

GROUND-BREAKING STUDY RECOMMENDS ADOPTEES GET ACCESS TO THEIR BIRTH RECORDS

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NEW YORK, Nov. 12, 2007 – The Evan B. Donaldson Adoption Institute today released the most comprehensive examination to date of one of the most controversial, emotional issues in the modern adoption world: whether adopted people, once they become adults, should have access to their original birth information. This report suggests that all states change their laws so that the answer is “yes.”

Among the findings in the report, “For the Records: Restoring a Right to Adult Adoptees,” are:

- Prohibiting adopted people from getting their personal information raises significant civil rights concerns and potentially serious, negative consequences for their physical and mental health.
- In states that now allow access, there has been no evidence that the legal changes have caused problematic behavior by adopted persons or damage to birthmother’s lives.
- Another assertion by critics of changing these laws – that abortion rates will rise and adoption rates will fall – is not supported by the evidence; in fact, it appears just the opposite occurs.

Based on its research and an analysis of its findings, the Institute’s recommendations include:

- Every state should amend its laws to restore unrestricted access for adult adopted persons to their original birth certificates – which, historically, had been their right nationwide.
- Within three years of enactment, revisit state laws that create a “sandwich” situation in which some adult adopted persons get access to their documents while others do not.
- Conduct research to expand the understanding of the experiences of adopted persons, birthparents and adoptive parents in relation to the issue of access to records.

“After decades of discussion, debate and heated argument, we decided to see what’s real and what’s based on anecdotes and stereotypes,” said Adam Pertman, Executive Director of the Adoption Institute. “Now we can reshape public policy in a way that genuinely helps the millions of people involved.”

The Evan B. Donaldson Adoption Institute is an independent, nonpartisan nonprofit that is the pre-eminent research, policy and education organization in its field. The Institute’s mission is to improve the lives of everyone touched by adoption through better laws, policies and practices.