



February 4, 2022

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*****FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE*****

In Response to Report on NYC Family Court in Crisis, Legal Aid Calls for Critical Reforms

(NEW YORK, NY) – **The Legal Aid Society**, in response to a report released by the New York City Bar Association and The Fund for Modern Courts on New York City Family Court, called for critical reforms to address a myriad of underlying issues that have left these courts ill-equipped to respond to families’ needs, creating an enormous backlog of critical matters that have yet to be adjudicated.

The report details a series of changes to address the issues faced by the children and families who rely on the courts for a wide range of matters including child abuse and neglect; issues related to custody, visitation, guardianship, and domestic violence; child support; and juvenile delinquency cases.

The findings call for investments in and upgrades to technology including adopting New York State's electronic filing system and creating a user-friendly website. The report also outlines the need to ensure appropriate access to technology for those participating in virtual hearings.

Furthermore, the report also addresses the court system’s case backlog where 56 judges were tasked with 192,000 filings in New York City in 2019. When COVID-19 emerged, proceedings came to a halt, creating a massive backlog of cases. The report recommends moving judges and resources from other trial courts to tackle the backlogs and delays.

Advocates are further calling on the court to improve external communication and enact uniform procedural rules to create a system that can be easily navigated by those who rely upon it.

The Legal Aid Society stated: “The pandemic has illuminated the many problems plaguing New York City’s Family Court system which impedes due process for our young clients and their families, as well as for our clients who are survivors of domestic violence. This report details the immediate steps our court system must take to address these systemic issues, and The Legal Aid Society commits to working with all stakeholders to bring these changes quickly to fruition.”

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The Legal Aid Society exists for one simple yet powerful reason: to ensure that New Yorkers are not denied their right to equal justice because of poverty. For 145 years, we have protected, defended, and advocated for those who have struggled in silence for far too long. Every day, in every borough, The Legal Aid Society changes the lives of our clients and helps improve our communities. www.legalaidnyc.org