



## MICHIGAN COURTS NEWS RELEASE

*John Nevin, Communications Director*

Ph: 517-373-0129 Twitter: @MISupremeCourt FB: facebook.com/misupremecourt

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

### **Supreme Court Resolution Celebrates Reunification Month**

*Justices Focus on Success of Court Partnership with MDHHS to Restore Families*

LANSING, MI, June 19, 2020 – The Michigan Supreme Court today highlighted a [resolution](#) celebrating June as Reunification Month. The resolution praises the work of judges, court staff, welfare professionals, and especially moms and dads across Michigan who are working to reunify foster children with their families. Reunification Month, celebrated in June, recognizes the people and efforts nationwide that help families get back together and stay together.

“The beauty of reunification lies in the courage to recognize the potential of second chances, and every year, at our Reunification Day celebration, we hear heartwarming stories of successful second chances,” said Chief Justice Bridget M. McCormack. “While this year, we would prefer to be celebrating in person, I hope that Reunification Month serves as a continuing inspiration and a testament to the fact that nothing is more important than family. Every child deserves a loving and nurturing family, and I thank everyone who is working to achieve that goal.”

“COVID-19 slowed down the reunification process. We believe that children are safe and well when they are with their families, and children should not be separated from their families one day longer than necessary. Ensuring that children could go home during COVID required strong partnerships with families, attorneys, service providers and the courts,” said JooYeun Chang, executive director of the Children’s Services Agency at the Michigan Department of Health and Human Services. “In an effort to address COVID-created barriers, the Rapid Permanency program was developed. Families who have made great progress and are being reunified deserve to be celebrated and admired, and their stories show their courage and resolve.”

The program, called Rapid Permanency, uses a team approach involving public and private child welfare caseworkers, lawyers, and judges to analyze cases eligible for reunification where parents have made significant progress. These stakeholders create a plan, with the input of parents, to address barriers that are currently prohibiting reunification and to facilitate the immediate referral to resources or services that can support safe and expedited permanency.

Since the announcement of Rapid Permanency in April, 305 children have been identified as possible candidates for rapid reunification through permanency reviews; of those, 175 youth, or 57 percent, have already been reunified. For those families being reunified, community-based services and supports are in place to ensure safety and success.

“Families who continue to persevere in the face of extreme hardship to bring their children home are to be commended for their hard work and ‘never-give-up’ attitude,” said Michigan Supreme Court Justice Elizabeth T. Clement. “When courts and social service professionals work together to help children, we can do amazing things – even during a pandemic – including rebuilding families and supporting them so they can stay together forever,” added Justice Megan K. Cavanagh. Both Justices focus on child welfare issues for the Court.

Michigan is one of 27 states that typically hold Reunification Month festivities, which are part of the [American Bar Association’s annual observance of National Reunification Month](#).