WonkCast #38: “It’s just loss”

Adoption Competent Mental Health · https://bridges4mentalhealth.org/hub/adoption-competence/27569766/

This podcast features C.A.S.E. CEO Debbie Riley. She talks with Zach about the structural barriers and opportunities to coordinate mental health and child welfare systems, what role Medicaid can play, and how to design an understanding of ambiguous loss into how we serve children and families in the child welfare system.

Key takeaways:

- **Adoption-competent mental health care requires understanding, specialized skills, and access to the right care.** Children and families connected to adoption, foster care, and kinship care have distinct experiences that require specialized knowledge and skills — and care that is available, accessible, and affordable.
- **Permanency + mental health are inseparable.** Families experience their needs holistically, while child welfare, behavioral health, Medicaid, and other systems often remain fragmented. Those systems must work together so families can access the specialized support they need to thrive.
- **Listening to lived experience can drive systems change.** C.A.S.E. began by listening to families and people with lived experience and responding to what they told us they needed. More than 25 years later, we’re working to embed those lessons into practice, systems, and policy so every child and family can access the support they need to thrive.
- **We know more than ever about what works, and we can build on that progress together.** Youth, families, professionals, funders, researchers, partners, advocates, and policymakers have collectively advanced adoption-competent care over the past 28 years. Now we have an opportunity to embed what we know into systems, financing, practice, and policy — and invite others to join us in building what comes next.

Listen to the podcast