

EVAN B.

POLICY • EDUCATION • PROGRESS

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ADOPTION INSTITUTE

Since its establishment in 1996, the Evan B. Donaldson Adoption Institute has been a pre-eminent, independent voice for improving adoption for everyone it touches – particularly children – through innovative programs, educational initiatives, research and analysis, and advocacy for better practices, policies and laws.

Unintended Consequences:

'Safe Haven' Laws are Causing Problems, Not Solving Them

MEDIA ADVISORY

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EXPERTS TO EXAMINE INFANT ABANDONMENT, ON FRIDAY, MARCH 14, 2003

Unintended Consequences:

New Study Raises Serious Concerns About Legalized Infant Abandonment

(New York: March 11, 2003) – Following up on its controversial report on unsafe infant abandonment, the Evan B. Donaldson Adoption Institute will host a roundtable discussion on the subject from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. on Friday, March 14, 2003. A group of the nation's leading experts on adoption, abandonment and child welfare will debate the issues at the event, which will take place at the Institute's office at 120 Wall St., 20th Floor.

Journalists are invited to cover the discussion, which will focus on the reasons for infant abandonment, the problems with so-called "safe haven" laws, and possible alternative solutions. The debate promises to be lively, given the divergent views of the participants (including a woman who abandoned her child and an adult adoptee who was abandoned as a baby). Space is limited, so seating will be on a first-come, first-served basis. If possible, please email rdulac-mckinney@adoptioninstitute.org or call 212-269-5080 x10 to let us know if you plan to attend, but prior notification is not mandatory.

The Adoption Institute report on infant abandonment, released this week, raises troubling questions about the effectiveness and effects of "safe haven" laws. The study – based on the most extensive research to date – finds the laws not only do not solve the problem, but also are having serious unintended consequences – such as encouraging women to conceal pregnancies, then abandon infants who otherwise would have been placed for adoption through established legal procedures or been raised by relatives. For a copy of the report, please contact the Institute or view the text on our website, www.adoptioninstitute.org.

Participants attending the Friday discussion include: **Tom Atwood**, President, National Council for Adoption; **Howard Davidson**, Director, American Bar Association Center for Children and the Law; **Twyana Davis**, co-founder, 2nd Chance of Life; **Sharon Edinger**, who was abandoned as an infant; **Marley Greiner**, Executive Chair for the adoptee-rights organization Bastard Nation; **Joan Hollinger**, University of California law professor and adoption law expert; **Charlotte Moore, MD**, Children's Hospital, Harvard University; **Margaret Spinelli**, New York State Psychiatric Institute, Columbia; **Ada White**, Adoption Program Director, Child Welfare League of America; and **Mary Zoller**, Virginia Department of Health, an infant abandonment expert.

Additional participants will be phoning in to join the discussion. They include: **Stephen Caldwell**, who was abandoned as a baby; **Cynthia Dailard**, Senior Public Policy Associate, Alan Guttmacher Institute; Sen. **Nancy Lorraine Hoffmann** (R-NY-49th), who sponsored New York State's safe haven law; **Michelle Oberman**, DePaul University College of Law and neonaticide expert; and **Nina Williams-Mbengue**, Policy Specialist, National Conference of State Legislatures.

For more information, background on the issue or an interview, please contact the Institute's Executive Director, **Adam Pertman**, at apertman@adoptioninstitute.org or 617-332-8944, or the Institute's Deputy Director, **Georgia Deoudes**, at gdeoudes@adoptioninstitute.org or 212-269-5080 x13.

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