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inspire.  
empower.

# C.A.S.E. Trainings on Adoption Practice

***C.A.S.E. offers more than 20 educational trainings, including our most popular program, W.I.S.E. Up! Many of these trainings can be tailored for parents, mental health professionals or both audiences. We also offer unique trainings for educators (see last page).***

***Look for the yellow NEW! symbol to identify the 8 NEW trainings now available.***

- **Topics and length can be customized to meet your needs**
- **Conducted remotely or in-person**
- **CEUs available for child welfare and mental health professionals**
- **Contact Ellen Singer, LCSW-C at 301-476-8525 ext. 112 or [singer@adoptionssupport.org](mailto:singer@adoptionssupport.org) to schedule a training or for more information.**

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## **1. Adoption Through the Eyes of Children: A Developmental Perspective**

***For Parents and Professionals***



Participants will gain an in-depth understanding of what children comprehend, think and feel about adoption as they grow up, 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 methods for addressing ambiguous loss and grief, self-esteem and self-value and identity through an adoption-competent developmental lens. 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. Adopting the Older Child/Teen**

***For Parents and Professionals***



Approximately 130,000 children and teens in foster care are awaiting permanent, loving adoptive families. Older children in several countries are also available for adoption. Many of these children have histories of complex trauma. To understand and meet their unique needs, parents must have a special skill set known as "trauma-informed parenting." This training provides an overview of the common parenting challenges including attachment, academic difficulties, emotional/social/behavioral issues as well as effective strategies for responding to these challenges. Participants will also explore the characteristics of parents best equipped to ensure a successful adoption experience.

**3. Attachment-focused Parenting: Parenting Children That Have Experienced Trauma**  
*For Parents and Professionals*



Foster and adoptive parents need reassuring, practical advice for promoting secure attachment in their children. This workshop helps participants understand how attachment develops and familiarizes them with the different styles of attachment. Participants will also explore the life events and experiences, including neurobiological influences that interrupt the development of secure attachment. Attachment-focused parenting techniques will be addressed as well as sensory-related activities that help with emotional regulation and promote connection.

**4. Beneath the Mask: Adoption Through the Eyes of Adolescents**  
*For Parents and Professionals*



Adolescence is a time when adoptees struggle with an extra layer of challenges related to their identity, their future and their past. Participants 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. Participants will gain an understanding of how adoption influences separation from parents, identity formation and decisions related to sexuality. In her book, [Beneath the Mask: Understanding Adopted Teens](#), author and C.A.S.E. CEO Debbie Riley highlights “the six spots where teens get stuck” as key vulnerabilities around the adoption experience in adolescence. This workshop will address those stuck spots in detail. Potentially 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)

The [Beneath the Mask: Understanding Adopted Teens](#) book can each be purchased separately in C.A.S.E.’s [online store](#).

**5. Beyond Placement: Understanding the Developmental and Psychological Tasks of Adoptive Families**  
*For Professionals*

This workshop will explore the vulnerability and risk factors for adoptive parents and compare the psychological tasks that all parents have with tasks specifically for adoptive parents. Losses for both parents and the child will be discussed within the family’s relationship issues of entitlement and claiming will be addressed as a predictable challenge parents face in providing appropriate, trauma-informed parenting that promotes attachment. 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.

**6. Disruption and Dissolution: What Next?**  
*For Professionals*

The disruption of a pre-adoptive placement as well as the dissolution of a placement after adoption finalization is devastating for all family members. This workshop will explore the challenges involved in both 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. This workshop also addresses strategies to support ALL family members struggling with complex feelings related to loss and grief in the aftermath of disruption/dissolution.

## **7. Enhancing the Assessment Process for Prospective Foster and Adoptive Parents** *For Professionals*



This workshop is designed for child welfare professionals who conduct home studies and who provide preparation and education for prospective parents. Children and adolescents with complex trauma histories that include neglect or abuse, loss and grief, breaks in attachment need informed, prepared, dedicated parents. In this workshop, participants will learn: 1) what prospective parents need to understand about the children in foster care needing homes and families; 2) the qualities and characteristics, beliefs and attitudes of parents best equipped to successfully meet the needs of vulnerable children and manage the behavioral, social, emotional and academic challenges that traumatized children may bring to their foster or adoptive families; 3) strategies for assessing parents' mental health, readiness and competence to become a "healing parent;" 4) the components of a professional home study report that can assist in placement decisions.

## **8. The Experience of Search and Reunion in Domestic and International Adoption** *For Parents and Professionals*



The media often presents the dramatic and heartwarming aspects of search and reunion, but for those involved, the reality is much more complex. This training explores the common questions and concerns of all adoption circle members involved in search and reunion. Participants will learn how to prepare for this unique and important experience as well as how to manage the potential relationship challenges that can present after reunion over time. Special considerations for opening closed adoptions with minors is given. The impact of technology and social media on search and reunion will also be discussed.

## **9. Healing Through Lifebooks** *For Parents and Professionals*

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.

## **10. Improving Outcomes for Success: Building a Child Welfare and Mental Health Adoption-Competent Workforce** *For Professionals*



Access to adoption-competent mental health services is a critical and well-documented need of children and families coming together through adoption in order to promote positive outcomes and the long-term success of adoptions. Meeting the diverse needs of adoptive families requires mental health providers to infuse knowledge gained through specialized adoption competency training, which may influence one's assessment protocols, diagnoses, treatment plans and interventions. In this workshop, C.A.S.E. CEO Debbie Riley will provide an overview of the development, implementation, and rigorous multi-year evaluation of the Training for Adoption Competency (TAC) Program now being implemented in 17 states, as well as the foundational constructs and examples of the web-based products and curricula being developed through the federal National Mental Health Training Initiative (NTI) to build an adoption-competent mental health workforce among child welfare and mental health providers throughout the United States.

## **11. Love is Not Enough: Parenting in Transracial Adoption** *For Parents and Professionals*

Well-intentioned transracially adoptive parents often deny or minimize the significance of race, mistakenly equating being “color-blind” with love. Often 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.

## **12. Openness in Adoption: The Importance of Birth Family in the Lives of Adopted and Foster Children** *For Parents and Professionals*

This workshop provides the opportunity for participants to examine how and why birth parents and other members of the birth family are so critically important to adopted children, and how adoptive parents’ attitudes toward birth families impact their children’s self-concept and identity. Presenters also address age-appropriate communication about birth family, helping children and adolescents come to terms with difficult information, and what parents and 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.

## **13. Same Family, Different Stories: Parenting Siblings by Birth/Adoption and/or with Unique Adoption Experiences** *For Parents and Professionals*

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 or adoption.

## **14. Second (or Third?) Choice is Not Second Best: Making the Decision to Adopt** *For Parents and Professionals*

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 to determine if adoption is the appropriate option as well as which type of adoption option is best for a prospective parent. This workshop can include consideration of alternative family building methods such as donor egg or sperm, surrogacy, etc. in the decision-making process.

## 15. Talking with Children about Adoption *For Parents and Professionals*



This workshop covers the basics of communication with children (through age 12) to help them understand their adoption story. Participants will 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; 3) engaging birth family members in this process in open adoptions, and 4) 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. Content in this workshop can be tailored to specific audience needs such as focusing on early or later years. Participants also learn how to use C.A.S.E.'s unique card game, *52 Ways to Talk about Adoption* to promote family adoption discussion.

The card game, *52 Ways to Talk about Adoption*, can be purchased separately in C.A.S.E.'s [online store](#).

## 16. Therapists as Adoption Specialists *For Professionals*



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 and 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)

## 17. Too Many Losses Too Soon: Loss and grief among foster and adopted children *For Parents and Professionals*



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.

## **18. Understanding and Treating Mental Health Issues of Adopted Children and Adolescents** *For Parents and Professionals*



In the past, the adoption experience was pathologized (“the adoption syndrome”). Today we understand that factors related to adoption have the potential to significantly impact the mental health of adopted youth: pre-natal experiences including alcohol or drug exposure; lack of pre-natal care, birthmother stress or depression, as well as early life traumatic experiences including neglect and abuse. Children may have genetic vulnerabilities to anxiety, depression and other mental health concerns. In addition, we know that some children may be temperamentally more vulnerable in coping with the normal, predictable challenges of adoption including loss and grief, feelings related to rejection and abandonment, identity development. This workshop provides an understanding of the common mental health challenges faced by adopted youth as well as an overview of the most effective therapies utilized by C.A.S.E.’s adoption-competent therapists, including play therapy, sand tray therapy, individual, group and family therapy, and use of creative arts.

## **19. Understanding and Working with Prospective and Waiting Adoptive Parents** *For Professionals*

Designed for private adoption agencies working with prospective adopters, this workshop addresses the motivation to adopt, infertility as a Life Crisis, understanding the process of making the decision to adopt, tools for effective communication and stress management with waiting parents. A child’s understanding of adoption from a development perspective is examined. This perspective includes a discussion of the process of attachment in adoption and potential challenges, especially when children are adopted at older ages with trauma histories. Participants will learn how to support families to help ensure adoption success.

## **20. The Value of Post-Adoption Services** *For Professionals*

This workshop is adapted to meet the needs of the hosting organization. Topics include research and data which support the benefits of adoption-competent therapy and other post-adoption services, the importance of funding streams to allow parents to access these services and organizational strategies that have been developed by various programs across the country. The goal of this workshop is to assist organizations in making decisions about developing effective, inclusive and accessible services in their area. Debbie Riley, CEO of C.A.S.E., has worked with states across the country as well as numerous local jurisdictions as they develop programs in their area. (Recommended as half or full-day program)

## **21. What’s Adoption Got to do with it? Talking with Children and Teens About Sexuality** *For Parents and Professionals*



Talking with children about sex can be one of the most challenging aspects of parenthood. This task may generate additional anxiety in adoptive parents because adoption stories and sexuality are intertwined in complex, emotional ways for both adoptive parents and their children. Participants will learn the information and guidance that children and teens need to develop the self-esteem and positive sexual identity that will enable them to make decisions that ensure their emotional and physical health and safety. This training highlights how parents can communicate with teens who are often reluctant to communicate with them about adoption and/or sexuality.



## 22. W.I.S.E. Up!<sup>sm</sup>: Empowering Children to Answer Questions About Adoption *For Families (or Parents only)*

W.I.S.E. UP! is a simple but important tool developed by C.A.S.E. to empower adopted children to handle the tough, intrusive and often troubling comments and questions they receive about adoption. This program has spread across the country and internationally as children have embraced its simplicity and power to address the consistent challenge of explaining adoption and their own unique adoption stories. W.I.S.E. UP! gives children, teens, and parents the power to choose comfortable ways to communicate about adoption with others.

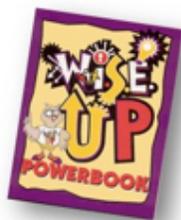
Through concurrent 2-hour parent-child workshops, the W.I.S.E. UP! Program involves fun arts and crafts, role plays and discussion to help teach children how to use this tool, while their parents are provided with best practices in supporting their children with W.I.S.E. Up!. Each family receives C.A.S.E.'s W.I.S.E. Up! Powerbook, created to help families continue to reinforce and practice the W.I.S.E. Up! method.

The W.I.S.E. Up! Powerbook and the W.I.S.E. Up! Powerbook for Children in Foster Care can each be purchased separately in C.A.S.E.'s [online store](#).

***\*The W.I.S.E. Up! training can also be tailored for child welfare professionals and foster parents based on C.A.S.E.'s W.I.S.E. Up! Powerbook for Foster Care.***

### ***For Facilitators***

Want to bring this powerful program to your community? Professionals in this training will learn how to offer the W.I.S.E. Up! concurrent workshops for children and parents. Note: This training is a highly interactive program; facilitators will be trained by C.A.S.E. personnel and become Certified W.I.S.E. UP! Trainers. W.I.S.E. Up! has been our most popular remote training offered. Visit our [facilitator training page](#) online to learn more.



**W**alk away or ignore what is said or heard

**I**t's private and I don't have to answer it

**S**hare something about my adoption story

**E**ducate others about adoption in general

## C.A.S.E. Trainings for Educators

### **S.A.F.E. at School<sup>sm</sup>: 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 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.

### **Facilitating Educational Success for Foster Children and Adopted Children: 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 training addresses working with teachers to ensure sensitivity and understanding of adoption-related experiences and issues and how they may manifest themselves at school -- including 1) understanding the emotional overlay of adoption for children with learning differences (e.g. ADHD, learning disabilities) and other special needs; 2) understanding how mental health challenges resulting from early life traumatic experiences including loss and grief may impact school performance and 3) very critically, ensuring that parents and school personnel are able to work together to support the needs of 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. Material from C.A.S.E.'s signature S.A.F.E. at School in-service training is included.