

## Benefits for Child Welfare Agencies

The [National Adoption Competency Mental Health Training Initiative \(NTI\)](#) is a comprehensive, standardized, web-based training designed to support child welfare and mental health professionals who serve foster, adoptive and guardianship families. NTI provides strategies and tools to enhance the skill set of mental health and child welfare professionals who in turn will be able to best support the unique needs of families connected to foster care, adoption and guardianship. NTI is additionally well suited to support child welfare organizations in meeting many of the practice parameters outlined in the Child and Family Services Review (CFSR) as well as the Family First Preventive Services Act.

### NTI Supports Family First and Preventive Services Act

The Family First and Preventive Services Act (FFPSA) maintains an essential focus on preserving families and preventing unnecessary foster care placements. Services emphasized in the FFPSA are those which are supported with evidence as well as those which are delivered through a trauma-informed lens.

NTI is perfectly aligned with these goals as NTI can help organizations prepare a **skilled, competent workforce**. The training provides **knowledge, strategies and tools** to professionals through a lens that accounts for the trauma, loss, and grief children and families have experienced. Through enhancing the skills of professionals involved with foster, adoptive and guardianship families, NTI shows promise in **preserving family stability and enhancing overall well-being**. In fact, outcomes demonstrate that 75% of child welfare professionals who participated in the [pilot phase](#) report that it is very true/often true that since taking NTI “I take the time to assess the necessity of moving a child before making a decision to do so, and work toward preventing unnecessary moves.”

### NTI Supports CFSR Goals

Findings from Round Three of the CFSR indicate that many of the participating states need more supports in a variety of practice areas to better serve children, youth, and families.

- In fact, most states struggled to achieve a strength rating in key areas such as **permanency goals, stability of foster care placements, and preserving connections**, to name just a few.
- Issues such as the **child’s behavior impacting placement stability** and **children and parents not receiving needed services** were both identified as practice concerns among other items. Additionally, the report indicates that children and parents are often not involved in case planning and siblings are not being considered for placement together after initial separation.
- In particular, the report identifies a **lack of needed services, including trauma informed services, as contributing to service provision difficulties**. Further, concerns were identified related to the adequacy of assessment and providing services that target identified needs.
- The report also indicated concerns surrounding **appropriate oversight of medications prescribed for mental/behavioral health issues**.
- With regard to systemic factors, **the majority of states under review did not achieve substantial conformity for staff and provider training**. In particular, the CFSR report indicates that **barriers to attending training included training frequency and location**. Additionally, some agencies did not currently maintain ongoing training requirements and while initial training was well done it did not accurately reflect the demands of the position. As for service array – report noted insufficient availability of trauma-informed services in the community.

## NTI Content Addressing CFRS Goals

NTI provides an **evidence-based, standardized and accessible web-based** training that enhances practitioners understanding of adoption specific experiences and needs. NTI training includes modules focusing on understanding the mental health needs of children and youth, how to build and strengthen attachment, understanding the impact of loss and trauma on behavior and development, challenges in positive identity formation, the need for post-permanency services to address challenges in the family life cycle, and how race, ethnicity, culture, sexual orientation and gender identity or expression impact the adoption or guardianship experience. The following list provides a sampling of NTI content that aligns with and may help states better achieve CFRS goals and performance outcomes:

- **Continuity of family relationships and connections is preserved for children**
  - *Strategies to keep children and youth connected to their birth family, significant connections, culture, and community*
  - *The importance of maintaining sibling connections for children who experienced loss and trauma*
- **Families have enhanced capacity to provide for their children's needs**
  - *Strategies for assessing child and parent needs, including parental issues that may be interfering with the ability to parent effectively*
  - *Strategies to support parents' ability to provide a healing environment and support their child's healing from trauma and loss*
  - *Therapeutic parenting strategies that workers can teach parents to address challenging behaviors*
  - *Strategies to support communicative openness in adoptive/guardianship families*
- **Children receive adequate services to meet their physical and mental health needs**
  - *Role of the caseworker in making appropriate referrals and monitoring treatment*
  - *Normalizing help-seeking as a strength and providing questions parents can ask to determine if a therapist is adoption-competent*
  - *The essential role of parental involvement in treatment*
- **Service Array and Resource Development**
  - *Information about evidence-based and evidence-informed treatment models and strategies that may be effective with the population*
  - *The need for post-permanency services to support ongoing and developmental needs of child and family*
  - *NTI companion curriculum for therapists to build adoption competency*
- **Foster and Adoptive Parent Licensing, Recruitment and Retention**
  - *Tools for assessing parental readiness and information to include in parent training*

## NTI Supports System Change and Collaboration with Mental Health Service Systems

Research has long demonstrated that there is a dearth of adoption-specific curriculum in the education and training of child welfare and mental health professionals. NTI seeks to fill that gap with **thorough and comprehensive training informed by extensive research**, providing a **trauma-informed model** for understanding the intricacies of the foster care, adoption, and guardianship experience and offering practical strategies to support children, youth, and families. Further, NTI supports **system change and improved collaboration** between child welfare and mental health systems through the aligned content and shared language of the companion curriculum, NTI Training for Mental Health Professionals. As a web-based training, NTI is easily accessible, standardized, and completely free. Through NTI, professionals have access to new and effective ways to engage in practice, enhance permanency, and improve lives.

For more information about bringing NTI to your system, [contact us at info@adoptionsupport.org](mailto:info@adoptionsupport.org).

