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GROUNDBREAKING REPORT EXAMINES INTERNET'S HISTORIC IMPACT ON ADOPTION

NEW YORK, Dec. 13, 2012 – The first-ever examination of the Internet's impact on adoption, released today, concludes that social media and other elements of this modern technology are having “transformative” effects – positive and negative – on adoption policy, practice and millions of people's lives, while raising serious legal, ethical and procedural concerns that have yet to be addressed.

[“Untangling the Web: The Internet's Transformative Impact on Adoption”](#) is the initial publication of a multiyear research project on the subject by the Donaldson Adoption Institute. Its key findings include:

- There is a growing “commodification” of adoption on the web, replete with dubious practices, and a shift away from the perspective that its primary purpose is to find families for children
- Finding birth relatives is becoming increasingly easy and commonplace, with significant institutional and personal implications, including the likely end of the era of “closed” adoption.
- A growing number of young adoptees are forming relationships with birth relatives, sometimes without their adoptive parents' knowledge and usually without guidance or preparation.
- A rising number of websites offer useful, positive resources and expedite the adoption of children and youth who need families, notably including those with special needs.

“We hope this report will serve as a wake-up call that something historic is happening that demands the attention of legislators, practitioners, law-enforcement officials and the affected parties themselves,” said Adam Pertman, Executive Director of the Adoption Institute. “In the longer term, our intent is to help shape policies and practices that respond to the shifting landscape in ways that protect vulnerable children and parents, while taking full advantage of the benefits that this new technology can bring.”

Among the recommendations in the Institute's 70-page report are:

- Professionals who deal with expectant and pre-adoptive parents should get training reflecting the certainty that many, if not most of their clients, will be able to find each other at some point, and should educate them about the benefits of openness and the realities of such relationships.
- Practitioners should get additional training and resources to enable them to better assist the growing number of adopted individuals and others who seek help with search and reunion.
- Policy and law-enforcement officials should routinely review online adoption-related sites/activity for fraud, exploitation or other illegal/unethical practices, and should take action as warranted.
- Laws that impede the parties to adoption from gaining significant information, including “closed records” statutes, should be repealed since the Internet obviates their main contemporary rationale (i.e., preventing the affected parties from learning about and finding each other).

[For additional information about “Untangling the Web”](#) or to schedule an interview, contact Pertman at 617-763-0134 or apertman@adoptioninstitute.org. The Adoption Institute is the leading research, policy and education organization in its field. Its mission is to provide leadership that improves laws, policies and practices – through sound research, education and advocacy – in order to better the lives of everyone touched by adoption. To learn more about the Institute, go to www.adoptioninstitute.org.