

**The Donaldson Adoption Institute  
The Lynn Franklin Fund  
Options Counseling Project  
Request for Proposals**

**Posted Date: April 13, 2015**

**Current Closing Date for Applications: June 1, 2015**

**Estimated Total Program Funding:**

**Award: \$75,000.00**

**The Donaldson Adoption Institute:**

- The Donaldson Adoption Institute's (DAI) mission is to better the lives of everyone touched by adoption by providing leadership that improves laws, policies and practices – and promotes high ethical standards – through sound research, education and advocacy. The Lynn Franklin Fund enables DAI to further its mission with a focus on positively impacting the lives of existing and future first/birth parents, as well as expectant parents who are considering their options.

**The Options Counseling Project**

**Aim:**

- Best practices in adoption require that pregnant women considering whether to parent their children should receive informed, non-directive counseling regarding the full range of options open to them. Too often, however, all options are not offered – or are presented in ways intended to steer, pressure or coerce women (and men when they are involved) into placing their infants for adoption. The Option Counseling Project aims to utilize the information acquired from the research to establish best practice standards, to disseminate them widely and to advocate for their broad implementation.

**Objectives**

- The project's objectives are to address two major audiences, mothers and fathers who have placed a child within the past 18 years, and adoption professionals. DAI's report on options counseling will provide context, information, analysis and recommendations regarding best practices to maximize informed decision-making for expectant mothers and fathers. This project represents a strategic first step and holds the promise of drawing an important baseline and offering a substantial contribution to the community. It will also serve to substantively inform future work in this area.

- We seek to answer the following:
  - To women and men who have placed a child or children for adoption. We would like to see both a quantitative and qualitative piece.
    - Do they believe they made a well-informed decision? Have their perceptions of this changed over time?
    - Do they feel they were given the information and opportunity to explore all of their options?
    - What written materials did they receive?
    - Did they trust the counselor they were working with? Were they told the counselor's credentials and the mode of treatment being used?
    - When did you first consider the idea of placing your child for adoption?
    - Where and by whom was the option of adoption presented to you??
  - To Adoption Professionals.
    - What are the credentials of the counselors they engage to work with expectant mothers and fathers?
    - What types of evidenced-based treatment modalities do those counselors use with expectant mothers and fathers considering adoption?
    - What types of written materials do they provide?
    - What protocols do they have in place to insure informed consent?

**Eligibility:**

Donaldson Adoption Institute seeks university affiliated candidates, Ph.D. or equivalent experience preferred, who have a minimum of ten years of experience in research and evaluation. Candidates can hold advanced degrees in any of the following areas: Psychology, Public Policy, Mental Health, Women's Studies, Social Psychology, Social Work or related fields.

Competitive candidates should also have:

- Expertise in the evaluation of human service systems reform and related activities, particularly in the field of adoption is preferred.
- Leadership in the field of study including publications or scientific journals and presentations at national research and evaluation conferences.
- Familiarity and practice of ethical practice standards in counseling and social work practice either through the NASW code of Ethics (create hyperlink) or the ACA Code of Ethics.
- Understand and embrace the spirit of our small, non-profit organization and demonstrate a willingness to promote their research both in their network and on behalf of DAI via media and presentation opportunities.

- Professional oral and written communication skills, particularly expertise in communicating research findings, data and issues to non-research audiences.
- Strong qualitative research skills and experience with mixed methods.
- Knowledge and expertise in relevant areas such as women and family studies, adoption, crisis intervention, interpersonal practice and child welfare preferred.
- Organizational, analytical and planning skills.

DIA is approaching this project as a collaborative effort. In the spirit of collaboration they offer the service of our project lead, Brenda Romanchik, as well as our outreach and networking capabilities. It also requires the lead researcher to provide project updates to the board on a regular basis.

**To Apply:**

**Please submit a proposal, including the following:**

- Background – Please include your understanding of the objectives, demonstration of knowledge in the field and why there is a need for this research
- Methodology
- Evaluation/Data Analysis
- Biographical Information
- Projected Timeline
- Contact Information

To apply, please send all materials to [wboltz@adoptioninstitute.org](mailto:wboltz@adoptioninstitute.org). Please reference Options Counseling in the subject line.