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**** MEDIA ADVISORY ****

State Agencies Recognize National Adoption Month

Department of Children and Families (DCF) and New Jersey Courts to Finalize Over 200 Adoptions at Events Taking Place Across the State

The New Jersey Department of Children and Families (DCF) and New Jersey Courts will celebrate National Adoption Month this November by co-hosting numerous events across the state to honor adoptive families and to finalize the adoptions of approximately 220 children who were formerly in foster care.

Most of this month's events, stretching from Cape May County to Sussex County, will be held on Friday, November 16, with 17 counties celebrating on that day. Other events are scheduled from Thursday, November 15 through Saturday, December 8.

"These adoption ceremonies are incredibly emotional for everyone involved," said DCF Commissioner Christine Norbut Beyer, who will attend Monmouth County's court hearing. "Many of these families began as resource homes, fostering the child or children they are adopting today. When the judge declares them a legal, permanent family, it is a poignant moment with a lot of happy hugs and tears."

As of June 2018, about 25,000 families were under DCF's Division of Child Protection and Permanency supervision. Annually, more than 90% of families served by DCP&P can be supported in their own homes without separating them from their biological parents. In the instances when children are removed from the home, over 36-percent are placed with relatives. This year, about five-percent (1,207) were declared legally free for adoption by the courts.

Approximately 90 percent of the children who are adopted in New Jersey are adopted by their foster parents, either kin or unrelated. Potential foster and adoptive families go through the same resource family licensing process. Therefore, it is typically a seamless transition from fostering to adoption.

Each county vicinage develops its own programming to recognize and honor the unification and finalization of families. Events vary from day ceremonies to dinners. This year's celebrations include adoption finalizations for adolescents in foster care, as well as sibling groups being adopted together, and children being adopted by relatives and kin.

Reporters and media outlets interested in sharing adoptive families' stories or covering one of the many Adoption Month events taking place throughout the state should be aware of the following:

- If the press is interested in covering a National Adoption Month event or families in their coverage area, please call the DCF Press Office, **609-888-7915**, for further information.

- **A complete list of the scheduled events is attached.** Please note that adoption court hearings are closed to the press, but each event listed notes whether members of the press are invited to attend scheduled family celebrations and other receptions following the court hearings. If there is no event, reporters or photographers may be connected with an adoptive family in their area through the DCF Press Office.
- Some counties will also celebrate private adoptions that are not conducted through the state's child welfare system.

For more information on adoption, call 1-800-NJ ADOPT (992-3678) or visit the DCF adoption Web site at www.njadopt.org.

A complete listing of Adoption Day events, as well as media availability to attend each event, is attached.