



2021 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. LAWRENCE MARKS
Chief Administrative Judge

January, 2022

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 2021.¹

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 2021, starting on January 4, 2021 and ending on January 2, 2022. Data is not presented for calendar year 2020 because of the cessation of most adoption cases during the pandemic.

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,³ the experience of the Family and Surrogate's Courts in 2021 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, 1,313 agency adoption

³ The Governor's Executive Order declaring a state of emergency, EO-202, dated March 7, 2020, was extended periodically through June 16, 2021. During most of that period, Administrative Order 78-20, issued in March, 2020, by the Chief Administrative Judge, precluded new filings except designated proceedings.

petitions were filed and 1,238 were finalized during the 13 terms of calendar year 2021 in Family and Surrogate's Courts statewide. Notwithstanding the challenges posed by the pandemic, 98.2 % of the adoption petitions filed were in compliance with the requirement that agency adoption filings be reviewed within 60 days. In data reflecting an improvement over the data in the pre-pandemic 2019 calendar year; 40.6% of the finalized petitions were able to be completed within 30 days of the review and 38.1 % of the adoptions finalized had been pending in excess of 90 days prior to finalization.

**Expedited Adoptions Report: Terms 1-13, 2021 (Jan. 4, 2021-Jan. 2, 2022)
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	362	420	362	149	271
THIRD	94	79	94	10	40
FOURTH	125	125	125	63	25
FIFTH	150	137	150	99	19
SIXTH	144	113	121	79	33
SEVENTH	103	85	96	20	25
EIGHTH	142	143	142	15	27
NINTH	112	58	119	18	35
TENTH	81	78	81	66	12
TOTAL	1313	1238	1290	519	487

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

**Expedited Adoptions Report: Terms 1-13, 2021 (Jan. 4, 2021 - Jan. 2, 2022)
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	111 0	131 0	111 0	38 0	93 0
<u>Kings Co.</u> Family Surrogate's	65 0	78 0	65 0	50 0	28 0
<u>NY County</u> Family Surrogate's	84 4	89 8	84 1	29 1	60 7
<u>Queens Co.</u> Family Surrogate's	83 0	101 0	83 0	26 0	75 0
<u>Richmond Co.</u> Family Surrogate's	19 0	21 0	19 0	6 0	15 0
TOTAL: NYC	362	420	362	149	271

* **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 as of Jan. 2 2022]: 163 (NYC Family Court)

Adoption Initiatives:

- **NYC Family Court:** In recognition of National Adoption Month, in November 2021, the NYC Family Court held a city-wide virtual program featuring adoption data and recorded remarks from jurists and stakeholders regarding the importance of adoption as a permanency option for youth. The Court also participates in the inter-agency NYC Adoption Workgroup, which seeks improvements in adoption processes. .

- **NY Co. Surrogate's Court:** Court staff received training on usage of the fingerprint machine to expedite receipt of criminal history information.

**Expedited Adoptions Report: Terms 1-13, 2021 (Jan. 4, 2021 - Jan. 2, 2022)
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	34 5	26 5	34 5	3 2	14 0
<u>Columbia Co.</u> Family Surrogate's	12 0	12 0	12 0	0 0	7 0
<u>Greene Co.</u> Family Surrogate's	2 0	2 0	2 0	0 0	0 0
<u>Rensselaer Co.</u> Family Surrogate's	6 0	5 0	6 0	2 0	0 0
<u>Schoharie Co.</u> Family Surrogate's	9 0	4 0	9 0	0 0	0 0
<u>Sullivan Co.</u> Family Surrogate's	7 0	10 0	7 0	1 0	9 0
<u>Ulster Co.</u> Family Surrogate's	19 0	15 0	19 0	2 0	10 0
TOTAL	94	79	94	10	40

* **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: Increased follow-up with agencies regarding delayed documentation and annual Heart Gallery program in Albany County Family Court.

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

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 6	0 2	0 6	0 0	0 1
<u>Franklin Co.</u> Family Surrogate's	15 0	20 0	15 0	7 0	5 0
<u>Fulton Co.</u> Family Surrogate's	3 0	3 0	3 0	0 0	3 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	1 0	6 0	1 0	0 0	6 0
<u>St. Lawrence Co.</u> Family Surrogate's	39 0	39 0	39 0	18 0	5 0
<u>Saratoga Co.</u> Family Surrogate's	20 0	19 0	20 0	11 0	1 0
<u>Schenectady Co.</u> Family Surrogate's	12 0	7 0	12 0	4 0	2 0
<u>Warren Co.</u> Family Surrogate's	4 0	4 0	4 0	1 0	2 0
<u>Washington Co.</u> Family Surrogate's	3 0	3 0	3 0	0 0	0 0
TOTAL	125	125	125	63	25

* Most frequent reason(s) for delay in finalizing adoption: Delays for DSS to have subsidies approved and for DSS and adoptive parents' attorneys to submit required documents.

Snapshot District-wide [Agency adoptions pending as of Jan. 1, 2022]: 19.

Adoption initiatives: Files are reviewed upon submission, emails and letters are sent to attorneys indicating any missing documentation and cases are calendared for status reviews. In Saratoga County Family Court, adoption petitions and supporting papers are filed the same day as the approval of the surrenders are signed, with DSS documents submitted within 1-2 weeks of the surrender approvals.

**Expedited Adoptions Report: Terms 1-13, 2021 (Jan. 4, 2021 - Jan. 2, 2022)
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	8 0	6 0	8 0	6 0	1 0
<u>Jefferson Co.</u> Family Court Surrogate's Court	26 0	33 0	26 0	11 0	4 0
<u>Lewis Co.</u> Family Court Surrogate's Court	0 0	0 0	0 0	0 0	0 0
<u>Oneida Co.</u> Family Court Surrogate's Court	17 0	16 0	17 0	14 0	3 0
<u>Onondaga Co.</u> Family Court Surrogate's Court	52 0	44 0	52 0	30 0	11 0
<u>Oswego Co.</u> Family Court Surrogate's Court	37 0	38 0	37 0	38 0	0 0
TOTAL	150	137	150	99	19

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. Case filed late in the year are often carried over until the next year. 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 20 years, the Fifth Judicial District celebrated a virtual Adoption Day in Nov., 2021, at which 42 children were adopted into 30 families from Onondaga, Oneida, Oswego and Jefferson Counties. District Administrative Judge James P. Murphy, Hon. Edwina Mendelson, Deputy Administrative Judge for Justice Initiatives, and Hon. Ryan McMahan, Onondaga County Executive, spoke and Congressman John Katko, an adoptive father, appeared virtually in a recorded message to the adoptive parents. After the formal celebration, judges handled the adoptions individually.

Expedited Adoptions Report: Terms 1-13, 2021 (Jan. 4, 2021 - Jan. 2, 2022)
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	25 0	14 0	25 0	9 0	5 0
<u>Chemung Co.</u> Family Surrogate's	35 0	36 0	35 0	34 0	2 0
<u>Chenango Co.</u> Family Surrogate's	0 11	0 8	0 8	0 1	0 7
<u>Cortland Co.</u> Family Surrogate's	0 18	0 16	0 12	0 6	0 10
<u>Delaware Co.</u> Family Surrogate's	16 0	16 0	2 0	13 0	0 0
<u>Madison Co.</u> Family Surrogate's	3 0	3 0	3 0	2 0	1 0
<u>Otsego Co.</u> Family Surrogate's	0 4	0 2	0 4	0 0	0 2
<u>Schuyler Co.</u> Family Surrogate's	0 5	0 5	0 5	0 1	0 4
<u>Tioga Co.</u> Family Surrogate's	0 1	0 0	0 1	0 0	0 0
<u>Tompkins Co.</u> Family Surrogate's	0 26	0 13	0 26	0 13	0 2
TOTAL	144	113	121	79	33

Snapshot District-wide (Agency adoptions pending as of Jan.1, 2022): 36 [11- Broome Family; 4- Chemung Family; 3-Chango Surrogate's; 2-Cortland Surrogate's; 2-Otsego Surrogate's; 13-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	0	0	0	0	0
Surrogate's	8	8	N/A	N/A	N/A
<u>Livingston Co.</u> Family	6	6	6	0	2
Surrogate's	0	0	0	0	0
<u>Monroe Co.</u> Family	43	28	43	0	9
Surrogate's	0	0	0	0	0
<u>Ontario Co.</u> Family	12	12	13	11	1
Surrogate's	0	0	0	0	0
<u>Seneca Co.</u> Family	2	2	2	2	0
Surrogate's	0	0	0	0	0
<u>Steuben Co.</u> Family	24	21	24	6	5
Surrogate's	0	0	0	0	0
<u>Wayne Co.</u> Family	0	0	0	0	0
Surrogate's	6	5	6	0	6
<u>Yates Co.</u> Family	2	3	2	1	2
Surrogate's	0	0	0	0	0
TOTAL	103	85	96	20	25

* 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 the need to wait for submission of certified copies of legal documents on behalf of the adoptive parents.

Adoption initiatives: Virtual Adoption Day programs were held, but the District hopes to resume in-person celebrations.

**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 6	0 4	0 6	0 3	0 1
<u>Cattaraugus Co.</u> Family Surrogate's	7 0	7 0	7 0	7 0	0 0
<u>Chautauqua Co.</u> Family Surrogate's	2 0	2 0	2 0	1 0	0 0
<u>Erie Co.</u> Family Surrogate's	74 16	77 17	74 16	N/A 0	N/A 7
<u>Genesee Co.</u> Family Surrogate's	8 0	7 0	8 0	2 0	0 0
<u>Niagara Co.</u> Family Surrogate's	24 0	22 0	24 0	1 0	19 0
<u>Orleans Co.</u> Family Surrogate's	3 0	5 0	3 0	0 0	0 0
<u>Wyoming Co.</u> Family Surrogate's	2 0	2 0	2 0	1 0	0 0
TOTAL	142	143	142	15	27

Most frequent reasons for delay in finalizing adoptions: Allegany Co. Surrogate's Court: delays in receiving documents; Erie Co. Family Court: issues involving adoptive parents and children; missing documents; Erie Co. Surrogate's Court: delays in receiving home studies and other agency documents .

Adoptions pending as of Jan. 2, 2022: 4 [Erie Co. Surr. 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	3 0	3 0	3 0	3 0	0 0
<u>Rockland</u> Family Surrogate's	7 0	7 0	7 0	7 0	0 0
<u>Orange Co</u> Family Surrogate's	38 0	24 0	38 0	0 0	19 0
<u>Dutchess Co</u> Family Surrogate's	26 0	18 0	33 ⁴ 0	5 0	13 0
<u>Westchester Co.</u> Family Surrogate's	38 0	6 0	38 0	3 0	3 0
TOTAL	112	58	119	18	35

Snapshot of pending adoptions as of Jan. 1, 2022: 15 [Dutchess Co. Fam.Ct]; 11 [Orange Co. Fam. Ct.]

Most frequent reason(s) for delay in finalizing adoptions: Dutchess Co. Family Court: delays in receiving documents from agency and attorneys, Indian Child Welfare Act and Interstate Compact on Placement of Children issues, fingerprint issues on adults in home.

Adoption Initiatives: With decreased numbers of children in foster care, Rockland County Family Court has experienced a decrease in the numbers of agency adoptions. The Court continues to convene permanency hearings before court attorney-referees in order 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.

⁴ Includes seven cases filed in 2020 and finalized in 2021.

**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	26 0	26 4	26 0	24 0	2 4
<u>Suffolk</u> Family Surrogate's	55 0	48 0	55 0	42 0	6 0
TOTAL	81	78	81	66	12

Most frequent reasons for delays in finalizing adoptions: Suffolk Co. Family Court: notice father issues, and missing or incorrect information submitted by attorneys and Holds and investigations by the Suffolk County Dept. of Social Services. Nassau Family Court delays ensued from coordinating schedule with sibling adoption and, in one case, a spelling error.

Agency adoptions pending as of Jan. 2, 2022: 26 [Suffolk Co. Family Court]; 1 [Nassau Co. Surrogate's Court; schedule for Jan., 2022].

Adoption initiatives: Suffolk Co. Family Court convened a virtual Adoption Day on Nov. 19, 2021 at which 19 adoptions were finalized, of which 16 were agency adoptions. Despite the pandemic, Suffolk Co. Family Court – and the Suffolk Co. Dept. of Social Services – doubled the number of agency adoptions filed. The Court's tracking system, including its 90-day reviews, continued to expedite the finalization process.

CONCLUSION

In 2021, despite the State of Emergency and disruptions of proceedings occasioned by the pandemic, in 98.2 % of its cases, the Unified Court System was 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 2019. 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, 2022