Lifelong Adoption Support

nurture. inspire. empower.
This is Michael...

Michael is a 10-year-old boy from Ethiopia who has already faced a lifetime’s worth of challenges.
When he was four... Michael watched his mother struggle and eventually die from AIDS. Before being sent to an orphanage, Michael spent a year in a military field hospital where he suffered daily abuse and witnessed untold horrors.

At the age of seven... Michael’s life changed dramatically when an American family adopted him. Yet, despite moving half a world away from his old life, Michael could not escape his traumatic past. His family soon learned that parenting a child with a history of painful trauma requires a very unique skill set.
Every family, biological or adoptive, encounters various challenges. However, families formed through adoption also encounter special issues connected to the adoption experience. Understanding and acknowledging the unique needs of adoptive families is critical for providing these families with effective support. Adoption does not end at placement – it is a lifelong journey.
According to a survey of adoptive parents, access to mental health counseling is the major unmet need following adoption placement.¹

¹ Casey Family Services 2003
Recognizing this need, the Center for Adoption Support and Education (C.A.S.E.) was created in 1998 to provide pre-and post-adoption counseling and educational services to the adoptive and foster care community.
The Center for Adoption Support and Education (C.A.S.E.)

STRENGTHENS
the well-being of foster and adoptive families,
PROMOTES
adoption awareness,
ENHANCES
adoption sensitivity, and
DEVELOPS
the skills for professionals and families to empower children to thrive.
C.A.S.E.’s adoption competent mental health services help adoptive and foster care families face unique challenges.

**Adoption Story**
Understanding individual adoption stories and coping with feelings of loss and grief over birth family.

**Identity**
Forming a cohesive positive identity and dealing with racism and bullying.

**Additional Loss**
Coping with the loss of siblings, extended family members, previous caregivers, friends and culture.

**Experienced Trauma**
Resulting in physical, emotional, academic and social difficulties.
Two years after his adoption, Michael had been hospitalized twice for violence against his peers. The family had also been struggling with Michael's homicidal comments, suicidal thoughts, and running away. Hospital staff told Michael's parents that he would unlikely be able to form attachments because of his early trauma.

Hopeless, his parents began to consider dissolving the adoption.
When Michael's family came to C.A.S.E., adoption competent therapists recognized that Michael's behaviors were rooted in complex trauma and post-traumatic stress disorder. The most important first step was educating Michael's parents about the diagnosis and explaining to them that his trauma affected his brain development. In fact, Michael's emotional age at the time was closer to 4 years old. Through continued education and therapy, Michael and his parents began the long journey towards healing.
When these challenges are not addressed, they impact the entire family. It is not only the children who require assistance – their parents do, too.

Without support and guidance, prospective parents in the midst of the adoption process might simply walk away. Without post-adoption support, families can become overwhelmed and might even take the drastic step of trying to reverse the adoption, leaving the child to an unknown fate. When parents don’t know how to handle challenges, children and teens can also be at risk of avoidable hospitalization and placement in long-term residential care.
Over the past 17 years, C.A.S.E.’s pre- and post-adoption clinical interventions have helped over 5,600 families.

C.A.S.E.’s highly skilled staff helps:
- Expectant/birth parents
- Prospective and waiting adoptive parents
- Foster children, teens and families
- Adopted children, teens, and their families
- Siblings of adopted children
- Adult adoptees and their families.

C.A.S.E.’s wide range of services have resulted in:
- Successful transition from foster care to permanency
- Healing of early trauma, loss and grief
- Promotion of secure attachments
- Increase in self-regulatory behaviors
- Improve functioning in school and community
- Adoption preservation
Michael, his parents and C.A.S.E.’s counselors began addressing his complex trauma through play therapy. This allowed Michael to express himself in his own way and enhanced positive interaction between Michael and his parents.

Michael’s aggressive behaviors began to subside, making room for smiles and occasional laughter. Michael started allowing hugs and other signs of affection.

With C.A.S.E.’s help, Michael began to bond with his parents and the family grew stronger every day.
Many individuals and families who desperately need help cannot afford it. In honor of Jockey International’s CEO, C.A.S.E. maintains the “Debra Waller Scholarship” Fund, which reduces counseling fees for eligible families.

Your contribution to this fund could change a family’s life.

- $150 provides one session of individual or family therapy
- $250 provides assessment for one family
- $750 for one child to participate in an 8-week kids psycho-educational group
- $1,800 provides three months of therapy for one family

Donate by phone or online at:
301.476.8525
adoptionsupport.org
About the Masks

Working with teens, C.A.S.E. uses masks as a therapeutic tool to address identity. These masks, created by our clients, express their inner thoughts, feelings and perceptions about who they are — how they see themselves and how they believe or want others to see them.