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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:
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CHIEF JUSTICE PATRICIA GUERRERO JOINS PRESIDING JUDGE SAMANTHA P. JESSNER TO CELEBRATE THE ADOPTION OF MORE THAN 230 CHILDREN TOMORROW AS PART OF THE COURT'S 24TH ANNUAL NATIONAL ADOPTION DAY CELEBRATION

News Conference Kicks Off Event at 8:15 a.m. Tomorrow

California Chief Justice Patricia Guerrero will join Presiding Judge Samantha P. Jessner, Presiding Judge of the Juvenile Court Akemi Arakaki, leadership and staff from the Los Angeles County Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS), and pro bono attorneys with the Alliance for Children's Rights (Alliance) and Public Counsel to commemorate the adoption of 232 children by 148 LA County families as part of the Court's 24th annual National Adoption Day celebration. Traditionally held the Saturday before Thanksgiving, this event celebrates the adoption finalization of children in foster care throughout LA County.

Presiding Judge Samantha P. Jessner will introduce Chief Justice Guerrero and others during a live news conference at **8:15 a.m. tomorrow, November 18**, with additional remarks from Alliance President and CEO Jennifer L. Braun, Public Counsel Vice President Kathryn Eidmann and DCFS Senior Deputy Director Diane Iglesias. The news conference will be livestreamed via YouTube at bit.ly/AdoptionDay23, and will be followed by adoption hearings beginning at **9 a.m.** Media are invited to attend the news conference in person and select adoption proceedings will be open to a pool camera.

"I will always remember the first time I handled an adoption proceeding," said Chief Justice Guerrero, "and the joy and celebration that such adoptions bring. Every child deserves a loving home, and adoptive families are committed to giving children the opportunity to thrive in a safe and stable environment."

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NATIONAL ADOPTION DAY 2023

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“For nearly a quarter-century now, the Court and its National Adoption Day partners at DCFS, the Alliance and Public Counsel have worked together to celebrate the true spirit of Thanksgiving by finalizing the forever families of hundreds of children in foster care in LA County,” Presiding Judge Jessner said. “This year we are especially grateful to Chief Justice Guerrero for joining this event, as her very presence as the leader of the California Judicial Branch honors the heroes that are California’s adoptive parents and the pro-bono attorneys, judicial officers, court and DCFS staff that help make this day a joyous occasion for all that attend.”

“For the 24th consecutive year, we are proud to join our partners on National Adoption Day to ensure that hundreds of children in LA County’s foster care system can finalize their adoptions in time for Thanksgiving,” said Cynthia J. Billey, Director of the Adoption Program at the Alliance for Children’s Rights, a co-founder of National Adoption Day. “The more than 391,000 children and youth living in foster care nationwide deserve to grow up in safe and nurturing homes devoted to their health, happiness, and development. We honor the courage and resilience of young people in foster care, we admire and share our gratitude to the dedicated kinship and foster parents who care for them during their times of greatest need, and we are deeply honored and committed to supporting these children and families on their path to permanency.”

“It takes very special people to permanently open their homes to children in need of love, guidance and protection,” DCFS Director Brandon T. Nichols said. “In the absence of biological parents, it makes all the difference for children and young people to feel supported and understood by trustworthy adults who can help promote their sense of self-worth and security. Their devotion and love as parents will pave the way for the continued healing and success of these remarkable youth.”

National Adoption Day began in the late 1990s when Judge Michael Nash (retired), former Presiding Judge of the Juvenile Court in LA County and current Director of the LA County Office of Child Protection, worked with a coalition of volunteer organizations, including the Alliance and Public Counsel, to organize adoption events on Saturdays in LA County. These events led to the launch of National Adoption Day, which has since expanded to courts across the country.

“We’re so proud of the innovative model that’s been developed in LA County that involves a close partnership between the Court, DCFS and legal service providers like Public Counsel and the Alliance for Children’s Rights to provide holistic advocacy to families as they exit the foster care system,” Eidmann said. “We know that the journey doesn’t end when adoption papers are signed; it’s just the beginning. That’s why we’ve worked closely with our partners to ensure adoptive families receive the comprehensive support they need to thrive. This attention to and care for each unique family’s needs is what makes LA’s adoption partnership special.”

“Tomorrow we celebrate 148 adoptive families taking part in National Adoption Day. These loving families have already achieved so much together,” said Presiding Judge Arakaki. “We wish them the very best as they embark on this new chapter in their lives.”

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November 18, 2023 – 24th Annual National Adoption Day Fact Sheet

Los Angeles Foster care and adoption statistics*:

- Adoptions scheduled for today: **232 children (148 families)**
 - 36% of the children being adopted today are 10 years or older
 - 36% are sibling groups (53 groups of two or more siblings)
 - Age range:
 - 0-2 11%
 - 3-5 28%
 - 6-9 25%
 - 10-14 26%
 - 15+ 10%
 - Number of Los Angeles children receiving child welfare services: 24,387 / Adoption Caseload 7,152
 - 2,587 (or 10.6%) of these are youth age 18 and older in extended foster care (AB12)
 - Number of Los Angeles children in out-of-home care: 16,204
 - Number of Los Angeles children waiting to be adopted: 3,605 (freed children)
 - Approximately 250 of those “waiting” children and youth have yet to be matched with an adoptive family
 - In 2022, there were 1,584 adoptions from foster care in Los Angeles
- *Source: L.A. County DCFS Fact Sheet, Child Welfare Services – September 2023 (Data from CWS/CMS); AIS Data as of 11/1/23

California Foster care and adoption statistics

- 49,176 children in out-of-home care
 - 15,386 waiting to be adopted
 - 6,242 foster care adoptions finalized
 - Over 3,000 youth age out of foster care each year
- *Source: U.S. Children’s Bureau, Administration for Children, Youth and Families, state-by-state-AFCARS data as of June 28, 2022

National Foster care and adoption statistics*

- 391,098 children in out-of-home foster care
 - 113,589 waiting to be adopted
 - Of those, 20% are over the age of 8 and 22% are teenagers
 - 54,240 adoptions finalized
 - 17,759 (or 5%) youth aged out of foster care without permanent families
- Sources: U.S. Children’s Bureau, Administration for Children, Youth and Families, national-AFCARS-trends-data as of June 28, 2022; AFCARS No. 29 preliminary estimates FY 2021 as of June 28, 2022

National Adoption Day (NAD) statistics*

- Number of children adopted on 2019 NAD: 5,200
 - Total number of children adopted on NAD since 2000: 85,000
 - Number of participating cities/counties 2019 NAD: 430
 - This year, 84 jurisdictions in 30 states across the country registered their events on the National Adoption Day website, and the NAD coalition anticipates over 300 events across the country will take place. Visit www.nationaladoptionday.org and scroll down to Events.
- *Source: Alliance for Children’s Rights, Dave Thomas Foundation for Adoption

National Adoption Day Los Angeles news conference on Saturday, November 18 @ 8:15 am (PST) on the 3rd Floor of the Edmund D. Edelman Children’s Court in Monterey Park. The news conference will also be livestreamed via YouTube at bit.ly/AdoptionDay23.



About National Adoption Day

Today is the **24th annual** National Adoption Day. A coalition of national partners – the Alliance for Children’s Rights, Dave Thomas Foundation for Adoption, Freddie Mac Foundation, Congressional Coalition on Adoption, and Children’s Action Network – founded National Adoption Day to raise public awareness of the thousands of children in foster care in the United States waiting to be adopted and to celebrate all loving families that adopt.

The first National Adoption Day was inspired by the innovative efforts of Michael Nash, former presiding judge of Los Angeles’ Juvenile Court, in collaboration with the Alliance for Children’s Rights, Public Counsel, and the Department of Children and Family Services to open the court on Saturdays and engage the volunteer efforts of *pro bono* attorneys to finalize large numbers of backlogged adoptions. Based on Los Angeles’ “Adoption Saturday” model, on November 18, 2000, the Alliance and its national partners organized the first-ever National Adoption Day, when *nine* cities opened their courts on the Saturday before Thanksgiving to finalize 1,100 foster care adoptions. As this grassroots effort took hold, the number of participating cities grew quickly, from 17 in 2001 to 340 in 2009 to 400 in 2018; as did the number of adoptions, from 1,500 in 2001 to 4,835 in 2009 to 5,200 in 2019. By 2007, National Adoption Day was celebrated for the first time in all 50 states and the District of Columbia.

Today, judges, social workers, attorneys, adoption advocates, and policymakers collaborate to plan these annual, one-day events in over 400 cities across the country and to date, the dreams of over **85,000** children in foster care have come true as part of National Adoption Day. Visit www.nationaladoptionday.org

Los Angeles “Adoption Day” Program

The Los Angeles “Adoption Day” program is a collaborative effort of the Los Angeles Juvenile Court, Los Angeles County Department of Children and Family Services, the Alliance for Children’s Rights, Public Counsel, and hundreds of *pro bono* attorneys to finalize large numbers of adoptions of children from the Los Angeles foster care system. The Los Angeles Adoption Days are normally held four times throughout the year. Over **43,000** adoptions have been finalized since the inception of this program in 1997.

National Adoption Month

November is also National Adoption Month. This year’s National Adoption Month theme, **“Empowering Youth: Finding Points of Connection,”** conveys the importance of providing opportunities and services that connect youth to their backgrounds to support meaningful permanent relationships. This theme brings attention to the needs of teens who are less likely to be adopted, often because of their age, and are much more likely to “age out” of foster care without the support of a permanent family, leaving them at risk of homelessness, unemployment and other negative outcomes. www.childwelfare.gov/topics/adoption/nam.

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Los Angeles County
Department of Children
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