

NTI Training: **A Family Perspective**

What is NTI?

The National Adoption Competency Mental Health Training Initiative (NTI) is a free, web-based training that provides the knowledge, tools, skills, and resources for child, youth, and family-serving professionals and paraprofessionals to effectively support the mental health and developmental needs of children/youth and their foster, adoptive and kinship families.



Why is Specialized Training Important?

The Center for Adoption Support and Education (C.A.S.E.) has more than 27 years' experience specializing in providing mental health counseling, education, and supports to foster, adoptive and kinship families. We have heard from many families over the years...

"We've been to 7 therapists trying to find someone who understands our needs..."

"We've had to 'train' therapists in how our family is different from those formed by birth..."

"Our therapist reinforces discipline techniques that don't seem to work with my child..."

"We were told to return our children to foster care because they are 'too damaged to be in a family'."

"I am so tired of being offered what is not needed and never being offered what we really need."

CHALLENGES FAMILIES EXPERIENCE

<p>Mental health counseling is the major unmet need following adoptive placement.</p>	<p>Too many mental health professionals are unfamiliar with issues related to older child adoptions and basic issues related to adoption.</p>	<p>Adoption professionals and families alike identify the urgent need for qualified, adoption-sensitive, mental health professionals to support and sustain their families.</p>	<p>"We need competent MH professionals who understand the issues in adoption and don't blame us for things we had no control over. We are not bad parents."</p>
---	---	---	--

What Specialized Training Do Clinicians Generally Receive?

Studies indicate most mental health professionals lack the training to meet the diverse complex clinical needs of adoptive families.

65% of clinical psychologists are unable to recall any course that focused upon adoption related issues.

Professors teaching doctorate level clinical programs spent on an average of 7.59 minutes per semester on the topics of adoption.

What Is the Risk to Children and Families?

Not meeting the mental health needs of children can create insurmountable barriers to the child's permanency through adoption, guardianship, and kinship care and risk stability of the placement. In too many cases, families are not getting the help they need, and, in some cases, the "help" is actually harmful for their children and family.

Youth and Families deserve better!!

Adoption Competency Training Developed with Family Voice

C.A.S.E. made building the competency of therapists across the country part of their mission. In 2009, they led the development of "adoption competency" as a specialized professional practice building an evidence-based, accredited curriculum - Training for Adoption Competency (TAC) - bringing together individuals with lived expertise and experts in mental health to identify the competencies needed to provide adoption competent care and define what it means to be an adoption competent professional.

In 2014, C.A.S.E. responded to a funding opportunity through the Children's Bureau (DHHS) to develop a web-based training to enhance the capacity of child welfare and mental health professionals to effectively support the mental health needs of children experiencing foster care, adoption and kinship care. To develop the curriculum, we engaged in a similar process - bringing together an advisory group of 20 individuals - with lived expertise as former foster youth, adopted youth, adoptive parents, and foster and kinship caregivers - as well as experts in child welfare and mental health to identify and vet the competencies and the guiding principles on which the curriculum is based. 🌱

How is NTI Meeting YOUR Needs?

NTI is based on guiding principles and practices that put families at the center of our work.

1. Reaffirms that family is central to healing and acknowledges that healing happens best in the context of a family and that parents must be at the center of their child's and family's treatment.
2. Recognizes that loss is at the heart of every separation and must be acknowledged, honored and supported. Youth need to mourn and grieve these profound losses while also giving space for unresolved parental grief.
3. Provides a common language for the challenges families have endured when raising children who are impacted by loss, separation, trauma, and experiences of foster and orphanage care.
4. Furnishes concrete tools and therapeutic parenting strategies that can help parents to understand the experiences of their children and learn skills to effectively support them.
5. Uses authentic examples of individuals and families with lived experience - through interviews, video clips, and case scenarios - that are reaffirming and share the voice of youth and families impacted by child welfare, adoption, and kinship care.
6. Guides professionals to understand that it is not about what is "wrong" with a child, but rather what has happened to them - the impact of their life experiences and we must look beyond behavior to the underlying need.
7. Acknowledges that family challenges often relate to the youth's compromised beginnings - experiences prior to permanency.
8. Reaffirms that all connections, past, present and future, are important to the child and matter; and provides strategies for supporting and honoring those connections.
9. Acknowledges that asking for help is a strength, welcomed and honored therapeutically.
10. Offers hope that professionals (at last) understand your children's unique needs and affirms what many families already know - it takes special skills to meet the needs of their children and families.