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NCFA Responds to Media Reports Regarding the Practice of Underground Placements of Internationally Adopted Children

September 11, 2013 – Alexandria, VA – The recent Reuters and NBC News reports have drawn public attention to very concerning cases where children who had joined families through both intercountry and domestic adoption were tragically placed in inappropriate settings through the unethical means of secretive internet groups.

Although NCFA takes very seriously the concern of adoption dissolution, we believe it is important to provide the perspective that while any amount of these unethical child placements is unacceptable, they are a distinct minority of adoptions. This significant concern is a small portion of the many children living in informal care settings that may be unsafe for them – the vast majority of those being U.S.-born children placed there by biological parents.

We call for an end to this inappropriate practice of illegally relocating children to potentially unsafe environments and appropriate prosecution of those involved in harming children. We believe it is a failing of the broader child welfare system’s difficult work of ensuring every child is in a safe setting and a failure to enforce the Interstate Compact on the Placement of Children when these situations occur across state lines. NCFA always advocates that when a child is placed in the care of new, permanent caretakers it should always be done through the most permanent legal mechanism possible and under the auspices of professional child welfare workers. Formal, legal adoption and in some cases legal guardianship should be ensured so that proper protocols have been followed to guarantee a placement is a safe setting for a child.

NCFA takes the issue of adoption dissolution very seriously. In the last two years, NCFA has provided four trainings at our National Adoption Conference to help adoption professionals and families understand how to work together in these difficult situations in the best interests of children. We have also recently published Supporting Children and Families when Adoption Dissolution Occurs to provide suggestions to increase professional and public awareness on how dissolution should be handled to protect children and support families.

NCFA has and continues to support enhanced pre-adoption training and post-adoption support services for all types of adoption. We believe increased pre-adoption training will help to better prepare families for the needs of special needs and traumatized children and should specifically educate prospective parents on any known needs of a child. We also advocate for widely available post-adoption support services through the public child welfare system as well as
private agencies. A reliable system of support would help to provide a safe place for families to turn before they reach the crisis level which may sometimes cause them to turn to unethical placements.

We believe that the Universal Accreditation Act, passed by Congress in December, and to be fully implemented by July 2014, will increase the education and professional requirements for international adoption agencies and will help support better services for children adopted from all countries. Further, NCFA believes that forthcoming legislation called the Children in Families First Act would provide overall improvement to US intercountry adoption systems, potentially including the ability to better track the placement and status of internationally adopted children for the purpose of post-adoption reports.

According to NCFA president Chuck Johnson, “These are tragic stories with a link to adoption, but the reality is that adoption is a vastly successful solution for nearly all of the children who find families. As we work to bring greater protection to children and stronger support services to families and children, it would be a greater tragedy to falsely conclude that these stories are a complete representation of adoption. In actuality, millions of children have found life and hope in families through adoption. We at NCFA will do our best to continue to make adoption the safest and best process possible for children to thrive as they find their way to a forever family.”

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*Passionately committed to the belief that every child deserves to thrive in a nurturing, permanent family, NCFA’s mission is to meet the diverse needs of children, birthparents, adopted individuals, adoptive families, and all those touched by adoption through global advocacy, education, research, legislative action, and collaboration.*

*More information is available on our website, [www.adoptioncouncil.org](http://www.adoptioncouncil.org).*