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REPORT SHOWS MISCONCEPTIONS STYMIE EQUALITY FOR ADOPTEES BY KEEPING
RECORDS CLOSED

NEW YORK, July 15, 2010 – In its continuing effort to improve law, policy and practice so that “all adopted people can achieve equal treatment with their non-adopted peers,” the Evan B. Donaldson Adoption Institute today released a major report recommending that every state enact legislation restoring the right of all adult adoptees to access their own original birth certificates (OBCs).

“For the Records II: An Examination of the History and Impact of Adult Adoptee Access to Original Birth Certificates” is based on a years-long examination of relevant judicial and legislative documents; of decades of research and other scholarly writing; and of the concrete experiences of states and countries that have either changed their laws to provide these documents or never sealed them at all.

The Institute's report suggests that, while a growing number of states have restored OBC access to adopted people once they reach the age of majority, efforts to accelerate the trend have been impeded by misunderstandings about the history of this controversial issue, misconceptions about the parties involved (especially birthmothers), and mistaken concerns about the impact of changing the status quo – e.g., legislators often assume that negative consequences will occur but, in fact, they do not.

“Effective policies and best practices serve everyone's interests better when they are based on accurate information,” said Adam Pertman, the Adoption Institute's Executive Director. “We hope this new report will help to reshape the debate over a very important and controversial question, and that the result will be that all adopted people can achieve equal treatment with their non-adopted peers.”

Among the findings in the 46-page Policy Brief, which updates and expands the Institute's November 2007 report, “For the Records: Restoring a Right for Adult Adoptees,” are:

- Barring adopted adults from access to their OBCs wrongly denies them a right enjoyed by all others in our country, and is not in their best interests for personal and medical reasons.
- Alternatives such as mutual consent registries are ineffective and do not meet adoptees' needs.
- The vast majority of birthmothers don't want to be anonymous to the children they relinquished.

The recommendations in the Institute's new Policy Brief include:

- Every “closed” state should unseal OBCs for all adult adoptees, retroactively and prospectively.

- States that already provide limited OBC access should revise laws to include all adult adoptees.
- No professional should promise women anonymity from the children they place for adoption.

For more details about “For the Records II” or to schedule an interview, contact Pertman at 617-763-0134 or apertman@adoptioninstitute.org. The Evan B. Donaldson Adoption Institute is the pre-eminent research, policy and education organization in its field. Its mission is to provide leadership that improves laws, policies and practices – through sound research, education and advocacy – to better the lives of everyone touched by adoption. Its award-winning website is www.adoptioninstitute.org.