



**2019 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, 2020**

## 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 2019.<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, 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,<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 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

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<sup>1</sup> Data covers the 13 terms of 2018, starting on January 2, 2019 and ending on January 1, 2020.

<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).

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 2019 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, 1,857 agency adoption petitions were filed and 1,793 were finalized during the 13 terms of calendar year 2019 in Family and Surrogate's Courts statewide; 99.78 % of the adoption petitions filed were in compliance with the requirement that agency adoption filings be reviewed within 60 days; 35% of the finalized petitions were able to be completed within 30 days of the review and 35 % of the adoptions finalized had been pending in excess of 90 days prior to finalization.

**Expedited Adoptions Report: Terms 1-13, 2019 (Jan. 2, 2019 - Jan. 1, 2020)  
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>	<b>727</b>	<b>695</b>	<b>725</b>	<b>97</b>	<b>422</b>
<b>THIRD</b>	<b>132</b>	<b>142</b>	<b>131</b>	<b>33</b>	<b>53</b>
<b>FOURTH</b>	<b>145</b>	<b>133</b>	<b>145</b>	<b>60</b>	<b>32</b>
<b>FIFTH</b>	<b>144</b>	<b>139</b>	<b>143</b>	<b>113</b>	<b>9</b>
<b>SIXTH</b>	<b>89</b>	<b>89</b>	<b>89</b>	<b>60</b>	<b>19</b>
<b>SEVENTH</b>	<b>132</b>	<b>137</b>	<b>132</b>	<b>55</b>	<b>29</b>
<b>EIGHTH</b>	<b>255</b>	<b>233</b>	<b>255</b>	<b>80</b>	<b>21</b>
<b>NINTH</b>	<b>156</b>	<b>129</b>	<b>156</b>	<b>47</b>	<b>33</b>
<b>TENTH</b>	<b>77</b>	<b>96</b>	<b>77</b>	<b>85</b>	<b>8</b>
<b><u>TOTAL</u></b>	<b>1857</b>	<b>1793</b>	<b>1853</b>	<b>630</b>	<b>626</b>

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

**Expedited Adoptions Report: Terms 1-13, , 2019 (Jan. 2, 2019 - Jan. 1, 2020  
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)**

<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 Staff Review</b>	<b># Agency Adoption Finalizations Delayed Beyond 90 Days From Filing Due to Missing Documentation*</b>
<b><u>Bronx County</u> Family Surrogate's</b>	<b>136 0</b>	<b>131 0</b>	<b>136 0</b>	<b>2 0</b>	<b>85 0</b>
<b><u>Kings Co.</u> Family Surrogate's</b>	<b>198 0</b>	<b>199 0</b>	<b>198 0</b>	<b>60 0</b>	<b>115 0</b>
<b><u>NY County</u> Family Surrogate's</b>	<b>158 7</b>	<b>172 4</b>	<b>158 5</b>	<b>19 0</b>	<b>97 2</b>
<b><u>Queens Co.</u> Family Surrogate's</b>	<b>171 0</b>	<b>142 0</b>	<b>171 0</b>	<b>14 0</b>	<b>91 0</b>
<b><u>Richmond Co.</u> Family Surrogate's</b>	<b>57 0</b>	<b>47 0</b>	<b>57 0</b>	<b>2 0</b>	<b>32 0</b>
<b>TOTAL: NYC</b>	<b>727</b>	<b>695</b>	<b>725</b>	<b>97</b>	<b>422</b>

\* **Most frequent reason(s) for delay in finalizing adoption:** NYC Family Court reported delays in submission by attorneys of information on back-up guardians, adoptive parent and child physicals, putative father registry and updates on medical information and home studies. NY County Surrogate's Court reported delays by attorneys despite reminders from the cCourt.

**Snapshot NYC-wide [Agency Adoptions Pending as of Jan. 1 2020]:201 (NYC Family Court)**

**Adoption Initiatives:**

– **NYC Family Court:** In recognition of National Adoption Month, in November 2019, each of the New York City Family Courts held designated “Adoption Days” at which a total of 74 adoptions were finalized, along with celebrations and gifts for the children.

– **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, 2019 (Jan. 2 2019 - Jan. 1 2020  
Third 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 Staff Review</b>	<b># Agency Adoption Finalizations Delayed Beyond 90 Days From Filing Due to Missing Documentation*</b>
<u>Albany Co.</u>					
Family	49	60 <sup>3</sup>	49	6	27
Surrogate's	6	6	5	0	0
<u>Columbia Co.</u>					
Family	5	3	5	0	3
Surrogate's	0	0	0	0	0
<u>Greene Co.</u>					
Family	10	10	10	8	2
Surrogate's	0	0	0	0	0
<u>Rensselaer Co.</u>					
Family	9	12	9	0	2
Surrogate's	0	0	0	0	0
<u>Schoharie Co.</u>					
Family	16	15	16	15	0
Surrogate's	0	0	0	0	0
<u>Sullivan Co.</u>					
Family	12	11	12	3	9
Surrogate's	0	0	0	0	0
<u>Ulster Co.</u>					
Family	25	25	25	1	10
Surrogate's	0	0	0	0	0
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>132</b>	<b>142</b>	<b>131</b>	<b>33</b>	<b>53</b>

\* **Most frequent reason(s) for delay in finalizing adoption:** Missing or incorrect paperwork, especially adoption subsidy paperwork and other documentation from local Depts. of Social Services.

**Snapshot [Agency Adoptions Pending as of Jan. 1 2020: 13** [Albany Family Ct: 2; Rensselaer Family Ct: 3; Columbia Family Ct: 2; Schoharie Family Ct: 1; Sullivan Family Ct: 2; Ulster Family Ct: 3]

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

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<sup>3</sup> Five petitions were dismissed.

**Expedited Adoptions Report: Terms 1-13, , 2019 (Jan. 3, 2019 - Jan. 1, 2020)**  
**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	20	16	20	18	0
Surrogate's	0	0	0	0	0
<u>Essex Co.</u>					
Family	0	0	0	0	0
Surrogate's	3	3	3	2	1
<u>Franklin Co.</u>					
Family	14	7	14	1	7
Surrogate's	0	0	0	0	0
<u>Fulton Co.</u>					
Family	5	4	5	0	0
Surrogate's	0	0	0	0	0
<u>Hamilton Co.</u>					
Family	1	0	1	0	1
Surrogate's	0	0	0	0	0
<u>Montgomery Co.</u>					
Family	4	7	4	0	7
Surrogate's	0	0	0	0	0
<u>St. Lawrence Co.</u>					
Family	19	17	19	15	2
Surrogate's	0	0	0	0	0
<u>Saratoga Co.</u>					
Family	40	37	40	20	1
Surrogate's	0	0	0	0	0
<u>Schenectady Co.</u>					
Family	26	25	26	2	8
Surrogate's	0	0	0	0	0
<u>Warren Co.</u>					
Family	2	5	2	0	4
Surrogate's	0	0	0	0	0
<u>Washington Co.</u>					
Family	11	12	11	2	1
Surrogate's	0	0	0	0	0
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>145</b>	<b>133</b>	<b>145</b>	<b>60</b>	<b>32</b>

\* 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, 2020]: 33.

**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, 2019 (Jan. 2, 2019 - Jan. 1, 2020)  
Fifth 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 Staff Review</b>	<b># Agency Adoption Finalizations Delayed Beyond 90 Days From Filing Due to Missing Documentation*</b>
<b><u>Herkimer County</u></b> Family Court Surrogates Court	19 0	19 0	19 0	19 0	0 0
<b><u>Jefferson County</u></b> Family Court Surrogates Court	32 0	33 0	32 0	16 0	0 0
<b><u>Lewis County</u></b> Family Court Surrogates Court	3 0	1 0	2 0	0 0	1 0
<b><u>Oneida County</u></b> Family Court Surrogates Court	17 1	17 1	17 1	17 0	0 1
<b><u>Onondaga County</u></b> Family Court Surrogates Court	50 0	48 0	50 0	41 0	7 0
<b><u>Oswego County</u></b> Family Court Surrogates Court	22 0	20 0	22 0	20 0	0 0
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>144</b>	<b>139</b>	<b>143</b>	<b>113</b>	<b>9</b>

\* **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.

**Adoption Initiatives:** The Fifth Judicial District celebrated National Adoption Day at the Oncenter in Syracuse, New York on November 22, 2019 during which 31 children were adopted, 23 of whom were from Onondaga County.

**Expedited Adoptions Report: Terms 1-13, 2018 (Jan. 2, 2019 - Jan. 1, 2020)**

**Sixth 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 Staff Review</b>	<b># Agency Adoption Finalizations Delayed Beyond 90 Days From Filing Due to Missing Documentation*</b>
<b><u>Broome Co.</u></b>					
Family	28	30	28	21	9
Surrogate	0	0	0	0	0
<b><u>Chemung Co.</u></b>					
Family	9	5	9	2	1
Surrogate	0	0	0	0	0
<b><u>Chenango Co.</u></b>					
Family	0	0	0	0	0
Surrogate	3	2	3	2	3
<b><u>Cortland Co.</u></b>					
Family	0	0	0	0	0
Surrogate	10	10	10	10	0
<b><u>Delaware Co.</u></b>					
Family	12	12	12	10	1
Surrogate	0	0	0	0	0
<b><u>Madison Co.</u></b>					
Family	4	4	4	2	0
Surrogate	0	0	0	0	0
<b><u>Otsego Co.</u></b>					
Family	0	0	0	0	0
Surrogate	5	5	5	5	0
<b><u>Schuyler Co.</u></b>					
Family	0	0	0	0	0
Surrogate	5	1	5	0	1
<b><u>Tioga Co.</u></b>					
Family	0	0	0	0	0
Surrogate	2	2	2	2	0
<b><u>Tompkins Co.</u></b>					
Family	0	0	0	0	0
Surrogate	11	18	11	6	4
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>89</b>	<b>89</b>	<b>89</b>	<b>60</b>	<b>19</b>

Snapshot District-wide (Agency adoptions pending as of Jan.1, 2020): 7

# Expedited Adoptions Report: Terms 1-13, 2019 (Jan. 2, 2019 - Jan. 1, 2020)

## Judicial District: 7th

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>Cavuga</u> Family	0	0	0	0	0
Surrogate's	12	18 <sup>4</sup>	12	12	0
<u>Livingston</u> Family	12	10	12	12	0
Surrogate's	0	0	0	0	0
<u>Monroe</u> Family	50	52	50	3	16
Surrogate's	5	4	5	0	3
<u>Ontario</u> Family	15	19	15	10	7
Surrogate's	0	0	0	0	0
<u>Seneca</u> Family	6	7	6	7	0
Surrogate's	0	0	0	0	0
<u>Steuben</u> Family	19	17	19	6	3
Surrogate's	0	0	0	0	0
<u>Wayne</u> Family	0	0	0	0	0
Surrogate's	9	6	9	1	0
<u>Yates</u> Family	4	4	4	4	0
Surrogate's	0	0	0	0	0
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>132</b>	<b>137</b>	<b>132</b>	<b>55</b>	<b>29</b>

\* **Most frequent reason(s) for delay in finalizing adoption:** Monroe Co. Family Court: document delays from agencies and county department; scheduling conflicts with adoptive parents, attorneys and Court; delays in receiving information from Adoption Star; delay in out-of-state service on consenting father; Steuben Co. Family Court: home study delays; missing documentation.

**Snapshot District-wide** (Agency adoptions pending as of Jan. 1, 2020): 7 [Monroe Co. Family Court]

**Adoption Initiatives:** Family Courts in Livingston, Monroe and Ontario Counties convened National Adoption Day celebrations;

<sup>4</sup> Adoptions finalized in 2019 included three filed in November and December, 2018 and three filed in 2016 that awaited Appellate Division decisions that were issued in January and March, 2019.

**Expedited Adoptions Report: Terms 1-13, 2019 (Jan. 3, 2019 - Jan. 1, 2020)**

**Eighth 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>Allegany Co.</u></b>					
<b>Family</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>
<b>Surrogate's</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>2</b>
<b><u>Cattaraugus Co.</u></b>					
<b>Family</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>N/A</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>Surrogate's</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>
<b><u>Chautauqua Co.</u></b>					
<b>Family</b>	<b>21</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>21</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>Surrogate's</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>0</b>
<b><u>Erie Co.</u></b>					
<b>Family</b>	<b>164</b>	<b>142</b>	<b>164</b>	<b>54</b>	<b>N/A</b>
<b>Surrogate's</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>13</b>
<b><u>Genesee Co.</u></b>					
<b>Family</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>Surrogate's</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>
<b><u>Niagara Co.</u></b>					
<b>Family</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>0</b>
<b>Surrogate's</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>
<b><u>Orleans Co.</u></b>					
<b>Family</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>Surrogate's</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>
<b><u>Wyoming Co.</u></b>					
<b>Family</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>0</b>
<b>Surrogate's</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>255</b>	<b>233</b>	<b>255</b>	<b>80</b>	<b>21</b>

**Most frequent reason(s) for delay in finalizing adoptions:** Allegany Surrogate's Court: delays in receiving documents; Genesee Co. Family Court: incorrect documents; Erie Co. Family Court: Missing and out-of-date documents, post-adoption services not yet in place, new attorneys; Orleans Co. Family Court: late home studies.

**Adoptions pending as of Jan. 1, 2020:** Erie Co. Surr. Ct: 3; Niagara Co. Fam. Ct: 2; Orleans Co. Family Court: 3.

**Adoption Initiatives:** Erie Co. Family Court: regular meetings with key personnel from Court, Dept. of Social Services and Court Improvement Project, including court staff attending Dept of Social Services status reviews; ; Orleans Co. Family Court: monitors status of all adoptions on bi-weekly basis and continues frequent contacts with attorneys and agencies to expedite submission of documents.

**Expedited Adoptions Report: Terms 1-13, 2019 (Jan. 2, 2019 - Jan. 1, 2020)  
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></b>					
<b>Family</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>0</b>
<b>Surrogate's</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>
<b><u>Rockland Co</u></b>					
<b>Family</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>0</b>
<b>Surrogate's</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>
<b><u>Orange Co.</u></b>					
<b>Family</b>	<b>46</b>	<b>25</b>	<b>46</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>18</b>
<b>Surrogate's</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>
<b><u>DutchessCo.</u></b>					
<b>Family</b>	<b>23</b>	<b>27</b>	<b>27</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>15</b>
<b>Surrogate's</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>
<b><u>Westchester Co.</u></b>					
<b>Family</b>	<b>77</b>	<b>67</b>	<b>77</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>0</b>
<b>Surrogate's</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>156</b>	<b>129</b>	<b>156</b>	<b>47</b>	<b>33</b>

**Snapshot of pending adoptions as of Jan. 1, 2020:** 8 [Dutchess Co. Fam.Ct.: 7; Rockland Co. Family Court: 1 (filed in late 2019) ].

**Most frequent reason(s) for delay in finalizing adoptions:** Dutchess Co. Family Court: delays in receiving documents, from agency and attorneys, criminal history reports and, in one case, a pending appeal; Westchester Co. Family Court: appellate delays, failures on the part of either or both the agency and adoption attorneys 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, which has had success in expediting both the filing and finalization of adoptions. Westchester Co. Family Court has continued its regular communication with the Dept. of Social Services to expedite adoptions. The Court finalized 17 adoptions on a successful Adoption Day, with entertainment by Dave's Cast of Characters in New Rochelle, a luncheon reception, and gift backpacks provided by Jockey, Inc. for the children filled with books, teddy bears and other merchandise collected by a local Girl Scout troop.

**Expedited Adoptions Report: Terms 1-13, 2019 (Jan. 2, 2019 - Jan. 1, 2020)  
Tenth 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</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>Nassau</u> Family Surrogate's</b>	<b>20 1</b>	<b>22 1</b>	<b>20 1</b>	<b>19 1</b>	<b>0 0</b>
<b><u>Suffolk</u> Family Surrogate's</b>	<b>56 0</b>	<b>73 0</b>	<b>56 0</b>	<b>65 0</b>	<b>8 0</b>
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>77</b>	<b>96</b>	<b>77</b>	<b>85</b>	<b>8</b>

**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.

**Agency adoptions pending as of Jan. 1, 2020: 29** [Suffolk Co. Family Court].

**Adoption initiatives:** Suffolk Co. Family Court convened an Adoption Day in November, 2019 at which eight agency adoptions were finalized. All freed children are tracked with a new set of guidelines and the court commenuicates regularly with the Suffolk County Dept. of Social Services. Spreadsheets are provided for all permanency planning hearings so that those hearings can be used as a tool to expedite adoptions.

## CONCLUSION

In 2019, in 99.78 % of its cases, the Unified Court System fully complied with the court rules requiring court staff review of agency adoption proceedings within 60 days of filing. 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, the Federal *Fostering Connections to Success and Adoption Improvement Act of 2008* and in the coming year the Federal *Family First Prevention Services Act*. Continuing the legacy of the late Chief Judge Judith S. 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, 2020