

**NTI for Mental Health Professionals:
Learning Community Series for
Adoption & Permanency Competence
(Series A/B, 10 CEs)**

Series Description:

The National Center for Adoption Competent Mental Health Services aims to improve mental health outcomes for children and families impacted by child welfare by providing technical assistance that bridges the gap between child welfare and mental health systems. The National Center prioritizes the need for specialized mental health services for children and families who have experienced the child welfare system.

The National Adoption Competency Mental Health Training (NTI) for Mental Health Professionals (MHP) provides the foundational knowledge, values and skills needed to enhance adoption competency for mental health professionals providing or interested in providing therapeutic or clinical services to children, youth and families experiencing adoption or guardianship. Core competencies include understanding and addressing the complex and often nuanced mental health needs of children experiencing adoption and guardianship, with a focus on the impact of grief and loss, trauma, attachment, identity challenges, and the need for connection and belonging.

Successful implementation of evidence into practice requires strategizing at multiple levels—the participants, the organization, the system, the nature of the evidence, and the methods of transfer and implementation. Clinical group discussion and coaching are transfer of learning activities in which participants complete the training modules independently and meet in a group setting with other training participants to debrief skills and concepts learned and apply knowledge and skills during case consultations, role play, and teach-back opportunities.

The NTI MHP Learning Communities are an advanced clinical practice offering for STTs partnering with the National Center to expand the professional workforce and increase the accessibility of adoption competent mental health providers. These Learning Communities are based on the Learning Collaborative Model and Transfer of Learning activities such as coaching, peer teach-back, and clinical consultation. The development of site-specific and cross-state Learning Communities provides mental health professionals with peer support, accountability methods that foster skill-building, and ongoing learning opportunities that expand clinical experience and resource awareness.

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Learning Community series are specific to two pacing options: Series A (six, 2-hour sessions over a monthly basis) and Series B (ten, 75-min sessions over a triweekly basis). *Series C is an additional “coach/facilitator-in-training” series offered for participants who are interested in being an NTI Champion within their site. The pacing and schedule can be determined by the specific cohort, though the content is based on a structure of three, 2-hour sessions. Upon completion of either Series A/B and Series C, they will be able to facilitate & support ongoing NTI-MHP learning communities within their professional networks.*

Eligible participants will be eligible for 10 Continuing Education hours upon completion of the entire Learning Community Series A (6 sessions) or B (10 sessions). *For participants completing Series C (3 sessions), they will be eligible for 5 additional Continuing Education hours.*

Session Descriptions:

1. **Establishing the Importance of Adoption Competency and Integrating Guiding Principles (Module 1/ Session A1/B1,B2)** - The first session in this series will establish expectations for engagement in this learning community cohort, determine participants' experience and needs for engaging in this series and completing NTI for Mental Health Professionals. Session 1 will focus on expanding knowledge about the importance of adoption and permanency- competency when working with children, youth, and families involved in child welfare and mental health systems. There will be review and discussion of the guiding principles that center children/youth's experiences in moving through the child welfare system to establish permanency, and the impact of adoption/guardianship/kinship care throughout their developmental lifespan.
2. **Understanding Complex Mental Health Needs: Considering Diagnoses & Adoption/Permanency-Informed Assessments and Treatment Planning (Module 2/ Session A2/B2)** - This session provides context for the complex mental health needs of children experiencing adoption, guardianship/permanency and the importance of helping children/youth understand their life stories. Content includes new frameworks for assessment; limitations of current diagnostic and medication practices commonly used with children with foster and/or institutional care experiences; skills and techniques for helping children/youth make sense of their adoption/guardianship stories; challenges related to developmental stages of the adoptive family life cycle; goals for therapeutic work and strategies for engaging

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families; and how to collaborate effectively with child welfare and other professionals to support appropriate treatment planning and intervention.

3. **Attachment & Addressing Grief & Loss in Treatment (Modules 3&4/ Session A3/B3,B4)** - This session will incorporate content from NTI MHP by providing an overview of the impact of insecure attachment, trauma, and grief & loss on children's developmental stages and their mental health. It will also provide opportunities for practitioners to engage in attachment-focused and grief & loss-centered treatment interventions to enhance connection and bonding for children in families that have been formed by adoption and permanency (guardianship, kinship placement).
4. **Trauma-Informed, Identity Formation Supportive Treatment (Modules 5&6/ Session A4/B5,B6)** - This session will incorporate content from NTI MHP by providing an overview of the impact of complex, relational trauma on children's developmental stages, identity formation, and their overall mental health. It will also provide opportunities for practitioners to engage in evidence-based, trauma-informed and identity-supportive treatment interventions to support healing for children & youth in adoptive/ guardianship/ kinship-formed families.
5. **Assessment & Treatment Planning (Module 7/ Session A5/B7,B8)** - This session will incorporate content from NTI MHP by providing an overview of the varied experiences and unique needs of children and families formed by adoption/kinship and/or child welfare involvement, and the importance of adoption-competent and trauma-informed treatment providers, tools, supports, and methods over a period of time. There will be a review of adoption & permanency-focused assessments and treatment planning considerations for individuals and families who have system involvement and CW placement history.
6. **Addressing Challenging Behaviors w/ Therapeutic Interventions & Resourcing for Family Stability (Modules 8&9/ Session A6/B9,B10)** - This session focuses on the nature of challenges and concerning behaviors commonly seen in adoptive and guardianship families and the therapeutic parenting strategies that professionals can teach and support parents to use. Content is focused on supporting parents to promote attunement and felt safety with children; understand and reframe behaviors; develop realistic expectations; provide a balance of nurture and structure; and teach self-regulation and coping skills. The session also addresses challenging behaviors that are often the most problematic for parents and threaten adoption/placement stability, and includes the need for a continuum of post-adoption & guardianship services & resources that help to prevent permanency disruption or dissolution.

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Cumulative Learning Objectives:

Upon completion of this learning community series, participants will be able to:

- Identify core knowledge, values, and skills that characterize an adoption/permanency competent mental health professional, including recognition of the importance of using positive adoption/permanency language.
- Identify and integrate into practice the guiding principles that inform adoption/permanency-competent clinical interventions to address the unique mental health needs of children, youth, and their families.
- Understand the negative impact of impermanence on mental health and adjustment in adoptive and guardianship families while integrating this understanding into the foundation of advanced clinical practice with children, youth, and families.
- Understand how early life experiences and risk & protective factors impact a child's or youth's mental health and well-being and be able to conduct assessments and consider diagnoses through an adoption and guardianship lens.
- Recognize the importance of knowing children's unique and complete story and the negative impacts of missing or mistaken information and secrets; help children and youth construct a coherent life narrative that makes sense of their experiences and supports a positive identity.
- Identify and describe the developmental stages and challenges of the adopted individual's and adoptive family's life cycle, and the core mental health issues and treatment goals that are addressed in adoption competent clinical interventions for family work.
- Synthesize an understanding of attachment patterns and address challenges in their work with families by identifying and utilizing at least one adoption/permanency-centered assessment tool that includes attachment-focused interventions.
- Integrate into clinical practice at least two strategies and therapeutic tools for helping families understand and honor their children's previous attachments and unique adoption/placement story.
- Identify at least three therapeutic parenting practices to support caregivers' efforts to enhance children's and youth's attachment at various developmental stages and respond to children's expressions of grief & loss.

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- Identify various types of developmental, complex and relational trauma and the impact on functioning and identity-development, and implications for choosing particular therapeutic interventions.
- Engage in adoption/permanency-competent assessment of relevant diagnoses associated with trauma and the diagnostic limitations, with application of therapeutic strategies and interventions that establish safety, coping/regulatory skills-building, and support the child/youth's healthy identity formation and integration of their life story.
- Demonstrate understanding of trauma-informed, family & child centered, adoption/permanency-focused facilitation skills and treatment interventions to support caregiver capacity to parent children/youth with different identities, backgrounds, and experiences with complex trauma and loss.
- Integrate an adoption-competent & permanency/trauma-focused assessment protocol into clinical practice; formulate treatment plans that support secure attachments, resolution of grief and loss, self-regulation skills, and continued positive identity formation within a healing family environment.
- Identify and prepare for facilitating specific therapeutic strategies to assist caregivers to:
 - Develop nurturing, trusting relationships with children who have attachment and behavioral challenges,
 - Provide a healthy balance of nurture and structure in the parent-child interaction, and
 - Support the development of the child's capacity for self-regulation and healthy coping
 - Encourage and equip caregivers to incorporate safety and self-care plans into regular practice
- Identify and describe very challenging child and teen behaviors and family problems experienced in adoptive and guardianship families and how to integrate motivational interviewing techniques into your practice to address lack of treatment progress.
- Practice strategies that support the development of the youth's capacity for self-regulation and healthy coping that integrate specific therapeutic strategies with caregivers to address challenging behaviors and avoid power struggles.

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- Engage with and increase understanding of relevant/local professionals and systems to support family stability and child well-being across the life cycle of permanency.
- Activate resource/knowledge-sharing and identify how NTI MHP curriculum has or can impact your clinical practice with individuals and adoptive/foster/kinship families.

Audience: For Mental Health Professionals (licensed, unlicensed, paraprofessionals, supervisors) working with children, youth, and families who have interfaced with child welfare systems and have been formed through foster care, guardianship, kinship, and adoption.

Cost: These sessions are offered at no cost to participants.

Session Timing Agendas:

Series A - Session 1

- Introductions, review of learning objectives and learning community expectations (20 mins)
- Self-assessment and discussion of current adoption-competence, with identification of areas for growth and needed resources (25 mins)
- Review and application of Guiding Principles in Adoption & Permanency clinical practices - both current experiences and identification of goals to support enhanced learning (30 mins)
- Review of the dynamics and presentations in families formed by adoption, guardianship, and kinship care; application of Guiding Principles and the 7 Core Issues to inform how to address these unique needs (20 mins)
- Identification of transfer of learning activities most supportive to the specific cohort (10 mins)
- Question & answer, evaluations (15 mins)

Series A - Session 2

- Review of learning objectives (10 mins)
- Review of risk and protective factors, mental health needs, diagnostic criteria, and behavior/relational challenges over developmental stages in children with CW placement history (10 mins)
- Review of assessment tools that include adoption and permanency considerations with children, youth, and families (25 mins)

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- Practice storytelling interventions that support a child knowing their unique and complete story and constructing a life narrative to make sense of their experiences and identities (25 mins)
- Engagement with advanced clinical practice activities to support adoption & permanency-competent therapeutic interventions that address core mental health issues connected to a child's journey through the child welfare system (25 mins)
- Question & answer, evaluations (10 mins)

Series A - Session 3

- Review of learning objectives (10 mins)
- Review of attachment needs and behavior/relational challenges in children with trauma histories (15 mins)
- Review of the impact of grief & loss on children's developmental stages and mental health (15 mins)
- Engagement & application of attachment-focused strategies/activities to address grief & loss, practice attachment-focused treatment strategies and support caregivers with therapeutic parenting interventions (40 mins)
- Advanced clinical practice activities to support the review of and preparation for engaging in treatment strategies (30 mins)
- Question & answer, evaluations (10 mins)

Series A - Session 4

- Review of learning objectives (10 mins)
- Review of diagnostic criteria that supports healing from complex, relational trauma, placement changes (including transcultural placements) and adoption/permanency considerations (20 mins)
- Review of therapeutic interventions (TF-CBT, EMDR, ARC, CPP) and prepare/practice application with a client or family (30 mins)
- Engagement of identity-formation and narrative/story-telling practices to facilitate adoption/permanency competent & culturally relevant treatment interventions (30 mins)
- Advanced clinical practice activities to support the review of and preparation for engaging in treatment strategies (20 mins)
- Question & answer, evaluations (10 mins)

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Series A - Session 5

- Review of learning objectives (10 mins)
- Review of assessment and treatment planning that supports secure attachments, resolution of grief and loss, self-regulation skills, and healthy identity formation (20 mins)
- Practice of incorporating therapeutic parenting strategies that support strengthening secure attachments, addressing grief & loss, and strengthening regulation and self-care skills to use with a client or family (30 mins)
- Engage in discussions and transfer of learning activities and therapeutic interventions to support permanency-focused treatment planning (30 mins)
- Advanced clinical practice activities to support the review of and preparation for engaging in treatment strategies (20 mins)
- Question & answer, evaluations (10 mins)

Series A - Session 6

- Review of learning objectives (10 mins)
- Review of the Guiding Principles as they relate to addressing various challenges in foster, adoptive, guardianship, and kinship families over their developmental lifespan (20 mins)
- Review of therapeutic parenting strategies and prepare/ practice application with a client or family in addressing significantly challenging behaviors and family problems in treatment services, including permanency disruption and dissolution (40 mins)
- Advanced clinical practice activities to explore engagement & collaboration strategies with systems & other relevant service providers to support robust permanency-focused treatment planning (25 mins)
- Resource-sharing, building and strengthening community within connections to other mental health professionals providing care and support to families formed by foster & kinship care and adoption (15 mins)
- Question & answer, evaluations, next steps/opportunities for ongoing continued learning (10 mins)

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Series B – Session 1

- Introductions, review of learning objectives and learning community expectations (20 mins)
- Self-assessment and discussion of current adoption-competence, with identification of areas for growth and needed resources (15 mins)
- Review and application of Guiding Principles in Adoption & Permanency clinical practices - both current experiences and identification of goals to support enhanced learning (20 mins)
- Identification of transfer of learning activities most supportive to the specific cohort (10 mins)
- Question & answer, evaluations (10 mins)

Series B – Session 2

- Review of learning objectives (5 mins)
- Review of risk & protective factors, mental health needs, diagnostic criteria, and behavior/relational challenges over developmental stages in children with CW placement history (10 mins)
- Review of assessment tools to determine inclusion of adoption and permanency considerations with children, youth, and families (20 mins)
- Practice storytelling interventions that support a child knowing their unique and complete story and constructing a life narrative to make sense of their experiences and identities (20 mins)
- Engagement with advanced clinical practice activities to support adoption & permanency-competent therapeutic interventions that incorporate strategies/activities to address core mental health issues connected to a child's journey through the child welfare system (15 mins)
- Question & answer, evaluations (5 mins)

Series B – Session 3

- Review of learning objectives (5 mins)
- Review of attachment needs and behavior/relational challenges in children with trauma histories (10 mins)
- Review of the developmental impact of trauma and insecure attachment on children's functioning (10 mins)

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- Engagement & application of attachment-focused strategies/activities to practice attachment-focused treatment strategies and support caregivers with therapeutic parenting interventions (25 mins)
- Advanced clinical practice activities to support the review of and preparation for engaging in treatment strategies (20 mins)
- Question & answer, evaluations (5 mins)

Series B – Session 4

- Review of learning objectives (5 mins)
- Review of behavior/relational challenges in children with significant losses and placement changes, considering the developmental impact of loss and grief on children's functioning (10 mins)
- Review of assessment tools to determine effectiveness of adoption and permanency considerations with clients and interventions that address loss and support healthy grieving (30 mins)
- Advanced clinical practice activities to support the review of and preparation for engaging in treatment strategies related to addressing grief & loss (25 mins)
- Question & answer, evaluations (5 mins)

Series B – Session 5

- Review of learning objectives (5 mins)
- Review of diagnostic criteria that supports healing from relational, complex trauma and adoption/ permanency considerations (10 mins)
- Review of trauma-informed, evidence-based/informed therapeutic interventions (TF-CBT, EMDR, ARC, CPP) and prepare/ practice application with a client or family (30 mins)
- Engagement of trauma-informed narrative/story-telling advanced clinical practice activities to facilitate adoption/permanency competent treatment interventions (25 mins)
- Question & answer, evaluations (5 mins)

Series B – Session 6

- Review of learning objectives (5 mins)
- Review of impact of relational trauma, placement changes (including transcultural), and losses on identity formation (15 mins)

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- Engagement of identity-formation and narrative/story-telling practices to facilitate adoption/permanency competent treatment and culturally relevant interventions (30 mins)
- Advanced clinical practice activities to support the review of and preparation for engaging in treatment strategies (20 mins)
- Question & answer, evaluations (5 mins)

Series B – Session 7

- Review of learning objectives (5 mins)
- Review of the nuances of assessment through the adoption/guardianship and kinship care lens (15 mins)
- Practice of therapeutic parenting strategies & interventions that support strengthening secure attachments and addressing grief & loss to use with a client or family (30 mins)
- Advanced clinical practice activities to support the review of and preparation for engaging in treatment strategies (20 mins)
- Question & answer, evaluations (5 mins)

Series B – Session 8

- Review of learning objectives (5 mins)
- Review of treatment planning that supports secure attachments, resolution of grief and loss, self-regulation skills, and identity formation (15 mins)
- Practice of incorporating therapeutic parenting strategies within treatment plan goals that encourage strengthening secure attachments, addressing grief & loss, and regulation skills-building to use with a client or family (30 mins)
- Advanced clinical practice activities to support the review of and preparation for engaging in treatment strategies with children and families (20 mins)
- Question & answer, evaluations (5 mins)

Series B – Session 9

- Review of learning objectives (5 mins)
- Review of the Guiding Principles as they relate to addressing various challenges in foster, adoptive, guardianship, and kinship families (10 mins)
- Review of therapeutic parenting strategies and prepare/ practice application with a client or family in addressing significantly challenging behaviors and family problems in treatment services (30 mins)

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- Advanced clinical practice activities to support the review of and preparation for engaging in treatment strategies (20 mins)
- Question & answer, evaluations (10 mins)

Series B – Session 10

- Review of learning objectives (5 mins)
- Review of the impact of adoption and permanency over a child's and family's developmental lifespan (15 mins)
- Advanced clinical practice activities to explore engagement & collaboration strategies with systems & other relevant service providers to support robust permanency-focused treatment planning and resourcing (30 mins)
- Resource-sharing, building and strengthening community within connections to other mental health professionals providing care and support to families formed by foster & kinship care and adoption (15 mins)
- Question & answer, evaluations, next steps/opportunities for ongoing continued learning (10 mins)

Facilitator Information:

Carla brings over 15 years of experience working in child welfare, mental health, and foster care/adoption agencies to her role at the National Center. As the NTI Mental Health Coach, Carla develops and facilitates live coaching support for mental health professionals enrolled in the National Adoption Competent Mental Health Training Initiative (NTI) to integrate best practices of adoption and permanency concepts in their work with individuals and families.

Before joining the National Center, Carla was a social worker supporting foster, adoptive, and kinship families in various public and non-profit agencies. She currently provides therapy for transracial and mixed-race adoptive individuals and families. She has also been an educator for caregivers in the areas of trauma-informed and attachment-focused parenting strategies, while including the unique perspective of adoption and placement loss and trauma. She provides clinical trainings to treatment professionals to enhance their understanding of adoption and permanency implications and integrate various therapeutic practices to support Black, Indigenous, Mixed POC and families.

[Carla Felten Professional Resume](#)

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Accessibility Accommodations:

For questions, concerns, or to request accessibility accommodations, please reach out to the coach/facilitator, Carla Felten at felten@adoptionsupport.org prior to registering for a series.

Continuing Education Information:

Center for Adoption Support and Education, provider #1972, is approved to offer social work continuing education by the Association of Social Work Boards (ASWB) Approved Continuing Education (ACE) program. Regulatory boards are the final authority on courses accepted for continuing education credit. ACE provider approval period: 3/3/26 – 3/3/29. Social workers completing this course receive 10 Clinical continuing education credits for attending all sessions in the series.

Center for Adoption Support and Education (C.A.S.E.) has been approved by NBCC as an Approved Continuing Education Provider, ACEP No. 7463. Programs that do not qualify for NBCC credit are clearly identified. Center for Adoption Support and Education (C.A.S.E.) is solely responsible for all aspects of the programs. Eligible participants completing this course and required elements will receive 10 continuing education credits for attending all sessions in the series.

The National Center is a program of the Center for Adoption Support and Education (C.A.S.E.) and continuing education credits are offered through C.A.S.E.

[Live Workshop System Requirements](#)

[Grievance/Cancellation Policies](#)

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