



*Focus on:*  
**THE CASE FOR ADOPTION  
COMPETENCY**



**THE IMPORTANCE AND THE NEED...**

Adoption and foster care are profound life experiences that touch many people, both throughout their lifetime and into future generations. This is an important topic because:

- The APA has identified Mental Health issues as the greatest unmet need of children in foster care.
- Adoptive families seek mental health services at a 3 to 5 times higher rate than the general population.

**Why do Mental Health Professionals Need to be Adoption Competent?**

Despite achieving permanency for millions of children, adoption/guardianship practice has grown more complicated over the years, with most children entering their new families at older ages following histories of deprivation, abuse, multiple losses, institutionalization, or other traumas. These life experiences, coupled with normative stressors

associated with being adopted, have resulted in significant parenting challenges for many adoptive families.

**Families often seek help multiple times without significant improvement.** It is difficult to find a therapist with basic adoption competency, and harder still to find one with advanced knowledge of practice models that are most likely to be effective with this population.

**See the resource *Adoptive Parents' Responses Related to Qualities of Therapists* to understand unhelpful help.** Contrast these comments with the nature of "helpful help," and you will better understand why adoption competence is critical for successfully intervening with these families.

**Module 1 also examines:**

- The limitations of current diagnostic and treatment models in addressing the range of issues of adopted youth and families;



- The different options for permanency through a range of adoption types and guardianship, as well as the impact of impermanency; and
- The seven core psychological issues that impact adopted persons and their parents, surfacing and resurfacing over the lifecycle.

## HOW IS THIS COURSE STRUCTURED?

This training consists of **10 modules, typically with 5 lessons of approximately half-hour each, totaling 25 hours of training.** There are pre- and post-tests for each module. Successful completion of all modules earns 25 CEUs certified by the National Association of Social Workers at no additional cost. (Tests can be repeated if needed.) Resources are provided for each Module that can be down-loaded, saved, and printed.

### How Does this Training Engage the Learner?

- Utilizes participant interaction and contains video clips of experts and families.
- Contains activities to support transfer of learning.
- Integrates both experiential insights and scholarly expertise.
- Offers a wealth of resources that you can print and use.
- Provides a journal to note insights and strategies that you would like to incorporate into your practice. Completing these for your own use will help you more fully integrate and apply this training.

**See quiz on page 3**

## NTI Training Helps Improve Adoption Mental Health Competency

*“For a variety of reasons, mental health professionals typically do not receive the training required to fill adoption-related counseling needs and, too often, either do not fully understand why such training is necessary or mistakenly believe the knowledge they already have is sufficient.”*

Dr. David Brodzinsky

### NTI’s National Training Initiative Partners:



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**Contact NTI for More Information:** [ntiadmin@adoptionsupport.org](mailto:ntiadmin@adoptionsupport.org)

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## ASSESSING YOUR CURRENT ADOPTION COMPETENCE:

To evaluate your own level of adoption-competence, please rate the items below, using this scale:

**1 = Not much awareness or knowledge**

**2 = Beginning awareness or knowledge**

**3 = Moderate knowledge & skill**

**4 = Thorough knowledge & skill**

\_\_\_ *Psychological issues related to adoption and how they manifest over development.*

\_\_\_ *Ability to conduct an adoption-competent psychosocial assessment.*

\_\_\_ *Impact of complex trauma on all aspects of development and practice models targeting these youth, such as DDP, ARC, TBRI, NMT, etc.*

\_\_\_ *Helping parents create a healing environment for adopted youth from different backgrounds, including teaching therapeutic parenting skills.*

\_\_\_ *Knowledge of the characteristics and skills that make adoptive families successful.*

\_\_\_ *Understanding attachment challenges and how to assist children and parents in building “felt safety” and trusting relationships.*

\_\_\_ *Ability to work therapeutically with families using a family systems approach.*

\_\_\_ *Knowledge of the continuum of openness in adoption, including helping adoptive families manage relationships with children's birth family.*

\_\_\_ *Helping children and their parents cope with losses inherent in adoption and guardianship and integrate past traumatic experiences.*

\_\_\_ *Ability to assist youth and adoptive parents in exploring race, ethnicity, and cultural differences and promote youth’s positive identity formation.*

**If your ratings above are not in the 3-4 range, this is the course for you!**

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