



# MICHIGAN COURTS NEWS RELEASE

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

## **Families Are the Focus of Annual Michigan Reunification Day Celebration**

*More Than Half of Children Discharged from Foster Care in 2016 Reunified with Parents*

LANSING, MI, June 30, 2017 – In recognition of National Reunification Month, the Michigan Supreme Court brought together reunited families, judges, and support professionals today for the 2<sup>nd</sup> annual Michigan Reunification Day at the Hall of Justice in Lansing. The event celebrates families who have worked hard and made difficult changes to bring their children back from foster care. Reunification Day also spotlights the many professionals, community members, and volunteers who make it possible for these families to become whole again.

Two families from Ingham County and a family from Genesee County joined Chief Justice Stephen J. Markman, Justice Bridget M. McCormack, Ingham County Circuit Court Judge Laura Baird, Genesee County Probate Court Judge F. Kay Behm, and Stacie Bladen, Deputy Director of the Michigan Department of Health & Human Services Children’s Services Agency, at the statewide event.

“I am pleased to honor parents across the state who have made the commitment to work with our trial courts and other professionals toward legal reunification with their children,” said Chief Justice Markman. “The path to reunification is not always easy—nor should it be—but as we see in the hugs and smiles and play activities in the courthouse today, the results make all that hard work worthwhile.”

“Our goal should always remain to keep families whole, and today, we witnessed the fruits of those efforts in the stories of our families and children who have been successfully reunified,” said Justice McCormack, who emceed the event. “I am heartened by the courts around the state that have scheduled their own events to celebrate reunified families, including those in Berrien, Cass, Muskegon, and Washtenaw counties. We hope that even more courts are inspired to follow suit in the future.”

The Michigan Department of Health and Human Services reports there are currently more than 13,000 children in foster care. In calendar year 2016, 7,168 children were discharged from foster care, and of those, 3,670 reunified with their parents (51.2 percent).

Michigan Reunification Day is part of the [American Bar Association’s annual National Reunification Month](#), which aims to recognize the important accomplishments of parents, and the many professionals who support them, in having their children safely and successfully returned home from foster care. Find news and resources at [www.courts.mi.gov/reunificationday](http://www.courts.mi.gov/reunificationday).

## Reunification Services in Michigan

Michigan has several programs in place to support parents towards successful reunification. According to the Michigan Department of Health and Human Services, their Family Reunification Program currently serves 73 counties—an expansion of 32 additional counties from the FY 2016. A four-month reunification service, the FRP provides a blend of skill-based interventions and solution-focused family work; and has shown success with reunifying families sooner and more safely than without the service.

MDHHS's Foster Care Supportive Visitation/In-Home Parent Education Program is an evidence-based intervention that allows parents to receive customized support services focused on parenting skill development before and after each visit. The program served 531 families in 2016, and now operates in 70 counties.

This year, MDHHS reached a total of 10 Parenting Through Change-Reunification sites in 10 counties:

- Ingham
- Bay and Saginaw
- Kalamazoo
- Oakland
- Lenawee and Monroe
- Detroit Wayne - Children's Center
- Detroit Wayne - Starfish Family Services;
- Detroit Wayne - Lincoln Behavioral Services;
- St. Clair
- Macomb

In addition, Parenting Through Change-Reunification is an evidence-based parenting skills training for parents of children with serious emotional disturbance and parents who are working toward reunification with their child/children in foster care.

For more information about the MDHHS Family Preservation Program, click [here](#).

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