



2010 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. ANN PFAU

Chief Administrative Judge

January, 2011

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 2010.¹

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 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

¹ Data covers the 13 terms of 2010, starting on January 4, 2010 and ending on January 2, 2011.

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).

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

The experience of the Family and Surrogate's Courts in 2010 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 12 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,³ 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, 2702 agency adoption petitions were filed and 2554 were finalized during the 13 terms of calendar year 2010 in Family and Surrogate's Courts statewide, of which 99.8 % were in compliance with the requirement that agency adoption filings be reviewed within 60 days; 63% of the finalized petitions were able to be completed within 30 days of the review and only 29.4% of the adoptions finalized had been pending in excess of 90 days prior to finalization.

³ The Unified Court System has attempted to minimize these delays by posting the adoption forms on the Internet (www.nycourts.gov) and, through its Court Improvement Project in conjunction with Chief Judge Kaye's "Permanency Now" project, by publishing and conducting training regarding the newly revised *Lawyers' Guide to Adoption* (2009).

**Expedited Adoptions Report: Terms 1-13, 2010 (Jan. 4, 2010 - Jan. 2, 2011)
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	1340	1265	1340	725	538
THIRD	111	108	111	61	16
FOURTH	153	139	151	67	26
FIFTH	166	177	166	162	6
SIXTH	162	164	160	132	20
SEVENTH	156	116	156	81	26
EIGHTH	232	229	232	170	39
NINTH	199	195	198	98	40
TENTH	183	161	183	106	40
<u>TOTAL</u>	2702	2554	2697	1602	751

**Expedited Adoptions Report: Terms 1-13, 2010 (Jan. 4, 2010 - Jan. 2, 2011)
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 Surrogate's	431 0	424 0	431 0	310 0	114 0
<u>Kings Co.</u> Family Surrogate's	306 0	319 0	306 0	244 0	75 0
<u>NY County</u> Family Surrogate's	310 6	298 8	310 6	87 1	211 5
<u>Queens Co.</u> Family Surrogate's	217 0	179 0	217 0	79 0	100 0
<u>Richmond Co.</u> Family Surrogate's	70 0	37 0	70 0	4 0	33 0
TOTAL: NYC	1340	1265	1340	725	538

* **Most frequent reason(s) for delay in finalizing adoption:** Delays in submission of Affidavit of No Appeal, adoptive parent and child updated medical reports, subsidized adoption approval, surrenders and judicial consents..

Snapshot District-wide [Agency Adoptions Pending as of Jan.3 2010]: 384

Adoption Initiatives: In 2010, the NYC Family Court Administrative Judge established an adoption committee of her permanent advisory council to advise her on adoption issues. In conjunction with National Adoption Day in mid-November, 2010, the New York City Family Court convened a full Adoption Week by convening a celebratory Adoption Day in each Family Court in which a total of 79 adoptions were finalized. Additionally, the ACS Heart Gallery, a traveling exhibit of photographs of children available for adoption, followed an ambitious schedule in 2010.

**Expedited Adoptions Report: Terms 1-13, 2010 (Jan. 4, 2010 - Jan. 2, 2011)
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	38 0	36 0	38 0	36 0	0 0
<u>Columbia Co.</u> Family Surrogate's	12 0	7 0	12 0	0 0	6 0
<u>Greene Co.</u> Family Surrogate's	5 0	2 0	5 0	2 0	0 0
<u>Rensselaer Co.</u> Family Surrogate's	0 17	0 23	0 17	0 15	0 2
<u>Schoharie Co.</u> Family Surrogate's	9 0	9 0	9 0	3 0	0 0
<u>Sullivan Co.</u> Family Surrogate's	5 0	5 0	5 0	3 0	2 0
<u>Ulster Co.</u> Family Surrogate's	23 2	24 2	23 2	0 2	6 0
TOTAL	111	108	111	61	16

* **Most frequent reason(s) for delay in finalizing adoption:** Delays by attorneys in submission of documents, including cases in which agencies file documents prior to attorneys; child protective agency need to investigate child maltreatment hotline report..

Snapshot District-wide [Agency Adoptions Pending as of Jan. 2, 2011]: 2: Rensselaer County; 12: Columbia County.

Adoption Initiatives:

--Albany and Ulster Counties convened Adoption Days and the Ulster County Department of Social Services set up its annual Heart Gallery. Albany County staff conducted meetings every six weeks with the Albany County Department for Children, Youth and Families to resolve problems causing delays. Rensselaer County Family Court has followed a practice of calendaring all pending adoptions for 30 day reviews and follow up.

**Expedited Adoptions Report: Terms 1-13, 2010 (Jan. 4, 2010 - Jan. 2, 2011)
Fourth 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>Clinton Co.</u>					
Family	14	13	14	13	2
Surrogate's	0	0	0	0	0
<u>Essex Co.</u>					
Family	3	0	3	0	0
Surrogate's	0	0	0	0	0
<u>Franklin Co.</u>					
Family	3	2	1	0	1
Surrogate's	4	1	4	1	3
<u>Fulton Co.</u>					
Family	8	8	8	8	0
Surrogate's	0	0	0	0	0
<u>Hamilton Co.</u>					
Family	0	0	0	0	0
Surrogate's	0	0	0	0	0
<u>Montgomery Co.</u>					
Family	0	0	0	0	0
Surrogate's	0	0	0	0	0
<u>St. Lawrence Co.</u>					
Family	30	29	30	28	0
Surrogate's	0	0	0	0	0
<u>Saratoga Co.</u>					
Family	46	43	46	0	11
Surrogate's	0	0	0	0	0
<u>Schenectady Co.</u>					
Family	21	19	21	3	7
Surrogate's	1	1	1	1	0
<u>Warren Co.</u>					
Family	13	13	13	4	1
Surrogate's	0	0	0	0	0
<u>Washington Co.</u>					
Family	10	10	10	9	1
Surrogate's	0	0	0	0	0
TOTAL	153	139	151	67	26

* Most frequent reason(s) for delay in finalizing adoption: delayed and incomplete submissions of documents by agencies and attorneys, including OCA registration card and child abuse registry and criminal history reports from NYS OCFS.

Snapshot District-wide [Agency Adoptions Pending as of Jan. 2, 2011]: 22

Adoption Initiatives: Court staff reviews documents same day, schedules within 1-2 weeks and follow up with attorneys.

**Expedited Adoptions Report: Terms 1-13, 2010 (Jan. 4, 2010 - Jan. 2, 2011)
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 County</u>					
Family Court	16	16	16	16	0
Surrogates Court	0	0	0	0	0
<u>Jefferson County</u>					
Family Court	16	16	16	13	3
Surrogates Court	0	0	0	0	0
<u>Lewis County</u>					
Family Court	12	12	12	0	0
Surrogates Court	0	0	0	0	0
<u>Oneida County</u>					
Family Court	20	22	20	22	0
Surrogates Court	5	4	5	4	1
<u>Onondaga County</u>					
Family Court	76	82	76	82	0
Surrogates Court	0	0	0	0	0
<u>Oswego County</u>					
Family Court	21	25	21	25	2
Surrogates Court	0	0	0	0	0
TOTAL	166	177	166	162	6

* Most frequent reason(s) for delay in finalizing adoption: delayed receipt of documents.

Snapshot District-Wide (Agency Adoptions Pending as of January 2, 2011): 4: Onondaga County Family Court, 3: Oneida Co. Family Court; 1: Oneida Co. Surrogate's Court

Adoption Initiatives: Onondaga County Family Court: Spearheaded by District Supervising Family Court Judge, the November, 2010 National Adoption Day event was the largest to date, finalizing 54 adoptions and attracting over 600 guests in the grand ballroom of the Nicholas J. Pirro OnCenter Complex in Syracuse, New York. The Court hosted the event in collaboration with the Family Courts within and outside the 5th Judicial District, county Departments of Social Services, the community and local Bar Associations. The launch of Onondaga County's new Adoption Day website included local information for individuals interested in fostering children, links to each of the Family Courts in the 5th Judicial District and information about the Adoption Day event and ongoing efforts to raise public awareness of the 463,000 children currently in the foster care system across our Country and more importantly the 341 children in Central New York, waiting for a permanent home. In addition, the Heart Gallery was made part of a display in the Courthouse, approximately a dozen agencies attended our NAD event to display adoption information and we had the unique opportunity to design and create a billboard to advertise our event which was displayed on a major highway here in Syracuse.

Oswego Family Court: Developing a CLE program for attorney's with regard to the completion of adoption paperwork.

**Expedited Adoptions Report: Terms 1-13, 2010 (Jan. 4, 2010 - Jan. 2, 2011)
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*
Broome Co.					
Family	38	38	38	33	5
Surrogate	0	0	0	0	0
Chemung Co.					
Family	36	34	36	22	1
Surrogate	0	0	0	0	0
Chenango Co.					
Family	0	0	0	0	0
Surrogate	14	14	14	13	1
Cortland Co.					
Family	0	0	0	0	0
Surrogate	10	11	10	9	2
Delaware Co.					
Family	0	0	0	0	0
Surrogate	13	13	13	13	0
Madison Co.					
Family	10	10	10	10	0
Surrogate	0	0	0	0	0
Otsego Co.					
Family	0	0	0	0	0
Surrogate	6	5	5	4	1
Schuyler Co.					
Family	0	0	0	0	0
Surrogate	5	6	4	2	2
Tioga Co.					
Family	0	0	0	0	0
Surrogate	9	12	9	5	4
Tompkins Co.					
Family	0	0	0	0	0
Surrogate	21	21	21	21	4
TOTAL	162	164	160	132	20

* **Most frequent reason(s) for delay in finalizing adoption:** Missing documents, including child abuse registry clearances, service affidavits, updated home studies and criminal history checks.

Snapshot District-wide [Agency Adoptions Pending as of Jan. 2, 2011]: 21 (8:Broome Co. Fam. Ct.; 2: Chemung Co. Fam. Ct.; 1: Cortland Co. Surr. Ct.; 1: Otsego Co. Surr. Ct.; 2: Schuyler Co. Surr. Ct.; 7: Tompkins Co. Surr. Ct.)

Adoption Initiatives: Four adoptions were finalized on Adoption Day in Chenango County and Delaware County has scheduled two or three Adoption Days during the year. Otsego County conducted reviews every two weeks or less and sent letters regarding missing documents and updated checklists.

**Expedited Adoptions Report: Terms 1-13, 2010 (Jan. 4, 2010 - Jan. 2, 2011)
Seventh 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>Cayuga</u> Family Surrogate's	0 12	0 7	0 12	0 7	0 1
<u>Livingston</u> Family Surrogate's	11 0	11 0	11 0	11 0	0 0
<u>Monroe</u> Family Surrogate's	82 17	67 6	82 17	40 0	1 0
<u>Ontario</u> Family Surrogate's	15 0	13 0	15 0	14 0	1 0
<u>Seneca</u> Family Surrogate's	0 0	0 0	0 0	0 0	0 0
<u>Steuben</u> Family Surrogate's	16 0	8 0	16 0	6 0	2 0
<u>Wayne</u> Family Surrogate's	0 3	0 4	0 3	0 3	0 0
<u>Yates</u> Family Surrogate's	0 0	0 0	0 0	0 0	0 0
TOTAL	156	116	156	81	26

Adoptions pending as of Jan. 2, 2011: 8 (1: Livingston Co. Fam. Ct.; 2: Monroe Co. Fam.Ct.; 5: Steuben Co. Fam.Ct.)

Most Frequent Causes of Delay: delays in submission of home-studies, adoptive parent abd agency documents, child abuse registry and criminal history reports; delay in requested follow-up reports by children's attorneys.

Special Initiatives: Adoption Day celebrations were held in Cayuga, Monroe and Ontario Counties. Monroe County Family Court maintains regular contact with agency regarding home studies; Steuben Co. Fam. Ct. Convenes regular meetings with the Dept. of Social Services Adoption Unit.

**Expedited Adoptions Report: Terms 1-13, 2010 (Jan. 4, 2010 - Jan. 2, 2011)
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	0	0	0	0	0
Surrogate's	17	17	17	17	0
<u>Cattaraugus Co.</u>					
Family	19	19	19	19	0
Surrogate's	0	0	0	0	0
<u>Chautauqua Co.</u>					
Family	21	21	21	17	1
Surrogate's	1	1	1	1	0
<u>Erie Co.</u>					
Family	99	104 ⁴	99	88	16
Surrogate's	26	26	26	7	15
<u>Genesee Co.</u>					
Family	12	11	12	0	0
Surrogate's	0	0	0	0	0
<u>Niagara Co.</u>					
Family	30	24	30	18	4
Surrogate's	0	0	0	0	0
<u>Orleans Co.</u>					
Family	4	3	4	0	3
Surrogate's	0	0	0	0	0
<u>Wyoming Co.</u>					
Family	0	0	0	0	0
Surrogate's	3	3	3	3	0
TOTAL	232	229	232	170	39

Adoptions pending as of Jan. 2, 2011: 1: Genesee Co. Fam. Ct.; 3: Orleans Fam. Ct.

Special Initiatives: Genesee Co. Family Court has a court attorney assigned to monitor adoption filings, contact attorneys about missing documents and perform monthly status checks. Orleans Co. Family Court monitors adoption filings, including documents required by the Court, on a bi-weekly basis.

⁴ In addition, 14 adoptions were withdrawn in 2010.

**Expedited Adoptions Report: Terms 1-13, 2010 (Jan. 4, 2010 - Jan. 2, 2011)
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	3 0	3 0	1 0	2 0	1 0
<u>RocklandCo.</u> Family Surrogate's	21 0	24 0	21 0	23 0	1 0
<u>Orange Co.</u> Family Surrogate's	32 0	26 0	32 0	1 0	7 0
<u>Dutchess Co.</u> Family Surrogate's	46 0	45 0	45 0	27 0	18 0
<u>Westchester Co.</u> Family Surrogate's	97 0	97 0	97 0	45 0	13 0
TOTAL	199	195	198	98	40

Snapshot of pending adoptions as of Jan. 2, 2011: 1:Rockland Co. Fam. Ct.; 6: Dutchess Co. Fam. Ct.; 7: Orange Co. Family Court.

Most frequent reason(s) for delay in finalizing adoptions: Delays in prospective adoptive parents and agency submission of document, including criminal history reports; delays arising from appeals.

Adoption Initiatives: Westchester and Rockland County Family Courts convened Adoption Days in conjunction with National Adoption Day. Forty-one adoptions, a record number for one day, were finalized in Westchester County Family Court in conjunction with celebrations that day. In Westchester County, periodic reviews of the cases of children freed for adoption with the Dept. of Social Services and the NYS OCFS have aided in expediting cases, as has institution of electronic process for approving adoption subsidies. In Rockland County, a court attorney-referee monitors adoptions as part of the free-child permanency hearings. As part of the Child Welfare Court Improvement Project Model Courts project, Dutchess Co. Family Court formed a subcommittee on expediting adoptions, which has been identifying and addressing sources of delay.

**Expedited Adoptions Report: Terms 1-13, 2010 (Jan. 4, 2010 - Jan. 2, 2011)
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's⁵	25 33	27 33	25 33	25 33	0 33
<u>Suffolk</u> Family Surrogate's	125 0	101 0	125 0	48 0	40 0
TOTAL	183	161	183	106	40

Most frequent reasons for delays in finalizing adoptions: Nassau Co. Family Court: Two adoption petitions filed in 2009 were delayed until 2010 because of need for investigation of report of suspected child maltreatment by prospective adoptive parents. Suffolk Co. Family Court: agency paperwork is generally filed within 30 days of children being freed for adoption but some delays have been reported in obtaining subsidy approvals and criminal history reports (four cases), as well as four cases each involving pending termination of parental rights appeals and issues involving service of notice fathers.

Agency adoptions pending as of Jan. 2, 2011: 49: Suffolk County Family Court

Adoption initiatives: Thirteen adoptions were finalized on Adoption Day in Suffolk County Family Court. The Suffolk County Family Court's Permanency Planning Coordinator closely monitors cases of children freed for adoption, including documents filed in conjunction with adoptions, and meets regularly with the Dept. of Social Services and agencies having custody of children awaiting adoption.

CONCLUSION

In 2010, the Unified Court System fully complied with the court rules requiring review of agency adoption proceedings within 60 days of filing and was able to complete 60% of the cases within 30 days after the review. Once all documents have been submitted to the courts, cases are promptly calendared for finalization. These successes reflect the judiciary's continued rigorous efforts to realize the goals of the

⁵ Nassau County Surrogate's Court finalized 18 private adoptions in 2010 but no longer does agency adoptions in light of the enactment of "one family/one judge" legislation.

landmark federal and state legislation. Over time, these statutes are expected to expedite 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, 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 the Federal and State *Adoption and Safe Families Acts*, the 2005 New York State permanency legislation and the Federal *Fostering Connections to Success and Adoption Improvement Act of 2008*. The legacy of Chief Judge Kaye's "Permanency Now" (formerly, "Adoption Now") initiative, inaugurated in late 2002, has been a continued willingness 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. This important initiative produced significant results state-wide, both in the short- and long-term, in significantly reducing the pool of children for whom achievement of a permanent stable home has been an elusive goal.

The rapid phases of child development, particularly the inexorable process by which children form vital bonds and attachments with their caretakers, as well as the critical needs of children for stability in their lives, require expeditious movement of children out of the limbo of foster care into permanent homes. In handling cases involving children, the Unified Court System is cognizant of children's unique senses of time; 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, 2011