# ANNUAL REPORT FISCAL YEAR 2023 May 1, 2022-April 30, 2023



National Council For Adoption | FY2023 Annual Report

#### Dear friend,

For many years, our mission here at National Council For Adoption has been to support all members of the adoption community. This past year, we took several major steps to more fully realize that mission, with new focuses on learning from the voices of adoptees and caring for birth parents.

This year has also shown us how truly interconnected the pillars of our work are, with high-quality research turning into high-impact educational content and strong connections with our member agencies supporting our policy advocacy goals. In this annual report, you'll find several case studies that illustrate how NCFA's various initiatives integrate with one other to build a more resilient, more compassionate adoption community that more effectively meets the needs of all its members.

All of this is only possible because of friends like you, and on behalf of all those we serve, I want to offer sincere gratitude. It's because of you that we are also now moving forward with an ambitious, impact-focused strategic plan, which you'll find near the end of this report.

Thank you for all that you do to make all this possible!



Sincerely, **Ryan Hanlon** President / CEO National Council For Adoption | FY2023 Annual Report

# NCFA By the Numbers Fiscal Year 2023

# 5,611

Total number of survey respondents represented in our research reports

**636** Total training conference attendees (in-person and virtual)

**10** New adoption education webinars developed and produced

**ZZ** Total number of adoption education webinars we offer

**2,266** Total webinar attendees this year **ZO** Media citations or inquiries from media

# 1,900 from 49 states

Individuals using our online advocacy center

5,350

Messages sent through our online advocacy center

**550** Policymakers reached through our online advocacy center

# Fighting for families in Washington

The last year that five-year-old Peterson and six-year-old Gina spent in Haiti was plagued by illness, hunger, and gang violence.

Legally, they had already been adopted by parents in the United States, Bryan and Julie, who were desperate to bring them home.

In practice, they were trapped, unable to get their passports so they could travel. That was when Bryan and Julie got in touch with National Council For Adoption. "There should not be this many roadblocks for connecting legally cleared orphans

"Speaking on behalf of my family and many others... thank you for your unwavering support. We are so incredibly lucky to have you in our corner." with families," Bryan wrote to us.

They were absolutely right, and this past winter, we took up their cause, bringing pressure to bear on policymakers in Washington to find a safe, legal way for Peterson and Gina—and another two dozen children in the same situation—to come home to their families.

When the children finally arrived in the United States in May, Bryan and Julie sent us a photo of their newly united family, and told us, "There is absolutely no chance this would have happened without your skills, resources and credibility for our cause."

For parents adopting from other countries, the wait to bring their children home is already long, and often agonizing. Bryan and Julie's story reflects how NCFA is able to make a difference for those families. That difference means that children have a chance to come home safely to their forever families, access health care and other essential services, bond with their families, and thrive.

Last year, NCFA staff uncovered a procedural delay that extended the wait time for India adoptions up to three additional months. Given that the



majority of children adopted internationally have at least one medical special need, that delay can mean more time in which a child suffers needlessly while waiting for specialist care.

Bringing together agencies and advocates with U.S. and Indian authorities, NCFA successfully advocated for the delay to be dropped, so that waiting families can bring their children home that much sooner.

The NCFA team's ability to fight for these families is because of two strategic advantages—*research and relationships*.

High-impact research projects like *Profiles in Adoption* give us significant credibility when working with policymakers, who want to see the data before they make a decision.

It's from *Profiles* Part 1, our survey of adopted parents, that we learned just how many intercountry adoptions currently involve a special need—data that made a real difference in arguing our position.

Some of our key findings from that project also became part of our response to the U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Service's (USCIS) proposed regulatory changes to adoption and of a briefing packet on adoption issues. that we delivered to each of the 80 freshman members of the U.S. Congress.

NCFA also gathers information about challenges and crises among the adoption community by keeping open lines of communication with our member agencies through listservs and caucus meetings, and via our cutting-edge online advocacy tool. We communicate that information through dozens of meetings each year with Members of Congress, their policy staff, and administrators throughout the Executive Branch. We also served as an Observer at the five-day meeting of the Special Commission of the Hague Convention on Intercountry Adoption.

In all our advocacy work, we bear in mind something that Bryan and Julie told us after bringing their children home. "Our one concern is that we are one of only a few families whose Haitian passport situation was resolved. We don't want to let the State Department off the hook after five of the twenty-eight kids have come home."

Thanks to the support of the friends and partners who make all our work possible, NCFA is determined both to ensure that all these children have the chance to come home, and to be there to support any adoptive family facing unnecessary delays or roadblocks.



NCFA opposes the proposed fee increases, noting that USCIS is seeking to increase fees at a time of decreased service provision, significantly increased processing/adjudication timeframes for applicants, and poor engagement with the adoption community. With significantly fewer cases to process, USCIS should not require more funding. If/when fees are increased, it should be commensurate with service provision, which has unfortunately been inadequate for many years."

From NCFA's written response to proposed USCIS regulations

# Understanding and caring for birth parents

doption Expe

Private domestic adoption in the United States has changed considerably from the 1970s to today. For a long time, birth parents had little or no say in most aspects of the adoption process, from choosing the adoptive family to maintaining connection with their child or the adoptive family after adoption.

Today, they are usually the ones making most of those decisions, a shift widely regarded as positive and beneficial. There has been, however, only a scant amount of birth parent-focused research. In order to fill that gap and improve services and support for birth parents, last year NCFA launched the second phase of our *Profiles in Adoption* research initiative.

The goal of this research was to understand this population better—who they are, what their pre-and post-adoption experiences have been like, and what factors led toward satisfaction or dissatisfaction with their adoption decisions, and more.

We heard from over 1400 birth parents, and the results outlined in the report answer key questions such as: Why do birth parents choose to place their child for adoption? What factors contribute the most to long-term satisfaction with an adoption decision? What is most helpful to an expectant or birth parent considering adoption?

Among other findings, the research confirmed

what we strongly suspected: that the two things make the biggest difference in a woman's overall satisfaction about choosing to place for adoption are non-coercive, non-directive pregnancy counseling, and accurate, comprehensive information about adoption.

Research and data then became concrete action with the development and launch of *Exploring Adoption*, which combines recent research, best practices, and personal stories to educate and equip those serving today's expectant and birth parent population. Each module of this self-paced, self-directed course includes slides, video clips, printable resources, and interactive elements like activities, exercises, and comprehension quizzes.

The course content incorporates both findings from NCFA's survey and focus groups and the personal stories and experiences of four birth mothers and one birth father who volunteered their time to make this training possible. We launched the training during a panel of birth parents at the 2023 National Adoption Conference, which served to validate the need for better support for these important members of the adoption community. Supporting everyone involved in an adoption is a fundamental piece of our mission, and through this combination of research and action, this year we took an important step forward in that mission.

Profiles in Adoption BIRTH PARENT EXPERIENCES

Read and download the full report! adoptioncouncil.org/profiles

# **Course Outline: Exploring Adoption 101**

# Module One: History of Domestic Infant Adoption

Participants learn how adoption has evolved over time and what has influenced the debate about current practices – the research, data, and information on which this course is based.

### Module Two: Stigmas and Bias Surrounding Adoption

We discuss common misconceptions about adoption and provide participants with the knowledge and resources to overcome those barriers, and explain the importance of accurate adoption language.

# Module Three: Changes and Modern Practices in Domestic Infant Adoption

This phase of the course covers topics like choosing adoptive parents, varying levels of openness, issues of grief and loss, and the need for post-placement counseling.

# Module Four: Understanding the Adoption Process

This module provides specific, accurate information about the technical and legal process of adoption, including basic legal requirements for relinquishment and finalization in adoption as well as the legal rights of birth parents.



# Module Five: Adoption Information and Resources

This final module offers state-specific tools and resources that facilitate information gathering by those counseling expectant parents and expectant parents to help identify and connect with trusted, ethical adoption service providers.

### Take the free online class, Exploring Adoption 101 adoptioncouncil.org/ exploringadoption



Janelle Ison rejoined the NCFA team in 2022 to lead the development of the Exploring Adoption Training, having previously worked for NCFA from 2007-2016. Since then, her role has expanded to oversee all of NCFA's education offerings. Janelle has been personally and professionally involved in local and national child and family advocacy efforts for over 25 years. As an adopted individual and birth mother, she openly shares her unique adoption story with others and maintains strong connections with her birth mom and birth son. Janelle earned a B.A. in Liberal Arts and a Master of Business Administration with a concentration in Program Management. Her nonprofit leadership and management experience includes administration, operations, finance and strategic planning.



# Equipping and strengthening front-line service providers

Frontline adoption professionals and child welfare workers have struggled mightily over the past few years.

A dramatic increase in mental health diagnoses and accompanying shortage of available services has left many service providers feeling underwater.

Compassion fatigue and employee burnout are running rampant in this sector.

A challenging regulatory environment, coupled with ongoing economic uncertainty, have also made high-impact child welfare work much more difficult.

Many adoption agencies have consolidated or closed, further winnowing the pool of options.

While ensuring the wellbeing of adopted children remains NCFA's primary goal, addressing the needs of child welfare workers is a critical element of that goal, helping member agencies address their most pressing challenges and stay ahead of future changes.

The National Adoption Conference, held annually in rotating cities throughout the country, is the linchpin of our efforts to support adoption professionals and strengthen their service provision for families and children. In fiscal year 2023, we brought the conference to Indianapolis, Indiana and welcomed more than 300 attendees.

The conference included a leadership track for those navigating the management of an adoption agency through challenging times, and a clinical track for those most directly involved in delivering services. Highlights included a focus on moving more children in foster care to permanency; unique mental health and medical needs in adoption; and ethical and legal questions for adoption professionals. The conference annually serves as an opportunity for attendees to obtain continuing education credits that they need to maintain their licensure, while also providing an opportunity to connect with one another and be re-inspired in their vital work.

During our 2023 fiscal year, we added a virtual one-day conference to our schedule, in order to support front-line adoption professionals who can't necessarily travel for conferences or want additional training. Adoption in the 21st Century: Ethical Practices for a Changing World took place in November to kick off National Adoption Month. We were excited to have 346 attendees take part in workshops that covered special medical needs, prenatal exposure, genetic testing, and other pressing current issues.

The NCFA team also rolled out more than a dozen new webinars for professionals last fiscal year. Some covered special needs in adoption or unique family structures. Others addressed very difficult topics for which limited training content is available, like adoptions which are disrupted or dissolved. Still others sought to help nonprofit adoption agencies to strengthen their operational and financial capabilities to help them remain open and serving families over the long term.

Finally, throughout the year we worked to help agencies learn from our research projects, holding frequent consultations to outline what we learned and how they can apply it to their own work.

# New Adoption Education Webinars

An Adoption Grandfamilies **Professional's Through Adoption** Guide to School-**Based Support** Adoption 101 for People Experiencing Autism and Infertility Adoption Processing Supporting Infertility and **Adoptive Parents** Child Loss With Histories of Loss Adoption Finance 101 for People Disruption and Experiencing Dissolution Infertility Post-Adoption An Employer's **Preservation and** Guide to

Workplace

**Adoption Benefits** 

# Partners in Family Formation

Last year's Profiles in Adoption Part One, our survey of adoptive parents, showed us that **nearly 40 percent of parents adopting domestically are motivated to adopt by struggles with infertility.** Through a new partnership with ARC Fertility, the nation's largest network of fertility clinics, NCFA was able to launch a new initiative to provide more intentional support for families for whom medical intervention has not been successful.

Thanks to ARC, NCFA developed an online resource hub with comprehensive guidance, sensitively and compassionately delivered and tailored to the needs of those who have already walked a difficult road towards starting or growing a family. Visit *adoptioncouncil.org/infertility* to view all these resources, with more to come.





Support: A Panel

Discussion

As Director of Research and NCFA's Morgridge Research Scholar, Nicole Davi leads efforts to gather new information on under-researched adoption issues and generate accurate, reliable, and up-to-data that drives our work. Before taking on this role, Nicole served as NCFA's Adoption Education Manager, leading webinar development, publications, and conference content. She has previous experience in foster care case management, research, and as a volunteer Guardian ad Litem. Nicole earned her bachelor's degree in Family, Youth, and Community Sciences, with a minor in Nonprofit Management and a concentration in Family Policy and Law from the University of Florida.

# **Media Highlights**

# **NEWSWEEK**

It's Time for Congress to Overhaul Intercountry Adoption | Opinion

MARY L. LANDRIEU AND RYAN HANLON, FORMER U.S. SENATOR FROM LOUISIANA; PRESIDENT AND CEO OF NATIONAL COUNCIL FOR ADOPTION ON 4/25/23 AT 8:00 AM EDT



U.S. CONGRESS JOE BIDEN INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS

wenty-three years ago, former President Bill Clinton signed the Intercountry Adoption Act of 2000, following the Senate's ratification of the international treaty on adoption, the Hague Convention on Adoption. After this bill was signed into law, regulations were promulgated, adoption agencies were accredited, and the U.S. Department of State began their role as the designated "central authority" partnering with the Department of Justice's Immigration and Naturalization Services (now transitioned to U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services) as required

# **C-SPAN**

AP

#### APRIL 24, 2023

Washington Journal Ryan Hanlon on the Adoption Process in the U.S.

Ryan Hanlon, president and CEO of the National Council for Adoption, talked about the adoption process in the U.S. and ways



# **MIAMI HERALD**

#### U.S. adoption providers ask Blinken to intervene on behalf of adopted children in Haiti

BY JACQUELINE CHARLES UPDATED FEBRUARY 16, 2023 3:22 PM PORT-AU-PRINCE

Adoption service providers, including the National Council for Adoption, are calling on Secretary of State Antony Blinken to help legally adopted children in Haiti join their new parents in the United States.

The providers sent Blinken a letter requesting that the State Department exercise its legal authority to provide passport waivers for children with legal and completed



Passport rush blamed on US policy

stalls adoptions in Haiti

# Y! NEWS

#### Area couples wait longer to adopt from pandemic-curtailed pool of newborns is, so you had remer preside

Jeff Himler, Tribune-Review, Greensburg, Pa.

dated January 23, 2023 · 8 min rea Jan. 23-The stars were aligned when Rob baby boy, Sal, to their family last February.

stepparent adoptions nationwide declined 24% from 2019 to 2020 while adoptions from foster care declined by 13%

After a little more than a year of preparati

their home just weeks later, they joined a group of new adoptive parents that had grown smaller in numbers during the covid-19 pandemic.

Ryan Hanlon, president and CEO of the U.S. National Council for Adoption who is not related to Bryan Hanlon, said in a phone interview that the State Department's manual calls on officials to prioritize adoption cases.

"Can we even say we prioritize adoption when we have legal options that we choose not to utilize?" he said. "It's the safety of the children that's the concern here."

Given the ongoing crush at Haiti's main immigration office\_government officials

# became eligible to adopt a child on Jan. 19,

A study released last year by the National Council For Adoption and the Catholic University of America found that private domestic, non-

# THE SACRAMENTO BEE

### Facilitator or agency? What to look for before signing an adoption contract in California

BY JASON POHL JANUARY 05, 2023 6:30

The bottom line? Be wary of unlicensed and independent operators, said Kristen Hamilton, communications director for the National Council For Adoption.

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# **ABC NEWS**

# 6 months since Roe ruling, how the adoption landscape has changed

Adoption agency providers in Texas tell "GMA" what the landscape looks like now. By Katie Kindelan GMA December 5, 2022, 4:00 AM

nampsime.

That same year, there were an estimated 19,685 non-stepparent, private domestic adoptions in the U.S., according to the National Council for Adoption, an adoption advocacy organization.

"Adoption is almost always a constraint. It's what happens when

# WASHINGTON EXAMINER

What the Biden administration should do to support adoption in 2023

By Ryan Hanlon | January 07, 2023 06:00 AM

# THE PHILADELPHIA INQUIRER

### Law is in best interests of children

Notably absent in the op-ed "A federal lay for 25 years. Let's get rid of it," is a consid children. The author mischaracterizes th Act as though this law - and not families is the reason for family separations. Only experience abuse and neglect enter the c in their families and receive support service welfare system, nearly half are reunified with their primary caregiver. ASFA was passed as a bipartisan in which children were spending many years in f about the best interests of children, we ca unlimited periods of time in foster car to repeal this law, we should be calling requirements.



Rvan Hanlon, president, National Council For Adoption, Alexandria, Va.

# HARVARD BUSINESS REVIEW

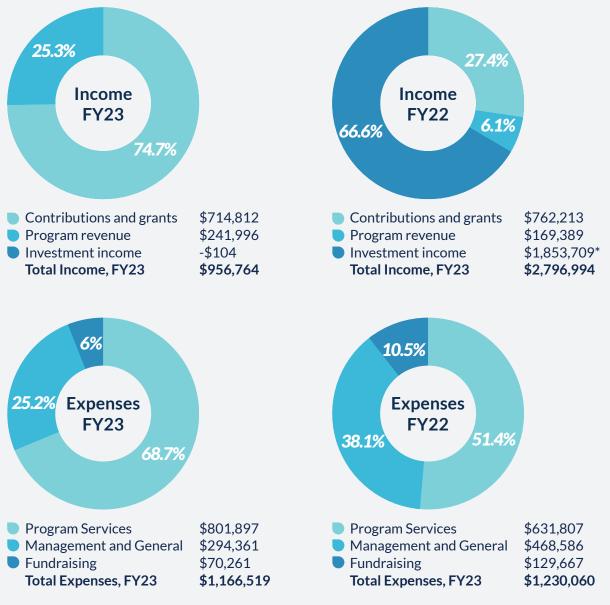
# **5 Ways Leaders Can** Support Adoptive Parents

by Kaylee J. Hackney, Matthew J. Quade, Dawn S. Carlson, and Ryan P. Hanlon

March 03, 2023

Approximately 100,000 children are adopted by parents in the United States each year. While there are less-expensive options for adopting a child, namely adoption through foster care, some adoptions can cost up to \$58,000. In addition to the financial burden, people opting to build their families through adoption are faced with the unique challenges that come with the adoption process, such as making life-changing

# **FINANCIALS**



\*Represents proceeds from the sale of NCFA's long-time headquarters building, which were invested for growth following our debt-free move into a more suitable space for a 21st-century workforce.



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### The following individuals are members of the Lou Stern Legacy Society

Jane and Greg Castanias Christiane Waldkirch Crupe George P. McDonnell\* Evelyn Spielmann\* Dr. Wayne W. Sharp and Mrs. Linda Whitbeck Sharp Mike and Maggie Thorne

### Memorial gifts were kindly made to NCFA FY23 to honor the lives and legacies of these individuals:

Warren Babineaux, Jr. Jane Bartholomew Jim Brunjes Randall Clark Peggy Faulkner Edward Lee Morgan Allan Neustadt Jennifer Palazzolo

Jacquelyn Vickers David White

# The following individuals are helping secure the future of adoption as Charter Contributors to the Families For All Development Fund:

Dr. and Mrs. Wayne Sharp Leigh and Robert Bowman Heidi Bruegel Cox Ryan and Laurel Hanlon Dr. Dana Johnson Randall and Megan Judt

Lola Reinsch William Rosen III Lisa Sinclair Catherine Sharp Stephen and Peggy Sharp Steven Sunday Pamela Stevenson Michael and Susan Theiler Mike and Maggie Thorne Gary and Mary Beth Walker

\*Deceased

# Ways to Give

NEW! NCFA is now set up to accept secure one-time, monthly, or quarterly, online donations through ACH (direct withdrawal from your bank account), PayPal, Apple Pay, Google Pay, and Venmo. See all your options AdoptionCouncil.org/donate

# Contribute stock or other securities

Your broker may electronically deliver the gift of shares directly to our account at UBS using the following information: DTC #0221 to National Council For Adoption's account, #TS34816-DK, UBS Financial Services, 200 Park Avenue, 30th Floor, New York, New York 10166.

# Make a gift through your workplace

Many employers will match employees' charitable gifts, multiplying the impact of your support! Search Charity Navigator's free database (scan the QR code at right) or check with your human resources office to see if these options are offered.



National Council For Adoption is registered for workplace giving via United Way, Independent Charities of America (ICA), and the Combined Federal Campaign (ID # 12128).

# Secure the future of adoption

In early 2021, NCFA announced the culmination of a longtime organizational goal to create an investment fund that will help sustain our work until the day that it is no longer needed - until every child, everywhere has a permanent, loving family. Pledges and gifts are now being taken for the Families For All Development Fund, established by Dr. Wayne W. Sharp and Mrs. Linda Whitbeck Sharp. All gifts or pledges made through April 30, 2025 qualify you to be honored as a Charter Contributor—get in touch with us to discuss your options.

# Host an online fundraiser

Friends of adoption like you are the best advocates for our work, especially within your own circles of influence. It's easy to set up your own fundraiser for NCFA via your personal Facebook page or your Instagram stories. Celebrate a birthday, an adoption day, or an awareness campaign like National Adoption Month or National Foster Care Month with a social media fundraiser.

# Leave a legacy for adoption

The Lou Stern Legacy Society recognizes donors who have chosen to support us through their estate plans. The society honors the life's work of our longtime friend and champion Lou Stern, a charter board member, founder, and supporter and advocate of NCFA. A legacy gift to NCFA through the Lou Stern Society offers tax planning advantages while ensuring that your gift is invested in accordance with your wishes and recognized during your lifetime. Options for leaving a legacy gift to NCFA include a simple bequest that remembers NCFA in your will, or an insurance policy, IRA, or other financial instrument that designates NCFA as a primary or contingent beneficiary. If you have already included NCFA in your estate plans, please contact us today so that we can properly recognize this special relationship and enroll you in the Society. If you are still considering your legacy, our staff will work with you to review your options and identify how you can have the greatest impact.

# Do you have questions about any of these options?

Are you interested in making the greatest impact possible for children and families?

Contact Megan Judt, Director of Development, at (703) 299-6633 or *mjudt@adoptioncouncil.org*.

# 2023-25 Strategic Plan

# Goal #1

Champion policy-making solutions for private domestic adoption, foster care adoption, and intercountry adoption.

### **Objective 1:**

Advance policy options for lawmakers to strengthen ethical private domestic adoption practices.

### **Objective 2:**

Advance policy options for more US families to pursue adoption from foster care.

### **Objective 3:**

Advance policy options for more US families to pursue intercountry adoption.

# Goal #2

#### Expand current and develop new partnerships both within and outside the child welfare community.

### **Objective 1:**

Develop, market, and promote partnership programs to reach more individuals impacted by adoption.

### **Objective 2:**

Assess and pursue opportunities related to professional training, to potentially include microcredentialing, certifications, agency employee onboarding, college, and university social work and other human services programs.

### **Objective 3:**

Evaluate and revise the membership model to maximize value to both members and NCFA.

# Goal #3

Expand NCFA's cultural influence through strategic research, dissemination of research findings, and mobilizing partnerships and coalitions.

### **Objective 1:**

Pursue strategic research initiatives to fill current research and data gaps in the adoption landscape.

### **Objective 2:**

Develop and implement an ongoing public relations strategy to educate public, media, and policymakers on findings of NCFA's research.

### **Objective 3:**

Organize and utilize a coalition of adoption leaders focused on determining future research priorities.

# FAMILY FORMATION PARTNERS

Surveys show that nearly 40% of American adults have considered adopting at some point in their lives. Most never take the next step. Meanwhile, research from the Baylor University School of Business demonstrates that support from one's employer in family-building have a strong positive connection to an employee's job satisfaction, long-term loyalty, and overall wellbeing. NCFA's goal is to bridge these two trends by offering employer-based educational resources with low barriers to entry, to help more hopeful parents understand their adoption options and pursue their family-building dreams. Visit *adoptioncouncil.org/ffp* to learn more about our Family Formation Partners.

# **Board of Directors**

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Amy Wolfe, Director of Operations

Alison Richards, Office & Programs Assistant

Passionately committed to the belief that every child deserves to thrive in a nurturing, permanent family, National Council For Adoption's mission is to meet the diverse needs of children, birth parents, adopted individuals, adoptive families, and all those touched by adoption through global advocacy, education, research, legislative action, and collaboration. *Our vision is a world in which all children everywhere have nurturing, permanent families.* 

National Council For Adoption

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