Finding the Right **Mental Health Therapist**

Parents and caregivers who have experienced child welfare services or adoption are often looking to find appropriate mental health services – this may include licensed counselors, clinical social workers, marriage and family therapists, or psychologists.

Finding a mental health therapist who has expertise and specialized training to understand your family's needs is critical. There are many ways to support finding the best therapist for your family. Parent/caregivers can call prospective therapists or schedule an initial interview to find out more about the therapist's area of specialization and approach to treatment. Some therapists offer an initial consultation that is free of charge to ensure the right fit for you and your family. Parents should start by giving the clinician a brief description of the concern or problem for which they need help and then delve deeper using the questions below. It may also be advisable for the therapist to meet the youth and family to ensure a connection can be made.

To find therapists that have additional trainings in adoption competency, parents can also consult the searchable Adoption Competence National Directory available via the C.A.S.E. website:

adoptionsupport.org/national-directory/

Questions to Ask Prospective Therapists

- How long have you been in practice and what degrees, licenses or certifications do you have?
- What age youth do you specialize in serving? Birth to 5? Latency age, adolescent?
- What is your experience in providing services to youth and their adoptive, kinship and/or foster families?
- How do you support the child's sense of loss?
- What experience do you have working with and supporting connections with birth family members including siblings?
- What unique issues do you see teens and their foster, adoptive and kinship families experiencing?
- What continuing clinical training have you had on adoption-related issues?
- What training have you had in trauma-based care?
- How do you include parents and other family members in the therapeutic process?
- Do you prefer to work with the entire family or only with children?
- Do you offer parent support groups and/or teen groups?
- Do you provide anticipatory guidance and psychoeducation for parents/caregivers?
- Do you give parents regular reports on a child's progress?
- What approach to therapy or clinical models do you use?
- Can you estimate the initial timeframe for the course of therapy?
- What changes in the daily life of the child and family might we expect to see because of the treatment?
- How do you work with other adults in the child's life, including teachers/daycare providers, school counselors, pediatricians, psychiatrists?

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