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Washington State Courts • Washington State Department of Social & Health Services

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**November 10, 2010**

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## **Foster child numbers declining as National Adoption Day is celebrated in state courts next week**

Dozens of Washington foster children and thousands of foster children around the U.S. will join new families this month as courts celebrate National Adoption Day amid successful efforts by child welfare workers and courts to move children out of foster care more quickly.

As National Adoption Day enters its sixth year of statewide celebration in Washington, and its 11<sup>th</sup> year of celebration nationwide, courts and adoption workers from 19 Washington counties will host adopting families as they welcome new members and remove more children from the foster care rolls. Celebrating counties include:

Benton/Franklin	King	San Juan	Whatcom
Chelan/Douglas	Kitsap	Skagit	Yakima
Clark	Mason	Snohomish	
Cowlitz	Okanogan	Spokane	
Island	Pierce	Thurston	

Nearly 800 foster children have been adopted into new families during National Adoption Day events in Washington courts since 2005, and nearly 30,000 foster children have found new families nationwide, since National Adoption Day was founded by a handful of courts in 2000 to raise awareness of the thousands of foster children awaiting adoption. The Washington celebration is co-sponsored by the state Supreme Court Commission on Children in Foster Care and the Department of Social and Health Services Children's Administration.

The number of foster children is declining nationally and in Washington as child welfare agencies and the Children's Administration continually intensify efforts to move children more quickly into permanent family situations, either through reunifying children with their birth parents or through adoption out of foster care into new families.

Quicker resolution for foster children is the primary goal of the Supreme Court's Foster Care Commission, which was established in 2005 and includes judges, child welfare workers, foster parents, current or former foster children, legislators, school officials, tribal officials and attorneys.

In Fiscal Year 2009 (July 2008 through June 2009), the Children's Administration announced that a record number of Washington foster children had been adopted into new homes (1,701 adoptions, compared to an average of 1,100 – 1,200 per year). That trend continued in Fiscal Year 2010 with 1,533 adoptions taking place, well above the previous average.

"I am pleased that so many communities are celebrating adoptions with children and their forever families on these special days," said Children's Administration Assistant Secretary Denise Revels Robinson. "So many legally free children wait for a family, knowing that they belong to someone and someone belongs to them. This month that wait is over for the children who are fortunate enough to join these families legally and forever."

Although adoption hearings are generally closed, National Adoption Day events provide a rare opportunity for the public and media to be present as new families are being formed, to speak with adopting parents and learn more about the adoption process.

As of Aug. 1, 2010, there were 9,114 children living in foster care in Washington, with 1,323 of those available for adoption — meaning the courts had permanently terminated their biological parents' rights to raise them. By comparison, when Washington state courts first began celebrating National Adoption Day in 2005, more than 9,500 children lived in foster care and far fewer (about 1,080) were available for adoption.

"The profound and positive impact of adoption on the life of a foster child can't be over-stated," said King County Superior Court Judge Dean Lum, Chairman of the Washington State National Adoption Day Steering Committee, who was himself an adopted child. "Children who suffer the loss of their parents find a new foundation of love and support through adoption, and that foundation provides them a solid base throughout their lives."

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