



2012 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. A. GAIL PRUDENTI

Chief Administrative Judge

January, 2013

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 2012.¹

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."

¹ Data covers the 13 terms of 2012, starting on January 3, 2012 and ending on January 1, 2013.

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).

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

The experience of the Family and Surrogate's Courts in 2012 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,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, 2566 agency adoption petitions were filed and 2468 were finalized during the 13 terms of calendar year 2012 in Family and Surrogate's Courts statewide. 99.7 % of the adoption petitions filed were in compliance with the requirement that agency adoption filings be reviewed within 60 days; 56.3 % of the finalized petitions were able to be completed within 30 days of the review and only 30.6 % 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, 2012 (Jan. 3, 2012 - Jan. 1, 2013)
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	1439	1358	1434	771	580
THIRD	96	91	96	41	13
FOURTH	151	160	151	94	33
FIFTH	120	120	120	89	7
SIXTH	110	111	110	70	20
SEVENTH	129	103	128	47	33
EIGHTH	219	237	219	57	17
NINTH	168	162	167	122	22
TENTH	134	126	134	99	32
<u>TOTAL</u>	2566	2468	2559	1390	757

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

**Expedited Adoptions Report: Terms 1-13, 2012 (Jan. 3, 2012 - Jan. 2, 2013)
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	562 0	477 0	532 0	305 0	172 0
<u>Kings Co.</u> Family Surrogate's	333 2	334 2	333 2	238 0	96 2
<u>NY County</u> Family Surrogate's	268 13	261 10	268 8	124 0	137 3
<u>Queens Co.</u> Family Surrogate's	210 0	231 0	210 0	80 0	151 0
<u>Richmond Co.</u> Family Surrogate's	53 0	45 0	53 0	24 0	21 0
TOTAL: NYC	1,439	1,358	1,434	771	580

* **Most frequent reason(s) for delay in finalizing adoption:** Missing documents including: adoptive parent and/or child's physical certifications, updated medical information and documents requested by the court.

Snapshot NYC-wide [Agency Adoptions Pending as of Jan. 1, 2013]: 417 (NYC Family Court)

Adoption Initiatives: In 2012, the New York City Family Courts continued efforts to reduce the time to adoption by collaborating with the NYC Administration for Children's Services to streamline the adoption process by sending deficiency letters to the ACS Permanency Support Unit in cases where necessary documents are missing. ACS then follows up with the provider agency so that deficiencies are remedied on a timely basis. Further, Kings County Family Court developed a blueprint for its "Zero to Five" project in order to expedite adoptions for its youngest children in foster care. Bronx County Family Court implemented a protocol of returning delayed cases from referees to judges. A benchcard/checklist is being created for the referees to provide greater monitoring during the permanency hearings. Additionally, the Court is working with a foster care agency on a pilot basis to review cases where children have been freed for adoption for more than 7 months. Attorneys are also being directed to review their own cases and alert the Court when adoptions are delayed. Finally, in November 2012, the Bronx, Kings, New York and Queens County Family Courts held designated "Adoption Days." in which 90 adoptions were finalized amidst celebrations.

**Expedited Adoptions Report: Terms 1-13, 2012 (Jan. 3, 2012 - Jan. 2, 2013)
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	20 0	22 0	20 0	22 0	0 0
<u>Columbia Co.</u> Family Surrogate's	19 0	19 0	19 0	0 0	5 0
<u>Greene Co.</u> Family Surrogate's	1 0	1 0	1 0	1 0	0 0
<u>Rensselaer Co.</u> Family Surrogate's	2 30	1 27	2 30	1 15	0 3
<u>Schoharie Co.</u> Family Surrogate's	2 0	2 0	2 0	2 0	0 0
<u>Sullivan Co.</u> Family Surrogate's	1 0	1 0	1 0	0 0	1 0
<u>Ulster Co.</u> Family Surrogate's	21 0	18 0	21 0	0 0	4 0
TOTAL	96	91	96	41	13

* **Most frequent reason(s) for delay in finalizing adoption:** Delays and/or need to obtain corrections in documents filed by attorneys, including cases in which agencies file documents prior to attorneys. One case was delayed because of delay in submitting the home study and others because of special needs of the child, delay in subsidy approval, disruption in family hospitalization of child.

Snapshot District-wide [Agency Adoptions Pending as of Jan. 1, 2013]: 3 (Renss. Co.Surr. Ct.)

Adoption Initiatives: Rensselaer County Surrogate's Court calendars all cases for 30-day review and letters are sent to adoption attorneys advising them of any missing documents due to be filed either by them or by the agency.

**Expedited Adoptions Report: Terms 1-13, 2012 (Jan. 3, 2012 - Jan. 2, 2013)
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	17	20	17	20	0
Surrogate's	0	0	0	0	0
<u>Essex Co.</u>					
Family	2	2	2	2	0
Surrogate's	0	0	0	0	0
<u>Franklin Co.</u>					
Family	0	1	0	0	0
Surrogate's	2	3	2	3	1
<u>Fulton Co.</u>					
Family	5	6	5	6	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	1	1	1	0	1
Surrogate's	0	0	0	0	0
<u>St. Lawrence Co.</u>					
Family	14	13	14	1	5
Surrogate's	0	0	0	0	0
<u>Saratoga Co.</u>					
Family	38	39	38	1	8
Surrogate's	1	1	1	1	0
<u>Schenectady Co.</u>					
Family	17	21	17	9	5
Surrogate's	0	0	0	0	0
<u>Warren Co.</u>					
Family	16	15	16	6	0
Surrogate's	0	0	0	0	0
<u>Washington Co.</u>					
Family	7	6	7	1	4
Surrogate's	0	0	0	0	0
TOTAL	151	160	151	94	33

* **Most frequent reason(s) for delay in finalizing adoption:** delayed and incomplete submissions of documents by agencies and attorneys, including subsidy approvals from NYS OCFS, and service on birth parents.

Snapshot District-wide [Agency Adoptions Pending as of Jan. 1, 2013]: 8 (district-wide).

Adoption Initiatives: St. Lawrence Co. Family and Surrogate's Courts worked together to finalize adoptions.

**Expedited Adoptions Report: Terms 1-13, 2012 (Jan. 3, 2012 - Jan. 2, 2013)
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	15	15	15	15	0
Surrogates Court	0	0	0	0	0
<u>Jefferson County</u>					
Family Court	23	23	22	0	1
Surrogates Court	0	0	0	0	0
<u>Lewis County</u>					
Family Court	2	1	2	0	0
Surrogates Court	0	0	0	0	0
<u>Oneida County</u>					
Family Court	31	32	32	31	1
Surrogates Court	4	5	4	4	0
<u>Onondaga County</u>					
Family Court	36	37	36	33	4
Surrogates Court	0	0	0	0	0
<u>Oswego County</u>					
Family Court	9	7	9	6	1
Surrogates Court	0	0	0	0	0
TOTAL	120	120	120	89	7

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

Snapshot District-Wide (Agency Adoptions Pending as of January 2, 2013): 4 (Onondaga Co. Fam. Ct.); 3 (Oswego Co. Fam. Ct.); 1 (Lewis Co. Fam. Ct.).

Adoption Initiatives: Eleven judges from the Fifth Judicial District convened Adoption Day on Nov. 16, 2013, during which 63 adoptions in 45 families were finalized. Eighteen adoption-related agencies provided information for community members interested in adoption and over 700 people attended. The Heart Gallery displayed photographs of children in need of adoptive homes and two photographers donated their time to photograph the adoptive families. Syracuse University College of law assisted with the event.

Use of technology has continued to expand. Adoption procedures were added to the WIKI program to streamline training. An adoption in Onondaga County was finalized using SKYPE for an adoptive couple unable to travel from Georgia. Additionally, the Onondaga County Family Court adoption clerk participated in a CLE program on adoption organized by a Family Court judge for the Onondaga County Bar Association.

**Expedited Adoptions Report: Terms 1-13, 2012 (Jan. 3, 2012 - Jan. 2, 2013)
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	14 0	16 0	14 0	7 0	7 0
<u>Chemung Co.</u> Family Surrogate	17 0	17 0	17 0	1 0	1 0
<u>Chenango Co.</u> Family Surrogate	0 1	0 1	0 1	0 1	0 0
<u>Cortland Co.</u> Family Surrogate	0 31	0 28	0 31	0 28	0 0
<u>Delaware Co.</u> Family Surrogate	0 13	0 13	0 13	0 13	0 0
<u>Madison Co.</u> Family Surrogate	9 0	9 0	9 0	3 0	0 0
<u>Otsego Co.</u> Family Surrogate	0 6	0 6	0 6	0 6	0 1
<u>Schuyler Co.</u> Family Surrogate	0 1	0 1	0 1	0 1	0 0
<u>Tioga Co.</u> Family Surrogate	0 4	0 4	0 4	0 4	0 0
<u>Tompkins Co.</u> Family Surrogate	0 14	0 16	0 14	0 7	0 9
TOTAL	110	111	110	70	20

* **Most frequent reason(s) for delay in finalizing adoption:** Missing documents, especially from attorneys or parties out of county, including, *inter alia*, divorce decrees and consents from birth fathers; pending termination of parental rights appeal; need to reassess adoptive home; conflict between birth parent's authorization for post-adoption contact under conditional surrender and preclusion of contact under order of protection; lack of available calendar time for conferences or finalizations..

**Expedited Adoptions Report: Terms 1-13, 2012 (Jan. 3, 2012 - Jan. 2, 2013)
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	11	9	11	9	2
<u>Livingston</u>					
Family	7	7	7	7	0
Surrogate's	0	0	0	0	0
<u>Monroe</u>					
Family	52	39	51	6	8
Surrogate's	16	7	16	0	7
<u>Ontario</u>					
Family	20	24	20	20	4
Surrogate's	0	0	0	0	0
<u>Seneca</u>					
Family	1	1	1	1	0
Surrogate's	0	0	0	0	0
<u>Steuben</u>					
Family	12	8	12	1	7
Surrogate's	0	0	0	0	0
<u>Wayne</u>					
Family	0	0	0	0	0
Surrogate's	7	5	7	0	5
<u>Yates</u>					
Family	3	3	3	3	0
Surrogate's	0	0	0	0	0
TOTAL	129	103	128	47	33

* **Most frequent reason(s) for delay in finalizing adoption:** **Cayuga Surrogate:** pending termination of parental rights appeals; **Monroe Family** - Waiting for home studies, verified schedule, attorney for child position; **Monroe Surr.** -Waiting for private home study; **Ontario Family** -delay in receiving corrected paperwork, attorney unavailability and issues raised by home study; **Steuben Family** - Delays in receiving home studies and other documents.

Snapshot District-wide [Agency Adoptions Pending as of Jan. 3, 2013]: Monroe Fam. 13.

Adoption Initiatives: Monroe Family -convened Adoption Day Nov. 16, 2012; adoption staff closely monitors adoption attorneys; **Steuben Family** - regular meetings with Dept. Of Social Services adoption personnel; **Yates Family** - adoption packets reviewed on day of filing with pre-screening to guide counsel through the process to ensure completeness.

**Expedited Adoptions Report: Terms 1-13, 2012 (Jan. 3, 2012 - Jan. 2, 2013)
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	12	12	12	11	1
<u>Cattaraugus Co.</u>					
Family	13	13	13	13	13
Surrogate's	0	0	0	0	0
<u>Chautauqua Co.</u>					
Family	12	12	12	9	2
Surrogate's	0	0	0	0	0
<u>Erie Co.</u>					
Family	126	148	126	2	(several)
Surrogate's	18	18	18	5	9
<u>Genesee Co.</u>					
Family	3	3	3	0	0
Surrogate's	0	0	0	0	0
<u>Niagara Co.</u>					
Family	27	26	27	14	0
Surrogate's	0	0	0	0	0
<u>Orleans Co.</u>					
Family	5	2	5	0	1
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	219	237	219	57	17

Most frequent reason(s) for delay in finalizing adoptions: **Erie Co. Fam Ct.:** Missing documents, including certified orders, marriage certificates, psychological report and corrected documents from adoption attorney; **Genesee Fam. Ct.:** missing documents, including subsidy approvals; **Orleans Co. Fam. Ct.:** delay in receiving home study.

Adoptions pending as of Jan. 1, 2013: 19 (Erie Fam.Ct.); 2 (Genesee Fam Ct.); 3 (Orleans Fam. Ct.)

Special Initiatives: Bi-weekly review of documents by clerk (Orleans Fam.Ct.); periodic meetings with key personnel and status reviews to identify barriers to timely resolution of cases (Erie Co. Fam. Ct.); annual adoption seminar (Genesee Co. Fam. Ct.).

**Expedited Adoptions Report: Terms 1-13, 2012 (Jan. 3, 2012 - Jan. 2, 2013)
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	2 0	1 0	1 0	1 0	0 0
<u>RocklandCo.</u> Family Surrogate's	11 0	14 0	11 0	13 0	1 0
<u>Orange Co.</u> Family Surrogate's	33 0	30 0	33 0	23 0	7 0
<u>Dutchess Co.</u> Family Surrogate's	28 0	26 0	28 0	22 0	4 0
<u>Westchester Co.</u> Family Surrogate's	94 0	91 0	94 0	63 0	10 0
TOTAL	168	162	167	122	22

Snapshot of pending adoptions as of Jan. 1, 2013: 5 (Dutchess Fam. Ct.)

Most frequent reason(s) for delay in finalizing adoptions: Delays in prospective adoptive parents and agency submission of documents, including criminal history reports and out-of-state documents, as well as ambivalence on the part of adoptive parents or children and child protective investigations of adoptive homes.

Adoption Initiatives: Westchester Family Court finalized 22 adoptions on a successful Adoption Day on Nov. 16, 2012, with entertainment for the children by Dora the Explorer and Scooby Doo as well as gift packages filled with toys, tee shirts, etc. . In Rockland Co. Fam. Ct., a 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. Dutchess Co. Fam. Ct. periodically reviews adoption files and is a participating county in the Court Improvement Project.

**Expedited Adoptions Report: Terms 1-13, 2012 (Jan. 3, 2012 - Jan. 2, 2013)
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	31 10	31 10	31 10	31 10	0 0
<u>Suffolk</u> Family Surrogate's	93 0	85 0	93 0	58 0	32 0
TOTAL	134	126	134	99	32

Most frequent reasons for delays in finalizing adoptions: Suffolk Co. Family Court: delays in agency submission of documents; pending termination of parental rights appeal (8 cases); notice father issues (6 cases); attorney submission of documents (5 cases); lack of certified birth certificate (3 cases); venue change documents (4 cases).

Agency adoptions pending as of Jan. 1, 2013: 31 (Suffolk Co. Family Court).

Adoption initiatives: In Suffolk Co. Family Court, the Permanency Planning Coordinator oversees processing of agency adoptions, has weekly contact with the local Dept. of Social Services to expedite timely submission of documents and sends documents promptly in order to obtain a timely response in cases involving a possible change of venue to the court that handled the termination of parental rights, surrender or permanency proceeding.

CONCLUSION

In 2012, in 99.7% 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 56.3 % 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*. 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, 2013