

Definition: An Adoption Competent Mental Health Professional

An adoption competent mental health professional has:

- At least minimal requisite qualifications to provide mental health clinical services;
- A family-based, strengths-based approach to working with children preparing for or having achieved permanence and their adoptive and birth families;
- A developmental and family systems approach to understanding and working with children preparing for or having achieved permanence and their families; and
- An understanding that one's sense of identity and belonging are connected to self-esteem and well-being.

An adoption competent mental health professional has achieved a foundational understanding of:

- the different types of adoption (i.e., foster care, kinship, inter-country, and private) as forms of family formation and clinical issues associated with early adverse experiences;
- the importance of maintaining connection with siblings, kin, and community; and
- the basic evidence-informed strategies to promote attachment, identity formation, and longer-term family well-being;

An adoption competent mental health professional has developed beginning skills in:

- conducting an adoption competent assessment that uncovers a child's unique story;
- using trauma-informed, attachment-based clinical strategies to assist children/youth to understand and process their experiences and begin to form healing relationships;
- using evidence-informed strategies to support caregivers to learn and engage in therapeutic parenting and to promote healthy attachments and identity formation in their child; and
- engaging extended families and other networks to support family preservation and longer-term family wellbeing.

National Adoption Competency Mental Health Training Initiative (NTI)

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