

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

For further information contact:
Deanna Carlson Stacy, CCAI, 703-288-9700
Gina Russo, CCAI, 202-421-3578 cell

National News Coverage Highlights Foster Care, Adoption Issues, Underscores Need for Reform

Congressional Coalition on Adoption Institute Emphasizes Importance of Increasing Awareness of Needs of Nation's Foster Youth

WASHINGTON, D.C. – Today, there are more than 500,000 children in foster care in the United States. These children will remain in foster care for an average of three years and, while in care, will experience at least three placements. One in five children will languish in foster care for more than five years. And, each year, more than 19,000 children will age out of foster care without having found a safe, loving, permanent family.

Starting yesterday, ABC News and programs including Primetime, 20/20, Good Morning America and Nightline are examining the state of our nation's foster care system in a series of segments scheduled to air over the next several days. Additionally, ABC and Time magazine jointly conducted a national survey, released earlier this week, which found that nearly half of respondents -- 47% -- feel that their current state child welfare system is not doing enough to identify children at risk of abuse or neglect, and that a majority support broad reform of foster care.

“This news coverage of foster care and adoption issues and the results of the ABC/Time survey illustrate that there is a continuing need for increased awareness of the state of our nation's foster care system and the vulnerable children in its care,” stated Deanna Carlson Stacy, executive director of the nonprofit, nonpartisan Congressional Coalition on Adoption Institute (CCAI). “We must all work together – policymakers, members of the press, advocates, child welfare practitioners, and members of the general public – to ensure that we can meet the needs of children in foster care.”

CCAI is dedicated to raising awareness about foster youth and orphans, and the issues that they confront, in the United States and around the world. Created in 2001 as a privately-funded nonprofit that serves Congress' bicameral, bipartisan adoption caucus, CCAI's Congressional Directors are Senator Larry Craig (R-ID), Senator Mary Landrieu (D-LA), Representative Jim Oberstar (D-MN) and Representative Ginny Brown-Waite (R-FL). All are adoptive parents. The caucus, the Congressional Coalition on Adoption, was created in 1985 and has 196 Congressional members from all fifty states and from both the House and the Senate.

“There are many things that governments do well, but raising children is not one of them. That is why CCAI is so important. By working to improve adoption policies and practices, raise public awareness of foster care and adoption issues, and recognize and celebrate the achievements of those within the foster care system, CCAI helps make a real difference in the lives of our most vulnerable children,” said Senator Landrieu, co-chair of CCAI and a champion for foster care reform.

Annually, these efforts include:

The Congressional Foster Youth Program – This program provides talented college students, who have spent their formative years in foster care, an opportunity to spend a summer on Capitol

Hill as a Congressional intern. In the five years since this program's inception, thirty seven former foster youth have interned in the offices of twenty four members of Congress. Today, the fifth annual class of CCAI interns will arrive in Washington, D.C., where they will intern for members of Congress including Representative Curt Weldon (R-PA), Senator John Kerry (D-MA), Representative Jim Saxton (R-NJ) and Representative Adam Schiff (D-CA).

***Angels in Adoption*TM Program and Gala** – CCAI and members of Congress partner each year to recognize and honor the work of individuals across the nation who have worked to enrich the lives of foster children and orphans. Previous recipients have included actors, athletes, foster and adoptive parents, doctors, judges, governors, and advocates. Last year, more than 190 members of Congress participated in identifying “Angels” – making this the year's single most significant Congressional event pertaining to child welfare in the U.S.

“Telling the stories shared by thousands of foster children nationwide is an admirable way to help educate the public about the need for adoption and foster parents,” said Rep. Brown-Waite. “As the mother of an adopted daughter and a Co-Chair of the Congressional Coalition on Adoption Institute, I know firsthand the need for more loving parents to adopt children across the country. ABC is to be commended for their efforts to educate and inform the millions of Americans that watch their programs. Hopefully more children will be placed in caring and nurturing homes because of these television specials.”

ABOUT THE CONGRESSIONAL COALITION ON ADOPTION INSTITUTE: The Congressional Coalition on Adoption Institute is a nonprofit, nonpartisan organization dedicated to raising awareness about the tens of thousands of orphans and foster children in this country, and the millions of orphans around the world in need of permanent, safe, and loving homes; and to eliminating the barriers that hinder these children from realizing their basic right of a family. For more information, please visit www.ccaainstitute.org

####