



## Focus on Module 2:

### Understanding Mental Health Needs of Children and Youth

#### Applying Risk and Protective Factors

In a team meeting, have staff think of a child or foster or adoptive family that is having serious difficulties. Take a moment to jot down two or three presenting problems.

- Review the handout, *“Risk and Protective Factors for Mental Health in Children”*. Discuss the factors that may have contributed to these problems and identify biological, psychological, and social risk and protective factors. Consider how these factors inform your work with families.

#### Understanding Diagnosis and Treatment

- Did you know? 21-39% of children in foster care are prescribed psychotropic medications.

Are you aware of the medications used by children on your caseload, as well as potential side effects of those medications?

- Review the infographic and guidelines regarding medication usage from ACF with your staff, *“Promoting the Safe Appropriate and Effective Use of Psychotropic Medication for Children in Foster Care”*. Encourage staff to provide this handout to psychiatric professionals to whom they refer,
- The Program Directory handout provides a sampling of resources that can be useful for foster/adoptive families. Research options in your area or available to them nationally and compile a list to share. Remember to update periodically!

#### Helping Children Tell Their Story

- In a team meeting, watch the video in Module 2 Lesson 3, *“What it’s like being Taken Away”*. Does this change your understanding of the child’s experience?



### Helping Children Tell Their Story (cont'd)

- Ask your staff to try one new tool presented in lesson 3 to help a child on their caseload tell their story. For instance: Lifebooks, Storyboards, Digital Stories, Genograms, Ecomaps, Timelines, Bibliotherapy, Cinematography, and Memory Boxes. Ask them to reflect on their experience in a team meeting.

### Assessing Foster and Adoptive Parents

- Review the questions listed in “Assessing Attachment-Readiness and Capabilities in Prospective Adoptive Parents”. Lead a discussion with staff about home studies provided to your agency and/or by your agency. List areas where you are doing well with home studies and areas where you would like to see improvements.

### Helping Families Find a Therapist

- Encourage your staff to print and use the questions provided in the handout, “Finding the Right Therapist” to help families find an adoption competent therapist.
- Ask staff to proactively reach out to therapists to ask about their adoption and foster care specific training. Start a resource list of local therapists to refer families.
- Utilize the Child Welfare Information Gateway [Foster Care and Adoption Directory](#) or the [State Foster/Adoptive Coalitions](#) to search for local resources.
- Begin talking to therapists in your area about the opportunity to participate in NTI for Mental Health professionals. Refer them to your Implementation Specialist or the NTI website: [adoptionsupport.org/nti](http://adoptionsupport.org/nti).

## NTI Training Improved Competence

*“The training improved my knowledge and competence. I have a good working relationship with mental health providers, but now will be able to work with them on a different level with the info learned in the training.”*

-NTI user

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**Contact NTI for more information:** [ntiadmin@adoptionsupport.org](mailto:ntiadmin@adoptionsupport.org)

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