

Who Is Access Connecticut?

Access Connecticut is a grassroots organization of adoptees, birth parents, adoptive parents and adoption professionals dedicated to re-establishing the right of adult adoptees to access their original birth certificates, which was taken away in 1975.

Access Connecticut has one goal: We seek to **re-establish the right** of adult adoptees to access their original birth certificate, a right which the all non-adopted citizens have under Connecticut law. **Prior to 1975 all adoptees born in Connecticut had the right** to obtain their true, original birth certificates (OBCs) upon reaching the age of majority.

Every adoptee has two birth certificates: A true, original birth certificate (OBC) created the day they are born and a false, amended birth certificate. The false birth certificate is created by the state when their adoption is finalized (up to a year or more after their birth), and says their adoptive parents are their biological parents. The false birth certificate is the adoptee's legal birth certificate.

Adoptee rights advocates are active in many states. Their efforts have been successful in several states in recent years, including Alabama, Maine, New Hampshire, Oregon, Rhode Island, and Tennessee. (Kansas and Alaska never sealed original birth certificates.)

We are incredibly pleased to announce that on June 6, 2014 Governor Dannel Malloy signed into law Public Act 14-133 (House Bill 5144), which restores the right of adoptees adopted after October 1, 1983 to access their original birth certificates upon reaching the age of 18. We are completely thrilled and grateful that the Governor signed the bill, which represents years of work on the part of literally thousands of supporters of adoptee rights.

Access Is A Human Right

“The law must be consonant with life. It cannot and should not ignore broad historical currents of history. Mankind is possessed of no greater urge than to try to understand the age-old questions. “Who am I?” “Why am I?” Even now the sands and ashes of the continents are being shifted where we made our first steps as man. Religions of mankind often include ancestor worship in one way or another. For many, the future is blind without a sight of the past. Those emotions and anxieties that generate our thirst to know the past are not superficial or whimsical. They are real and they are “good cause” under the law of man and God.”

[Judge Wade S Weatherford, Seventh Judicial Circuit, South Carolina, ruling on an adoptee’s petition to access adoption records.](#) (1979)

“In all of us there is a hunger, narrow and deep, to know our heritage, to know who we are and where we have come from. Without this enriching knowledge, there is a hollow yearning. No matter what our attainments in life, there is a vacuum, an emptiness and a most disquieting loneliness!”

[Alex Haley, Author](#)

The Home Page of [Ancestry.com](#) states as follows: *“Ready to discover your family story? Simply start with yourself and we’ll do the searching for you. Find your ancestors’ stories. Discover yours.”*

What if you could never know your family story? What if the State was hiding it from you? Adoptees can’t discover their family stories because they are the only people from whom the State hides their true, original birth certificate.

Adoptees Need Up-To-Date Medical Information

“In 2009, the U.S. Surgeon General established a Family History Initiative, which recognized that

familial medical history can be of vital important in the diagnosis and treatment of medical conditions and illnesses that are genetically based. Similarly, The Centers for Disease Control, Office of Public Health Genomics (CDC OPHG), in 2002 established the Family History Public Health initiative "to increase awareness of family history as an important risk factor for common chronic diseases such as cancer, heart disease, and diabetes, and to promote its use in programs aimed at reducing the burden of these diseases in the U.S. population."

[For The Records II: An Examination of the History and Impact Of Adult Adoptee Access to Original Birth Certificates](#), Policy & Practice Perspective, July 2010, Evan B. Donaldson Adoption Institute. p. 27

"Adoptees for restoring access stress the importance of OBCs to obtaining medical information. Without access to birth family names, adopted persons are barred from gaining fuller knowledge of their medical histories and genetic risks in order to make the best decisions about their own health treatment and that of their children. They may have only outdated information provided at the time of adoption, so adoptees without access to their birth families may not know they should have early screenings for certain conditions manifested by their biological relatives at a later time. They also may need answers to medical questions that were not included on a checklist completed long ago, perhaps before family patterns of illness were known. "

[For The Records II: An Examination of the History and Impact Of Adult Adoptee Access to Original Birth Certificates](#), Policy & Practice Perspective, July 2010, Evan B. Donaldson Adoption Institute. p. 19

Substitutes for Access Don't Work

"Critics of mutual consent registries – also sometimes called "passive" registries – point out that they make few matches; reunion rates through them range from "a high of 4.4% to a median of 2.05%....

Another limitation of mutual consent registries is that they are state-specific, so they cannot facilitate matches across borders, and they require adopted persons to know that dates and places of their birth (the latter of which may have been changed on their amended birth certificates). For example, in North Carolina from 1949 until rewriting of the statute in 1995, the law specified that amended birth certificates for adoptees change their birth place to the residences of their adoptive parents and omit the names of the attending physicians and the local registrars (General Statutes of North Carolina, Section 48-29 of Chapter 48 Adoption of Minors). Finally, matches are impossible if either the birth parent or the adoptive person does not register because he/she has died, though the other may still want to find identifying information for other relatives.”

[For The Records II: An Examination of the History and Impact Of Adult Adoptee Access to Original Birth Certificates](#), Policy & Practice Perspective, July 2010, Evan B. Donaldson Adoption Institute. p. 32; citing Samuels, E.J. (2000-2001). The idea of adoption: An inquiry into the history of adult adoptee access to birth records. Rutgers Law Review., 53, 367-437.

No “Horror Stories” Have Resulted From Access

“By the end of June, [Oregon] Ballot Initiative 58 attorney and adoption activist Thomas McDermott suggested that most adopted adults and birth parents were reuniting quietly because, as Helen Hill, founder of the Ballot Initiative 58 campaign put it (Taylor, 2000b), “it’s a personal and private experience for most people.” Significantly, Frank Hunsaker (Taylor, 200b) (Taylor, 2000b), who was the leader of the opposition to Ballot 58 and the chief counsel of the constitutional challenge to Ballot Initiative 58, admitted that, **“I have not heard any so-called horror stories.”** (emphasis added) (p.E1). Hunsaker, who was in contact with a network of birth mothers, including the Jane Does he had initially defended and dozens of distraught birth mothers who called him in the aftermath of Ballot Initiative 58’s passage, was poised to publicize any social disturbance he came across. **Hunsaker’s statement that birth mother’s lives had not been destroyed nor their privacy invaded, as he had repeatedly predicted, seriously undermined the adverse social impact theory that had been used repeatedly to attack Ballot Initiative 58.”**

Carp, W.E., (2007) [Does opening adoption records have an adverse social impact?](#) Some lessons from the US., Great Britain, and Australia, 1953-2007. Adoption Quarterly, 10 (3-4), p. 37.

“A commission [in New South Wales, Australia] that was set up to study the impact of the law reported that “triad members **complied with the provisions of the contact veto to an extraordinary degree**....It is not easy to think of other laws which have such a high level of compliance.” (emphasis added)

[For The Records II: An Examination of the History and Impact Of Adult Adoptee Access to Original Birth Certificates](#), Policy & Practice Perspective, July 2010, Evan B. Donaldson Adoption Institute. p. 33, citing Carp, W.E., (2007) Does opening adoption records have an adverse social impact? Some lessons from the US., Great Britain, and Australia, 1953-2007. Adoption Quarterly, 10 (3-4), 29-52.

“Triseliotis’ research on the impact of birth certificate access worldwide found that “a policy of open records has been operating in Scotland since 1930 and in England from 1976 onwards, with **no evidence of adopted persons misusing or abusing this facility**. The experience of countries such as Finland, Israel and New Zealand, where open records operate, has been similar. (Triseliotis, 1992) With regard to New South Wales, Australia, Carp (2007) concluded: “**None of the dangers people had feared – that their privacy would be invaded and their families destroyed – had materialized**” (p. 48) Additional countries that provide OBC access include Germany, the United Kingdom,. Belgium, Holland, Sweden, Norway, Denmark, Iceland, some Canadian provinces, Israel and Taiwan.” (emphasis added.)

[For The Records II: An Examination of the History and Impact Of Adult Adoptee Access to Original Birth Certificates](#), Policy & Practice Perspective, July 2010, Evan B. Donaldson Adoption Institute. p. 34, citing Triseliotis, J. (1992) Letter To Members of the Senate and General Assembly of the State of New Jersey.

The Vast Majority of Birth Mothers Want Contact

“For statistical evidence of birth mother’s preferences, access proponents rely on a variety of types of data. With respect to New Jersey searches on behalf of adoptees, the New Jersey Division of Youth and Family Services reported that **95% of the birth parents it contacted agree to some form of contact.**” (emphasis added)

Letter from Delores Helb, Adoption Registry Coordinator, State of N.J., Dep’t. of Human Servs., Div of Youth and Family Servs., to N.J. Senator Joseph F. Vitale (December 13, 2004) (on file with the author). [Surrender and Subordination: Birth Mothers and Adoption Law Reform](#), Elizabeth J. Samuels, University of Baltimore School of Law, Michigan Journal of Law and Gender, p.

“According to the testimony of a New Jersey-based private investigator, in his experience reuniting 1,700 birth mothers and the children they surrendered, **only 2% “of those mothers did not want to be found.”** (emphasis added)

An Act Concerning Adoptees: Hearing on A. 3237 Before the A. Comm. On Family, Women & Children’s Servs. Comm., 211th Leg., 2d Ann. Sess. (N.J. 2005) (statement of James (Joe) Collins) [Surrender and Subordination: Birth Mothers and Adoption Law Reform](#), Elizabeth J. Samuels, University of Baltimore School of Law, Michigan Journal of Law and Gender, p.

“A study published In the UK in 2005 found that 93% of birth mothers who have had contact with their children with either “pleased” or “very pleased” and **only 1% of birth mothers were “not pleased.”** (emphasis added)

[John Triseliotis et al., The Adoption Triangle Revisited](#): A Study of adoption, search and reunion experiences 124 (2005)

In Oregon, Maine and New Hampshire (which restored access in 2000, 2005, and 2009,

respectively), **the combined percentage of birth parents who requested no contact on their Contract Preference Form was less than 1%.(0.14)**

[“Reform Access Success”](#), report by the American Adoption Congress

“The number of birthparents filing no-contact preference forms in all of the four states granting unconditional access constituted 1 percent or less of the total OBCs

released.....Some may question whether the small number of contact vetos of non-contact preference forms is the result of the lack of birthparent knowledge about this provision in the law, or perhaps even a lack of knowledge that the law exists. This seems unlikely to have been the case at least in Oregon, however, since the change was on the ballot and received extensive, prolonged attention in the state’s media.” (emphasis added)

[For The Records II: An Examination of the History and Impact Of Adult Adoptee Access to Original Birth Certificates](#), Policy & Practice Perspective, July 2010, Evan B. Donaldson Adoption Institute. p.

29

Contact Preference Forms Allow Birth Parents To Communicate With the Adult

Adoptee Without Contact

The bill proposed by Access provides a system for birth parents to file a Contact Preference Form, like [this form](#) successfully used in Rhode Island, which gives them the following options:

- I would like to be contacted;
- I would prefer to be contacted only through an intermediary; or
- I prefer not to be contacted at this time.

Adoptees, Birth Parents and Adoptive Parents are Natural Allies, Not Enemies.

Research has shown repeatedly that members of the adoption triad have mutual, not antagonistic, interests related to adult adoptee access to identifying information.

Madelyn Freundlich, [Confidentiality Becomes Political: The New Strategy in Opposition to Open Records](#). American Adoption Congress Decree, Winter 1997/Spring 1998, at 4.

“Thus, it was the protection of children from public knowledge of their illegitimacy, rather than the protection of the parties from one another, that led to the sealing of OBCs”... (emphasis added) By 1948, nearly all states began issuing amended birth certificates, with the new documents listing the names of the children’s adoptive parents as their biological parents (Carp, 1998). The original certificates were sealed from the public – but through the late-1950s generally not from adult adoptees – again, so that an out-of-wedlock birth or unknown parentage would not stigmatize the children (Samuels, 2000-2001, Car, 1998). By the 1940s, organizations such as the U.S. Children’s Bureau were offering additional reasons for sealing records, at least until the adopted person reached the age of majority. These included the desirability of protecting adoptive families from the intrusion of the “natural parents” (Morlock, 1945). **The Bureau explicitly recognized the importance of access for adult adoptees, however, noting “every person has a right to know who he is and who his people were”** (Morlock, 1946, p. 168) (emphasis added)

[For The Records II: An Examination of the History and Impact Of Adult Adoptee Access to Original Birth Certificates](#), Policy & Practice Perspective, July 2010, Evan B. Donaldson Adoption Institute. p.

Complete Birth Parent Anonymity Is An Illusion Under Connecticut law.

Connecticut Probate Courts have the ability to order access to the OBC in their discretion if the birth parents cannot be located, and they determine it does not harm the public interest, the adoptee, or the birth or genetic parents. In doing so, **the Court is NOT required to notify birth parents** that the OBC has been disclosed to the adult adoptee. See [Conn. Gen. Stat. Section 7-53](#).

Birth Mothers Weren't "Promised Privacy": Secrecy Was Imposed, Not Chosen. Many Birth Mothers Were Banished and Shamed.

"In this deeply moving work, Ann Fessler brings to light the lives of hundreds of thousands of young single American women forced to give up their newborn children in the years following World War II and before Roe v. Wade. *The Girls Who Went Away* tells a story not of wild and carefree sexual liberation, but rather of a devastating double standard that has had punishing long-term effects on these women and the children they gave up for adoption."

From the Publisher of [The Girls Who Went Away](#), by Ann Fessler

"We deplore the shameful practices that denied you, the mothers, your fundamental rights and responsibilities to love and care for your children. You were not legally and socially acknowledged as their mothers. And you were yourselves deprived of care and support.

To you, the mothers who were betrayed by a system that gave you no choice and subjected you to manipulation, mistreatment and malpractice, we apologise.

We say sorry to you, the mothers who were denied knowledge of your rights, which meant you could not provide informed consent. You were given false assurances. You were forced to endure the coercion and brutality of practices that were unethical, dishonest and in many cases illegal.

We know you have suffered enduring effects from these practices forced upon you by others. For the loss, the grief, the disempowerment, the stigmatisation and the guilt, we say sorry.

*To redress the shameful mistakes of the past, we are committed to ensuring that all those affected get the help they need including specialist counselling services and support, **the ability to find truth in freely available records** and assistance in reconnecting with lost family." (emphasis added.)*

From the March 21, 2013, [national apology](#) delivered by Australian Prime Minister Julia Gillard to birth mothers for practices of forced adoption in that country during the Baby Scoop Era. The apology results from an extensive, remarkably detailed Senate Committee [Report](#) and investigation on the history of adoption in Australia.

“The birth mother advocates, who are among the most vocal advocates for access, stress the fact that birth mothers were neither offered a choice of being, nor guaranteed that they would be, forever unknown to their children....As a means of assessing these competing claims, this article analyzes the provisions in a collection of birth mother surrender documents assembled by the author — seventy-five mid-twentieth century documents executed in twenty-six different states. In order to establish the significance of the provisions with respect to these claims, the article first relates depictions by birth mothers of a journey from silence to legislative advocacy. The article then examines the conflicting claims about birth mothers that pervade legislative contests over adult adoptee access to original birth certificates. Finally, the article analyzes the provisions of the surrender documents. **The analysis of the provisions definitively supports birth mother advocates’ reports that women were neither offered a choice of nor guaranteed lifelong anonymity.** Their opponents’ contentions to the contrary, whether motivated by concern for birth mothers or other interests, reinscribe an earlier culture of shame and secrecy, subordinating women’s own wishes and silencing their newly raised voices.....An examination of the collection of seventy-five surrender documents from twenty-six states shows that their provisions are consonant with women’s reported feelings of lack of agency and powerlessness, as well as their contention that they were neither offered nor guaranteed lifelong anonymity.” (emphasis added)

[Surrender and Subordination: Birth Mothers and Adoption Law Reform](#), Elizabeth J. Samuels,
University of Baltimore School of Law, Michigan Journal of Law and Gender

“Confidentiality for most was not a choice, but an inherent part of the adoption process.”

[For The Records II: An Examination of the History and Impact Of Adult Adoptee Access to Original](#)

[Birth Certificates](#), Policy & Practice Perspective, July 2010, Evan B. Donaldson Adoption Institute. p. 21, citing Schooler, J.E. & Norris, B.L. (2002). Coping with birthparent loss in adopted children. Journal of Child Psychology and Psychiatry. 43 (2), 213-223.

“Forty percent of the documents do include provisions about future identity disclosure or future contact. **Under the terms of these provisions, it is the birth mother who promises she will not seek information about the child.** She affirms her understanding that she is not entitled to information about the child’s new identity or whereabouts. She promises she will not interfere with or harass the adoptive family. (emphasis added)

[Surrender and Subordination: Birth Mothers and Adoption Law Reform](#), Elizabeth J. Samuels, University of Baltimore School of Law, Michigan Journal of Law and Gender, p. 139

“The idea that adopted persons’ own birth identities should be concealed from them, an idea that arose and enjoyed its heyday in the last century, was a novel invention, a historical anomaly.”

[Surrender and Subordination: Birth Mothers and Adoption Law Reform](#), Elizabeth J. Samuels, University of Baltimore School of Law, Michigan Journal of Law and Gender,

“Surrender” is such a appropriate description of these documents. We had our backs to a cliff – every single person we had ever trusted and loved betrayed our trust and were against us; our parents, teachers, the sisters and priest of our church. **The only “choice” we were given was to surrender our child...**(Letter from Dorothea Copeck-Nolan to the author (June 6, 2009) (on file with Elizabeth Samuels)(explaining that she married the child’s father and that she and her husband, and the two sons they raised, were found by [her adult son] when he was 35).” (emphasis added)

[Surrender and Subordination: Birth Mothers and Adoption Law Reform](#), Elizabeth J. Samuels, University of Baltimore School of Law, Michigan Journal of Law and Gender, p. 138

“In Australia, the majority of adopted adults have unconditional access to their OBCs, because the two most-populated states have passed relevant legislation.”

[For The Records II: An Examination of the History and Impact Of Adult Adoptee Access to Original Birth Certificates](#), Policy & Practice Perspective, July 2010, Evan B. Donaldson Adoption Institute. p.

7

Secrecy Harms Adoptees and Adoptive Families.

“Secrets within any family distort reality, undermine trust, and destroy intimacy. Secrets create exclusion, destroy authenticity, product fantasies, evoke fear, and kindle shame. For those touched by adoption, there is a high cost to pay.”

[For The Records II: An Examination of the History and Impact Of Adult Adoptee Access to Original Birth Certificates](#), Policy & Practice Perspective, July 2010, Evan B. Donaldson Adoption Institute. p.

31, citing: Schooler, J.E. & Norris, B.L. (2002). Coping with birthparent loss in adopted children. *Journal of Child Psychology and Psychiatry*. 43 (2), 213-223.

“Research has shown that **secrecy within adoptive families**, attempts to deny or suppress children’s interest in their birth families, and parents’ difficulty in communicating freely with their children about adoption are **all linked with greater distance in the parent-child relationship in childhood and adulthood** – as well as with more adjustment difficulties for the children.” (emphasis added)

[For The Records II: An Examination of the History and Impact Of Adult Adoptee Access to Original Birth Certificates](#), Policy & Practice Perspective, July 2010, Evan B. Donaldson Adoption Institute. p.

31, citing: Brodzinsky, D. (2006). Family structural openness and communication openness as predictors in the adjustment of adopted children. *Adoption Quarterly*, 9 (4), 1-18.; Ruetner, M.S. & Koerner, A.F. (2008). The effect of family communication patterns on adopted adolescent adjustment.

Journal of Marriage and Family, 70, 715-727; Grotevant, H.D. (2007) &McRoy, R.G. (1998).

Openness in adoption: Exploring family connections. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage; Passmore, N.

Feeney, J.. & Foulstone, A. (2007). Secrecy within adoptive families and its impact on adult adoptees.

Family Relationships Quarterly, 5, 3-5.

“According to both research and decades of experience, adopted **adults who choose to search make it clear that they are not rejecting their adoptive parents or looking for new ones.** Rather, they are primarily manifesting a desire to complete their understanding of their personal histories or heritage.”

[For The Records II: An Examination of the History and Impact Of Adult Adoptee Access to Original Birth Certificates.](#) Policy & Practice Perspective, July 2010, Evan B. Donaldson Adoption Institute. p. 25, citing Treseliotis, J., Feast, J. & Kyle, F. (2005). The adoption triangle revisited: A study of adoption, search and reunion experience. London: British Association for Adoption & Fostering.

Openness Is The Norm In Adoption Today

- “Closed” infant adoptions have shrunk to a tiny minority (about 5 percent), with 40 percent “mediated” and 55 percent “open.” In addition, 95 percent of agencies now offer open adoptions.
- In the overwhelming majority of infant adoptions, adoptive parents and expectant parents considering adoption meet, and the expectant parents pick the new family for their baby.
- Adoptive parents, like most participants in open adoptions, report positive experiences; more openness is also associated with greater satisfaction with the adoption process.
- Women who have placed their infants for adoption – and then have ongoing contact with their children – report less grief, regret and worry, as well as more peace of mind.
- The primary beneficiaries of openness are the adopted persons – as children and later in life – because of access to birth relatives, as well as to their own family and medical histories

[Openness In Adoption: From Secrecy and Stigma To Knowledge and Connections](#), Practice

Perspective, March 2012, Deborah H. Siegel, Ph.D., & Susan Livingston Smith, LCSW

“In summary, the majority of adoptive parents thought that New York State law should allow an adult adoptee to obtain a copy of their original birth certificate, and that this access should be retroactive (access should be given regardless of when the child was adopted).”

[“It’s Time To Speak For Ourselves” Adoptive Parents Attitudes Towards Openness in Adoption](#)

[Records](#): Summary of A Study of NYS Adoptive Parents Conducted in 1994-1995

Connecticut & National Expert Endorsements

Although Access Connecticut seeks to re-establish the right of access for adult adoptees only, adoption and child welfare organizations are in a position of trust in regard to minor adoptees, and have an obligation to preserve their rights until they reach the age of majority.

These licensed child-placing agencies and social welfare organizations in Connecticut have provided Access Connecticut an endorsement of the following statement:

“This agency supports restoring the right of adult adoptees to receive a copy of their original birth certificate upon reaching the age of majority. We believe this right should apply retroactively as well as prospectively.”

[Adoptions from the Heart](#)

[Connecticut Adoption Services](#)

[Connecticut Association of Foster and Adoptive Families](#)

[Connecticut Council on Adoption](#)

[Connecticut Voices for Children](#)

[Family and Children's Agency, Inc.](#)

[FamilyAffirmation Center for Treatment](#)

[Independent Adoption Center](#)

[Jewish Family Services of Bridgeport](#)

[Jewish Family Services of New Haven](#)

[Lutheran Social Services of New England](#)

[National Association of Social Workers – Connecticut Chapter](#)

['r Kids](#)

[Rainbow Adoptions International, Inc.](#)

[The Village for Children and Families](#)

[Touched By Adoption](#)

Many national experts and organizations with extensive experience in adoption support adult adoptees access to their original birth certificates. The following is a partial list of such organizations, and other interested parties, along with their statements of support.

[Catholic Conference of Ohio](#)

[Concerned United Birthparents \(CUB\)](#)

[Child Welfare League of American \(CLWA\)](#)

[National Association of Social Workers \(NASW\)](#)

[North American Council on Adoptable Children \(NACAC\)](#)

[Ohio Right To Life](#)

[American Adoption Congress \(AAC\)](#)

[Evan B. Donaldson Institute](#)

[National Adoption Center](#)

[American Academy of Pediatrics](#)

[Parents for Ethical Adoption Reform](#)

[Holt International Children's Services](#)

- [Concerned United Birthparents \(CUB\)](#). The only national organization focused on birth parents – their experience, healing and wisdom.

“CUB supports adult adoptees’ right to access their records, without restrictions or qualifications. Knowing one’s identity is a civil right which is being consistently abused by the practice of sealed records adoptions. All human beings have the right to know their original identity which includes their genetic roots, their medical history and biological history.”

http://www.cubirthparents.org/open_records.php

- [Child Welfare League of America](#) . The largest adoption-focused organization in the U.S. with

thousands of state and private agencies as members.

“The interests of adopted adults in having information about their origins have come to be recognized as having critical psychological importance as well as importance in understanding their health and genetic status. Because such information is essential to adopted adults’ identity and health needs, the agency should promote policies that provide adopted adults with direct access to identifying information.”

CWLA Standards of Excellence for Adoption Services 87 (2000)

- [National Association of Social Workers](#). The National Association of Social Workers (NASW) is the largest membership organization of professional social workers in the world, with 140,000 members. NASW works to enhance the professional growth and development of its members, to create and maintain professional standards, and to advance sound social policies

“The need and right of adoptees to know their birth origin should be recognized and respected. This right extends to requests from adult adoptees for identifying information.”

NASW: Social Work Speaks: NASocialWPolicy Statements, 2000-2003 131 (5th ed. 2000)

- [North American Council on Adoptable Children \(NACAC\)](#). The largest adoptive parent organization in the U.S. Founded in 1974 and committed to meeting the needs of waiting children and families who adopt them.

“NACAC believes that every adopted person has the right at the age of majority, to receive personal information about his or her birth, foster, and adoption history, including medical information, and educational and social history. NACAC supports efforts of adoptees to have access to information about and connections with their birth and foster families.....Recognizing that many adult adoptees have a need for more complete information about their birth families, NACAC supports their right to

this information and supports access to original birth certificates to any adult adoptee at age of majority.”

[NACAC, Position Statements: Access To Records.](#)

- [American Adoption Congress \(AAC\).](#) The American Adoption Congress is comprised of individuals, families and organizations committed to adoption reform. We represent those whose lives are touched by adoption or other loss of family continuity. We promote honesty, openness and respect for family connections in adoption, foster care and assisted reproduction. We provide education for our members and professional communities about the lifelong process of adoption. We advocate legislation that will grant every individual access to information about his or her family and heritage.

“Enacting legislation in all states that guarantees access to identifying information for all adopted persons and their birth and adoptive families through records access and preservation of open adoption agreements.”

[AAC Mission Statement](#)

“Adoption: No Secrets. No Fear. is about normalizing the reunion and reconnection process. It is about access and adoptees’ right to know who they are. It is about the connection that birth parents feel with their children and their desire to know them as adults. It is about adoptive families and their support for openness at every stage of the adoption journey.”

[AAC: No Secrets. No Fear.](#)

- [Evan B. Donaldson Adoption Institute.](#) A non-profit education, policy and research organization. The Evan B. Donaldson Adoption Institute develops and implements a range of ethics-based policy and practice initiatives to address the critical issues facing the field of adoption.

“Every state should restore unrestricted access to original birth certificates for all adult adoptees, retroactively and prospectively. The experience of many other countries, of U.S. states where birth certificates have never been sealed from adopted persons, and from those states that have restored access, all indicate that there are few if any problems when access is granted. There is no significant legal, experiential or factual rationale for denying adopted adults the right to access their OBCs – a right that is enjoyed by all non-adopted Americans. Allowing access with the provision for contact preference forms is a practical solution that affords birthparents a greater opportunity to express their wishes – and therefore greater “protection” – than they currently have with sealed records.”

[For The Records: Restoring A Legal Right For Adult Adoptees](#)

- [National Adoption Center](#). Provides adoption opportunities particularly for children with special needs and children from minority cultures.

“The National Adoption Center believes that it is an inalienable right of all citizens, including adopted adults, to have unencumbered access to their original birth certificates. In keeping with this position, we believe that copies of both the original and the amended birth certificate should be given to the adoptive family at the time of finalization unless specifically denied by the birthparents. In any case, the National Adoption Center advocates that the adoptee, at age 18, be granted access to his/her original birth certificate.

The National Adoption Center also supports an adult adoptee’s unencumbered access to all medical and historical records.* These records should be given to adopting families prior to finalization.”

- [American Academy of Pediatrics](#). A professional association of pediatricians with more than 60,000 members, which has the largest pediatric publishing program in the world.

“The most helpful thing a human being can learn in life is to be conscious of himself as an individual, and to be aware of who and what he is. Determining identity is a difficult process for some brought up

by his natural parents; it is more complex for the individual whose ancestry is unknown to him (p. 948)...”(t)here is ample evidence that the adopted child retains his need for seeking his ancestry for a long time: (pp. 948-949)”.

American Academy of Pediatrics Commission on Adoption, (1971). [Identity development in adopted children](#), Pediatrics, 47 (5), 948-950.

- [Parents for Ethical Adoption Reform \(PEAR\)](#). PEAR is a 501(c)(3) Pennsylvania nonprofit corporation. PEAR started as a grassroots group of adoptive and prospective adoptive parents who came together to discuss the lack of a unified, respected voice for adoptive families.

“PEAR supports unrestricted access to birth records for all adults adopted as minors. We do not believe any citizen should be discriminated against by removing the right to obtain their personal, official documents. We oppose the imposition of contact vetoes, court orders or third-party agency interference with an adoptee’s right to access his or her original birth certificate.

Adoption should be about the formation of a family for the benefit and best interests of children, not the destruction of identity. As an organization we will support clean legislation submitted in any state that seeks to achieve the goal of opening records.”

- [Holt International Children’s Services](#). Holt International, a Christian organization founded over 50 years ago, continues to be a world leader in international adoption and child welfare programs that enable children to have families of their own.

“Holt International Children’s Services supports access by adoptees and birth parents to identifying information about each other.”

[Holt Open Adoption Position](#)

