



National Council For Adoption

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Media Contact:
Chuck Johnson
(703) 299-6633 office
(301) 751-3750 mobile

Adoption Factbook Reveals New Domestic Adoption Study; Leads Discussion on Current State of Adoption

May 24, 2011 – Alexandria, Va. – The National Council For Adoption (NCFA) proudly announces the publication of its new comprehensive adoption resource, *Adoption Factbook V*. Copies can now be ordered from NCFA (1-866-21-ADOPT; ncfa@adoptioncouncil.org; <https://www.adoptioncouncil.org/publications/adoption-factbook.html>).

“NCFA’s acclaimed *Adoption Factbook* series represents one of the best sources of adoption research and statistics available nationwide,” said NCFA president and CEO Chuck Johnson. “Like past editions, the newly released *Adoption Factbook V*, with studies and articles submitted from a diverse group of experts, covers an enormous range of important issues in adoption and will serve as an invaluable resource to policymakers, adoption professionals, members of the media, and the entire adoption community.”

NCFA is dedicated to principled advocacy on behalf of children, birthparents, and adoptive families. Commissioning thorough and up-to-date research is one key component of this important work, as it helps adoption advocates develop, share, and promote best practices in adoption. As the centerpiece of *Adoption Factbook V*, the updated National Adoption Data Study, compiled by Dr. Paul J. Placek, presents domestic adoption statistics from all fifty states. There is no other source for this combined nationwide data.

Following are sample highlights from the latest National Adoption Data Study.

Domestic Adoption

Overall, domestic adoption has increased in recent years; In 2007, 133,737 domestic adoptions were reported, an increase of 3,468 (2.6 percent) over the reported 130,269 domestic adoptions in 2002. Although many concerns remain for adoption advocates, NCFA celebrates this slight increase in domestic adoptions and hopes it will be part of a continuing trend.

While there has been a decline in the number of infant adoptions, the increase in overall domestic adoption is due to a rise in adoptions by relatives as well as adoptions from foster care. Related adoptions (including step-parent adoptions and other family member adoptions) have increased by 2,992 (5.5 percent), with 57,248 reported in 2007 compared to 54,256 in 2002.

The number of domestic infant adoptions obviously fluctuates from year to year, but it has been on the decline since 1992, and the latest study by NCFA reveals that this is a continuing trend.

There were only 18,078 domestic infant adoptions in 2007 (the most recent year for which this study was able to obtain statistics), compared to 22,291 in 2002. This 18.9 percent decrease indicates that there is still much work to be done in order to ensure that women facing unintended pregnancies are fully informed, educated, and able to consider the option of adoption on an equal basis with all other pregnancy options.

The Adoption Option Index, available only from NCFA as part of the National Adoption Data Study, indicates the number of infant adoptions per 1,000 nonmarital live births and abortions combined. In 1996, the Adoption Option Index was 9.5 for every 1,000 nonmarital live births and abortions, and by 2007 it had fallen to 6.1. The Index, which is also broken down by state, shows great variability across states; as Dr. Placek states, "The fact that NCFA's Adoption Option Index varies so greatly across different geographic areas indicates that adoption choices may largely depend upon the support services available."

Compiling nationwide data on domestic infant adoption and calculating the Adoption Option Index on a state-by-state basis offers NCFA the unique ability to recognize and monitor trends in infant adoption across the country.

Adoptions from Foster Care

While the focus of the National Adoption Data Study is on domestic adoption, the latest numbers for both adoptions from foster care and intercountry adoption are collected and published as well. These numbers indicate that there is still much work to be done to increase public awareness of the thousands of American children waiting in foster care.

Yet great strides have been made in increasing the number of adoptions from foster care: The most recent Health and Human Services report from the Adoption and Foster Care Analysis and Reporting System (AFCARS) for Fiscal Year 2009 reported that 55,684 children were adopted from foster care in 2009, an increase over previous years.

NCFA and other advocates for foster care reform are gratified to see this increase in adoptions out of foster care, and we will continue to work with our partners in order to promote and establish policies that prioritize permanency and find families for the remaining 114,556 children in the U.S. foster care system who are eligible for adoption.

Intercountry Adoption

There has been a significant decline in intercountry adoption in recent years. There were 11,059 immigrant orphan adoptions reported in 2010, a 35.8 percent decrease from 17,229 in 2008. The figures from 2010 are even more striking when noting the overall five-year decline of 51.7 percent since 2004, when 22,900 intercountry adoptions were reported.

The dramatic decline in the number of intercountry adoptions can be attributed to a variety of factors, many outside the control of U.S. adoption officials and advocates. Adoption has slowed or shut down in many countries, for reasons that vary from nation to nation; the most common reasons include concerns about corruption, the slower processing of adoption cases, an increased focus on domestic adoption programs within sending countries, and stricter regulations on which children are eligible for adoption.

Ensuring that best practice safeguards are in place for the protection of children, birthparents, and adoptive parents is essential. However, it is also important to remember that millions of orphaned and abandoned children may lose the chance to have a permanent family of their own if intercountry adoption is no longer an option for them. Intercountry adoption must remain a

viable and acceptable option for vulnerable children worldwide, many of whom live in institutions or other forms of temporary care and lack safe, loving families to call their own.

By advocating for ethical, Hague-compliant processes that promote transparency in adoption, as well as helping child welfare advocates worldwide understand the benefits offered by intercountry adoption to children when in-country permanency options (such as family preservation or reunification, kinship adoption, or domestic adoption) fail, NCFA will continue to encourage ethical, comprehensive, and holistic child welfare policies that serve the best interests of children.

(For the complete findings and in-depth analysis of the National Adoption Data Study, please see the full-length article in the *Adoption Factbook V*.)

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While there has been a decrease in domestic infant and intercountry adoption over the past several years, there has been no decrease in the number of American families willing to adopt. In fact, the opposite is true; many families wait for years in order to adopt children.

Research clearly shows that adoption is good for children, birthmothers, and families; outcomes for adopted children and birthmothers are generally very positive. Children adopted as infants display few indicators of high-risk behavior such as alcohol use, fighting in school, and trouble with the police. Adopted children also scored higher than did adolescents in the general population on indicators of wellbeing such as school performance, friendships, self-esteem, and social competency.

Most birthmothers who placed their children for adoption report feeling that they made the right decision. In particular, comparing teenagers who make an adoption plan with those who parent indicates that those who chose adoption are more likely to finish school, obtain a higher level of education, and attain better employment than their parenting peers. They are also less likely to receive public assistance or experience another pregnancy before they are married.

In a 2010 Harris Interactive Survey commissioned by NCFA, a majority (57 percent) of respondents agreed with the statement “Sometimes choosing adoption is what it means to be a good mother.” Both current research and public opinion support the fact that adoption can be a positive option for women, and yet providing information to women making pregnancy decisions often proves a challenge. If more women were fully informed and educated about the option of adoption and its positive outcomes for both birthparents and children, they might choose to make an adoption plan. Women facing unintended pregnancies should be provided with timely, accurate, non-coercive information about adoption, and programs such as the federally funded Infant Adoption Awareness Training Program and NCFA’s Infant Adoption Revival Project continue to provide the education and counseling necessary to meet this need.

NCFA hopes the newest edition of the *Adoption Factbook V* will inform and inspire the adoption community, providing child welfare advocates with information to help them and those they serve. As a whole, the *Adoption Factbook V* provides in-depth information and analysis for birthparents, adoptive parents, researchers, and policymakers, including:

- families that adopt children with special needs;
- families formed via interracial adoption;
- putative father registries;
- the Adoption Tax Credit and other important adoption-related legislation;
- strategies for promoting permanency and recommendations for foster care reform;

- the current state of intercountry adoption, including how it has been affected by the Hague Convention;
- decisionmaking tools for prospective birthmothers;
- medical issues related to adoption;
- putative father registries across the country, as well as federal putative father legislation.

Given its scope, relevance, and the enormous amount of expert knowledge and research contained in the *Adoption Factbook V*, NCFA is confident that this policy guide will address many of the most pressing issues in adoption today, contribute to ongoing discussions about best practices, promote sound, ethical policies, and ensure that adoption remains a viable option for vulnerable children in this country and abroad.

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Founded in 1980, the National Council For Adoption (NCFA) is an adoption advocacy nonprofit that promotes a positive culture of adoption through education, research, and legislative action. Through its core areas of focus—infant adoption, adoption out of foster care, and intercountry adoption—NCFA serves children, birthparents, adoptive families, adoption agencies, U.S. and foreign governments, policymakers, media, and the general public as the authoritative voice for adoption.

More information is available on our website, www.adoptioncouncil.org.