



2017 REPORT TO THE GOVERNOR AND THE
LEGISLATURE, PURSUANT TO SECTION 112-A (3)
OF THE DOMESTIC RELATIONS LAW, CONCERNING EXPEDITED
CALENDARING OF ADOPTION PROCEEDINGS

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Chief Administrative Judge

January, 2018

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 2017.¹

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

¹ Data covers the 13 terms of 2017, starting on January 3, 2017 and ending on January 1, 2018.

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).

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

The experience of the Family and Surrogate's Courts in 2017 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, 1992 agency adoption petitions were filed and 1924 were finalized during the 13 terms of calendar year 2017 in Family and Surrogate's Courts statewide; 99.6% of the adoption petitions filed were in compliance with the requirement that agency adoption filings be reviewed within 60 days; 52% of the finalized petitions were able to be completed within 30 days of the review and only 35.7% of the adoptions finalized had been pending in excess of 90 days prior to finalization.

Expedited Adoptions Report: Terms 1-13, 2017 (Jan. 3, 2017 - Jan. 1, 2018)
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	862	901	858	469	434
THIRD	75	71	75	48	25
FOURTH	138	117	134	25	18
FIFTH	126	116	126	103	9
SIXTH	130	109	129	90	32
SEVENTH	96	93	97	46	23
EIGHTH	289	256	289	106	25
NINTH	167	156	167	66	67
TENTH	109	105	109	53	54
<u>TOTAL</u>	1992	1924	1984	1006	687

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

**Expedited Adoptions Report: Terms 1-13, , 2017 (Jan. 3, 2017 - Jan. 1, 2018)
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	223 0	231 0	223 0	136 0	95 0
<u>Kings Co.</u> Family Surrogate's	219 0	235 0	219 0	106 0	129 0
<u>NY County</u> Family Surrogate's	207 7	243 5	207 3	142 1	101 3
<u>Queens Co.</u> Family Surrogate's	135 0	135 0	135 0	68 0	67 0
<u>Richmond Co.</u> Family Surrogate's	71 0	52 0	71 0	13 0	39 0
TOTAL: NYC	862	901	858	469	434

* **Most frequent reason(s) for delay in finalizing adoption:** Delays in submission by attorneys of criminal histories and child abuse clearances; parent and child physicals and updates on medical information; Home Studies; SCR abuse clearances on back-up resources; and notifications of adoptions to NYC Board of Health.

Snapshot NYC-wide [Agency Adoptions Pending as of Jan. 2, 2018]: 225 [NYC Family Court: 222; NY County Surrogate's Court: 3]

Adoption Initiatives:

– **NYC Family Court:** In recognition of National Adoption Month, in November 2017, each of the New York City Family Courts held designated “Adoption Days” at which a total of 107 adoptions were finalized. Ceremonies recognizing the importance of adoptions were held and the events were covered by local news outlets, including the *Brooklyn Daily Eagle*, ABC News 7 and NY1 News. Additionally, in furtherance of the New York City Family Court's Strategic Plan, Queens Family Court created an Adoptions Subcommittee which reviews and considers strategies and suggestions to improve the timely finalization of adoptions.

– **NY Co. Surrogate's Court:** Fingerprints and child abuse clearances are done as soon as possible. Attorneys are notified as soon as files are reviewed to let them know what documents, if any, are missing.

**Expedited Adoptions Report: Terms 1-13, 2017 (Jan. 4, 2017 - Jan. 2, 2018)
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	24 2	20 0	24 2	19 0	4 2
<u>Columbia Co.</u> Family Surrogate's	9 0	11 0	9 0	5 0	3 0
<u>Greene Co.</u> Family Surrogate's	5 0	5 0	5 0	5 0	0 0
<u>Rensselaer Co.</u> Family Surrogate's	14 0	10 0	14 0	3 0	11 0
<u>Schoharie Co.</u> Family Surrogate's	6 0	6 0	6 0	5 0	0 0
<u>Sullivan Co.</u> Family Surrogate's	7 0	7 0	7 0	5 0	0 0
<u>Ulster Co.</u> Family Surrogate's	7 1	11 1	7 1	6 0	4 1
TOTAL	75	71	75	48	25

* **Most frequent reason(s) for delay in finalizing adoption:** Missing or incorrect paperwork, especially adoption subsidy paperwork.

Snapshot [Agency Adoptions Pending as of Jan. 2, 2018]: 13 [Albany Family Court: 4; Albany Surrogate's Court: 2; 3; Rensselaer Family Court: 4; Sullivan Family Court: 2; Ulster Family Court: 1]

**Expedited Adoptions Report: Terms 1-13, , 2017 (Jan. 3, 2017 - Jan. 1, 2018)
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	32	18	32	18	0
Surrogate's	0	0	0	0	0
<u>Essex Co.</u>					
Family	0	0	0	0	0
Surrogate's	0	0	0	0	0
<u>Franklin Co.</u>					
Family	8	2	8	0	8
Surrogate's	2	2	2	0	2
<u>Fulton Co.</u>					
Family	0	0	0	0	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	5	3	5	0	5
Surrogate's	0	0	0	0	0
<u>St. Lawrence Co.</u>					
Family	36	41	36	4	1
Surrogate's	0	0	0	0	0
<u>Saratoga Co.</u>					
Family	36	34	32	0	1
Surrogate's	0	0	0	0	0
<u>Schenectady Co.</u>					
Family	9	5	9	2	0
Surrogate's	0	0	0	0	0
<u>Warren Co.</u>					
Family	6	6	6	1	0
Surrogate's	0	0	0	0	0
<u>Washington Co.</u>					
Family	4	6	4	0	1
Surrogate's	0	0	0	0	0
TOTAL	138	117	134	25	18

* Most frequent reason(s) for delay in finalizing adoption: delays in filing by agencies.

Snapshot District-wide [Agency adoptions pending as of Jan. 2, 2018]: 30.

Adoption initiatives: Files are reviewed upon submission and letters are sent to attorneys indicating any missing documentation needed to move forward with the adoptions.

**Expedited Adoptions Report: Terms 1-13, 2017 (Jan. 3, 2017 - Jan. 1, 2018)
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 Surrogates Court	7 0	7 0	7 0	7 0	0 0
<u>Jefferson County</u> Family Court Surrogates Court	21 0	21 0	21 0	14 0	0 0
<u>Lewis County</u> Family Court Surrogates Court	5 0	5 0	5 0	5 0	2 0
<u>Oneida County</u> Family Court Surrogates Court	23 3	22 3	23 3	22 1	0 2
<u>Onondaga County</u> Family Court Surrogates Court	55 0	46 0	55 0	42 0	5 0
<u>Oswego County</u> Family Court Surrogates Court	12 0	12 0	12 0	12 0	0 0
TOTAL	126	116	126	103	9

* **Most frequent reason(s) for delay in finalizing adoption:** delays in obtaining adoptive parents' medical and criminal histories, as well as local Department of Children and Family Services documentation.

Adoption Initiatives: The Fifth Judicial District, spearheaded by Onondaga County, celebrated its annual National Adoption Day celebration at the Oncenter, Syracuse, New York on November 17, 2017. At this Adoption Day celebration, Family Court Judges from across the District finalized 52 adoptions. Over 800 people attended the event, which was covered by multiple news outlets.

**Expedited Adoptions Report: Terms 1-13, 2017 (Jan. 3, 2017 - Jan. 1, 2018)
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	17 0	21 0	16 0	12 0	9 0
<u>Chemung Co.</u> Family Surrogate	23 0	18 0	23 0	16 0	6 0
<u>Chenango Co.</u> Family Surrogate	0 6	0 4	0 6	0 0	0 1
<u>Cortland Co.</u> Family Surrogate	0 15	0 15	0 15	0 15	0 0
<u>Delaware Co.</u> Family Surrogate	14 0	13 0	14 0	11 0	1 0
<u>Madison Co.</u> Family Surrogate	9 0	9 0	9 0	9 0	0 0
<u>Otsego Co.</u> Family Surrogate	0 3	0 2	0 3	0 2	0 1
<u>Schuyler Co.</u> Family Surrogate	0 5	0 4	0 5	0 4	0 0
<u>Tioga Co.</u> Family Surrogate	0 5	0 5	0 5	0 3	0 2
<u>Tompkins Co.</u> Family Surrogate	0 33	0 18	0 33	0 18	0 1
TOTAL	130	109	129	90	32

Snapshot District-wide (Agency adoptions pending as of Jan.2, 2018): **39** [Broome Co. Family Court: 10; Chemung Co. Family Court: 5; Chenango Co. Surrogate's Court: 6; Delaware Co. Surrogate's Court: 1; Otsego Co. Surrogate's Court: 1; Schuyler Co. Surrogate's Court: 1; Tompkins Co. Surrogate's Court: 15]

* **Most frequent reason(s) for delay in finalizing adoption:** pending termination of parental rights appeals; delays in attorney submission of documents, home studies, verified schedules and updated medical information, as well as documentation from local Departments of Social Services and agencies in other counties.
Adoption initiatives: Otsego Co. Surrogate's Court: weekly review of pending adoptions to ensure receipt of required documentation.

**Expedited Adoptions Report: Terms 1-13,, 2017 (Jan. 3, 2017 - Jan. 1, 2018)
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	0	0	0	0	0
Surrogate's	3	2	3	2	3
<u>Livingston</u>					
Family	19	21	21	21	7
Surrogate's	0	0	0	0	0
<u>Monroe</u>					
Family	36	32	35	7	3
Surrogate's	7	6	7	0	7
<u>Ontario</u>					
Family	13	14	13	10	1
Surrogate's	0	0	0	0	0
<u>Seneca</u>					
Family	4	6	4	4	2
Surrogate's	0	0	0	0	0
<u>Steuben</u>					
Family	7	5	7	2	0
Surrogate's	0	0	0	0	0
<u>Wayne</u>					
Family	0	0	0	0	0
Surrogate's	7	7	7	0	0
<u>Yates</u>					
Family	0	0	0	0	0
Surrogate's	0	0	0	0	0
TOTAL	96	93	97	46	23

Most frequent reasons for delay: Monroe Co. Family Court: delay in receiving the verified schedules/home studies, scheduling delay by adoptive family; Steuben Co. Family Court: delay in submission of documents including home studies; Seneca Co. Family Court: delay in receiving divorce decree and out-of-state surrender.

Snapshot District Wide [Agency Adoptions Pending as of Jan. 2, 2018]: [Cayuga Co. Surrogate's Court.: 3; Livingston Co. Family Court: 4; Monroe Co. Family Court: 3; Seneca Co. Family Court: 1; Steuben Co. Family Court: 1].

Adoption Initiatives: Family Courts in Livingston, Monroe and Ontario Counties convened Adoption Day celebrations; Monroe and Steuben County Family Courts maintain close contact and meet with the agency adoption unit staff.

**Expedited Adoptions Report: Terms 1-13, 2017 (Jan. 3, 2017 - Jan. 1, 2018)
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>Allegheny Co.</u>					
Family	0	0	0	0	0
Surrogate's	8	7	8	7	1
<u>Cattaraugus Co.</u>					
Family	18	18	18	18	0
Surrogate's	0	0	0	0	0
<u>Chautauqua Co.</u>					
Family	35	31	35	8	5
Surrogate's	0	0	0	0	0
<u>Erie Co.</u>					
Family	177	141	177	63	N/A
Surrogate's	12	10	12	0	8
<u>Genesee Co.</u>					
Family	11	11	11	2	3
Surrogate's	0	0	0	0	0
<u>Niagara Co.</u>					
Family	18	26	18	7	6
Surrogate's	0	0	0	0	0
<u>Orleans Co.</u>					
Family	5	8	5	1	0
Surrogate's	0	0	0	0	0
<u>Wyoming Co.</u>					
Family	0	0	0	0	0
Surrogate's	5	4	5	0	2
TOTAL	3289	256	289	106	25

Most frequent reason(s) for delay in finalizing adoptions: Genesee Co. Family Court: missing documents, including subsidy agreement; Wyoming Co. Surrogate's Court: attorney delays in submitting documents and Dept. of Social Services home studies; Chautauqua Co. Family Court: delay in serving putative father, scheduling conflict with attorney and missing documents from outside agency; Erie Co. Family Court: Missing and out-of-date documents, lack of proof of service of surrender and termination of parental rights orders, outdated documents and foster parent issues; Erie Co. Surrogate's Court: missing documents; Orleans Co. Family Court: late home studies.

Adoptions pending as of Jan. 2, 2018: 58 [Wyoming Co. Surrogate's Court: 1; Chautauqua Co. Family Court: 4; Erie Co. Fam. Ct: 52; Orleans Co. Family Court: 1]

Adoption Initiatives: Erie Co. Family Court: regular meetings with key personnel from Court, Dept. of Social Services and Court Improvement Project; Erie Co. Surrogate's Court and Orleans Co. Family Court: frequent contacts with attorneys and agencies to prompt submissions.

**Expedited Adoptions Report: Terms 1-13, 2017 (Jan. 3, 2017 - Jan. 1, 2018)
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	4	1	4	1	0
Surrogate's	0	0	0	0	0
<u>RocklandCo.</u>					
Family	7	6	7	6	0
Surrogate's	0	0	0	0	0
<u>Orange Co.</u>					
Family	47	40	47	3	24
Surrogate's	0	0	0	0	0
<u>Dutchess Co.</u>					
Family	49	47	49	12	37
Surrogate's	0	0	0	0	0
<u>Westchester Co. Family</u>	60	62	60	44	6
Surrogate's	0	0	0	0	0
TOTAL	167	156	167	66	67

Snapshot of pending adoptions as of Jan. 2, 2018: 29 [Dutchess Co. Fam.Ct.: 18; Rockland Co. Family Court: 1; Westchester Family Ct.: 10].

Most frequent reason(s) for delay in finalizing adoptions: Dutchess Co. Family Court: delays in receiving out-of-state documents, criminal history reports, attorney and local Dept. of Social Services submissions; Rockland Co. Fam.Ct.: late submission of documents; Westchester Co. Family Court: delays in notices to birth fathers, appellate delays, failures on the part of either or both the agency and adoption attorney in submitting the necessary paperwork required to complete the court file, adoptive parent or child ambivalence, contested adoptions and pending child protective investigations.

Adoption Initiatives: Dutchess Co. Family Court conducts status review within 60 days of filing and has participated in the LEAN initiative to analyse and respond to any points of delay; Rockland Co. Fam Ct.: court attorney referee presides over permanency hearings, including those of children freed for adoption, in order to provide more efficient monitoring of permanency plans, including progress toward adoption; Westchester Family Court: finalized 26 adoptions on a successful Adoption Day on Nov. 17, 2017, with entertainment by Star Wars characters, an arts and crafts table, luncheon reception, and gift packages filled with books, teddy bears and other merchandise.

**Expedited Adoptions Report: Terms 1-13, 2017 (Jan. 3, 2017 - Jan. 1, 2018)
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	43 5	38 5	43 5	38 3	2 2
<u>Suffolk</u> Family Surrogate's	61 0	62 0	61 0	12 0	50 0
TOTAL	109	105	109	53	54

Most frequent reasons for delays in finalizing adoptions: Suffolk Co. Family Court: delays in agency submission of medical information, child abuse clearances and other documents and attorney submission of documents regarding adoptive parents; Nassau Co. Surrogate's Court: delay in receiving birth certificate and verified schedule; Nassau Co. Family Court: delay in submission of divorce judgment and pending child protective investigation.

Agency adoptions pending as of Jan. 2, 2018: 19 [Nassau Co. Family Court: 5; Suffolk Co. Family Court: 14].

Adoption initiatives: Nassau Co. Family Court convened an Adoption Day at the Long Island Children's Museum and has maintained regular communication with the Dept. of Social Services Adoption Unit. Suffolk Co. Family Court: finalized six adoptions on Adoption Day on Nov. 17, 2017 at the courthouse in Central Islip.

CONCLUSION

In 2017, in 99.6 % of its cases, 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 52% 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 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*. Continuing the legacy of former Chief Judge Kaye's "Permanency Now" (formerly, "Adoption Now") initiative, inaugurated in late 2002, the impressive data reflects 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, 2018