

Strengthening Community Mental Health Workforce Capacity

Community Mental Health Centers (CMHCs) are a vital support for children and families with high-acuity behavioral health needs, many of whom have experienced trauma, separation, and child welfare involvement. The National Center for Adoption Competent Mental Health Services (the National Center) partners with CMHCs to strengthen workforce capacity, improve service responsiveness, and support better outcomes for children and families.

For families involved in foster care, adoption, and kinship care, CMHCs often serve as the local hub for trauma-informed, family-centered services. This work supports stability, reduces use of higher levels of care, and strengthens coordination across child-serving systems (e.g., schools, child welfare, and juvenile justice), including the use of peers to enhance care.

Children and families in foster care, adoption, and kinship systems often face complex trauma, attachment disruptions, and layered behavioral health needs that require specialized clinical understanding. Without adoption-competent knowledge and skills, clinicians can feel unprepared for complex family dynamics, families may disengage from services that don't feel responsive, and systems can experience greater instability and fragmented care.

The National Center helps close this gap by partnering with CMHCs and offering practical professional development through the [National Training Initiative \(NTI\)](#). Adoption-competent mental health care equips providers to look beyond behavior to the experiences and relationships that shape it, supporting stronger engagement and more sustainable outcomes.

Building that level of adoption-competent practice requires organization-wide support, not just individual clinician effort. The National Center's work directly supports key CMHC system priorities by strengthening workforce development and retention, deepening trauma-informed and family-centered care, improving cross-system coordination, and enhancing access, stabilization, and continuity of care. By building clinician confidence and providing

practical tools for working with complex cases, this approach helps reduce burnout while improving the quality and responsiveness of services delivered to children and families.

Through no-cost virtual training, tools, and technical assistance, the National Center helps CMHCs build sustainable workforce capacity without adding administrative burden. Support includes:

- **No-cost CEU-eligible training for clinicians and supervisors through NTI**
- **Implementation support to help translate learning into everyday practice**
- **Coaching and learning communities to reduce professional isolation, build peer connection, and sustain skill development**

Being added to a national directory that will advertise CMCH clinicians' expertise in adoption competence

Together, these supports help CMHCs strengthen day-to-day practice and translate training into measurable improvements in access, engagement, and outcomes.

Partnering with the National Center can help CMHCs reduce waitlists by boosting clinician effectiveness and confidence, more effectively meeting the unique needs of families, supporting rural and under-resourced providers through accessible training and consultation, and improving outcomes for children and families with complex needs. It can also strengthen staff retention and morale by equipping providers with the skills and support needed to manage challenging cases more clearly and confidently.

When clinicians are prepared to understand the effects of trauma, loss, and attachment disruptions, they can engage families with empathy, build trust, and support stability over time. The National Center collaborates with CMHCs to create adoption-competent systems of care that reflect the realities of the children and families they serve, strengthening continuity of care, reducing service drop-off, and helping families access responsive, informed quality support when it matters most. 