

Main Office
Permanent Judicial Commission
On Justice For Children
140 Grand Street - Suite 404
White Plains, NY 10601
(914) 948-7568
Fax # (914) 948-7584



Children's Center Program
A.E. Smith Building, 1st Floor
P.O. Box 7015
Albany, NY 12225
(518) 486-6563
Fax# (518) 402-4482

Co-Chairs

Judith S. Kaye
Ellen Schall

Members:

Richard J. Bartlett
Richard M. Berman
Fred Brancato
Sheryl Browne-Graves
Geoffrey Canada
Lizette Cantres
Michael I. Cohen
Joan O. Cooney
Monica Drinane
Nancy Dubler
Lucy Friedman
Michael Gage
Lenore Gittis
Richard N. Gottfried
Roger Green
Earlene Hill
Mary F. Kelly
Jane Knitzer
Joseph M. Lauria
Ian G. MacDonald
Kathryn McDonald
Deborah Merrifield
Sondra Miller
Elba Montalvo
Nicolette M. Pach
Stephen Saland
Fern Schair
Nicholas Scopetta
Charles S. Sims
Jane Spinak
Alana Sweeny
Sharon Townsend
Lucia B. Whisenand
Caroline Zinsser

Executive Director

Sheryl Dicker

Hillary Rodham Clinton
First Lady
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue
Washington, DC 20050

Dear Hillary,

Thank you for inviting me to the recent adoption event. Unfortunately, scheduling conflicts precluded my attendance.

I was dismayed at New York's poor showing. New York had made enormous strides to expedite adoptions. But, the computation methodology puts New York at a considerable disadvantage. New York, unlike any other large state, has been expediting adoptions for the last few years. Its baseline average was far larger than any other state. (For example, while New York's baseline was 4,700, California's was 3,200, Illinois 2,200 and Texas only 880.) New York would have surpassed the baseline had the state not taken so long to pass ASFA conforming legislation. New York's fingerprinting provision has become extremely burdensome for courts and social services resulting in the delay of hundreds, if not thousands, of adoptions this year. Additionally, the state law's broad, mandatory criminal conviction exclusion has resulted in heart breaking situations. (One involving a 20 year old manslaughter conviction of a domestic violence victim caring for her sister's children caused a Family Court Judge to declare New York's ASFA law unconstitutional.)

Also, it is important to note that most of the progress this year was upstate. There was a decline in adoptions in New York City. I will send you an interesting report on New York City adoptions by Trudy Festinger of New York University's School of Social Work that analyzes New York City adoptions. (e.g. the 3820 foster children adopted in 1998 entered care at the median age of 4.4 months of age and spent a median of 6.8 years in care!)

I have also enclosed our booklet, *Ensuring the Healthy Development of Foster Children: A Guide for Judges, Advocates and Child Welfare Professionals*. In the course of implementing the federal Court Improvement Project, the Commission found that many foster children had serious, unmet health needs that could undermine their development and efforts to secure a permanent home. This booklet addresses that

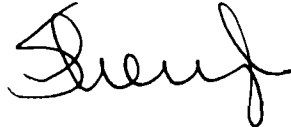
deficiency in the current child welfare system by providing ten questions to identify a foster child's health needs and gaps in services.

The booklet is an important part of the Commission's strategy to ensure that at least one person involved in a child welfare case will ask questions about a foster child's basic health needs and expand awareness of the importance of these health issues for foster children's life prospects.

I have also enclosed a copy of an update memo summarizing recent activities of the Commission for your information.

I look forward to seeing you soon.

Warm Regards,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Sheryl', with a stylized, flowing script.

Sheryl Dicker

Clinton Presidential Records Digital Records Marker

This is not a presidential record. This is used as an administrative marker by the William J. Clinton Presidential Library Staff.

This marker identifies the place of a publication.

Publications have not been scanned in their entirety for the purpose of digitization. To see the full publication please search online or visit the Clinton Presidential Library's Research Room.



Permanent Judicial Commission on Justice for Children

Main Office: 140 Grand Street, Suite 404
White Plains, NY 10601
(914) 948-7568; Fax (914) 948-7584

Children's Center Program: A.E. Smith Building, 1st Floor
P. O. Box 7015, Albany, NY 12225
(518) 486-6563; Fax (518) 402-4482

CHAIR

Judith S. Kaye

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Sheryl Dicker

MEMBERS

Richard Bartlett
Richard Berman
Fred Brancato
Sherryl Browne-Graves
Geoffrey Canada
Lizette Cantres
Michael I. Cohen
Joan Cooney
Monica Drinane
Nancy Dubler
Lucy Friedman
Michael Gage
Lenore Gittis
Richard Gottfried
Roger Green
Mary F. Kelly
Susan K. Knipps
Jane Knitzer
Joseph M. Lauria
Ian MacDonald
Kathryn McDonald
Deborah Merrifield
Sondra Miller
Elba Montalvo
Nicolette Pach
Stephen Saland
Fern Schair
Nicholas Scopetta
Charles S. Sims
Jane Spinak
Alana Sweeny
Sharon Townsend
Lucia B. Whisenand
Caroline Zinsser

TO: Chief Judge Judith Kaye
FROM: Sheryl Dicker, Executive Director
DATE: October 1999
RE: Update on Activities

I. Court Improvement: Phase I

By designation of the Court of Appeals, the Permanent Judicial Commission on Justice for Children is spearheading New York's implementation of the federally funded State Court Improvement Project (CIP) to assess and improve foster care proceedings. During Phase I of the CIP, the Commission's research resulted in a reform agenda with effective court leadership at its core. This is comprised of three parts:

- Creating a clear philosophy regarding the court's role in protecting the rights of children and families by preventing unnecessary placements and promoting permanency;
- Overseeing implementation of effective plans developed by the Department of Social Services; and
- Developing services needed by children and families involved in the court process. Phase I demonstrated that this overarching goal is implemented by the following broad activities:

Communication and cooperation with the Department of Social Services—to build a strong social service system that provides effective preventive and family preservation services and good information to the court about children in care and their families;

Development of internal court mechanisms to expedite and improve outcomes for children—mechanisms include creation of dependency units, accelerated time frames for adjudication and disposition, a front-loaded system with adequate hearing time for each case, and the assignment of one Judge to a family throughout the life of the case; and

Use of non-adversarial alternative dispute resolution mechanisms—mechanisms include pre-trial conferencing, mediation and family group conferencing to resolve cases earlier, provide better information to the courts, and develop service plans that reflect the needs of the individual child and family.

New York City Adoptions 1998

Trudy Festinger, D.S.W.

Ehrenkranz School of Social Work
New York University

October 1999

NEW YORK CITY ADOPTIONS 1998*

This report describes the 3820 children in out-of-home care who were adopted in New York City between January 1 and December 31, 1998. Here and there they will be compared with the 3996 children adopted in calendar year 1995¹, the 3238 children adopted in 1996², and 4117 in 1997³. As in those reports, this analysis is based on data from WMS and CCRS (New York State's child welfare tracking system) and therefore is limited by the availability and quality of those data. Once again missing data and serious data entry errors resulted in the necessary exclusion of cases from some, and precluded other, analyses. Again, in an attempt to avoid errors as a result of extreme values, medians will be reported rather than the usual averages (means). Regardless, caution must be exercised, and numbers reported should be considered suggestive rather than definitive.

In calendar year 1998 fewer children were adopted than in 1997, most likely reflecting a lower census of children in care. The 1995-1998 distributions of adoptions were as follows, per quarter:

	1995		1996		1997		1998	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
First quarter	967	(24.2)	899	(27.8)	533	(12.9)	705	(18.5)
Second quarter	1299	(32.5)	1066	(32.9)	2261	(54.9)	1801	(47.1)
Third quarter	831	(20.8)	663	(20.5)	483	(11.7)	568	(14.9)
Fourth quarter	<u>899</u>	(22.5)	<u>610</u>	(18.8)	<u>840</u>	(20.4)	<u>746</u>	(19.5)
Total	3996		3238		4117		3820	

* I want to thank Commissioner Scoppetta of the Administration for Children's Services (ACS) for making it possible to examine the CCRS data on completed adoptions. And special thanks to Win Buckwalter for his essential help in creating the file that allowed me to do the SPSS analysis. I am also deeply grateful to those who provided feedback and helpful suggestions, and especially Rachel Pratt and Sarah Greenblatt.

As was the case in 1997, one can see a sizable jump in adoptions during the second quarter when compared to 1995 and 1996. The data also show a reduction from the 54.9% in 1997, perhaps a result of beginning efforts to stabilize the pattern of finalizations across quarters.

At the same time, the third quarter of 1998 still shows a proportionate decline, as though the system required a rest. This third quarter, which includes July and August when many take some time off, may always lag behind to some extent.

Description of Adoptions Completed in 1998

In 1998 in New York City, a total of 3820^{*} children in out-of-home care were adopted after having spent a median duration of 6.8 years in foster care during the most recent placement episode.^{**} This and some other highlights can be seen in Table 1. Only 8% had spent three years or less in care prior to being adopted. Roughly one-half (50.6%) were females. Three out of four (74.3%) were Black, 21.1% were Hispanic, and the rest were Asian, White, or classified as interracial.

Almost all adoptions (99.6%) were subsidized, as was the case in the previous three years, 72.8% for children designated as hard-to-place (because of age, sib status, etc.), and 27.2% for children with handicaps.

The Children's Ages

At the time the children entered care their median age was 4.4 months. This was a decrease from 1997 (7 months), 1996 (7.4 months), and 1995 (7.6 months). They

* In what follows, the totals vary somewhat because of missing information.

** Except where specifically noted, in what follows entry into care refers to the most recent placement episode.

Table 1 Child, Adoptive Parent, and Placement Characteristics		
	Number	Medians & Percents
Duration in placement	3818	6.8 yrs.
Child's age at entry, this episode	3817	4.4 mos.
Child's age at adoptive home placement	3816	2.2 yrs.
Child's age at adoption goal change	3303	3.8 yrs.
Child's age at freeing	3583	5.6 yrs.
Child's age at adoption	3819	8.4 yrs.
First placement episode	3818	91.3%
Adopted by kin	3803	41.0%
Adoptive mother's age at adoption	2323	51.2 yrs.
Adoptive father's age at adoption	752	52.3 yrs.
Single adoptive parents	1571	67.6%
Adoption subsidy	3778	99.6%
Single child adoptions	3817	40.3%
In adoptive home at, or within one month of, placement into care	3817	49.6%

ranged in age from a few days old to nearly 16 years. Slightly over 58% were under age one. When they were placed in the homes that eventually adopted them, their median age was 2.2 years, and 39% were under age one. When their goals were changed to adoption, their median age was 3.8 years, ranging from infancy to 19 years. At the time they were freed, their median age was 5.6 years. Finally, at the time of adoption, their median age was 8.4 years, ranging from 1.1 year to over 21.

Relationship Between Age and Adoption Steps

The age of the children at different points along the adoption road was strongly related to their age at the start of this placement episode. The older at placement, the older they were when goals were changed ($r = .87$), when they were freed ($r = .81$), and when they were adopted ($r = .74$). Age at placement was, however, essentially unrelated to various durations along the road to adoption. For example, age at placement was minimally related ($r = .11$) to the elapsed time before the goal change to adoption. Thus among children who were six months old or younger when they entered foster care, the median time between placement and goal change was somewhat shorter (median = 1.9 years) than for children who were over six months old (median = 2.7 years). But beyond this, various age groupings examined did not differ with respect to the duration between placement and adoption goal change.

Placement Characteristics

Many of the children had been in placement for quite some time prior to their adoption. The median duration of placement during the current placement episode was 6.8 years, this ranging up to nearly 18 years. For the vast majority (91.3%), this placement episode was their first placement into foster care, with the rest having entered care one to three times earlier. Also, a small proportion of children (2%), almost all in their first placement episode, had at some point been discharged home on a trial basis and had subsequently returned to care.

At the time of their adoption most children (69.6%) were in the care of 45 contract agencies,* with 30.4% in the care of the Administration for Children's Services (ACS),

* In New York City children are placed with contract agencies through purchase-of-service contracts with the public department. In some locales these contract agencies are called provider, voluntary, or private agencies.

an increase over 1997, when 17.4% were in the care of ACS. Four out of ten children (41%) were adopted by kin. Of those adopted by kin, nearly 51% were in the care of ACS. Although the proportion of children in kinship homes in the care of ACS had remained fairly similar between 1995 and 1997 (32% in 1995, 30% in 1996, and 31% in 1997) the 51% represents an increase in 1998. But there was no increase in the overall proportion of children adopted by kin, (36.8% in 1995, 40.7% in 1996, 43% in 1997, and

Table 2		
Kinship and Non-Kinship Adoptions: Child, Adoptive Parent, and Placement Characteristics		
	Kinship (N=1559)	Non- Kinship (N=2244)
In the care of contract agencies	49.5%	83.5%
Duration in placement	7.8 yrs.	5.9 yrs.
Child's age at entry, this episode	7.1 mos.	3.2 mos.
Child's age at adoptive home placement	2.0 yrs.	2.3 yrs.
Child's age at adoption goal change	4.4 yrs.	3.3 yrs.
Child's age at adoption	9.4 yrs.	7.6 yrs.
Placement --> adoption goal change	2.8 yrs.	2.1 yrs.
Placement --> to freeing	4.7 yrs.	3.7 yrs.
First placement episode	92.8%	90.3%
Adoptive mother's age at adoption	52.7 yrs.	50.6 yrs.
Adoptive father's age at adoption	53.0 yrs	52.1 yrs.
Single adoptive parents	77.2%	61.6%
Sibling group adoptions	40.5%	34.9%
In adoptive home at, or within one month of, placement into care	57.5%	44.5%

41% in 1998). Table 2 presents some highlights of similarities and differences among kinship and non-kinship adoptions, many of which will be mentioned later in this report.

Characteristics of the Adoptive Parents

The race/ethnicity of adoptive parents is of interest, although it is important to remember that CCRS designations, on which it is necessary to rely here, may include a certain unknown amount of error. Nearly two-thirds (65.3%) of the 1506^{*} adoptive mothers on whom there was information were designated as Black, 24.7% were designated Hispanic, 4.4% were White, and the rest were mixed. As for 740 adoptive fathers: 50.8% were designated Black, 28.9% Hispanic, 9.2% White, the rest Asian and mixed. Almost all of the Black mothers, fathers or couples (95.9%) adopted children who were Black. A somewhat lower percentage of Hispanic parents (66.4%) adopted Hispanic children, and an even smaller proportion of White mothers, fathers, or couples (44.6%) adopted White children.

Looked at from the perspective of the children, 82.7% of Black children were adopted by Black mothers, fathers, or couples, 8.3% by Hispanic, 1% by White, and the rest by Asian and mixed-race parents and couples. Roughly seven out of ten (72.4%) Hispanic children were adopted by Hispanic parents, the rest by Black (9%), White (6.7%), Asian and various mixed-race combinations. Children designated as White were mostly adopted by White (53.2%) and by Hispanic (30.9%) parents, the rest by Black (8.5%), Asian and various mixed-race parents and couples.

* Lower total number because an adoptive parent of a sibling group is counted only once.

At the time of adoption, the median ages of 2323 adoptive mothers and 752 adoptive fathers were, respectively, 51.2 and 52.3 years, and they ranged in age from almost 23 to over 90 years. Kinship adoptive mothers were on average two years older than non-kin mothers, whereas the age difference between the fathers was about one year. These ages for the group as a whole were slightly higher, and kinship/non-kinship age differences smaller, when compared to those of 1995, 1996, and 1997.

Nearly 68% of the adoptive parents were single mothers (there were no single fathers), the rest couples (32.4%), with higher proportions of single mothers among kinship (77.2%) than among non-kinship (61.6%) homes. Such kinship/non-kinship differences were quite similar during recent years, with the proportion of single parents among kin as well as among non-kin edging up. Hence the proportion of single parents adopting increased from 58.7% in 1995 to 63.2% in 1996 to 65.7% in 1997 to 67.6% among 1998 adoptions.

Single Child/Sibling Adoptions

Multiple-child adoptions consisted mainly of siblings adopted together, although some of these groups may have included unrelated children. The percentage of sibling groupings among adoptions in 1998 were nearly identical to those reported for adoptions of 1997. Thus, 40.3% of the children adopted in 1998 were single-child adoptions, 31.1% were two-child adoptions, 16.4% were three-child adoptions, the rest consisting of four- to eight-child adoptions. In 1997 the parallel percentages were 38.5%, 31.3%, 17.9% with the remainder consisting of four- to eight-child adoptions. The proportions of single and multiple-child adoptions were quite similar in 1995 and 1996 as well.

When adoptions of 1998 are looked at as families, 2445 families adopted 3820 children. Like adoptions in 1995, 1996, and 1997, somewhat over 6 out of 10 of the families

(62.9%) adopted one child in 1998, and 24.3% adopted two children, 8.5% adopted three children, with the rest adopting four to eight children. As was the case in previous years, kinship families were slightly more likely to adopt sibling groups than non-kinship families, as 40.5% of kinship families adopted groups of two or more siblings, compared to 34.9% of non-kinship families.

Placement Histories and Various Durations

The placement histories of nearly one-half of the children were very stable. That is, 49.6% of the children were eventually adopted by the home they entered at, or within one month of, placement and another 9.3% were in an adoptive home between one and six months of their entry into care. These percentages are similar to adoptions completed in 1997, where the respective percentages were 51.5% and 10.2% and are similar to 1996 and 1995 figures. Less than one-quarter (21.5%) were placed in their adoptive homes following three years in care.

In view of such stability of placement it is no surprise that at the time their goals changed to adoption, a majority of the children (76.3%) were residing in homes that eventually adopted them. So too, at the time they were freed most of the children (84.5%) were living with their to-be-adoptive parents. For the 15.5% who were placed into homes following their freeing, the median time between their entry into foster care and their adoptive home placement was 6.5 years, over one year longer than was the case for a similar group among adoptions of 1997 (median was 5.1 years).

For the group as a whole, there was a median duration of 2.9 years between placement into homes that in time adopted the children and the signing of adoption agreements. And the median time between placement into adoptive homes and finalization was 4.8 years, with the middle 50% of cases ranging from 2.9 years to 7.4 years prior to

finalization. The time between placement into adoptive homes and finalization was slightly shorter for single children (4.2 years) than for sibling groups (5.0 years). It was nearly four years shorter for contract agency cases (3.9 years) than for ACS cases (7.7 years), and within each of these the time was shorter for non-kin homes than for kinship homes (7 months shorter for ACS cases; 16 months shorter for contract agency cases). There was also considerable variation among contract agencies. For instance, when one singles out agencies with 75 or more completed adoptions in 1998, they varied from a low median duration of 3.2 years to a high of 6.0 years between adoptive home placement and finalization.

From the Start Children

To return for just a moment to the children whose placement histories were very stable --- the 49.6% of the children who were eventually adopted by the home they entered at, or within one month of, placement. Who were these "from the start" children? Did they differ from children placed in adoptive homes later, and in what way? Although a minority of them (32.9%) were in the care of ACS, they comprised a slightly larger proportion of the cases cared for by ACS (53.8%) than of those cared for by contract agencies (48%). But whether in contract or public agency care, 47.3% of these "from the start" children, compared to 34.7% of the rest, were adopted by kin, their median age at placement into foster care (2.2 months) was seven months younger than children placed into adoptive homes later, and a slightly higher proportion of them (42.8%) were single-child adoptions than was the case for the rest of the children (37.8%). On the whole, the time between their placement and goal change (2 years), between goal change and finalization (3.1 years) and between placement and finalization (5.7 years) was shorter for these "from the start" children than for those placed into adoptive homes later (2.7 years; 4.3 years; 7.8 years respectively).

Milestones and Other Considerations

Five Milestones

The achievement of the five official milestones for 1997 and 1998 adoptions can be seen in Table 3. With the exception of milestones 2 and 4, they were achieved for a minority of children in both years, as was the case among adoption of 1995 and 1996. In 1998 the first milestone (time from placement to goal change), was achieved for 27.2% of the children, and for the group as a whole the median was 28.4 months. It can also be seen that the achievement levels and medians for milestones 1, 2 and 3 among 1998 adoptions are very similar to those for 1997 and, although not shown, they are very similar to

Table 3						
Milestones: 1997 and 1998 Adoptions						
	1997 Adoptions			1998 Adoptions		
Milestone Time Frames	Number	Median (months)	Milestone Achieved	Number	Median (months)	Milestone Achieved
1. Placement --> goal change to adoption (Milestone = 18 mos)	3697	27.0	28.9%	3303	28.4	27.2%
2. Goal change --> petition to free (Milestone = 4 mos)	3045	3.7	57.4%	2330	3.7	57.1%
3. Goal change --> freeing (Milestone = 12 mos)	3556	15.3	34.4%	3155	16.0	33.3%
4. Freeing --> signing adoption placement agreement (Milestone = 3 mos)	3676	1.3	64.2%	3088	2.4	56.6%
5. Signing adoption placement agreement --> finalization (Milestone = 12 mos)	3676	16.0	34.8 %	3088	14.1	41.1%

adoptions of 1996 and 1995 as well. Milestone 4 (time from freeing to signing adoption placement agreement) shows a small median increase (median = 2.4 months) when compared to 1997 (median = 1.3 months) and therefore a decrease in achievement. This change was essentially offset by the decrease in median duration of milestone 5 (time from signing adoption placement agreement to finalization) and consequent increase in achievement.

Milestones and A.S.F.A.

Table 3 shows that the largest lag in achievement in 1998 occurred in the duration of time between placement and the change of goal to adoption, as was the case when adoptions in 1995, 1996 and 1997 were examined. As noted then, many factors can extend the duration before reaching a decision about a goal change to adoption. When this was examined it was, for instance, apparent that longer median durations occurred among a small group of cases in which children went home on trial discharges, among children in sibling groups, among children in kinship homes, and among children in the care of ACS whether in kinship or non-kinship homes. Nevertheless, in relation to the promotion of permanency of the Adoption and Safe Families Act (A.S.F.A.) it is to be noted that in only 14.3% of 3234 cases (cases with no trial discharge) was the goal changed to adoption within 14 months of a child's placement.⁴ Among adoptions of 1997, the "within 14 months" proportion was 15.8%. As was the case among adoptions of 1997, the 1998 proportions of "within 14 months" were higher among cases in non-kinship (18.8%) than among kinship homes (8.7%), and within each of these the percentages were higher among contract than among ACS cases.

* Fourteen months is used because A.S.F.A. requires that a permanency planning hearing be held no later than twelve months after the date the child is considered to have entered foster care (which is defined as the earlier of 60 days after a child's removal or the date of the first judicial finding of abuse or neglect).

From Freeing and Goal Change to Adoption

In addition to the five official milestones shown in Table 3, larger time frames were examined. For example, the duration between freeing and adoption should be 15 months, when one adds together the official designations for milestones 4 and 5. This milestone was achieved for 33.7% of the children. The median duration between freeing and adoption was 23.0 months, with the middle 50% of cases ranging from 12.3 months to 40.8 months. The median duration was higher among 980 ACS cases on whom information was available (40.1 months) than for the 2598 children in contract agency care (17.5 months), and this was the case for kinship as well as for non-kinship homes. Although, on the whole, ACS cases showed longer durations for cases remaining in ACS care at finalization (between freeing and finalization nearly 36% of ACS cases had been transferred to contract agencies) there was also much variation among contract agencies. For example, when contract agencies with 75 or more adoptions completed in 1998 were examined, they varied from a low median duration of 13.9 months to a high of 31.3 months between freeing and finalization.

Even larger stretches of time were reviewed. Here the achievement proportions are somewhat lower. For example, the duration between adoption goal change and final adoption should be 27 months, according to the milestones set forth. The median duration was 43.7 months, with the middle 50% of cases ranging from 27.2 months to 66.1 months. The 27-month milestone was achieved for 24.6% of the 3303 children on whom information was available, compared to 23.6% in 1997, 24% in 1996 and 24.3% in 1995, and median durations of 39.7, 38.5 and 36.6 months for 1997, 1996 and 1995 respectively.

From Foster Care Entry to Adoption

When one looks at the largest time frame, the total time from placement to final adoption, the median duration was 81.1 months (or 6.8 years), with the middle 50% of cases ranging from 4.5 years to 9 years. The 45-month (or 3.8 year) milestone was achieved for 15.8% of the 3818 children on whom information was available, compared to 16.5% in 1997, 15.2% in 1996 and 16.1% in 1995, and median durations of 6.2, 6.2 and 5.8 years for 1997, 1996 and 1995 respectively as can be seen in Table 4. On the surface there is the appearance of an "upward creep" in median durations for the group as a whole since 1995. Closer examination showed that the durations remained

Table 4								
Duration of Time Between Foster Care Entry and Finalization 1995-8 ACS and Contract Agency Non-kinship and Kinship Homes								
	1998		1997		1996		1995	
	Median Years	Number	Median Years	Number	Median Years	Number	Median Years	Number
ACS non-kin	8.8	(371)	8.2	(177)	7.3	(100)	6.6	(123)
ACS kinship	8.8	(788)	8.4	(538)	7.7	(395)	6.9	(473)
Total ACS	8.8	(1159)	8.3	(715)	7.6	(495)	6.8	(596)
Contract non-kinship	5.3	(1873)	5.3	(2177)	5.4	(1815)	5.3	(2396)
Contract kin	6.4	(771)	6.5	(1210)	6.4	(922)	6.0	(992)
Total Contr.*	5.7	(2652)	5.7	(3391)	5.7	(2742)	5.6	(3396)
Total Group*	6.8	(3818)	6.2	(4113)	6.2	(3238)	5.8	(3996)

* Slightly larger N's because of missing information above

almost identical for children in the care of contract agencies (5.7 years for 1996 - 8, and 5.6 years for 1995), and such stability was the case for non-kinship and kinship adoptions over the years. However, the median duration for ACS cases increased over time (1998: 8.8 years, 1997: 8.3 years, 1996: 7.6 years, 1995: 6.8 years) and, as Table 4 shows, this was

the case for both non-kinship and kinship adoptions. Hence one plausible explanation for the overall increase in duration between 1997 and 1998 concerns the proportion of cases in ACS care. It can be seen that in 1998 a larger proportion of the adoptions were ACS cases. They therefore had more of an impact on the total duration of time among adoptions of 1998.

Achievement of Official Milestones

Using the five official milestones, the total number of milestones achieved for each child are presented in Table 5, which shows the results for cases with no missing information in 1995, 1996, 1997 and 1998. It can be seen that 5.2% of the cases achieved all milestones in 1998, slightly higher than the proportions in previous years. At the low end, 7.8% achieved no milestones in 1998, also slightly higher than in previous years. Yet, on the whole, the four distributions have remained quite similar over the years.

Table 5								
Number of Milestones Achieved: 1995 to 1998								
	1995		1996		1997		1998	
Number achieved	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
None achieved	159	5.0	153	6.2	199	6.9	171	7.8
One achieved	625	19.6	561	22.7	632	21.9	423	19.3
Two achieved	1003	31.5	817	33.1	810	28.0	634	28.9
Three achieved	907	28.5	582	23.6	829	28.7	575	26.2
Four achieved	415	13.0	277	11.2	331	11.5	277	12.6
All achieved	75	2.4	76	3.1	87	3.0	113	5.2
Total	3184	100.0	2466	100.0	2888	100.0	2193	100.0

Durations and Placement in Adoptive Home

As mentioned previously, cases of children who were in their adoptive homes from the beginning of their entry into foster care (or shortly thereafter) consistently showed somewhat shorter median durations along the adoption route than children placed into adoptive homes later. The differences were quite similar to those reported for adoptions of 1995, 1996 and 1997. For instance, the median duration was shorter between entry into foster care and the goal change to adoption, between the goal change to adoption and freeing, and between freeing and adoption agreement signing. When one examined longer time frames, such as the duration between the adoption goal change and finalization, cases of children in adoptive homes "from the start" showed a median duration that was 14.3 months shorter than cases where some time elapsed between their entry into care and their placement into homes that became their adoptive homes. Finally, a somewhat higher proportion of the "in the adoptive home from the start" cases achieved all ACS milestones (8.0%) than did other cases (2.5%), and a smaller proportion (3.3%) achieved no milestones than the 12% of cases where more time elapsed before an adoptive home placement.

Judicial Procedures

Freeing

Most children (80.1%) adopted in 1998 were freed as a result of a TPR court proceeding with respect to one or more parents. The remaining 19.9% consisted primarily of surrenders. The proportion freed via a TPR court proceeding in 1998 was slightly lower than was the case in 1997 (81.5%), 1996 (84.1%) and 1995 (85.0%).

Information on the county courts where dispositional hearings to free the children occurred was available on 2363 cases, 98.9% of which occurred in the Family Courts of

the five boroughs of New York City. In what follows, the discussion is limited to these five courts, and as was the case in the 1995, 1996 and 1997 Adoptions reports, pertains almost totally to contract agency cases because of large amounts of missing information with respect to ACS. Most filings were in the courts of Manhattan (38.4%), Brooklyn (26.9%), or Bronx (26.6%). Information on the county courts where adoption petitions were filed was available on 1820 cases, 81.3% of which were filed in the Family Courts of the five boroughs of New York City. Most of these filings occurred in the Bronx (32.9%) and Brooklyn (32.3%) Family Courts.

Concurrent Filings

An examination of the joint occurrence of freeing and adoption petition filing was hampered by considerable missing information. The information for children freed in the Family Courts of the five boroughs of New York City is shown in Table 6. Thus for 630 children freed in the Brooklyn Family Court, information on adoption petition filing was available for 403 children. In 58.6% of these 403 cases, both the freeing

-----Table 6-----

	Family Court				
	Brooklyn	Bronx	Manhattan	Queens	Stat. Isl.
Number of Children Freed	630	622	898	166	22
Information Available for Freeing and Adoption Petition Filing	403	421	571	118	13
Number Freed and Adoption Petition in Same Court	236	218	122	46	1
Percent in Same Court	58.6	51.8	21.4	39.0	7.7

disposition and the petition to adopt were filed in the Brooklyn Family Court. In the Bronx Family Court, both types of hearings occurred in 51.8% of the 421 cases where both sets of information were available; for 571 Manhattan cases there was an overlap

for only 21.4% of cases; for 118 cases freed in Queens the overlap was 39%; and there was a joint occurrence of just one of 13 cases in the Staten Island Family Court.

Overall, between the filing of petitions to free and the filing of adoption petitions most cases (59.2%) were shifted from one court to another. This was quite similar to the 58.6% among 1997 adoptions, and shows a slight downward change over the nearly 63% that were shifted in 1996. In past reports it was shown that cases handled in the same court shortened the time between the point of freeing and adoption petition filing, as well as finalization, hence the downward shift from 1996, from a child's point of view, signifies a desirable change, although the downward trend has not continued during the past year.

Judicial Steps Within the Milestones

Duration: Petition to Free → Freeing

In reporting on the five milestones (Table 3) a number of sequential judicial steps were only briefly mentioned or omitted entirely. Yet they are of interest. For instance, the duration of time between filing petitions to free and the date of freeing was available for 2425 (63.5%) of the children. The median duration was 10.6 months, quite similar to the medians of 10.5, 10.3 and 10.1 months reported for adoptions of 1997, 1996 and 1995 respectively. The vast majority of these proceedings took place in the Family Courts of the five boroughs of New York City with median durations ranging from 9.4 to 11.4 months.

Duration: Freeing → Filing Petition to Adopt

The duration of time between freeing and the filing of petitions to adopt was available for 1794 (67.6%) of the children in the care of contract agencies and 26 (2.2%) in ACS

care at the time they were adopted. Because of the amount of missing information among ACS cases, the following concerns only children in the care of contract agencies. The median duration was 13.4 months, slightly higher than the contract agency medians of 12.7, 12.2 and 12.8 months for adoptions of 1997, 1996 and 1995.

The 1998 median span of over a year could have been a function of time needed to place children into adoptive homes following the freeing procedure. Indeed, the duration between freeing and filing adoption petitions was much longer (median = 36.7 months) for such children. But these situations included only 17% of all children in the care of contract agencies, with the remainder having been placed into their adoptive homes at some point prior to the freeing procedure. But regardless of when children were freed, the time between freeing and adoption petition filing was about one year longer for children placed into adoptive family homes following 24 months in care than for those placed into home earlier. In addition to the timing of the adoptive home placement, other factors were examined such as sibling status, and whether the children were placed with kin or not. None of these made a particular difference in the duration between freeing and adoption petition filing for children in the care of contract agencies.

The location of the two legal events was also explored. Among 2652 cases in contract agency care at the time of adoption, information about court location was available for 1517 (57.2%), and showed that 41% occurred in the same county. This was almost identical to what was reported in 1997 (41.4%). Having both events in the same NYC county court (although not necessarily before the same judge) lowered the median time between freeing disposition and adoption petition filing by 3.1 months, when compared to hearings that involved a change in courts. This was quite similar to the reduction of 3.7 months in 1997 and 3.2 months among adoptions of 1996.

Duration: Filing Petition to Adopt → Finalization

Finally, the duration between filing petitions to adopt and finalization was available for 1794 (67.6%) children in contract agency care. This showed a median time of 3.4 months, a reduction in time when compared to 5.1 months in 1997, 5.4 months in 1996 and 4.6 months reported for adoptions of 1995. Among cases of 1998, the duration in the Family Courts of five New York City boroughs ranged from a median of 2.4 months to 3.9 months.

Some Final Thoughts

This review of 3820 adoptions completed in 1998 has shown the essential similarity between 1998, 1997, 1996, and 1995 with respect to the adoptees, the adopters, and various time frames along the road to adoption finalization. Although the number of adoptions varied over the years and decreased from 4117 in 1997, many other aspects barely budged. The continuities were impressive. Only here and there were some differences between years noticeable, as was apparent in the gradual reduction over time in median age at placement, the increase in the proportion of children placed who were under age one, a small increase in the proportion of single parents adopting, an increase in the proportion of children in the care of ACS at the time of adoption, and a reduction in the duration of time between filing petitions to adopt and finalization.

There was much similarity across the years in the ups and downs of total quarterly finalizations, showing a rise during the April 1-June 31 quarter of each year, and a slump in the quarter thereafter. The second quarter high was particularly so in 1997, hence the small reduction in 1998 may constitute a positive beginning. As mentioned in last year's report, such a cyclical pattern is odd since it seems unlikely that more children and their

families are ready for adoption during one part of the year than another. From a systemic point of view it would also be preferable to have a more stable pattern of adoption filings and finalizations throughout the year rather than the roller-coaster pattern that has existed. Attention is being given to this matter, and there are plans to establish quarterly goals and a system for monitoring achievement. There may always be somewhat of a lag in July and August when many take some time off, yet overall greater stability can substitute for what now exists.

It is worth noting another similarity over the years: the duration of time between placement and goal change to adoption. The median time was 2.4 years among 1998 adoptions, 2.3 years among 1997 and 1996 adoptions, and 2.2 years for adoptions of 1995. This finding is particularly relevant in view of the promotion of permanency provisions of the 1997 Adoption and Safe Families Act. It is sobering to note that less than 15% of cases in their first placements among 1998 adoptions, less than 16% among 1997 and 1996 adoptions, and less than 17% for 1995, met the guidelines set forth by that legislation. In this regard it becomes vital to identify and implement approaches, such as an earlier exploration of a range of permanency options, whose purpose is to expedite permanency planning.

It is also noteworthy that the median duration of 6.8 years between foster care entry and finalization represents an increase over previous years. Whereas the duration for children in contract agency care remained virtually identical, ACS durations increased over time. ACS durations were also longer for both kinship and non-kinship homes. Since a larger proportion of 1998 adoptions were of children in the care of ACS, this had more of an impact on the total duration of time among adoptions of 1998. Although it is possible that ACS handled more complex cases that took more time, this is unlikely to be the full

explanation. A recent project at ACS⁵, which introduced an organizational change, showed that adoptions among ACS cases could be speeded up considerably. The data there and here suggest that ACS continue to review its procedures at every step of the adoption process in order to identify time lags and barriers, so that appropriate changes can be explored.

The ongoing problem of missing data and glaring inaccuracies in CCRS remains a concern, as was the case in past reports of adoptions from 1995-97. It is all too easy to shrug this off as "just a data problem" without recognizing that data problems can create barriers to understanding program and organizational problems, when analyses are hampered as was the case in this and past reports. For instance, in this report missing data for children in the care of ACS made it impossible to pinpoint whether the slower progress of ACS cases was particularly confined to one or another time segment along the road to adoption. Such information could have provided some helpful leads for beginning attempts to understand what factors might be responsible for this slower progress toward adoption.

One can only hope that case tracking in the future information system Connections, full implementation of which is far behind schedule, will address these missing data problems. But new systems do not necessarily solve data omission, transmission or entry problems. Diagnosing the reason for these difficulties would be an important first step. Training programs also could incorporate material on the importance of accurate information and the need for improvement in this regard.

Finally, as was the case in past years, based on information available, it was shown that where freeing and adoption petition filing occurred in the same Family Court (but not necessarily before the same judge) it lowered the median duration between these two judicial events and, in turn, shortened the time for finalization. One can only imagine the saving in time if judges were routinely responsible for continuing with a case from freeing disposition through to finalization.^{*} From the psychological perspective of children, and from the fiscal perspective of New York City, this would be a desirable change.

* A study is currently under way (NYC Family for Kids and New York University) that examines this question.

Notes

¹ Festinger, T. (1996). Adoptions 1995. Unpublished report. Ehrenkranz School of Social Work, New York University.

² Festinger, T. (1997). Adoptions 1996. Unpublished report. Ehrenkranz School of Social Work, New York University.

³ Festinger, T. (1998). Adoptions 1997. Unpublished report. Ehrenkranz School of Social Work, New York University.

⁴ U.S. Code. 1997. 42 U.S.C. section 675 (5) (C) & (F).

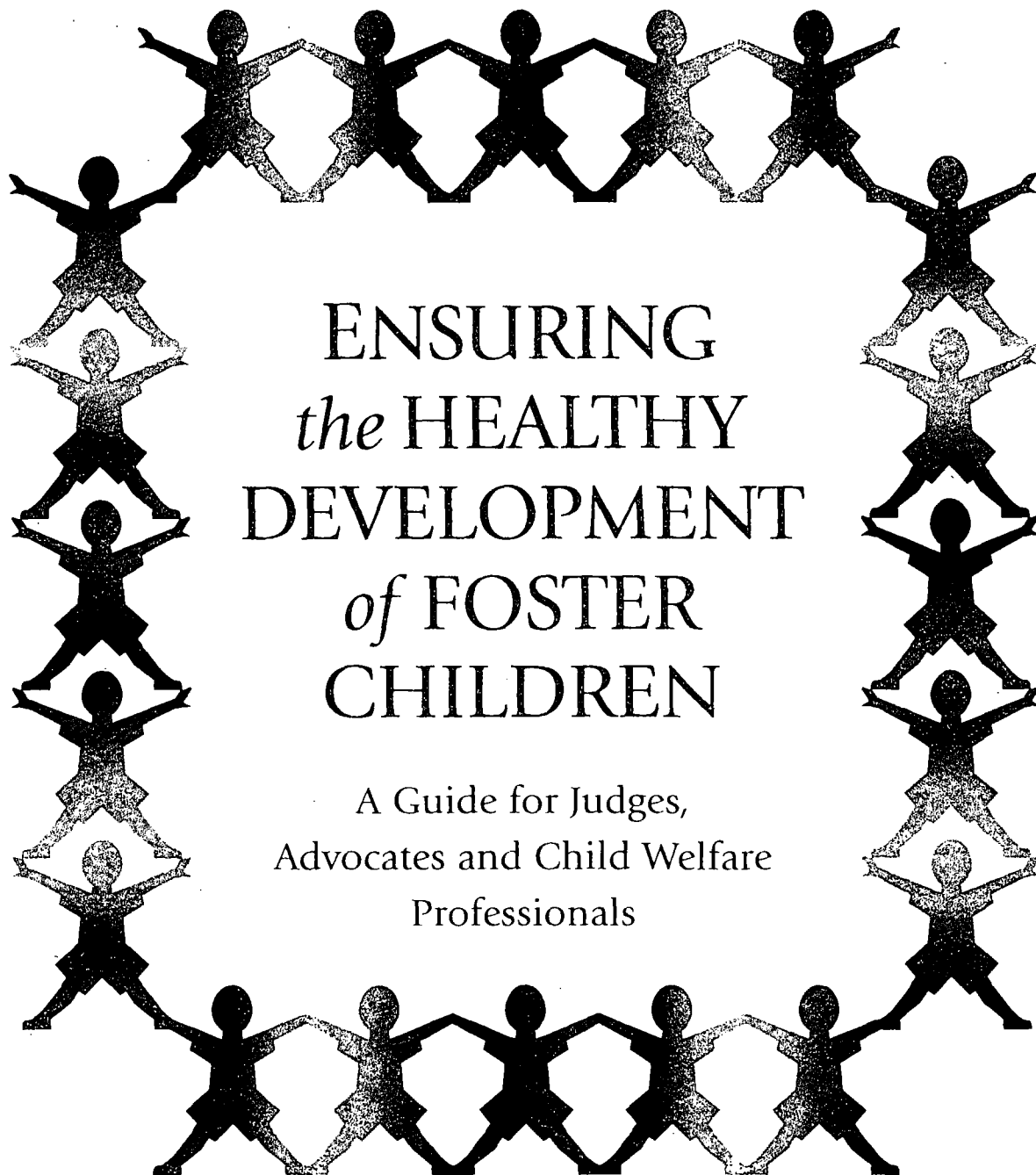
⁵ Festinger, T. & Pratt, R. (1999). Speeding the Adoption Process: An Evaluation of the Adoption Expediting Unit Project. New York City Families for Kids, NYC Administration for Children's Services.

Clinton Presidential Records Digital Records Marker

This is not a presidential record. This is used as an administrative marker by the William J. Clinton Presidential Library Staff.

This marker identifies the place of a publication.

Publications have not been scanned in their entirety for the purpose of digitization. To see the full publication please search online or visit the Clinton Presidential Library's Research Room.



ENSURING
the HEALTHY
DEVELOPMENT
of FOSTER
CHILDREN

A Guide for Judges,
Advocates and Child Welfare
Professionals

New York State Permanent Judicial Commission on Justice for Children

Foster Care Rolls in New York City Drop to Their Lowest Levels Since the 1980's

By SOMINI SENGUPTA

Following steady and sometimes sharp declines over the last several years, the number of children in foster care in New York City has fallen below what it was a decade ago, when the worst of the crack epidemic helped send the foster care population soaring.

The city's foster care population has declined by nearly 30 percent since 1991, from a record high of 49,100 to 35,200 this fall, according to the Administration for Children's Services. The reductions have helped ease the strain on a system swollen not only by the children whose families were torn apart by crack, but also by changes in local policy on child welfare.

City officials, while acknowledging that foster care populations can be influenced by a wide range of forces, say the recent, striking reductions have largely been driven by three factors: youngsters who flooded the system in the late 1980's and early 1990's are turning 18 and leaving the rolls; adoptions have increased by nearly two-thirds over the last six years, and children are not remaining in the foster care system as long.

The city officials say it is impossible to predict whether the decline will continue. But contrary to widespread fear, they have not yet seen the foster care population grow significantly in the aftermath of welfare reform. They and others are quick to say it is extremely hard to quantify how many children are entering the system for what specific reasons, and equally difficult to say how welfare reform or other policy shifts are going to play out over many years — for instance, the mayor's latest threat, to take custody of the children of homeless parents who refuse to work for their shelter.

Child welfare experts, as well as advocates who monitor the city's foster care system, say the decline in the total population is to be expected after the aberrant spikes starting around 1987, when the crack crisis began to drive many thousands of children from their homes.

They note, too, that the official count of children in foster care was inflated a decade ago in part because of a change in city policy to include children who were informally cared for by relatives as a part of the official foster care system.

And while the advocates applaud the latest declines, they insist it is too early to tell whether they signal long-term improvements in the system.

In truth, making sense of trends in foster care is confounding even to veteran students of the subject. As with the ups and downs of crime rates, it is difficult to discern exactly who or what deserves credit for the ebb and flow of the foster care population and how much of it can be attributed to demographic vagaries.

For their part, city officials, who are eager to publicize the latest drops, acknowledge that the system is shrinking in part because some youngsters are "aging out." But they also attribute the declines to a bigger budget and a more efficient agency.

Children are spending less time in the system, and adoptions are up.

The Administration for Children's Services budget has peaked to over \$2 billion a year under Nicholas Scoppetta, who became commissioner in 1996 after the widely publicized beating death of 6-year-old Elisa Izquierdo. More staff members have been hired, and the average caseload for a child protective worker has been cut by half in the last three years, Mr. Scoppetta said. Moreover, he noted in an interview last week, a record 11,000 children have been adopted in the last three years alone.

"That is a really dramatic drop in numbers," he said of the decline. "The record-setting number of adoptions is one thing we can point to."

Much of the city's decline came at a time when the foster care population nationwide was climbing — to 546,000 in 1999 from 406,000 in 1990.

But the city's experience, said an agency spokesman, Michael Kharfen, may represent a harbinger of national trends. In the last year, he said, there has been "a slight decline" in the number of children coming into foster care nationwide. The drop has been starkest in New York and Illinois, which, after Cali-

fornia, have the largest numbers of foster children. Adoptions are on the rise nationally, as well.

Those who monitor the city's foster care system are reluctant to draw sweeping conclusions about the latest trends. Still, even some of the system's most ardent critics, like Marcia Robinson Lowry, a lawyer who has sued the city on behalf of foster children for more than two decades, say there are grounds for "cautious optimism."

"There's no question that there's been more attention paid to the system in the last few years," said Ms. Lowry, executive director of Children's Rights, a national advocacy group. But she added, "I think it's too soon to judge what really is going on."

The one thing that is known now, said Fred Wulczyn, a research fellow with the Chapin Hall Center for Families at the University of Chicago, is that the foster care system has roughly reached the balance that it had before crack cocaine helped fuel its explosive growth.

"The system was stretched," said Mr. Wulczyn, who studies New York City's foster care system. "It's finally getting back to its stride on the admissions and discharges side."

That shift comes at a crucial time for city officials. Under a recent settlement of a federal class-action lawsuit, the child welfare agency is under scrutiny by an outside panel of experts. Early next year, that panel is expected to release its evaluation of how well the agency has overhauled its long-troubled foster care system.

Moreover, like other cities, New York is under considerable pressure to speed up adoptions. The Federal Adoption and Safe Families Act, which went into effect this year, requires the city to seek adoptions for all children who have spent 15 of the most recent 22 months in foster care. (The children adopted last year in the city had been in foster care for an average of 6.8 years.)

The foster care population has undergone dramatic shifts in the last two decades. The numbers had been declining steadily through the early 1980's, reaching a low of around 16,200 in 1984. Child welfare officials began to notice children of crack-addicted parents as early as 1985, when the numbers began to nudge upward. "It really hit high gear in 1987," Mr. Wulczyn said, pointing to the influx of newborns that came into the system starting that year.

The numbers spiked sharply in 1988 and 1989; the population grew by 10,000 children each of those years, peaking at 49,100 in 1991.

At the same time, a wave of children who were being cared for by relatives officially came into the system under a change in the law. In the last couple of years, many of those children have turned 18 and ventured out on their own. In general, more children are leaving the system now than in years past: 12,700 were discharged in fiscal year 1999, compared with 11,600 in 1994.

Moreover, a larger share of children leaving the system is being

1/2

The New York Times

MONDAY, DECEMBER 6, 1999

adopted rather than returned home. Last year, around 30 percent of the youngsters leaving foster care were adopted, while 52 percent were returned to their birth parents or relatives. By comparison, in 1994, 21 percent of the children who left the system were adopted and 60 percent returned to birth parents or relatives.

Adoptions climbed steadily in the mid-1990's. In fiscal year 1997, a record 4,009 children were adopted, compared with 2,300 in 1994. Over the last two years, adoptions have hovered around 3,800.

When Mr. Scoppetta took over a reorganized child welfare agency in 1996 under the shadow of Elisa Izquierdo's death, many feared that the city would indiscriminately pull children from their homes to avoid similar tragic embarrassments. Indeed, the first few years of Mr. Scoppetta's tenure were characterized by aggressive enforcement. The number of children who came into foster care soared. It went from around 8,000 children in fiscal year 1995 to 10,000 in 1996 — his first year in office — to 12,000 in 1998.

But in the last year, the number fell significantly. Admissions to the system dropped to 10,200 at the end of fiscal year 1999.

Finally, part of the decline in the overall foster care population seems

also to be driven by shorter stays in the system. The median length of stay for youngsters who came into foster care in 1995 — the most recent year for which the agency has available figures — was 1.76 years, down from 2.82 years for children who came into the system in 1990.

If unpredictable outside forces like crack addiction fueled the anomalous growth of a decade ago, it is all but impossible to divine what the next decade holds. Already, dire predictions have been made about how the new federally mandated time limits on welfare benefits will flood the foster care system. That does not seem to have happened yet. Then again, it is not yet possible to measure the full impact of welfare reform — particularly because today's robust economy can cushion the blow.

"It's still too early to tell whether welfare reform will increase or decrease the number of kids in care," said David Tobis, director of the Center for the Study of Family Policy at Hunter College. "The big factor is what happens to the economy."

Moreover, no one is either pleased or satisfied that, despite the recent reductions, more than 35,000 children remain in foster care because of worries about their well-being. It is, everyone agrees, an enormous and unhealthy number.

2/2

The New York Times

MONDAY, DECEMBER 6, 1999

Clinton Presidential Records Digital Records Marker

This is not a presidential record. This is used as an administrative marker by the William J. Clinton Presidential Library Staff.

This marker identifies the place of a publication.

Publications have not been scanned in their entirety for the purpose of digitization. To see the full publication please search online or visit the Clinton Presidential Library's Research Room.



Too Fast for Families

Washington's Get-Tough Adoption Law Hits Home

† In 1999, following state implementation of the federal Adoption and Safe Families Act (ASFA), the number of petitions to terminate parental rights filed in Family Court jumped by one-third—to 4,201.
(See "Terminations," page 6)

† The number of children assigned to the adoption track rose by 10 percent last year, reversing a five-year trend.
(See "Adoptions," page 7)

† Since 1996, the percentage of foster children in the system who have been assigned to the goal of adoption has fallen from 44.6 percent to 33.8 percent.
(See "Adoptions," page 7)

† Caseworkers spend from five to 20 percent of their time locating services for parents, according to an informal survey of foster care agency administrators conducted by CWW. What takes up the biggest share of a caseworker's time? Paperwork. (See "Survey," page 11)

Center for an
Urban
Future

Shalini Ahuja
Family Desk Director

120 Wall Street, 20th floor • New York, New York 10005
Tel 212 479 3348 Fax 212 344 6457 e-mail shalini@NYCFuture.org

† New York's 62 contracted foster care agencies differ enormously in the percentages of children they assign to the adoption track. The citywide average is 34 percent—but some agencies have adoption track rates as high as 76 percent or as low as 13 percent.
(See "Rushing Roulette," page 8)

† Only 15 percent of the foster care adoptions completed in 1998 would have conformed to ASFA's new speedier timetables.
(See "Strife in the Fast Lane," page 2)

† The city has finally begun to weigh family reunification and adoption equally in its new system for rating the performance of contracted foster care agencies.
(See "EQUIP-ed," page 10)

† In 1998, nearly two-thirds of the adoptive parents in New York City were single mothers. Not one was a single father.
(See "Adoption Snapshot," page 5)

† Only one percent of the 11,000 foster parents or adoptive parents who have been fingerprinted under the state's tough new ASFA implementation law actually had criminal records.
(See "Bad Rap Sheets," page 13)

Child Welfare Watch is a joint project of the Center for an Urban Future and the New York Forum.
This edition was written by Shalini Ahuja, Jonathan Bowles, John Courtney, Peggy Farber and Glenn Thrush

The New York Forum: James Dumpson, New York Community Trust; Julius C.C. Edelstein, Senior Vice-Chancellor Emeritus, CUNY;
Augusta Kappner, President, Bank Street College; Stanley H. Lowell, former Deputy Mayor, City of New York;
Milton Mollen, ex-Judge; Richard C. Wade, Distinguished Professor Emeritus, CUNY

Center for an Urban Future: Kim Nauer, Executive Director; Neil Scott Kleiman, Director; Shalini Ahuja, Family Desk Director; Glenn Thrush, Editor

Funded by the Hite Foundation with ongoing support from the Child Welfare Fund.

Clinton Presidential Records Digital Records Marker

This is not a presidential record. This is used as an administrative marker by the William J. Clinton Presidential Library Staff.

This marker identifies the place of a publication.

Publications have not been scanned in their entirety for the purpose of digitization. To see the full publication please search online or visit the Clinton Presidential Library's Research Room.



Too Fast for Families

Washington's Get-Tough Adoption Law Hits Home

- † In 1999, following state implementation of the federal Adoption and Safe Families Act (ASFA), the number of petitions to terminate parental rights filed in Family Court jumped by one-third—to 4,201. (See "Terminations," page 6)
- † The number of children assigned to the adoption track rose by 10 percent last year, reversing a five-year trend. (See "Adoptions," page 7)
- † Since 1996, the percentage of foster children in the system who have been assigned to the goal of adoption has fallen from 44.6 percent to 33.8 percent. (See "Adoptions," page 7)
- † Caseworkers spend from five to 20 percent of their time locating services for parents, according to an informal survey of foster care agency administrators conducted by CWW. What takes up the biggest share of a caseworker's time? Paperwork. (See "Survey," page 11)
- † New York's 62 contracted foster care agencies differ enormously in the percentages of children they assign to the adoption track. The citywide average is 34 percent—but some agencies have adoption track rates as high as 76 percent or as low as 13 percent. (See "Rushing Roulette," page 8)
- † Only 15 percent of the foster care adoptions completed in 1998 would have conformed to ASFA's new speedier timetables. (See "Strife in the Fast Lane," page 2)
- † The city has finally begun to weigh family reunification and adoption equally in its new system for rating the performance of contracted foster care agencies. (See "EQUIP-ed," page 10)
- † In 1998, nearly two-thirds of the adoptive parents in New York City were single mothers. Not one was a single father. (See "Adoption Snapshot," page 5)
- † Only one percent of the 11,000 foster parents or adoptive parents who have been fingerprinted under the state's tough new ASFA implementation law actually had criminal records. (See "Bad Rap Sheets," page 13)

Child Welfare Watch is a joint project of the Center for an Urban Future and the New York Forum.
This edition was written by Shalini Ahuja, Jonathan Bowles, John Courtney, Peggy Farber and Glenn Thrush.

The New York Forum: James Dumpson, New York Community Trust; Julius C.C. Edelstein, Senior Vice-Chancellor Emeritus, CUNY;
Augusta Kappner, President, Bank Street College; Stanley H. Lowell, former Deputy Mayor, City of New York;
Milton Mollen, ex-Judge; Richard C. Wade, Distinguished Professor Emeritus, CUNY.

Center for an Urban Future: Kim Nauer, Executive Director; Neil Scott Kleiman, Director; Shalini Ahuja, Family Desk Director; Glenn Thrush, Editor.

Funded by the Hite Foundation with ongoing support from the Child Welfare Fund.