

NTI Evaluation Protocol

Principal Investigator: Bethany Lee, PhD

Project Title: Evaluation of the National Training Initiative of Adoption Mental Health Competence

Purpose of the Study:

The purpose of the study is to evaluate the process and outcome of the National Training Initiative of Adoption Mental Health Competence (NTI), an online training curriculum for child welfare workers and mental health providers.

The NTI was funded through a collaborative agreement with the Children's Bureau. The Center for Adoption Support and Education (CASE), in collaboration with the University of Maryland School of Social Work (UM) and other collaborating partners, have developed an online training curriculum for child welfare and mental health professionals in adoption practice with children in foster care being prepared for adoption or guardianship and children who leave care to adoptive and guardianship families. Research documents the high prevalence of emotional and behavioral problems among these populations of children and the lack of adoption competent professionals to provide quality services to them and their families. The NTI will work collaboratively with selected pilot sites to infuse enhanced adoption competence in the provision of mental health interventions to these children and families.

A comprehensive evaluation will focus on the NTI's major activities and guide the development and delivery of the curriculum and technical assistance activities provided to participating sites and users. The overarching evaluation questions are focused on site-level and user-level experiences.

For each implementation site:

- (1) What system or site-level factors are barriers and facilitators to implementation and integration of an online training curriculum?
- (2) What implementation support or technical assistance was associated with increased implementation and integration of the online training curriculum?

For individual trainees:

- (3) How did the participants rate the relevance, accessibility and satisfaction with the online training materials and did these vary by a participant's work, role, or other demographics?
- (4) How did actual and perceived adoption competence change between baseline and completion of the training and did this vary by a participant's work, role, or other demographics?
- (5) What impact did the training have on participant self-reported practice behaviors in working with issues of adoption and guardianship and did infusion of content vary by a participant's work, role, or other demographics?

It is anticipated that 8-9 states and tribal territories will participate in the pilot of the curriculum that is anticipated to eventually be launched nationwide. The knowledge gained from the pilot sites will guide revisions to the curriculum as well as help build knowledge about what supports may be needed for systems or sites to implement an online training curriculum.

Findings from individual trainees will help us identify what aspects of the curriculum may be most relevant to practice, what competencies can be gained by participants, and whether these outcomes vary by type of work, role, or demographics.

We are not collecting any data about specific children or families. However, we will ask the public child welfare staff members who participate in the training whether they were able to use the knowledge gained from the training to improve services to any clients and how these newly gained practice behaviors were received. Ultimately, we hope that enhancing the skills of the workforce will improve service delivery to children and families touched by adoption or guardianship.

Methods and Procedures:

The study includes both a site-level as well as individual participant-level methods.

The site-level evaluation will collect survey data from a state-level director, key informants at each site, and documentation from NTI Implementation Specialists who will work with each site-level evaluation team. The measures collected will focus on readiness and motivation for participation in the NTI training, anticipated barriers and compensatory strategies, and the process of implementation and integration of the training.

The individual participant-level methods involve online survey completion that is primarily integrated seamlessly in the online training.

Each participant will complete the following:

- (1) a baseline enrollment survey (to collect demographics and work/training history, technological capacity for online training, and initial levels of perceived adoption competence),
- (2) knowledge tests before and after each module (to assess competence gains),
- (3) reaction surveys following each training module (very brief ratings of satisfaction, relevance, and access, with some open-ended responses allowed – these will be randomly assigned to lessen participant burden),
- (4) a completion survey at the end of the entire training (to collect post-test ratings on perceived competence, as well as usefulness of training, impact, and overall satisfaction); and
- (5) a follow-up survey administered six months after completion about whether/how participants have infused the training into their practice with children and families.

In addition to the individual data collected directly from each individual participant, we will collect data "behind the scenes" to track their progression through the online training curriculum-- e.g., time lapses between each login, time to completion of each module, and any technological challenges encountered that required NTI Help Desk assistance.

Measures:

The evaluation will include data at both the site-level and participant-level. The tables below describe each included measure and its use in the evaluation:

Table 1. Site-Level Measures

Instrument	Respondent	Timepoint	Method
A. State Administrator Survey	1 state-level leader involved in decision for state to participate in training pilot.	2-4 weeks after first implementation team planning meeting.	Online survey
B. Cohort Key Informant Survey	Cohort level leaders with oversight over target users.	2-4 weeks after planning begins (early planning).	Online survey
C. Implementation Team Discussion Guide	Site Implementation Team	Between first implementation team meeting and training launch (mid planning)	Discussion facilitated by Implementation Specialist.
D. Sustainability Discussion Guide.	Site Implementation Team	Late in training or as TBD (finalization pending).	Discussion facilitated by Implementation Specialist.

Table 2. Individual User Instruments

Instrument	Respondent	Timepoint	Method
1. Target User Survey (optional for each site)	Potential participants in the training	Prior to training launch in site	Online survey
2. Enrollment survey	All trainees	At enrollment into training	Online survey
3. Reaction Survey	All trainees	Assigned to randomly selected participants at the end of each training module	Online survey
4. Completion survey	All trainees who complete the modules	After completing the final training module	Online survey
5. Follow-up survey	All trainees who complete the modules	Six months after completion of the final training	Online survey

Please note that some measures provided have not yet been reviewed and approved by the project’s Federal Project Officer. Because this project is funded as a collaborative agreement, the Federal Project Officer has final review and approval of all project content and measures.

Sample description:

NTI staff will work with state leaders to identify the locations, units, or sites that will be included in the pilot training and evaluation. We anticipate that as many as 5,000 child welfare staff (including workers and supervisors) who work with families and youth affected by adoption and guardianship will be recruited to participate in the training. The final sample size and

inclusion/exclusion criteria will be determined through discussion between NTI staff and site leaders.

Risks and Benefits:

Participants will be child welfare staff and supervisors who work with children and families impacted by guardianship and adoption. By participating in the evaluation, individuals completing the training will have the opportunity to provide input into the refinement of the curriculum.

Risks of participation are minimal. There is a risk of breach of confidentiality of data. To minimize this risk, data will be stored in a secure system. All staff members' participation and data will remain confidential; only approved evaluation team members will have access to identified data. Any identifying information provided by participants will be used only to link data collected at multiple time points and to provide any technical assistance requested. Identifying information will be destroyed once a user has completed his/her participation. The data from the study may be published. However, no identifying information will be used in reports or publications.