

The National Adoption Competency Mental Health Training Initiative (NTI) Pilot for Mental Health Professionals to Launch in March 2018

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Burtonsville MD - The National Adoption Competency Mental Health Training Initiative (NTI) is



**National Adoption Competency
Mental Health Training Initiative**

announcing the availability of its free web-based, state-of-the-art, adoption competency mental health pilot training for mental health professionals to be launched in March 2018. This evidence-informed standardized curriculum is one of NTI's two adoption competency training curricula funded by the Children's Bureau and developed by the [Center for Adoption Support and Education](#) (C.A.S.E.) with the

University of Maryland School of Social Work / Institute for Innovation and Implementation, PolicyWorks and several curricula developers.

The NTI training provides clinicians with a no-cost opportunity to become better equipped to address the mental health needs of children, youth, and families moving toward or having achieved permanency through adoption and guardianship. The training modules provide foundational knowledge, values, and skills for adoption-competent casework and clinical practice. [The content](#) addresses the core issues of adoption and guardianship with a focus on assessment, support, and therapeutic interventions to promote permanency and family stability.

The NTI curriculum for mental health professionals pilot training will be implemented in the pilot sites of California, Illinois, Maine, Minnesota, Oklahoma, South Carolina, Tennessee, Washington, and The Cherokee Nation. This training developed for mental health professionals has followed the NTI curriculum for child welfare professionals which completed its [pilot training](#) in December 2017 with nearly 6000 pilot users enrolled and a completion rate of nearly 70%. The national launch of both curricula is planned for 2019, kicking off open access to the training post-pilot for the first time in all states, tribes, and territories.

Dawn Wilson, Director of NTI, addressed the intense need for this adoption competency training, "Because of traumatic life experiences and compromised beginnings, many children who are adopted or in guardianship experience elevated risks for developmental, health, emotional, and behavioral challenges." Research shows that the impact of these experiences and challenges often compromise well-being and family stability.

- Up to **80 percent** of children in foster care have significant mental health issues, compared to approximately 18-22 percent of the general population.

Dore, 2005; National Conference of State Legislatures, 2016

[National advisors](#) have vetted the NTI competencies including clinicians, adoption researchers, child



welfare administrators, and people with lived experience. [Debbie Riley](#), LCMFT, CEO of C.A.S.E. added, "We believe NTI has the potential to continuously improve outcomes by infusing adoption mental health competencies into child welfare and mental health practice. I am excited and eager to advance the development of accessible adoption competency curriculums." Debbie explains

further in [the video above](#).



"NTI offers an easy-to-use and comprehensive overview of the unique issues of children in adoption and foster care placement," said NTI Advisor, David Brodzinsky, Developmental, Clinical, and Forensic Psychologist, Professor Emeritus of Clinical Psychology, Rutgers University. He continued,

"Understanding adoption challenges and issues that can influence self-esteem, identity, family relationships and psychological adjustment is critical for mental health professionals to consider in their work with these individuals. The reality shared by many adoptive families is that therapists lacking adoption competence training can, at times, do more harm than good. I have found there is very little substantive training like NTI available today."

Mental Health Professionals interested in participating in the NTI Mental Health Pilot are invited to go to www.adoptionsupport.org/info4nti and sign up for more information.

About C.A.S.E.

The Center for Adoption Support and Education (C.A.S.E) is the national leader in mental health services for the adoption and foster care community. We nurture, inspire, and empower adoptive and foster families and the professionals who serve them. Our headquarters location is Burtonsville, Maryland. For more info: www.adoptionsupport.org

About NTI

NTI was established in October 2014 through a five-year, \$9 million cooperative agreement with C.A.S.E. and the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Children and Families, [Children's Bureau](#) Grant #90CO1121. The National Adoption Competency Mental Health Training Initiative (NTI) is developing free, state-of-the-art web-based adoption competency mental health trainings for child welfare and mental health professionals. For more info: www.adoptionsupport.org/nti.

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National Adoption Competency Mental Health Training Initiative

Training for Mental Health Professionals

The National Adoption Competency Mental Health Training for Mental Health Professionals 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 impact of race, ethnicity, culture, class, and diversity on adoption and guardianship especially for transracial and transcultural families.

In addition to sharing clinical best practices in assessment and treatment and therapeutic parenting strategies, NTI provides an overview of evidence-based and evidence-informed treatment models that have been shown to be effective in helping children and youth heal from trauma and strengthen attachments. In addition to the 10 module/25-hour training, three 90-minute live coaching/consultation sessions will be provided to a select number of participants during the training to support the use of strategies learned in clinical practice.

Module 01: A Case for Adoption Competency

Module 1 provides an overview of the National Adoption Competency Mental Health Training for Mental Health Professionals and makes the case for the need for adoption competency in working with children, youth, and families experiencing adoption or guardianship. Lessons in this module orient participants to the training; highlight the guiding principles that provide the foundation for work with children and families from an adoption or guardianship lens; provide context for the changes in adoption and guardianship practice today; emphasize the urgent need for permanency for children; and introduce salient clinical issues for children and youth and their families experiencing adoption or guardianship from foster care, private infant adoption, or inter-country adoption.

Module 02: Understanding and Addressing the Complex Mental Health Needs of Children in Adoptive and Guardianship Families

Module 2 provides context for the complex mental health needs of children experiencing adoption or guardianship and the importance of helping children/youth understand their life stories. Lessons focus on: 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 families; and how to

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

Module 03 – The Impact of Loss and Grief Experiences on Children’s Mental Health

Module 3 focuses on the central role of loss and grief in foster care, adoption, or guardianship and how ambiguous and unresolved loss, abandonment, rejection, and disenfranchised grief impact the mental health of children. Lessons will emphasize the different kinds of loss and grief, and children’s developmental understanding of loss; focus on how loss and grief manifests developmentally, behaviorally, and emotionally; review therapeutic strategies and tools for helping children grieve and heal; provide strategies and evidence-informed therapies to help professionals and parents support grieving children; identify special issues in relative caregiving; and highlight the importance of, and provide strategies for, supporting openness and maintaining family, community, and cultural connections to mitigate losses.

Module 04 – Trauma and the Impact of Adverse Experiences on Brain Development and Mental Health

Module 4 focuses on the impact of trauma, including trauma from separation, on brain development, behavior, and mental health of children experiencing adoption or guardianship, as well as the implications for therapeutic interventions. Lessons focus on diagnostic limitations and tools to assess trauma history and its impact on functioning; the importance of helping parents shift thinking from “what’s wrong with you” to “what happened to you,” and strategies to support parents providing the healing environment and managing trauma triggers for their child; strategies and evidence-based/evidence-informed interventions to establish felt safety, build coping and regulatory skills, and readiness for children to process emotions related to traumatic experiences; and the impact of, and strategies to address, secondary trauma for parents and professionals. Several evidence-based interventions are shared, including Trauma-Focused Cognitive Behavioral Therapy, Child Parent Psychotherapy, Trust-based Relational Intervention, Attachment, Regulation, and Competency, and Eye Movement Desensitization Reprocessing.

Module 05 – Attachment, Child Development, and Mental Health - Promoting Security in Adoptive and Guardianship Families

Module 5 focuses on understanding the impact of early insecure attachment, poor nurture, separation, and abrupt moves on attachment and supporting the process of rebuilding or strengthening attachments. Lessons focus on understanding the continuum of attachment styles and challenges and the importance of accurate diagnosis of attachment disorders; provide tools for assessing attachment in children and parents and common goals for reparative work in your clinical practice; review behaviors associated with child and parent attachment styles and implications for clinical intervention; highlight therapeutic tasks for children and parents to promote attachment and bonding and integrate therapeutic parenting strategies to enhance children’s safety and attachment; and discuss evidence-based/evidence-informed attachment-based therapies to address attachment challenges and create a healing environment that facilitates attachment. Additional models discussed include Attachment and Biobehavioral Catch-Up, Circle of Security, Collaborative Problem-Solving, Dyadic Developmental Psychotherapy, Parent Child Interaction Therapy, Theraplay, and Video-based Intervention to Promote Positive Parenting and Sensitive Discipline.

Module 06 – Understanding the Impact of Race, Ethnicity, Culture, Class, and Diversity on Children and Families: Implications for Mental Health Practice

In Module 6, participants will learn how race, ethnicity, culture, class, and diversity impact a child's experience of adoption or guardianship, especially in transracial and transcultural families. Lessons focus on understanding challenges in various types of diverse families, including single parent, relative caregiver, transracial/transcultural families, children with special needs, Native American families, and children or parents with diverse sexual orientation or gender identity/expression. Lessons also focus on being aware of one's own biases and commitment to preserve children's culture, race, ethnic identity, and sexual orientation/gender identity/expression (SOGIE); supporting healthy racial identity development and racial socialization; assessing parental capacity to parent children of diverse cultures or gender identities; providing therapeutic strategies to help parents initiate conversations about race/ethnicity/culture and SOGIE in transracial and transcultural placements; and reviewing strategies for addressing microaggressions, bullying, and discrimination.

Module 07 - Identity Formation and the Impact of Adoption and Guardianship

Module 7 focuses on the nature of identity formation in the context of adoption and guardianship and the impact of missing and inaccurate information, and the implications of integration of one's adoption story. Lessons focus on understanding identity formation; barriers to positive identity; strategies to address the "Six Stuck Spots;" and the role of openness in positive identity formation. Also included are strategies for helping children and youth do the work of understanding who they are, where they came from, and where they are going; strategies for working with parents to integrate the history of birth family and influence of significant others in the lives of their children; the role of search and reunion in identity formation; and the importance of parental support in the search and reunion process.

Module 08 – Assessment and Treatment Planning with Children and Families Experiencing Adoption or Guardianship

Module 8 will integrate and apply the information learned from previous modules to the assessment and treatment planning process, with focus on the overlay of adoption and guardianship-related issues and questions that should be incorporated to assure that clinical work is provided with an "adoption lens." Lessons will also focus on how to formulate treatment plans that support more secure attachment, resolution of grief, and promotion of self-regulation; the integral role of parents in therapeutic work; and special assessment issues of relative caregivers.

Module 09 – Using Therapeutic Parenting Strategies to Address Children's Challenging Behavior

Module 9 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. Lessons focus 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 lesson also addresses challenging behaviors that are often the most problematic for parents and threaten adoption stability.

Module 10– Family Stability and Wellness Post Permanency

Module 10 looks at adoption as a life-long process including the factors that shape adoption or guardianship adjustment and either support or threaten children’s and the family’s ongoing safety, permanency, and well-being. Lessons will explore the needs of children and families after adoption or guardianship and the continuum of post-adoption/guardianship services that help to prevent adoption disruption or dissolution. Additionally, this module covers the importance of positive adoption language, as well as provides clinicians with the opportunity to reflect on the impact of this training on their clinical practice.

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