

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE  
January 18, 2011

Contact: Amanda Gundlach  
(716) 753-4211

## **Wickmark Resigns as Commissioner of Social Services**

**Mayville:**--This morning, the Chautauqua County Executive Gregory J. Edwards received formal notice from Steve Wickmark of his resignation from his position as Commissioner of Social Services effective April 29, 2011.

Wickmark has decided to pursue his passion for helping children in need as a member of a panel of specially trained mediators dedicated to facilitating expedited permanency settlements, a role he was recruited to fill in the Office of Courts Administration's Family Court Improvement Project. There he will be helping to develop improved processes for establishing permanency for children in foster care in the 8<sup>th</sup> Judicial District.

"This move is consistent with Steve's legal background and life long commitment of using his skills and talents to represent, advocate for, and serve children and their families," said Edwards.

Over the last two years, Wickmark has moved the Department of Social Services in a positive direction through numerous and effective changes, improved the functioning of the Department, and streamlined operations. He performed his duties as Commissioner with skill and dedication despite the unprecedented challenges due to the fire in Dunkirk, funding cuts by New York State, astronomical increases in demand which exceeded 30% in some areas, the constraints of delivering Medicaid, and all other services in this environment.

"I am disappointed to lose the drive and commitment that he brought to the Department, however the children and families of the 8<sup>th</sup> Judicial District have gained the full time services of a dedicated professional," said Edwards.

The position of Commissioner of Social Services has very specific and rigorous job training, experience, educational requirements, as set by NYS, and as a result is a difficult position to fill. However, Edwards will begin the process of recruiting and hiring a replacement immediately with the goal of having another talented professional in place before May.

-END-