Clerk decorated the courtroom with hanging paper stars and a large "Happy Adoption Day" banner was hung across the back of the courtroom, behind the Judge's bench. It made for a very festive day. Photos were taken of the families to commemorate their adoptions.

-- In the Bronx County Family Court, Adoption Day 2023 was held on November 15, 2023. Eight Jurists participated. The Jurists, as well as the Adoptions Clerk, referenced on the record the significance of the adoptions being done on Adoption Day. Jurists afforded all parties and guests the opportunity to participate at their adoption proceeding and photographs were taken to commemorate their special day. Bronx Family Court finalized 9 agency adoptions on Adoptions Day 2023. Bronx County finalized 12 agency adoptions in the month of November.

-- In Kings County Family Court, 16 agency adoptions were finalized on their Adoption Day on November 15, 2023. All adoptive parents received a "Certificate of Recognition" from the Kings County Family Court, which was signed by the Kings County Family Court Supervising Judge and the Judicial Hearing Officer who presided over the adoptions. The certificates have the name of the adoptive parent and state that they are receiving the Certificate of Recognition for their "love, compassion, and generosity." Kings County finalized a total of 27 agency adoptions in the month of November.

-- In Richmond County Family Court, 9 agency adoptions were finalized in November, 2023.

**Expedited Adoptions Report: Terms 1-13, 2023 (Jan. 3, 2023 - Jan. 2, 2024)  
Third Judicial District**

<b>COUNTY AND COURT</b>	<b># Agency Adoptions Filed</b>	<b># Agency Adoptions Finalized</b>	<b># Agency Adoptions: Preliminary Review by Court Staff Within 60 Days of Filing</b>	<b># Agency Adoptions: Finalized Within 30 Days of the Preliminary Court Staff Review</b>	<b># Agency Adoption Finalizations Delayed Beyond 90 Days From Filing Due to Missing Documentation or other reasons*</b>
<u>Albany</u> Family Surrogate's	13 2	16 2	11 2	7 2	1 0
<u>Columbia</u> Family Surrogate's	5 0	5 0	5 0	1 0	4 0
<u>Greene</u> Family Surrogate's	4 0	4 0	4 0	0 0	4 0
<u>Rensselaer</u> Family Surrogate's	5 0	5 0	5 0	4 0	1 0
<u>Schoharie</u> Family Surrogate's	6 0	6 0	6 0	4 0	0 0
<u>Sullivan</u> Family Surrogate's	22 0	24 0	24 0	8 0	2 0
<u>Ulster</u> Family Surrogate's	14 0	14 0	14 0	0 0	4 0
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>71</b>	<b>76</b>	<b>71</b>	<b>26</b>	<b>16</b>

\* **Most frequent reason(s) for delay in finalizing adoption:** Delays in State Central Registry clearances and missing or incomplete paperwork by local departments of social services.

**Expedited Adoptions Report: Terms 1-13, 2023 (Jan. 3, 2023 - Jan. 2, 2024)  
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	12 0	4 0	12 0	2 0	2 0
<u>Essex Co.</u> Family Surrogate's	2 5	0 2	2 5	0 2	0 3
<u>Franklin Co.</u> Family Surrogate's	5 0	9 0	5 0	2 0	3 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	12 0	7 0	12 0	0 0	4 0
<u>St. Lawrence Co.</u> Family Surrogate's	50 0	58 0	58 0	44 0	14 0
<u>Saratoga Co.</u> Family Surrogate's	33 0	36 0	36 0	24 0	12 0
<u>Schenectady Co.</u> Family Surrogate's	25 0	27 0	22 0	15 0	5 0
<u>Warren Co.</u> Family Surrogate's	4 0	5 0	4 0	0 0	0 0
<u>Washington Co.</u> Family Surrogate's	7 0	7 0	7 0	0 0	0 0
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>155</b>	<b>155</b>	<b>162</b>	<b>89</b>	<b>43</b>

\* **Most frequent reason(s) for delay in finalizing adoption:** Delays by DSS and adoptive parents' attorneys in submitting required documents; incomplete petitions, home study delays; counsel scheduling conflicts.

**Snapshot District-wide [Agency adoptions pending as of Jan. 1, 2024]: 37.**

**Adoption initiatives:** Family Court, Montgomery County, has instituted a program in which the Court does not docket cases for finalization until all required paperwork has been received by the Court.



**Expedited Adoptions Report: Terms 1-13, 2023 (Jan. 3, 2023 - Jan. 2, 2024)  
Fifth 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 the Preliminary Court Staff Review	# Agency Adoption Finalizations Delayed Beyond 90 Days from Filing Due to Missing Documentation or other reasons*
<u>Herkimer</u> -Family - Surrogate's	14 0	16 0	16 0	16 0	0 0
<u>Jefferson</u> -Family - Surrogate's	20 0	18 0	18 0	10 0	2 0
<u>Lewis</u> -Family - Surrogate's	8 0	8 0	8 0	7 0	1 0
<u>Oneida</u> -Family - Surrogate's	12 0	12 0	12 0	12 0	0 0
<u>Onondaga</u> -Family - Surrogate's	81 0	80 0	81 0	30 0	24 0
<u>Oswego</u> -Family - Surrogate's	47 0	41 0	47 0	34 0	5 0
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>182</b>	<b>175</b>	<b>182</b>	<b>109</b>	<b>32</b>

**Most frequent reason(s) for delay in finalizing adoption(s):** delays in receiving timely criminal and child abuse history report(s) of adoptive parents, filing of home study(s), pending custody matters, appellate stays, missing information from attorneys, litigants and agencies, and court scheduling issues.

**Adoption Initiatives:** National Adoption Day has been celebrated in the Fifth Judicial District for over 20 years. The 2023 adoption ceremony was celebrated in person for first time since the pandemic. A court officer sang anthems and speakers included the District Administrative Judge, the Deputy Chief Administrative Judge for Justice Initiatives, the County Executive, the Mayor of Syracuse, and non-judicial staff who shared personal stories of adoption and the meaning of Adoption Day. Adoption Finalizations followed the formal celebration, individually with adoptive families and the Family Court Judge.

**Expedited Adoptions Report: Terms 1-13, 2023 (Jan. 3, 2023 - Jan. 2, 2024)  
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	45 0	27 0	45 0	1 0	16 0
<u>Chemung Co.</u> Family Surrogate's	15 0	16 0	15 0	13 0	3 0
<u>Chenango Co.</u> Family Surrogate's	0 16	0 12	0 16	0 9	0 3
<u>Cortland Co.</u> Family Surrogate's	0 21	0 21	0 21	0 21	0 0
<u>Delaware Co.</u> Family Surrogate's	19 0	19 0	19 0	19 0	0 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 7	0 7	0 7	0 7	0 4
<u>Schuyler Co.</u> Family Surrogate's	0 6	0 6	0 6	0 3	0 3
<u>Tioga Co.</u> Family Surrogate's	0 7	0 7	0 7	0 7	0 0
<u>Tompkins Co.</u> Family Surrogate's	0 11	0 13	0 15	0 3	0 10
<b>TOTAL</b>	147	128	151	83	39

**Snapshot District-wide (Agency adoptions pending as of Jan.1, 2024):** 29 [18- Broome Co. Family Court; 4- Chenango Co. Family Court; 7- Tompkins Co. Surrogate's Court]

**Most frequent reason(s) for delay in finalizing adoptions:** 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:** Chemung County conducted training for the bar and enhanced adoption processing in conjunction with Child Welfare Court Improvement Project; Tompkins County added courtroom space and was able to fill staff vacancies.

**Expedited Adoptions Report: Terms 1-13, 2023 (Jan. 3, 2023 - Jan. 2, 2024)  
Seventh Judicial District**

<b>COUNTY AND COURT</b>	<b># Agency Adoptions Filed</b>	<b># Agency Adoptions Finalized</b>	<b># Agency Adoptions: Preliminary Review by Court Staff Within 60 Days of Filing</b>	<b># Agency Adoptions: Finalized Within 30 Days of Preliminary Court Staff Review</b>	<b># Agency Adoption Finalizations Delayed Beyond 90 Days From Filing Due to Missing Documentation or other reasons*</b>
<u><b>Cayuga Co.</b></u> Family Surrogate's	0 13	0 13	0 13	0 9	0 0
<u><b>Livingston Co.</b></u> Family Surrogate's	6 0	6 0	6 0	6 0	0 0
<u><b>Monroe Co.</b></u> Family Surrogate's	34 3	36 1	34 3	5 0	14 0
<u><b>Ontario Co.</b></u> Family Surrogate's	10 0	11 0	11 0	10 0	0 0
<u><b>Seneca Co.</b></u> Family Surrogate's	1 0	2 0	1 0	1 0	0 0
<u><b>Steuben Co.</b></u> Family Surrogate's	34 0	25 0	25 0	4 0	2 0
<u><b>Wayne Co.</b></u> Family Surrogate's	0 7	0 1	0 7	0 1	0 2
<u><b>Yates Co.</b></u> Family Surrogate's	7 0	11 0	7 0	0 0	6 0
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>115</b>	<b>108</b>	<b>107</b>	<b>36</b>	<b>27</b>

\* **Most frequent reason(s) for delay in finalizing adoption:** 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, 2024:** 7 (Monroe Co. Family Court).

**Adoption initiatives:** Yates Co. Family Court: The Court has required agencies to submit complete packages, rather than piecemeal documents.

**Expedited Adoptions Report: Terms 1-13, 2023 (Jan. 3, 2023 - Jan. 2, 2024)  
Eighth 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>Allegany Co.</u> Family Surrogate's	0 2	0 2	0 2	0 2	0 0
<u>Cattaraugus Co.</u> Family Surrogate's	5 0	5 0	5 0	5 0	0 0
<u>Chautauqua Co.</u> Family Surrogate's	25 1	25 0	25 1	1 0	0 1
<u>Erie Co.</u> Family Surrogate's	155 13	160 11	155 13	40 0	N/A 9
<u>Genesee Co.</u> Family Surrogate's	11 0	9 0	11 0	9 0	2 0
<u>Niagara Co.</u> Family Surrogate's	30 0	22 0	30 0	8 0	17 0
<u>Orleans Co.</u> Family Surrogate's	4 0	10 0	4 0	0 0	2 0
<u>Wyoming Co.</u> Family Surrogate's	4 0	4 0	4 0	4 0	0 0
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>250</b>	<b>248</b>	<b>250</b>	<b>69</b>	<b>31</b>

**Most frequent reasons for delay in finalizing adoptions:** **Genesee Co. Fam. Ct.:** while most adoptions are completed within 45 days; delays are 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 required documents; **Erie Co. Fam. Ct.:** delays in identifying birth fathers; foster parent issues, arranging post-adoptive services

**Adoptions pending as of Jan. 2, 2024:** 4 [Erie Co. Surr. Ct]; 49 (Erie Co. Fam. Ct.); 6 (Orleans Co. Fam. Ct).  
**Adoption initiatives:** Erie Co. Fam. Ct.: increased focus on ensuring identification of birth fathers; Orleans Co. Family Court monitors cases on a bi-weekly basis and contacts attorneys regarding required documents.

**Expedited Adoptions Report: Terms 1-13, 2023 (Jan. 3, 2023 - Jan.2, 2024)  
Ninth Judicial District**

<b>County</b>	<b># Agency Adoptions Filed</b>	<b># Agency Adoptions Finalized</b>	<b># Agency Adoptions Reviewed by Court Staff Within 60 Days of Filing</b>	<b># Agency Adoptions Finalized Within 30 Days of Review</b>	<b># Agency Adoption Finalizations Delayed Beyond 90 Days from Filing Due to Missing Documentation*</b>
<b><u>Putnam Co.</u> Family Surrogate's</b>	<b>1 0</b>	<b>1 0</b>	<b>1 0</b>	<b>1 0</b>	<b>0 0</b>
<b><u>Rockland</u> Family Surrogate's</b>	<b>5 0</b>	<b>5 0</b>	<b>5 0</b>	<b>4 0</b>	<b>1 0</b>
<b><u>Orange Co</u> Family Surrogate's</b>	<b>21 0</b>	<b>14 0</b>	<b>21 0</b>	<b>4 0</b>	<b>8 0</b>
<b><u>Dutchess Co</u> Family Surrogate's</b>	<b>13 0</b>	<b>19 0</b>	<b>19 0</b>	<b>8 0</b>	<b>5 0</b>
<b><u>Westchester Co.</u> Family Surrogate's</b>	<b>26 0</b>	<b>20 0</b>	<b>26 0</b>	<b>7 0</b>	<b>6 0</b>
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>66</b>	<b>59</b>	<b>72</b>	<b>24</b>	<b>20</b>

**Snapshot of pending adoptions as of Jan. 1, 2024:** 1 [Dutchess Co. Fam.Ct.]

**Most frequent reason(s) for delay in finalizing adoptions:** **Dutchess Co. Family Court:** delays in receiving documents from out of state and from local Dept. of Children and Family Services, and fingerprint delays on adults in home; **Orange Co. Fam. Ct.:** document submission delays; **Rockland Co. Family Court:** delay in document translation, as well as document submission delays.

**Adoption Initiatives:**

**Rockland Co. Family Court:** court attorney referees convene permanency hearings to closely monitor and expedite cases and continue to collaborate with the local Dept. of Social Services to ensure that documents are submitted timely; with fewer children in foster care, fewer adoption petitions are filed, resulting in fewer delays.

**Dutchess Co. Family Court** conducts status review within 60 days of filing and, since 2016, has experienced success in e-filing and finalizations from its participation in the LEAN initiative., a collaborative management planning program.

**Expedited Adoptions Report: Terms 1-13, 2023 (Jan. 3, 2023 - Jan. 2, 2024)  
Tenth Judicial District**

<b>COUNTY</b>	<b># Agency Adoptions Filed</b>	<b># Agency Adoptions Finalized</b>	<b># Agency Adoptions Reviewed by Court Staff Within 60 days</b>	<b># Agency Adoptions Finalized Within 30 days of Review</b>	<b># Agency Adoption Finalizations Delayed Beyond 90 Days From Filing Due to Missing Documentation*</b>
<b><u>Nassau</u> Family Surrogate's</b>	13 0	13 1	13 1	13 0	0 1
<b><u>Suffolk</u> Family Surrogate's</b>	50 0	42 0	50 0	50 0	4 0
<b>TOTAL</b>	63	56	64	63	5

**Agency adoptions pending as of Jan. 2, 2024:** 27 [Suffolk Co. Family Court];

**Most frequent reason(s) for delay in finalizing adoptions:** Suffolk Co. Fam. Ct: Interstate Compact on Placement of Children reports, subsidy application and appellate delays.

**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 November 17, 2023 at the Riverhead Aquarium, the first time the event was held outside of the courthouse. Six adoptions were completed that day and five additional families, whose adoptions had already been finalized, attended, along with family and friends. There was a face-painter, photobooth, and an author signing books. The families had breakfast and then were welcomed into the aquarium for a day of fun and shows. The Court has continued to work with the Jockey Backpack Program, a non-profit organization that supplies new backpacks to children being adopted and their families, so that every child adopted in Suffolk County in 2023 received one. The backpacks display the child's new initials and have a soft blanket and a stuffed animal inside. Another bag is provided to the parents and is filled with information for resources that may be needed after the adoption.

**CONCLUSION**

Ninety-eight percent of the agency adoption petitions filed in 2023, Family and Surrogate's Courts in New York State, complied with the court rules requiring court staff review of agency adoption proceedings within 60 days of filing. In many instances, conducting proceedings via the Microsoft Teams virtual platform, once all documents were submitted to the courts, allowed cases to be promptly calendared for finalization, resulting in a significant reduction in the number of cases pending for more than 90 days.

These successes under challenging 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, 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, notwithstanding extensive efforts by the courts to monitor submissions and remind attorneys about deficiencies.

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. 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 perception 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 of significant consequence 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, 2024