

Voice for Adoption

SPEAKING OUT FOR OUR NATION'S WAITING CHILDREN



MEDIA ADVISORY: FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE AND PLANNING

MAY 10 LAUNCH SET FOR NEW INITIATIVE – KEEPING THE PROMISE – TO RESHAPE ADOPTION IN U.S. MAJOR CHILD WELFARE GROUPS UNITE IN CALL FOR SERVICES TO HELP FAMILIES SUCCEED

WASHINGTON, D.C., May 3, 2011 – A broad coalition of adoption and child welfare organizations – including the Evan B. Donaldson Adoption Institute, the Congressional Coalition for Adoption Institute, Voice for Adoption, the Child Welfare League of America, the North American Council on Adoptable Children, the Dave Thomas Foundation for Adoption, and the Center for Adoption Support and Education – will co-sponsor a briefing on Capitol Hill for lawmakers and the media next week as part of a landmark national initiative designed to “reshape” adoption in the U.S. – particularly for children from foster care.

Families who have struggled because they lacked sufficient services – as well as families who have surmounted their challenges because they received needed supports – will tell their stories and answer questions at the event, which will take place **2-3:30 p.m. on Tuesday, May 10, in Room SVC 210-212, Capitol Visitor Center**. A list of additional families from around the country will be distributed to journalists who wish to “localize” their stories. Senator Amy Klobuchar of Minnesota, a member of the Congressional Coalition for Adoption will be the guest speaker.

The co-sponsoring agencies will present information on the critical need for post-adoption services, the consequences of not addressing this need, and their recommendations for the future. In addition, key players have been encouraged to keep this initiative alive with ongoing efforts to raise public awareness and political attention until families receive the critical ongoing supports they need to care for special needs children. To demonstrate the breadth of professional support for a “paradigm shift” in the adoption field, an unusually broad array of child welfare and adoption organizations are endorsing this effort (see list below); many will be traveling from all over the U.S. to be represented at the briefing.

Keeping the Promise is the groundbreaking, research-based report recently published by the Donaldson Institute (<http://tinyurl.com/EBDpromise>). The Adoption Institute’s 98-page report, “Keeping the Promise: The Critical Need for Post-Adoption Services to Enable Children and Families to Succeed” is the most comprehensive compilation to date of knowledge about post-adoption needs and services. It concludes that too many are not receiving the essential assistance they need, calls for a reshaping of national priorities and resources to develop and provide such services – and provides a series of recommendations for improving policy and practice.

As the report stresses, the vast majority of adopted children function normally, and their parents are highly satisfied with their families. But over the past 15 years, nearly a million boys and girls were adopted by Americans from foster care in our country and from orphanages abroad, and the majority of U.S. adoptions continue to be of those types (by far, mostly from state child welfare systems).

“The reality is that all too often adopted children never get the help they need in order to deal with the trauma they’ve experienced in life prior to living with their adoptive family,” said Voice for Adoption’s Executive Director, Nicole Dobbins. Adam Pertman, the Adoption Institute’s Executive Director adds, “The good news is that most of them, and their families, are doing just fine; the bad news is that the ones who need help too often aren’t getting it.”



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The organizations that have endorsed the report's findings and recommendations include: the Child Welfare League of America, the North American Council on Adoptable Children, the Dave Thomas Foundation for Adoption, Voice for Adoption,¹ the Freddie Mac Foundation, the American Academy of Adoption Attorneys, the National Council for Adoption, the Joint Council on International Children's Services, the Adoption Exchange Association, the Kinship Center, Lutheran Social Services of New England, Spence-Chapin Services to Families, The Cradle, Bethany Christian Services, the Center for Family Connections, the Center for Adoption Support and Education, the New York State Citizens' Coalition for Children, Wide Horizons for Children, Adoptions Together, Children's Home Society of North Carolina, and Adoption Resources of Wisconsin. Additional organizations support this work and plan to utilize and disseminate it, but are constrained by governmental or other regulations from becoming official "endorsers."

This broad group of adoption and child welfare organizations are recommending that "the paradigm has to shift" from simply forming families through adoption to providing the supports needed to raise children to healthy adulthood. Among recommendations in the Institute's paper and those that will be presented at the Congressional briefing are:

- Convene a national leadership task force to shape/ promote changes in policy and practice.
- Develop public-private partnerships and dedicated federal funding for post-adoption services.
- Make such services a routine part of federal, state and local child welfare planning/financing.
- Fund and conduct critically needed research to develop and assess the most effective services.
- Request the Government Accountability Office (GAO) to conduct an investigative report on post-adoption support and enhance data collection on adoption disruption and dissolution.

For more details about the May 10 briefing, contact Emily Collins at Emily@ccainstitute.org or 202-544-8500, or Nicole Dobbins at voiceforadoption@gmail.com 202-210-8118.

Voice for Adoption (VFA) is a coalition of national and state organizations that develops and advocates for improved adoption policies. Recognized as a national leader in special needs adoption, VFA works closely with federal legislators and child welfare organizations, to advocate for families who are willing and able to make a lifelong commitment to the 115,000 children in foster care waiting to be adopted. Its website is www.voice-for-adoption.org

For more information about the partners in this unprecedented effort to help children and families in our country by transforming adoption practices, please go to the organizations' website, including:

- Congressional Coalition for Adoption Institute: www.ccainstitute.org
- Evan B. Donaldson Adoption Institute: www.adoptioninstitute.org
- North American Council on Adoptable Children: www.nacac.org
- Child Welfare League of America: www.cwla.org
- Dave Thomas Foundation for Adoption: www.davethomasfoundation.org
- Center for Adoption Support and Education: www.adoptionsupport.org

¹ The Voice for Adoption is a coalition whose Board is composed of Adopt America Network, Adoption Exchange Association, Adoption Exchange Inc., Casey Family Services, Child Welfare League of America, Children Awaiting Parents, EMQ FamiliesFirst, Family Builders Network, Kinship Center, Latino Family Institute, New York Council on Adoptable Children, North American Council on Adoptable Children, Spaulding for Children-Michigan, and Three Rivers Adoption Council.