



## Press Kit

### **About the Congressional Coalition on Adoption Institute**

The Congressional Coalition on Adoption Institute (CCAI) is a non-profit organization that works to raise awareness about the needs of children without families and to remove policy barriers that hinder children from knowing the love and support a family provides. CCAI is unique in that each of our programs brings together policymakers and individuals with direct foster care or adoption experience. We have found that when policymakers hear direct experiences of those affected by orphan and child welfare policy, they become engaged in this issue and work to bring about legislative improvements in an effort to ensure each child has their right to a family realized.

CCAI was founded in 2001 by advocates of the world's orphaned and foster youth. In founding CCAI, these advocates sought to match the commitment of members of Congress' Adoption Caucus, the Congressional Coalition on Adoption, with the information and resources needed to make the dream of a family a reality for every child.

### **Angels in Adoption—October 9, 2013**

The *Angels in Adoption*<sup>™</sup> program is CCAI's signature public awareness program, which provides an opportunity for all Members of Congress to honor the good work of their constituents who have enriched the lives of foster children and orphans. To date over 1,700 *Angels in Adoption*<sup>™</sup> have been honored for their outstanding contributions toward the welfare of children in the U.S. and around the globe.

### **Foster Youth Internship Program—May 29-July 30, 2013**

The Foster Youth Internship (FYI) Program offers 16 talented young people who spent their formative years in foster care with an opportunity to work in a Congressional office for a summer. The interns gain valuable work experience while advocating for the needs of over 400,000 foster youth in the U.S. Over 100 interns have had their lives forever impacted by participating in this program

### **Congressional Resource Program**

Through its Congressional Resource Program, CCAI is an educational resource for information critical to adoption and foster care policy. Forums and reports provide ideal opportunities for individuals who have direct experience with adoption and foster care to communicate with policymakers about the barriers that hinder children from realizing their basic right to a family.

### **20/20 Vision Program**

The CCAI 20/20 Vision Program is a public-private partnership which exists to increase positive dialogue and information exchange among private sector individuals, foreign and domestic government officials, and Members of Congress. Over the last ten years, this program has been instrumental in laying strong foundations between U.S. and foreign policymakers, and has also provided continued opportunities for the world community to share its knowledge and experience in providing safe and loving homes for children.

### **National Adoption Day—November 23, 2013**

National Adoption Day is a collective national effort to raise awareness of the over 114,000 children in foster care waiting to find permanent homes and loving families. For the last eleven years, National Adoption Day has made the dreams of over 35,000 children come true by working with courts, judges, attorneys, adoption professionals, child welfare agencies and advocates to finalize adoptions and find permanent, loving homes for children in foster care.

## **Key Staff**

### **Kathleen Strottman, Executive Director**

Kathleen Strottman comes to her role as the Executive Director of the Congressional Coalition on Adoption Institute (CCAI) after serving for nearly eight years as a trusted advisor to Senator Mary L. Landrieu (D-LA). As the Senator's Legislative Director, Kathleen worked to pass legislation such as the No Child Left Behind Act, The Medicare Modernization Act, The Inter-Country Adoption Act, The Child Citizenship Act of 2000, The Adoption Tax Credit and the Family Court Act. Together with the Senator, Kathleen worked to increase the opportunity for positive dialogue and the exchange of best practices between the United States and sending countries such as China, Romania, Russia, Guatemala, Honduras, El Salvador and India. Kathleen received her bachelor's degree in political science from the College of the Holy Cross and went on to serve as a Jesuit Volunteer. She and her husband, Matt, are the proud parents of three children, Grace, Noah and Liam.

### **Allison Cappa, Director of Programs**

Allison joined CCAI in September of 2010, having previously worked for Senator Don Nickles and then serving as the Associate Director of Marketing at a trade association based in Washington, DC. Allison started at CCAI as the Director of External Relations, and in her new role as the Director of Programs, she oversees CCAI's core initiatives including the Angels in Adoption™ events and gala, the Congressional Foster Youth Internship as well as National Adoption Day efforts across the country. She graduated Oral Roberts University with a bachelor's degree in Communications.

### **Elle Hogan, Director of External Relations**

As the Director of External Relations, Elle is responsible for developing and implementing CCAI's strategic communications plan, which includes managing media outreach and engagement, social media strategy and development of communications materials. She also oversees CCAI's development strategy to facilitate and expand support of the Institute among individual, corporate and foundation donors. Elle most recently volunteered as an Adoption Facilitator at an orphanage in Hong Kong and also worked in Ogilvy Washington's Social Marketing practice. She graduated from Saint Louis University with a concentration in Journalism and earned her master's degree in Health Communication from Johns Hopkins University.

### **Becky Weichhand, Director of Policy**

Becky came to CCAI from the beautiful Great Lakes State of Michigan. Prior to coming to CCAI, Becky worked with several of the premier child welfare law firms and policy organizations in the U.S., including the Alliance for Children's Rights and National Council for Adoption. She also frequently travels internationally to study and work with orphan care programs in other countries. Becky educates Members of Congress and their staff on the issues about which she is the most passionate. She directs CCAI's Congressional Resource Program and 20/20 Vision Program and has coordinated congressional delegations to Los Angeles, the United Kingdom, Ethiopia and Guatemala. Becky also managed The Way Forward Project, which focused on highlighting the need for family-based care of children in six African nations. Becky has a J.D. from Regent Law, and is a licensed attorney in Virginia.

## **Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)**

### **Why is there a need for CCAI?**

There are over 40,000 registered lobbyists in Washington, DC. Not one of these lobbyists is working without a bias for children in need of families. Unlike big industries with money, orphaned children do not have a voice on the Hill or a presence in DC. This is exactly the reason CCAI exists. We represent children without families by using our relationship with Congress to ensure that the needs of orphans and foster children are heard.

### **Is CCAI a lobbyist organization?**

No, CCAI does not lobby on behalf of any individual piece of legislation or government program. CCAI does not take official positions on issues related to adoption and foster care, but rather seeks to provide policymakers with the resources they need to make informed decisions.

### **Why does CCAI focus on Congress?**

Federal policy makers have three tools that when used to benefit children in need of families, make an immeasurable difference: 1) power to legislate to improve adoption laws, 2) power to convene influential persons and political leaders from around the world, and 3) powerful voice that garners media and public attention.

### **How is CCAI funded?**

To maintain the integrity of the organization, CCAI does not accept any government funding. The work of the CCAI is made possible through the generous support of individuals, corporations, and foundations who share our desire to live in a world where every child has a safe, loving home and a promising future.

## Facts and Statistics About Adoption and Foster Care

**In the U.S. 400,540 children are living without permanent families** in the foster care system. 115,000 of these children are eligible for adoption, but nearly 40% of these children will wait over 3 years in foster care before being adopted.

**Around the world, there are an estimated 153 million orphans** who have lost at least one parent. There are 17,800,000 orphans who have lost both parents and are living in orphanages or on the streets and lack the care and attention required for healthy development. These children are at risk for disease, malnutrition, or death.

**U.S. families adopted more than 9,000 children** in fiscal year 2012. China is the top sending country, followed by Ethiopia, Russia, South Korea, and Ukraine. Intercountry adoption has been on the decline since its peak in 2004 at 22,990 adoptions.

**No child under 3 years of age should be placed in institutional care** without a parent or primary caregiver. This is based on results from 32 European countries and in-depth studies in nine of the countries, which considered the “risk of harm in terms of attachment disorder, developmental delay and neural atrophy in the developing brain.”

**Each year, 27,000 youth “age out” of foster care** without the emotional and financial support necessary to succeed. This number has steadily risen over the past decade. Nearly 40% had been homeless or couch surfed, nearly 60% of young men had been convicted of a crime, and only 48% were employed. Seventy-five percent of women and 33% of men receive government benefits to meet basic needs. 50% of all youth who aged were involved in substance use and 17% of the females were pregnant.

**Nearly 25% of youth aging out did not have a high school diploma** or GED, and a mere 6% had finished a two- or four-year degree after aging out of foster care. One study shows 70% of all youth in foster care have the desire to attend college.

**Over 60,000 children in foster care in the U.S. are placed in institutions** or group homes, not in traditional foster homes.

**Over 3 years is the average length of time a child waits** to be adopted in foster care. Roughly 55% of these children have had 3 or more placements. An earlier study found that 33% of children had changed elementary schools 5 or more times, losing relationships and falling behind educationally.

**Adopted children make-up roughly 2% of the total child population** under the age of 18 in the U.S. Disproportionately, 11% of all adolescents referred for therapy have been adopted. Post-adoption services are an important to all types of adoption, whether foster care adoption, international adoption, or domestic infant adoption.

**For More Information:**



Congressional Coalition on Adoption Institute  
311 Massachusetts Avenue, NE  
Washington, DC 20002  
202.544.8500  
[www.ccainstitute.org](http://www.ccainstitute.org)

Elle Hogan  
Director of External Relations  
(w) 202-544-8500  
Email: [Elle@ccainstitute.org](mailto:Elle@ccainstitute.org)



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