

C.A.S.E. Training Initiative on Adoption Practice

The following list is a sample of our most requested training topics. Presentations are generally two hours in length, but time can be adjusted according to your needs. We can modify content as well as create new presentations on different topics at your request.

For more information or to schedule a training, please contact Ellen Singer, LCSW-C at 301-476-8525 ext. 112 or singer@adoptionsupport.org.

1. **ADOPTION THROUGH THE EYES OF CHILDREN: A developmental perspective**

This workshop provides participants with an in-depth understanding of what children comprehend, think, and feel about adoption as they grow, from the pre-school years through adolescence. Common questions, fears, and concerns related to birth parents, relationships with adoptive and extended family members, and relationships with peers are addressed. Special emphasis is on the 7 core issues of adoption, as well as methods for treating ambiguous loss and grief, self-esteem and self-value, and identity. How non-adopted children perceive adoption is included, as well as the impact of feedback from peers and adults in the child's world which impact adoption adjustment.

2. **TOO MANY LOSSES, TOO SOON: Loss and grief among foster and adopted children**

This workshop addresses the unique loss experienced by children in foster care and adoption, and will include factors that influence children's reaction to loss, the four psychological tasks of grief work, and healing therapies for children and teens. The critical aspects of loss in foster care and adoption and how these losses impact children will be explored. Discussion will include how professionals can work with parents to understand how their children are experiencing the ambiguities of foster care and adoption. Effective interventions for opening communication with children, and strengthening transitions and attachment to new families will be included.

3. **TALKING WITH CHILDREN ABOUT ADOPTION**

This "most requested" workshop covers the basics of communication with children (ages birth – 12) to help them understand their adoption story. Participants learn 1) what children understand about adoption at different developmental stages; 2) how this knowledge provides parents with a guide for when, how and what to share with their children at different ages, including information that parents perceive to be difficult, negative, or painful, and 3) children's comprehension of how other people in their lives perceive adoption. Practical advice is offered to help parents anticipate their children's questions and concerns and learn effective, appropriate ways of responding. Workshop can be tailored to specific audience needs – e.g. focus on early or later years.

4. **BENEATH THE MASK: Adoption through the eyes of adolescents**

Adolescence is a time when adoptees struggle with an extra layer of challenges related to their identity, their future and their past. Ms. Debbie Riley, CEO of C.A.S.E. and author of [Beneath the Mask: Understanding Adopted Teens](#), will explore how the "normal" or typical developmental tasks of the teen years are intensified by adoption, particularly if teens are being raised by parents of a different race or culture. This workshop provides participants with an understanding of how adoption influences separation from parents, identity formation, and decisions related to sexuality. The "Six Spots where teens get stuck" as highlighted in Ms. Riley's book address the key vulnerabilities around the adoption experience in adolescence. Potential mild and serious emotional and behavioral issues at home and at school will be addressed. Clinical strategies can be included as part of this program. (Recommended as a half or full-day program)

5. THE OVERLOOKED KEY TO ADOPTION SUCCESS: Educators and adoption professionals in partnership

A critical component of counseling and parent support programs at C.A.S.E. is the need to ensure success for children at school. This is addressed on several levels, including working with teachers to ensure sensitivity and understanding of adoption issues and how they may manifest themselves at school; promoting informal, positive, and factual information about adoption for non-adopted students; and very critically, ensuring that parents and school personnel are able to work together to ensure appropriate special educational programs for foster and adoptive students. Special attention is given to the creation of collaborative relationships between adoption professionals and school counselors. This workshop outlines ways to connect these important systems for adoptees, particularly those with special needs.

6. W.I.S.E. UP!sm FOR PARENTS: Empowering Children to Answer Questions about Adoption

A popular tool developed by C.A.S.E. to empower adopted children is the W.I.S.E. UP! program for handling comments and questions about adoption. W.I.S.E. UP! gives children, teens, and parents the power to choose comfortable ways to communicate about adoption with others. This program has spread across the country as children have embraced its simplicity and power to address the consistent challenge of explaining adoption and their adoption stories.

7. FACILITATOR TRAINING FOR W.I.S.E. UP!sm: Empowering children to respond to questions about adoption

A popular tool developed by C.A.S.E. to empower adopted children is the W.I.S.E. UP! Program for handling comments and questions about adoption. W.I.S.E. UP gives children, teens, and parents the power to choose comfortable ways to communicate about adoption with others. This program has spread across the country as children have embraced its simplicity and power to address the consistent challenge of explaining adoption and their adoption stories. Professionals in this training learn how to use W.I.S.E. UP! and offer concurrent workshops for children and parents. (Highly interactive program; facilitators become Certified W.I.S.E. UP! Trainers.)

8. THE VALUE OF POST-ADOPTION SERVICES

This workshop is adapted to meet the needs of the hosting organization, and includes research and data which support the benefits of post-adoption services, funding streams, and organizational components developed by various programs across the country. The goal of this program is to assist organizations in making decisions about developing effective, widespread programs in their area. Debbie Riley, CEO of C.A.S.E., has worked with states across the country and numerous local jurisdictions as they develop programs in their area. (Recommended as half or full-day program)

9. THERAPISTS AS ADOPTION SPECIALISTS

Participants in this full-day program will learn the multiple and complex ways that adoption impacts all members of the adoptive extended family system, from both a developmental and family life cycle perspective. Assessment of client needs and treatment strategies will be covered. Issues addressed include: loss and grief, attachment and bonding, identity, self-esteem, and social roles. Effective strategies for communication about adoption, strengthening the connections/relationships within and between extended family systems members, and coping with loss will be presented, as well as current trends in community support services to ensure preservation of adoptive families. (Recommended as full-day program)

10. S.A.F.E. AT SCHOOLsm: Support for Adoptive Families by Educators

This workshop is designed for school personnel and can be adjusted to address specific concerns of individual schools. The goal of this well-regarded training program is to create a positive school environment about adoption for both adopted and non-adopted children by finding opportunities to weave informal, brief educational moments into already-existing programs and curricula. It will provide critical foundational information about children's normal developmental understanding about adoption, potential manifestations of adoption issues at school, five key strategies for opening and managing communication about adoption in school, and recommendations for home-school collaboration about adoption. The workshop can be adapted for an audience of counselors and school psychologists to include potential behavioral, emotional, and learning issues rooted in adoption.

11. OPENNESS IN ADOPTION: THE IMPORTANCE OF BIRTH PARENTS IN THE LIVES OF ADOPTED AND FOSTER CHILDREN

This workshop provides the opportunity for participants to examine how and why birth parents are so critically important to adopted children, and how adoptive parents' attitudes toward birth parents impact their children's self-concept and identity. We also address age-appropriate communication about birth parents, helping children/adolescents come to terms with difficult information, and what parents/professionals need to know about search and reunion with birth family. For families involved in open adoptions, participants learn both the benefits and challenges involved in these unique relationships, as well as how to successfully navigate the common challenges to promote positive relationships.

12. SAME FAMILY, DIFFERENT STORIES: Parenting Siblings with Unique Adoption Experiences

Adoptive parents often need to weave different adoption stories into one family. Sibling relationships can be challenged by these differences – e.g. children have different amounts of information or contact with birth family members, children came into the family at different ages, etc. A child may perceive his story as “better” or “worse” than his siblings and/or have very different feelings about having been adopted from his brothers or sisters. This workshop explores strategies for handling these differences as children grow and change. It also includes sibling and family issues of families formed by birth and by birth/adoption.

13. BEYOND PLACEMENT: Understanding the Developmental and Psychological Tasks of Adoptive Families

This workshop will explore the vulnerability/risk factors for adoptive parents and compare the psychological tasks for all parents with tasks for adoptive parents. Losses for both parents and the child will be discussed within the family's relationships. In addition, issues of entitlement and claiming will be addressed as a predictable strain on a parent's ability. The developmental tasks of the adopted child will be examined as they are critical in assessing the family's risk for disruption or dissolution. Strategies for supporting parents and ultimately the child, will be presented.

14. DISRUPTION AND DISSOLUTION: What Next?

This workshop will explain the difference between disruption and dissolution. The three circumstances related to both disruption and dissolution will be explored using research and case examples. Participants will learn strategies to work with families who may be at risk of disruption or dissolution.

15. HEALING THROUGH LIFEBOOKS

A Lifebook is a valuable tool to document both abstract and concrete events of a child's journey towards permanency – adoption. The seven top reasons for creating a Lifebook will be explored, including a therapeutic mechanism to assist the child in processing his/her feelings. Participants

will be encouraged to become an “investigator”, enabling them to track where the information can be obtained and from whom. A diverse sampling of Lifebooks will be reviewed.

16. SECOND (or Third?) CHOICE IS NOT SECOND BEST: Making the Decision to Adopt

This workshop is for those considering adoption and professionals working with prospective adoptive parents. The focus is on helping participants understand the process of grief and loss when adoption is not the primary choice for family building. Participants will explore the important questions that must be addressed in order to determine if adoption is the appropriate option as well as which adoption option is best. This workshop can involve looking at the impact between adoption and alternative family building methods – e.g. donor egg/sperm, surrogacy, etc.

17. UNDERSTANDING AND WORKING WITH PROSPECTIVE/WAITING ADOPTIVE PARENTS

This workshop addresses infertility as a Life Crisis, making the decision to adopt, tools for effective communication and stress management. In addition, to further educate the participants, a child’s understanding of adoption from a development perspective is examined. This perspective includes a discussion of attachment issues, especially when children are adopted at older ages.

18. LOVE IS NOT ENOUGH: PARENTING IN TRANSRACIAL ADOPTION

Well-intentioned transracially adoptive parents often deny or minimize the significance of race, mistakenly equating being “color-blind” with love. Other parents recognize the importance of helping their child develop a positive racial identity and connection with their racial heritage, but are uncertain as to how to achieve this goal. Participants in this workshop will learn how to parent a child of a different race to promote healthy racial socialization and identity development and a positive sense of well-being. We also address what parents must do to equip their children to cope with racial discrimination.