



**2024 REPORT TO THE GOVERNOR AND THE**  
**LEGISLATURE, PURSUANT TO SECTION 112-A(3)**  
**OF THE DOMESTIC RELATIONS LAW, CONCERNING EXPEDITED**  
**CALENDARING OF ADOPTION PROCEEDINGS**

**HON. JOSEPH A. ZAYAS**

**Chief Administrative Judge**

**April 2025**

## **INTRODUCTION**

This report is submitted by the Chief Administrative Judge pursuant to Domestic Relations Law Section 112-a, which requires the Chief Administrator of the Courts to promulgate court rules to expedite the calendaring and disposition of authorized agency adoptions in Family and Surrogate's Courts, and to submit annual reports to the Governor and Legislature regarding the implementation and impact of the rules. This report documents implementation of the rules in the Family and Surrogate's Courts for the calendar year 2024.<sup>1</sup>

## **SUMMARY OF THE PROVISIONS OF SECTION 112-A OF THE DOMESTIC RELATIONS LAW AND IMPLEMENTING COURT RULES**

In an effort to expedite adoptions filed by authorized agencies, Domestic Relations Law Section 112-a provides that an adoption proceeding is deemed "filed" upon receipt by the Clerk of the Surrogate's or Family Court of the documents required by statute and court rule,<sup>2</sup> as well as an "affidavit of readiness" from the petitioning agency's attorney. D.R.L. §112-a(1).

Once these documents are filed, the Surrogate's or Family Court is required to

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<sup>1</sup> Data covers the 13 terms of 2024, starting on January 3, 2024 and ending on January 1, 2025.

<sup>2</sup> Domestic Relations Law §112(2), (3), (5) and (7), as implemented in Section 207.55 of the *Uniform Rules of the Surrogate's Court* and Section 205.53 of the *Uniform Rules for the Family Court*, set forth the documents required to be submitted in an adoption proceeding, in addition to the affidavit of readiness required by Domestic Relations Law § 112-a(1).

schedule the proceeding for a "review...to determine if there is adequate basis for approving the adoption." D.R.L. §112-a(2). If an adequate basis is found, the Court is required to direct the appearance of the adoptive parents and child for approval of the adoption; if not, the Court "shall direct such further hearings, submissions or appearances as may be required, and the proceedings shall be adjourned as required for such purposes." D.R.L. §§112-a(2)(a), 112-a(2)(b). The review, appearances for approval of the adoption, and any adjournments for further hearings, submissions or reviews are required to take place within time frames established by court rules. D.R.L. §112-a(3). The Chief Administrator is required to report annually to the Governor and Legislature "on the implementation of such rules and their impact upon adoptions from authorized agencies." *Id.*

In an effort to encourage and expedite the adoption of children by foster parents with whom they have formed bonds, sections 383-c and 384-b of the Social Services Law require attorneys for authorized agencies to notify prospective adoptive parents promptly of their rights to commence adoption proceedings upon court approval of voluntary surrenders of children and transfers of guardianship and custody through termination of parental rights, respectively. S.S.L. §§383-c(8), 384-b(10). The agencies are further directed to advise prospective adoptive parents of the procedures for adoption and cooperate "in the provision of necessary documentation." *Id.* The vast majority of prospective adoptive parents approved by authorized agencies for the adoption of children -- generally more than 90% -- are caring for such children as foster parents.

The Chief Administrative Judge promulgated rules for the Family and Surrogate's Courts which generally establish a 90-day time frame for completion of authorized agency adoptions, absent adjournments for extenuating circumstances. Section 205.59 of the *Uniform Rules for the Family Court* and section 207.62 of the *Uniform Rules for the Surrogate's Court* require that the initial review by the court to determine the adequacy of the petition and required documentation, including the affidavit of readiness, shall occur within 60 days of the filing of the documents. If the documentation is deemed adequate and the petition is deemed ready for approval, the court is directed to schedule the appearance of the adoptive parent(s) and child within 30 days of the review. If the petition is not ready for finalization, the court must specify what further hearings, submissions or appearances are necessary and adjourn the proceedings "as required for such purposes." 22 N.Y.C.R.R. §§205.59, 207.62.

### **SURVEY OF FAMILY AND SURROGATE'S COURT PRACTICES**

The experience of the Family and Surrogate's Courts in 2024 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, 1,663 agency adoption petitions were filed and 1,454 were finalized during the 13 terms of calendar year 2024 in Family and Surrogate's Courts statewide. 98.4 percent of the adoption petitions filed were in compliance with the requirement that agency adoption filings be reviewed by court staff within 60 days and 34.1% of the finalized adoptions were able to be completed within 30 days of the staff review. 24.9% of the adoptions finalized had been pending in excess of 90 days prior to finalization.

**Expedited Adoptions Report: Terms 1-13, 2024 (Jan. 3, 2024-Jan. 1, 2025)  
SUMMARY: ALL DISTRICTS**

<b>DISTRICT</b>	<b># Agency Adoptions Filed</b>	<b># Agency Adoptions Finalized</b>	<b># Agency Adoptions Reviewed by Court Staff Within 60 Days of Filing</b>	<b># Agency Adoptions Finalized Within 30 Days of Staff Review</b>	<b># Agency Adoption Finalizations Delayed Beyond 90 Days From Filing Due to Missing Documentation</b>
<b>NYC: 1, 2, 11, 12 AND 13</b>	560	547	547	55	182
<b>THIRD</b>	83	89	79	20	23
<b>FOURTH</b>	114	113	110	60	34
<b>FIFTH</b>	157	162	157	98	12
<b>SIXTH</b>	147	138	147	90	26
<b>SEVENTH</b>	90	85	87	27	44
<b>EIGHTH</b>	202	199	202	81	24
<b>NINTH</b>	72	57	72	19	20
<b>TENTH</b>	64	64	64	58	6
<b>TOTAL:</b>	<b>1489</b>	<b>1454</b>	<b>1465</b>	<b>508</b>	<b>371</b>
<b>% of filings</b>		<b>97.6%</b>	<b>98.4%</b>	<b>34.1%</b>	<b>24.9%</b>

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

**Expedited Adoptions Report: Terms 1-13, 2024 (Jan. 3, 2023 - Jan. 1, 2025)  
Judicial District: New York City (1<sup>st</sup>, 2<sup>nd</sup>, 11<sup>th</sup>, 12<sup>th</sup>+ 13<sup>th</sup> Jud. Districts)**

COUNTY	# Agency Adoptions Filed	# Agency Adoptions Finalized	# Agency Adoptions Reviewed by Court Staff Within 60 Days of Filing	# Agency Adoptions Finalized Within 30 Days of Staff Review	# Agency Adoption Finalizations Delayed Beyond 90 Days From Filing Due to Missing Documentation*
<b><u>Bronx County</u></b> Family Surrogate's	149 0	162 0	147 0	6 0	58 0
<b><u>Kings Co.</u></b> Family Surrogate's	134 1	134 1	131 1	21 0	25 0
<b><u>NY County</u></b> Family Surrogate's	125 1	123 2	124 1	16 0	35 1
<b><u>Queens Co.</u></b> Family Surrogate's	116 0	84 0	110 0	11 0	43 0
<b><u>Richmond Co.</u></b> Family Surrogate's	34 0	41 0	33 0	1 0	20 0
<b>TOTAL: NYC</b>	<b>560</b>	<b>547</b>	<b>547</b>	<b>55</b>	<b>182</b>

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

**Snapshot NYC-wide [Agency Adoptions Pending Jan. 2, 2025]: 194 (NYC Fam. Ct.); 0 (NY Co. Surr. Ct.)**

**Adoption Initiatives:**

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

**NYC Family Court:** In recognition of Adoption Month 2024, the New York City Family Court held several adoption month events. Kings County Family Court celebrated Adoption Day on November 8, 2024. Court staff, attorneys, agencies, and community groups came together to honor each child and family, marking a new beginning filled with love, support, and opportunity. The celebration included welcoming remarks from judges, local officials, special recognition for the adoptive families, and an array of activities and entertainment for children and guests. Adoptions were finalized during the day for 29 children.

On November 22, 2024, in collaboration with various organizations and agencies, Richmond Family Court staff hosted Adoption Day 2024. The Ceremonial Courtroom at 18 Richmond Terrace was used for the formal finalization of the five adoptions held that day. Prior to their case being heard, children had a chance to create picture frames at an arts and crafts table, courtesy of Safe Horizon's Children Center. The families were also treated to breakfast and balloons, books from the New York Public Library, gifts and games provided by ACS, and gifts by Jockey made possible through the assistance of the Richmond County Bar Association.

Queens County Family Court celebrated National Adoption Day on November 14, 2024. Adoptions for 3 children were finalized in person in the Queens County Family Court courthouse on that date. There were two tables decorated with colorful balloons on the first floor and fifth floor of the building with signs denoting Adoption Day. The tables included refreshments and snacks. In addition, small age-appropriate gifts including stuffed animals, books and backpacks with Dave and Buster gift card were distributed to the children who were present for their adoptions. Two judges presided over the adoptions with ACS caseworkers present to celebrate the occasion.

Manhattan Family Court held an Adoption Day Celebration on November 14, 2024. One of the courtrooms was allocated and decorated for the celebration. The adoption clerk set up a meet and greet room with party decorations, treats and gift bags for the adoptees and their siblings. Five adoptions were finalized during the day's celebration.

All the adoptions in all the counties were commemorated with photos of the families with the judges and the court staff. A total of 558 agency adoption petitions were filed in New York City Family Court in 2024. A total of 544 agency adoptions were finalized in New York City Family Court in 2024.

**Expedited Adoptions Report: Terms 1-13, 2024 (Jan. 3, 2024 - Jan. 1, 2025)  
Third Judicial District**

<b>COUNTY AND COURT</b>	<b># Agency Adoptions Filed</b>	<b># Agency Adoptions Finalized</b>	<b># Agency Adoptions: Preliminary Review by Court Staff Within 60 Days of Filing</b>	<b># Agency Adoptions: Finalized Within 30 Days of the Preliminary Court Staff Review</b>	<b># Agency Adoption Finalizations Delayed Beyond 90 Days From Filing Due to Missing Documentation or other reasons*</b>
<u>Albany</u> Family Surrogate's	18 3	16 3	18 3	0 3	4 0
<u>Columbia</u> Family Surrogate's	1 0	2 0	0 0	0 0	1 0
<u>Greene</u> Family Surrogate's	5 0	4 0	5 0	0 0	4 0
<u>Rensselaer</u> Family Surrogate's	10 0	10 0	7 0	7 0	3 0
<u>Schoharie</u> Family Surrogate's	3 0	3 0	3 0	3 0	0 0
<u>Sullivan</u> Family Surrogate's	19 0	21 0	19 0	6 0	1 0
<u>Ulster</u> Family Surrogate's	24 0	30 0	24 0	1 0	10 0
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>83</b>	<b>89</b>	<b>79</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>23</b>

**Most frequent reason(s) for delay in finalizing adoption:** Delays in SCR clearances; missing or incomplete paperwork by Department of Social Services ("DSS"); delayed paperwork submissions; delay by DSS in submitting dispositional order freeing the child and serving notice of entry upon the birth parents.

**Snapshot District-wide [Agency Adoptions Pending as of Jan. 2, 2025]: 11**

**Adoption Initiatives** Ulster Family – The Chief/Deputy Chief Clerk makes phone calls and send emails to counsel and DSS to get missing paperwork. Once the file is ready to be scheduled, the matter is calendars within 2 weeks. The Clerk's Office has asked DSS not to give the case to the assigned attorney that is filing the petition until most or all of the necessary DSS paperwork is ready for filing.

**Expedited Adoptions Report: Terms 1-13, 2024 (Jan. 3, 2024 - Jan. 1, 2025)  
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	15 0	16 0	15 0	2 0	14 0
<u>Essex Co.</u> Family Surrogate's	0 4	0 3	0 0	0 0	0 3
<u>Franklin Co.</u> Family Surrogate's	11 0	2 0	11 0	0 0	4 0
<u>Fulton Co.</u> Family Surrogate's	7 0	4 0	7 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	2 0	1 0	0 0	1 0
<u>St. Lawrence Co.</u> Family Surrogate's	29 0	39 0	29 0	26 0	3 0
<u>Saratoga Co.</u> Family Surrogate's	23 0	23 0	23 0	20 0	3 0
<u>Schenectady Co.</u> Family Surrogate's	16 0	17 0	16 0	7 0	3 0
<u>Warren Co.</u> Family Surrogate's	4 0	3 0	4 0	2 0	0 0
<u>Washington Co.</u> Family Surrogate's	4 0	4 0	4 0	3 0	0 0
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>114</b>	<b>113</b>	<b>110</b>	<b>60</b>	<b>34</b>

\* **Most frequent reason(s) for delay in finalizing adoption:** Delays by DSS and adoptive parents' attorneys in submitting required documents; home study and subsidy approval delays.

**Snapshot District-wide [Agency adoptions pending as of Jan. 1, 2025]: 25.**

**Adoption initiatives:** Family Court, Schenectady County, holds calendar dates 90 days after filing open to use if adoptions are ready for finalization.



**Expedited Adoptions: Terms 1-13, 2024 (Jan. 3, 2024 - Jan. 1, 2025)  
Fifth Judicial District**

COUNTY AND COURT	#Agency Adoptions Filed	#Agency Adoptions Finalized	# Agency Adoptions: Preliminary Review by Court Staff Within 60 Days of Filing	# Agency Adoptions: Finalized Within 30 Days of the Preliminary Court Staff Review	# Agency Adoption Finalizations Delayed Beyond 90 Days from Filing Due to Missing Documentation or other reasons*
<u>Herkimer</u> -Family - Surrogate's	2 0	2 0	2 0	2 0	0 0
<u>Jefferson</u> -Family - Surrogate's	21 0	22 0	21 0	14 0	0 0
<u>Lewis</u> -Family - Surrogate's	0 0	0 0	0 0	0 0	0 0
<u>Oneida</u> -Family - Surrogate's	16 0	16 0	16 0	15 0	1 0
<u>Onondaga</u> -Family - Surrogate's	78 0	78 0	78 0	40 0	11 0
<u>Oswego</u> -Family - Surrogate's	40 0	44 0	40 0	27 0	0 0
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>157</b>	<b>162</b>	<b>157</b>	<b>98</b>	<b>12</b>

**Most frequent reason(s) for delay in finalizing adoption(s):** Untimely receipt of adoption filing requirements including criminal background checks and child abuse history reports, home study(s), documentation from attorneys and agency representatives, appellate stays, incomplete filings, insufficient review of documents by agency and or attorneys prior to filing.

**Adoption Initiatives:** National Adoption Day has been celebrated in the Fifth Judicial District for over 20 years. Court leaders and the Onondaga County Executive introduced the program, followed by guest speakers, the adoptive parents of Olympian Simone Biles, and Lt. Peter Robinson shared personal stories of adoption and sang *God Bless America* and *America the Beautiful*. Forty-three children were adopted after the formal celebration, individually with their adoptive families and Family Court Judge. See *CNY Central*, "Syracuse adoption event brings families together on Nat'l Adoption Day," Nov. 22, 2024.

**Expedited Adoptions Report: Terms 1-13, 2024 (Jan. 3, 2024 - Jan. 1, 2025)  
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	52 0	59 0	52 0	31 0	9 0
<u>Chemung Co.</u> Family Surrogate's	8 0	8 0	8 0	8 0	0 0
<u>Chenango Co.</u> Family Surrogate's	0 6	0 6	0 6	0 0	0 6
<u>Cortland Co.</u> Family Surrogate's	0 18	0 14	0 18	0 13	0 1
<u>Delaware Co.</u> Family Surrogate's	0 10	0 10	0 10	0 10	0 0
<u>Madison Co.</u> Family Surrogate's	9 0	9 0	9 0	5 0	0 0
<u>Otsego Co.</u> Family Surrogate's	0 4	0 2	0 4	0 0	0 1
<u>Schuyler Co.</u> Family Surrogate's	0 15	0 15	0 15	0 14	0 0
<u>Tioga Co.</u> Family Surrogate's	0 4	0 1	0 4	0 1	0 3
<u>Tompkins Co.</u> Family Surrogate's	0 21	0 14	0 21	0 8	0 6
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>147</b>	<b>138</b>	<b>147</b>	<b>90</b>	<b>26</b>

**Snapshot District-wide (Agency adoptions pending as of Jan.1, 2025):** 33

**Most frequent reason(s) for delay in finalizing adoptions:** missing documents from attorneys, including home study, appeal status, adoption registry form, adoption subsidy confirmation, State Central Registry and criminal clearances; coordinating schedule with companion adoption.

**Adoption Initiatives:** Chemung Co. Family Court: Child Welfare Court Improvement Project has successfully fast-tracked agency adoptions. Tompkins Co. Surrogate's Court uses computer reminders to track cases.

**Expedited Adoptions Report: Terms 1-13, 2024 (Jan. 3, 2024 - Jan. 1, 2025)  
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 Surrogate's	0 3	0 3	0 3	0 3	0 0
<u>Livingston Co.</u> Family Surrogate's	3 0	3 0	3 0	3 0	0 0
<u>Monroe Co.</u> Family Surrogate's	56 4	55 4	53 4	14 0	20 1
<u>Ontario Co.</u> Family Surrogate's	4 0	4 0	4 0	4 0	0 0
<u>Seneca Co.</u> Family Surrogate's	2 0	2 0	2 0	2 0	0 0
<u>Steuben Co.</u> Family Surrogate's	4 0	7 0	4 0	0 0	7 0
<u>Wayne Co.</u> Family Surrogate's	0 5	0 0	0 5	0 0	0 1
<u>Yates Co.</u> Family Surrogate's	9 0	7 0	9 0	1 0	6 0
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>90</b>	<b>85</b>	<b>87</b>	<b>27</b>	<b>44</b>

\* **Most frequent reason(s) for delay in finalizing adoption:** missing documentation from the agency or attorney, including home studies, verified schedules, and other documents from adoptive parents.

**Adoptions pending as of Jan. 2, 2025:** Monroe Co. Family Court: 5.

**Adoption initiatives:** Monroe Co. Family Court convened a National Adoption Day celebration at which six children were adopted. See "A day full of hugs and smiles for families as adoptions become official," *Democrat & Chronicle (Rochester)*, Nov. 22, 2024.

**Expedited Adoptions Report: Terms 1-13, 2024 (Jan. 3, 2024 - Jan. 1, 2025)  
Eighth Judicial District**

COUNTY	# Agency Adoptions Filed	# Agency Adoptions Finalized	# Agency Adoptions Reviewed by Court Staff Within 60 Days of Filing	# Agency Adoptions Finalized Within 30 Days of Review	# Agency Adoption Finalizations Delayed Beyond 90 Days from Filing Due to Missing Documentation*
<u>Allegany Co.</u> Family Surrogate's	0 0	0 0	0 0	0 0	0 0
<u>Cattaraugus Co.</u> Family Surrogate's	9 0	9 0	9 0	9 0	0 0
<u>Chautauqua Co.</u> Family Surrogate's	10 0	8 2	10 0	1 0	1 0
<u>Erie Co.</u> Family Surrogate's	124 13	123 16	124 13	41 0	N/A 16
<u>Genesee Co.</u> Family Surrogate's	10 0	12 0	10 0	9 0	1 0
<u>Niagara Co.</u> Family Surrogate's	23 0	20 0	23 0	17 0	2 0
<u>Orleans Co.</u> Family Surrogate's	9 0	5 0	9 0	0 0	4 0
<u>Wyoming Co.</u> Family Surrogate's	4 0	4 0	4 0	4 0	0 0
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>202</b>	<b>199</b>	<b>202</b>	<b>81</b>	<b>24</b>

**Most frequent reasons for delay in finalizing adoptions:** Chautauqua Co. Family Court and Niagara Co. Family Court: delays in agency submission of required documents; Erie Co. Fam. Ct.: delays in identifying birth fathers; foster parent issues,

**Adoptions pending as of Jan. 2, 2025:** 1 [Erie Co. Surr. Ct]; 51(Erie Co. Fam. Ct.); 4 (Orleans Co. Fam. Ct).

**Adoption initiatives:** Orleans Co. Family Court monitors cases on a bi-weekly basis and contacts attorneys regarding required documents.

**Expedited Adoptions Report: Terms 1-13, 2024 (Jan. 3, 2024 - Jan. 1, 2025)  
Ninth Judicial District**

<b>County</b>	<b># Agency Adoptions Filed</b>	<b># Agency Adoptions Finalized</b>	<b># Agency Adoptions Reviewed by Court Staff Within 60 Days of Filing</b>	<b># Agency Adoptions Finalized Within 30 Days of Review</b>	<b># Agency Adoption Finalizations Delayed Beyond 90 Days from Filing Due to Missing Documentation*</b>
<b><u>Putnam Co.</u> Family Surrogate's</b>	<b>1 0</b>	<b>1 0</b>	<b>1 0</b>	<b>1 0</b>	<b>0 0</b>
<b><u>Rockland</u> Family Surrogate's</b>	<b>9 0</b>	<b>9 0</b>	<b>9 0</b>	<b>8 0</b>	<b>1 0</b>
<b><u>Orange Co</u> Family Surrogate's</b>	<b>17 0</b>	<b>14 0</b>	<b>17 0</b>	<b>0 0</b>	<b>7 0</b>
<b><u>Dutchess Co</u> Family Surrogate=s</b>	<b>18 0</b>	<b>12 0</b>	<b>18 0</b>	<b>3 0</b>	<b>8 0</b>
<b><u>Westchester Co.</u> Family Surrogate=s</b>	<b>27 0</b>	<b>21 0</b>	<b>27 0</b>	<b>7 0</b>	<b>4 0</b>
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>72</b>	<b>57</b>	<b>72</b>	<b>19</b>	<b>20</b>

**Snapshot of pending adoptions as of Jan. 1, 2025:** 6 [Dutchess Co. Fam.Ct.]

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

**Adoption Initiatives:** **Orange Co. Family Court:** celebrated Adoption Day on Nov.22, 2024.

**Rockland Co. Family Court:** With fewer children in foster care and greater efforts to reunify families, including through preventive services and Treatment Court, there are fewer adoption petitions filed, resulting in fewer delays.

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

## Expedited Adoptions Report: Terms 1-13, 2024 (Jan. 3, 2024 - Jan. 1, 2025) 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	14 0	14 0	14 0	14 0	0 0
<u>Suffolk</u> Family Surrogate's	50 0	50 0	50 0	44 0	6 0
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>64</b>	<b>64</b>	<b>64</b>	<b>58</b>	<b>6</b>

**Agency adoptions pending as of Jan. 2, 2025:** 27 [Suffolk Co. Family Court];

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

**Adoption initiatives:** Judges review open adoptions every 90-days to monitor progress and expedite finalizations.

National Adoption Day was held in person in Suffolk Co. Fam. Ct. on November 17, 2024 at the Riverhead Aquarium, the first time the event was held outside of the courthouse. See "Adoption Day at Riverhead Aquarium unites 11 kids with their new families, while sea creatures swim nearby," *Newsday*, Nov. 22, 2024. Six adoptions were completed that day and five additional families, whose adoptions had already been finalized, attended, along with family and friends. There was a face-painter, photobooth, and an author signing books. The families had breakfast and then were welcomed into the aquarium for a day of fun and shows. The Court has continued to work with the Jockey Backpack Program, a non-profit organization that supplies new backpacks to children being adopted and their families, so that every child adopted in Suffolk County in 2024 received one. The backpacks display the child's new initials and have a soft blanket and a stuffed animal inside. Another bag is provided to the parents and is filled with information for resources that may be needed after the adoption.

### CONCLUSION

The Unified Court System's record of compliance with the court rules continued with fully 98.4% percent of the agency adoption petitions filed in 2024 in Family and Surrogate's Courts in New York State having been reviewed by court staff within 60 days of filing. This success under challenging conditions reflect the judiciary's continued rigorous efforts to realize the goals of the landmark federal and state legislation aimed at expediting the movement of children out of foster care back to their own families, to adoptive homes or to other permanent living arrangements.

The intensive inter-agency efforts to bring adoptions to finalization quickly have continued to produce impressive results. As in past years, to the extent that delays have been encountered, these have been related to the persistent problem of failures by petitioners' attorneys and

authorized agencies to submit complete documentation at the outset, as required by statute and rule, notwithstanding extensive efforts by the courts to monitor submissions and remind attorneys about deficiencies.

The prompt resolution of children’s cases, whether through family reunification, adoption, kinship guardianship or other alternatives, remains a priority for the Unified Court System as it implements federal and New York State legislation. The rapid phases of child development — particularly the inexorable process by which children form vital bonds and attachments with their caretakers, the critical needs of children for stability and their unique perception of time — require their expeditious movement out of the limbo of foster care into permanent homes, as what may appear to be modest delays are of significant consequence in the lives of children. The successful implementation of the legislation and court rules requiring prompt calendaring and completion of adoption proceedings, as outlined in this report, has furthered the goal of expediting these important cases.

January, 2025