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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Date: Sept. 23, 2010

**NYS OFFICE OF CHILDREN & FAMILY SERVICES
HONORED FOR ONLINE CHILD ABUSE CLEARANCE SYSTEM**

Albany, NY --- The New York State Office of Children and Family Services (OCFS) has won a Best of New York Award for Project Excellence from Government Technology Magazine for its Online Clearance System (OCS). The award was presented at the Government Technology Conference in Albany on Sept. 22.

OCFS operates the Statewide Central Register of Child Abuse and Maltreatment (SCR). The winning application enables agencies that are required to have background checks submitted for their employees to now submit them via the Web rather than on paper. The system expedites the processing of the information, reduces errors, and better enables the tracking of the request.

There are approximately 220,000 clearance requests submitted annually. With the new OCS, the annual savings is expected to exceed \$250,000.

Prospective child care employees are the largest group submitted for clearances, with most other requests from anyone over the age of 18 living with family day care applicants.

The process prior to implementation of the Online Clearance System required that each individual fill out a handwritten form accurately and completely. The submitting agency requiring clearance verified and mailed the document to the SCR. Any issues or mistakes were identified and the document was then mailed back to the submitting agency. Following the send-back, correction and resubmission process (which could take multiple iterations), the clearance could be completed. Responses would then be mailed to the clearance requestor.

The Statewide Central Register, also known as the "hotline," receives telephone calls alleging child abuse or maltreatment within New York State. The SCR relays information from the calls to the local Child Protective Services for investigation. Anyone suspecting that a child in New York State is being abused or maltreated is urged to call the hotline at 1-800-342-3720.

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