



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: adoptionssupport.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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National Adoption Competency
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Contact NTI for more information: ntiadmin@adoptionssupport.org

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