



NOTE: This Toolkit is also available on our website...[Click Here](#)

## Table of Contents

Item	Page
1. EASY ACCESS LINKS: NTI Info, Demos, & Enrollment.....	2
2. FAQ + All the Facts.....	3
3. C.A.S.E. Trainings and CE Credit Approval.....	5
4. NTI Training for Child Welfare Professionals – Modules and Lessons .....	6
5. NTI Overview of Child Welfare Supervisory Lessons Snapshot.....	14
6. NTI Training for Mental Health Professionals - Modules and Lessons.....	17
7. NTI Training for School-Based Mental Health Professionals - Modules and Lessons .....	26
8. Why Should Mental Health Professionals and Providers Invest in NTI?.....	32
9. Join the National Directory of Adoption Competent Mental Health Professionals.....	36
10. Implementation Planning Checklist .....	38
11. Best Practice for NTI Implementation.....	44



**National Adoption Competency  
Mental Health Training Initiative**

**Advancing Practice for Permanency & Well-Being**<sup>TM</sup>

## **EASY ACCESS LINKS: NTI Info, Demos, & Enrollment**

**The National Adoption Competency Mental Health Training (NTI)** is a free, online training to address the mental health and developmental challenges of children, youth and their foster, adoptive, and kinship families. Completers of the training receive a certificate of completion and free NASW or NBCC approved CE credits. The training for child welfare and mental health professionals, originally developed with federal funding, was adapted for school-based mental health professionals.

The following links are available to **(1) learn more (2) view demo lessons, (3) enroll to preview various lessons/modules, and (4) enroll in the curriculum of your choice.**

★ **NTI Training for Mental Health Professionals – 30-hour training**

1. Watch a brief introductory video: <https://adoptionsupport.org/nti/nti-mental-health-resources/>
2. View a demo of two of our lessons: <https://adoptionsupport.org/nti/nti-mental-health-resources/#training-demos>
3. Review the curriculum on the C.A.S.E. LMS: Key-MHPREVIEW\*  
<https://case.myabsorb.com?KeyName=MHPREVIEW>
4. Enroll in the training: <https://adoptionsupport.org/nti/access/access-for-individuals/>.

★ **NTI Training for Child Welfare Professionals – 20-hour training for child welfare staff and 25-hour training for child welfare supervisors.**

1. Watch a brief introductory video: <https://adoptionsupport.org/nti/nti-child-welfare-resources/>
2. View a demo of a lesson: <https://360.articulate.com/review/content/9b74a032-8ee7-426c-9f91-002ddd52de76/review>
3. Review the curriculum for Child Welfare workers on the C.A.S.E. LMS: Key-CWPREVIEW\* <https://case.myabsorb.com?KeyName=CWPREVIEW>

Review the curriculum for Child Welfare Supervisors on the C.A.S.E. LMS (note this is the same curriculum as the CW workers but has the additional supervisor lessons): Key – CWSREVIEW\* <https://case.myabsorb.com?KeyName=CWSREVIEW>

4. Enroll in either training: <https://adoptionsupport.org/nti/access/access-for-individuals/>.

★ **School-based Mental Health Professionals Training – 17.5-hour training for school counselors, social workers, psychologists, therapists, and other professionals.**

1. Watch a brief introductory video: <https://adoptionsupport.org/nti/school-based-mental-health-professionals-training/>
2. View a demo of the training: <https://adoptionsupport.org/nti-ed-module-demos/>
3. Review the curriculum on the C.A.S.E. LMS: Key - SCHREVIEW\*  
<https://case.myabsorb.com?KeyName=SCHREVIEW>
4. Enroll in the training: <https://case.myabsorb.com/#/signup-form>

\*Please note this version of each curriculum does not issue CE credits and is intended for review purposes only.



**National Adoption Competency  
Mental Health Training Initiative**

**Advancing Practice for Permanency & Well-Being**  
TM

## **FAQ + All the Facts!**

### **What is NTI?**

**The National Adoption Competency Mental Health Training (NTI)** is free, online trainings to address the mental health and developmental challenges of children, youth and their foster, adoptive, and kinship families. Those who successfully complete the trainings receive a certificate of completion and free NASW or NBCC approved continuing education credits.

### **Length?**

NTI Training for **Child Welfare Professionals** – 17.5-hour training

NTI Training for **Child Welfare Supervisors** – 21.5-hour training

NTI Training for **Mental Health Professionals** – 26.5-hour training

### **Continuing Education Credits?**

**NTI Child Welfare** – 17.5 CE Credits approved by NASW, NBCC

**NTI Child Welfare Supervisors** – 21.5 CE Credits approved by NASW, NBCC

**NTI Mental Health** – 26.5 CE Credits approved by NASW, NBCC

### **Why NTI Curricula?**

1. Specialized training is **critical** for those serving families post permanency.
2. Adoption competence is the hallmark of **quality care** for this population as it provides the knowledge and skills needed post permanency.
3. **Freely available**; funded by the Children's Bureau specifically for professionals serving post permanency families.

*(See reverse side)*

4. Developed and continued with:

- latest **adoption and guardianship research**
- **ongoing outcome studies** to ensure relevance and quality
- state-of-the-art learning technology for a more **enjoyable and interactive training experience**

## What do professionals say about the training?



NTI is the most concise training I have seen for Child Welfare staff ever!”

*Deputy Director of Foster Care and Adoption Child Welfare Services*



NTI training offers an easy-to-use and comprehensive overview of the unique issues of children in adoption and foster care placement. Many adoptive families share that therapists lacking adoption competence training can, at times, do more harm than good. I have found there is very little substantive training like NTI available today.”

*Dr. David Brodzinsky, Ph.D. Psychologist & Author, NTI Advisor,  
Professor Emeritus of Clinical Psychology, Rutgers University*

## How do you access NTI trainings on the C.A.S.E. LMS?

To enroll in NTI Child Welfare and Child Welfare Supervisor trainings:

<https://adoptionsupport.org/case-training-institute/nti/access/access-for-individuals>

To enroll in the NTI Mental Health training:

<https://adoptionsupport.org/case-training-institute/nti/access/access-for-individuals>

For more info:

[www.adoptionsupport.org/nti](http://www.adoptionsupport.org/nti)



# C.A.S.E. Trainings and CE Credit Approval

## When Trainings are Taken on the CASE Institute Learning Management System (LMS):

**NTI Training for Child Welfare Professionals**-----17.5 CE Credits approved by NASW, NBCC

**NTI Training for Child Welfare Supervisors**-----21.5 CE Credits approved by NASW, NBCC

**NTI Training for Mental Health Professionals**-----27 CE Credits approved by UConn, NASW, NBCC

**School-Based Mental Health Professionals Training**--17.5 CE Credits approved by NASW, NBCC

**Training for Adoption Competency**-----60 CE Credits approved by NASW, NBCC

- NASW = National Association of Social Workers
- NBCC = National Board of Certified Counselors is available for home-study programs
- UConn = University of Connecticut School of Social Work for revised training for Mental Health Professionals beginning 11/10/2025
- CE credits are included on the automated certificates that are created in the CASE Institute learning management system when participants complete the training. Certificates can be found in the participant's Transcript.
- C.A.S.E is not able to provide authoritative answers about continuing education requirements in every state for every profession. You may need to contact your state licensing organization to determine if the CE credits provided meet state licensing or continuing education requirements.

## For Systems that upload NTI Trainings to their own Learning Management Systems (LMS):

- The NTI Trainings for Child Welfare Professionals, Child Welfare Supervisors, and Mental Health Professionals can be uploaded to a host site's Learning Management System.
- The School-Based Mental Health Professionals Training is only available via the CASE Institute LMS.
- CASE can only provide CEs for trainings within the CASE Institute LMS; However, CASE can provide guidance on how to become an approved CE provider or submit trainings for CE approval.
  - If the training provider is not already an approved CE provider and they want to provide CE credit, they will need to submit the training to the state or national licensing board of their choosing for CE approval.
  - To assist in this process, the NTI Implementation Specialist has a CEU submission package that provides most of the materials a CE provider would need for the approval process.

## Other Ways to Access NTI with CE Credits:

NTI Training for Mental Health Professionals is also hosted on the American Psychiatric Association [learning management system](#) and can be accessed for free with 25 CME credits (AMA PRA Category 1 credits), 25 CE credits for Psychologists (through partnership with APA Office of Continuing Education in Psychology), and 25 CE credits for Social Workers (through ASWB).

## — Training for Child Welfare Professionals/Supervisors —

The National Adoption Competency Mental Health Training for Child Welfare Professionals provides the foundational knowledge, values and skills needed to enhance adoption competency for child welfare professionals supporting children, youth and families experiencing adoption guardianship, foster, or kinship care. Core competencies include understanding and addressing the complex and often nuanced mental health needs of children, with a focus on the impact of grief and loss, trauma, attachment, identity challenges, and the need for connection and belonging.

### **Module: A Case for Adoption Competency**

This module provides an overview of the National Adoption Competency Mental Health Training for Child Welfare Professionals and makes the case for the need for adoption competency. Lessons in this module orient participants to the training and training objectives, highlight the guiding principles that provide the foundation for work with children and families from an adoption or guardianship lens, provide context for the changes in adoption and guardianship options and practice today; and emphasize the urgent need for permanency for children and youth and the negative consequences of impermanence.

- Lesson 1:** Introduction and Overview of National Adoption Competency Mental Health Training for Child Welfare Professionals
- Lesson 2:** Guiding Principles that Support Effective Mental Health Practice with Children And Families
- Lesson 3:** Adoption and Guardianship Options Today
- Lesson 4:** Children’s Urgent Need for Permanence

### **Learning Objectives**

- Acquire appropriate expectations for the training based on an accurate understanding of the focus, nature, and main goals of the training
- Identify the core knowledge, values, and skills that characterize an adoption-competent Child Welfare Professional
- Recognize the elevated risk for an array of mental health disorders in children who are in or have exited foster care to adoption or guardianship
- Achieve a beginning recognition of the critical role that Child Welfare Professionals can play to address core mental health issues through effective casework practices

- Identify and integrate into your practice the guiding principles that inform adoption competent interventions to address the unique mental health needs of children and their adoptive and guardianship families
- Describe adoption and guardianship options and historic trends that influence adoption and guardianship policy and practice today
- Comprehend the urgent need for permanence, the negative impact of impermanency on children, youth, and families, and the importance of achieving and sustaining permanence for healthy development

## **Module: Understanding and Addressing Mental Health Needs of Children Moving Towards or Having Achieved Permanence through Adoption or Guardianship**

This module provides context for the complex mental health needs of children experiencing adoption or guardianship and the importance of helping children/youth understand their life stories. Lessons focus on new frameworks for assessment, case planning and treatment planning; skills and techniques for helping children/youth make sense of their stories; skills and techniques for helping parents and guardians to understand their child's behavior in the context of their experiences and reframe behavior; and how to refer to and collaborate effectively with adoption competent mental health clinicians to address mental health challenges.

- Lesson 1:** Overview of the Mental Health Needs of Children and Youth Moving Towards or Having Achieved Permanence Through Adoption and Guardianship
- Lesson 2:** Mental Health Assessment and Treatment Planning Through the Lens of Adoption and Guardianship
- Lesson 3:** Helping Children and Youth Create Their Life Narrative
- Lesson 4:** Working with Parents to Address Children's Mental Health Needs
- Lesson 5:** Child Welfare Role with Community Mental Health Providers

### **Learning Objectives**

- Define the normative behaviors of children and youth in or from foster care in the context of their unique experiences and current functioning
- Understand how risk and protective factors increase children and youth's vulnerability and resilience
- Expand your understanding of the unique assessment components for children and youth in care
- Recognize limitations of current diagnostic assessment and medication practices when used with children with foster care experiences
- Identify additional domains to assessment practice
- Understand that practices deemed evidence-based may not, by themselves, address the range of challenges of children within this population
- Identify and describe key features of specific interventions that have been demonstrated to be effective in addressing the effects of early trauma and promoting attachment
- Develop an understanding of the child's unique story and how that informs your work
- Foster skills that facilitate rapport, conversation, and openness with children and youth about



their past experiences

- Identify and describe specific techniques that help children and youth know more about their stories to work through their past experiences and form healthy relationships
- Develop skills to help parents assess their own parenting capabilities, motivation, and readiness to parent their child
- Identify and describe strategies to assist parents and other caregivers to reframe behaviors based on an understanding of the child's or youth's story
- Identify and develop strategies to engage parents in using therapeutic parenting to promote healing
- Identify and describe strategies for effective collaboration with mental health professionals, including strategies for:
  - ✓ Identifying a qualified and competent mental health professional
  - ✓ Providing a salient history when making referrals
  - ✓ Clarifying appropriate treatment expectations, and
  - ✓ Assuring that parents are involved in the therapeutic process

## **Module: Enhancing Attachment and Bonding for Children Moving Towards/Having Achieved Permanence through Adoption and Guardianship**

This module focuses on the heart of child welfare practice – understanding the process of forming attachments and the impact of poor nurture, separations and abrupt moves on that process. Lessons emphasize the importance of early relationships and experiences; the continuum of attachment styles; what professionals can do to promote attachment; skills and techniques to provide attachment-based casework with children and youth; strategies for working with parents and mental health professionals to promote felt safety and secure attachment; and evidence-informed attachment-based therapies.

- Lesson 1:** Attachment and Separation – Their Impact on the Development of Children
- Lesson 2:** Supporting Attachment After Children's and Youth's Separation from Birth Family
- Lesson 3:** Child Welfare Role in Working with Children to Support Healthy Attachment
- Lesson 4:** Child Welfare Role in Working with Parents to Enhance Attachment
- Lesson 5:** Working with Mental Health Providers to Support Attachment

### **Learning Objectives**

- Recognize the critical importance of attachment and the impacts of early insecure attachment on brain structure and social, emotional, verbal, and cognitive development
- Describe the process of early attachment formation, four categories of attachment styles in children, and behavioral outcomes associated with each style
- Identify and describe cultural differences in attachment patterns and implications for casework practice
- Recognize the negative impact of removal and placement in foster care on children's or youth's ability to form secure attachments



- Understand the critical need to support and comfort children and youth through necessary moves from first placement to permanent adoptive or guardianship family and help them maintain positive attachment relationships
- Understand that secure attachments can be built and re-built
- Define four primary goals in doing attachment casework with children and youth
- Identify and describe child welfare practice strategies and tools to minimize the relational trauma of interrupted attachments and to promote children's and youth's healthy attachments in new families
- Identify the four primary goals in attachment work with foster, adoptive, and guardian parents
- Identify and describe strategies and tools to:
  - ✓ Help families understand and honor their children's previous attachments and unique story
  - ✓ Address attachment challenges
  - ✓ Create a healing environment that facilitates attachment, and
  - ✓ Employ therapeutic parenting strategies that enhance children's safety and attachment.
- Identify and describe the primary therapeutic models for attachment work
- Demonstrate your ability to make appropriate referrals, monitor treatment progress and outcomes, and collaborate effectively with mental health professionals.

## Module: The Impact of Loss and Grief Experience on Children's Mental Health

The module focuses on the central role of loss and grief in foster care, adoption or guardianship and how loss and grief impact the mental health of children. Lessons will emphasize the different kinds of loss and grief, including ambiguous and unresolved losses; focus on how losses and grief manifest developmentally, behaviorally and emotionally and strategies for helping children heal; provide strategies and evidence-informed therapies to help professionals and parents support grieving children; and highlight the importance of openness and maintaining family, community and cultural connections to mitigate losses.

- Lesson 1:** The Impact of Ambiguous and Unresolved Loss and Grief on Emotional Adjustments and Mental Health of Children and Families
- Lesson 2:** Understanding Loss and Grief Issues in the Context of Developmental Stages, Emotional Adjustments, and Mental Health of Children and Youth
- Lesson 3:** Child Welfare Professional's Role in Helping Children and Youth Deal with Loss and Grief
- Lesson 4:** Child Welfare Professional's Role in Helping Parents and Guardians Support their Child's Grief
- Lesson 5:** Maintaining Connections and Openness and the Child Welfare Role with Community-Based Mental Health Providers in Helping Children Deal with Grief and Loss

## Learning Objectives

- Identify and describe the different kinds of grief and loss
- Describe how grief and loss manifests developmentally, behaviorally, and in emotional expression

- Recognize how cultural values and beliefs may affect expressions of loss and grief
- Describe how grief and loss manifests developmentally, behaviorally, and in emotional expression
- Assess more accurately children's and youth's behavior, distinguishing manifestations of unresolved grief from pathology
- Employ casework practices and tools with children and youth that facilitate conversations about grief and loss in a sensitive, empathic, and timely way
- Employ casework practices and tools to facilitate the grieving process, building readiness for new relationships
- Articulate the Child Welfare Professional's role in preparing, educating, and supporting parents to assist their children in their grieving
- Employ casework practices with parents and guardians to help them understand and support the grief process and build readiness for new relationships
- Understand the unique dynamics and challenges of the relative caregiving parent
- Identify and describe how openness in adoption and guardianship, and maintaining connections, can ameliorate loss and grief
- Assess an appropriate level of openness in a child's or youth's best interest
- Collaborate with mental health providers to assure that they understand the issues of loss and grief for children and youth in adoption and guardianship, the unique clinical issues in relative care, and the clinical issues pertaining to openness

## **Module: The Impact of Early and Ongoing Trauma on Child and Family Development, Brain Growth and Development, and Mental Health**

This module focuses on the important role of trauma, including trauma from separation, on brain development, behavior and mental health of children experiencing adoption or guardianship. Lessons provide a primer on brain development and the impact of early adverse experiences on children; the importance of shifting thinking from “what’s wrong with you” to “what happened to you”; understanding triggers of past trauma and therapeutic parenting strategies to help parents manage trauma triggers and build trust, safety, and healing; skills and strategies for helping children make meaning of their trauma stories and work through their trauma experiences; and collaborating with mental health therapists to provide evidence-informed therapies to support children’s healing.

- Lesson 1:** Traumatic Experiences of Children Achieving Permanence Through Adoption or Guardianship
- Lesson 2:** Understanding the Psychological Impact of Trauma and How Children and Youth Cope
- Lesson 3:** The Child Welfare Professional's Role in Working with Children and Youth to Identify and Address the Impact of Trauma
- Lesson 4:** Child Welfare Professional's Role in Working with Parents to Address the Impact of Trauma
- Lesson 5:** Child Welfare Professional's Role in Supporting Mental Health Treatment

## Learning Objectives

- Identify and describe the types of trauma frequently experienced by children in the child welfare system
- Recognize and assess the physical, neurochemical, and psychological impact of trauma and trauma-related mental health needs of children
- Describe the link between traumatic experiences and “survival behaviors”
- Identify four frameworks for understanding trauma and trauma-related behaviors in children and youth
- Reduce system-related trauma for children and youth
- Employ casework practices and tools with children and youth to build resilience and facilitate healing from trauma
- Employ casework practices and tools to build resilience and facilitate healing from trauma.
- Articulate important goals to address with parents to enhance the child’s “felt safety”
- Identify and describe the most common and effective practice models for trauma
- Articulate strategies for supporting treatment for children and youth in their families
- Recognize symptoms of secondary traumatic stress, burnout and vicarious trauma and develop strategies to reduce the effects

## Module: Positive Identity Formation and the Impact of Adoption and Guardianship

This module focuses on the nature of identity formation in the context of adoption and guardianship and how birth family and history impact identity formation. Lessons focus on understanding identity, barriers to positive identity and the importance of “knowing who you are”; the role of the professional in helping children tell the story of who they are; understanding the “Six Stuck Spots” in identity formation and the role of openness in positive identity formation; strategies for helping children and youth do the work of understanding who they are, where they came from, and where they are going; strategies for working with parents to integrate the history of birth family and influences of significant others in the lives of their children; and collaborating with mental health therapists to support children’s identity work.

- Lesson 1:** Overview: Identity Matters
- Lesson 2:** Identity Formation During the Adolescent Years for Youth Moving Towards or Having Achieved Permanence Through Adoption and Guardianship
- Lesson 3:** Child Welfare Professional’s Role with Children, Youth, and Birth Families in Supporting Positive Identity
- Lesson 4:** Child Welfare Professional’s Role with Parents in Helping Children and Youth with Positive Identity Formation
- Lesson 5:** Search and Reunion and Collaboration with Community-Based Mental Health Providers

## Learning Objectives

- Recognize the importance of self-identity, how it is formed, and its relationship to mental health
- Articulate the different stages of identity development and focus on adolescence as the pivotal time for clarifying identity

- Articulate the process of identity formation during adolescence and areas of vulnerability or concern, including the “Six Stuck Spots” for foster or adopted/guardianship youth
- Employ casework strategies and tools to help youth to integrate the various aspects of the birth family history into their sense of self
- Identify tools to help youth gather and process information about birth family history
- Employ casework strategies and tools to help parents support their children’s positive identity formation including addressing the Six Stuck Spots
- Prepare adoptive parents or guardians to develop communicative openness in addressing children’s questions and concerns about their past, their birth family, adoption or guardianship, and other issues related to their identity
- Describe the role search and reunion play in the identity formation of the youth and honor the need for knowledge about their birth family and adoption story
- Collaborate effectively with mental health professionals in supporting the youth’s search and reunion journey and identity formation process

## **Module: The Lifelong Journey: Maintaining Children’s Stability and Well-being in Adoptive and Guardianship Families**

This module looks at the factors that shape adoption or guardianship adjustment and facilitate the child and family’s ongoing safety, permanency and well-being. Lessons will explore the needs of children and families after adoption or guardianship and the kinds of services that help to sustain them; the role of the professional in preparing children and families to address mental health needs throughout the adoption or guardianship process; and, strategies for providing support to strengthen and sustain family stability post adoption or guardianship.

- Lesson 1:** Child, Youth, and Family Adjustment after Adoption or Guardianship
- Lesson 2:** The Mental Health Challenges of Children, Youth, and Families After Adoption or Guardianship
- Lesson 3:** Matching Child, Youth, and Family Needs to Postadoption and Guardianship Services
- Lesson 4:** Maintaining Stability Post-Permanency - The Ongoing Journey
- Lesson 5:** Review of Lessons and Tools to Enhance Adoption Mental Health Competence

### **Learning Objectives**

- Articulate the complexity of factors influencing post-adoption or guardianship adjustment, including normative developmental challenges and the most important parental qualities for sustaining permanency
- Assess risk factors that challenge adjustment and protective factors that support positive adjustment
- Articulate the continuum of mental health-related needs in adoptive or guardianship families and plan with parents/guardians how to address these needs
- Define the qualities in a therapist that indicate adoption-competent help and unhelpful help
- Describe the impact of resurfacing loss and trauma for youth and families
- Employ casework practices to help parents access supports and services after permanency and reframe help-seeking as a strength

- Describe the continuum of available formal and informal post-adoption or guardianship services to meet family needs
- Recognize the primary types and causes of instability and stages of adoption or guardianship breakdown
- Recognize your role in supporting the provision of postadoption services

## Supervisor Lessons

Each module includes a short additional lesson for Supervisors (a total of 3 hours) that identifies three key skills from that module that supervisors can help support staff to use in their daily casework practice. Lessons include brief discussion about challenges or barriers to using these skills and how supervisors can address them, potential conversation starters to use with staff, one or more video roleplays demonstrating discussions between supervisors and staff to help build or strengthen staff skills or address challenges staff may encounter in using the skills, as well as a summary of tools from the training that can be used. A downloadable **Supervisor Coaching and Activity Guide** also provides supervisors with a variety of activities relating to the three key skill areas identified for each module that supervisors can choose to use with their teams or staff individually. Examples of activities include:

- **Team discussion or self-assessment about attitudes and assumptions**
  - Use suggested conversation prompts to discuss worker assumptions about placing children with relative caregivers
- **Review of a case and discussion/processing of learned concepts**
  - Have workers review an assessment and discuss child's risk and protective factors. What additional information would be helpful to have?
- **Roleplay of applied skills**
  - What conversation starters would workers use with parents to discuss the importance of honoring their child's origins? How could workers better prepare or transition a child for a move to prevent abrupt separation and re-traumatization?
- **Shared activities as a team**
  - Have your team develop a format for Life Books if there is not already one in use. Invite a panel to come to team meeting to discuss an issue, share information about a community resource for families.
- **Application of suggested tools**
  - Have workers use the ACEs survey with prospective parents to assess their trauma history and discuss what they learned. Discuss questions that could be added to your intake/assessment process to better assess a child's trauma history.

---

*Funded through the Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Children and Families, Children's Bureau, Grant #90CO1121, #90CO1144. The contents of this publication do not necessarily reflect the views or policies of the funder, nor does mention of trade names, commercial products or organizations imply endorsement by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. This information is in the public domain. Readers are encouraged to copy and share it, but please credit the National Adoption Competent Mental Health Training Initiative.*



nurture.  
inspire.  
empower.

# NTI Overview of Child Welfare Supervisory Lessons

## ~ Snapshot ~

In addition to the Child Welfare Professional Training, an additional 3 hours of lessons will help supervisors support their staff to apply learning in their daily casework practice. A downloadable workbook provides supervisors with a variety of activities to choose from to use with their teams or staff individually.

The most salient points or takeaways are summarized and guiding principles that provide the foundation for the module are highlighted. Suggestions are provided to help build or strengthen staff skills and to address common challenges supervisors may encounter from staff. The activities are listed by lesson within each module.

---

### Suggested Activities:

- **Team discussion or self-assessment about attitudes, biases, concerns**
  - (Conversation prompts to discuss worker biases about placing children with relative caregivers)
- **Review of a case and discussion/processing of learned concepts**
  - (Have workers review an assessment and discuss child's risk and protective factors; what additional information would be helpful to have?)
- **Roleplay of applied skills**
  - (What conversation starters would workers use with parents to discuss the importance of honoring their child's culture; How could workers better prepare or transition a child for a move to prevent abrupt separation and re-traumatization?)
- **Shared activities as a team**
  - (Develop a format for Life Books if there is not already one in use; invite a panel to come to team meeting to discuss an issue, share information.)
- **Trial of suggested tools**
  - (Have workers use the ACE survey with prospective parents to assess their trauma history and discuss what they learned; Discuss questions that could be added to your intake/assessment process to better assess a child's trauma history.)

## Activity Example:

Below is an excerpt from the *NTI Supervisor Coaching and Activity Guide: Module 5 Lesson 3: The Role of Child Welfare Professionals in Helping Children Deal with Loss and Grief*.

### Lesson 3's primary objectives for applying knowledge in practice

- Engages children in discussions related to their loss experiences and responds appropriately to address their feelings and thoughts.
- Understands the key elements of addressing grief with children and youth.
- Understands the 3-5-7 model and seeks to apply it where applicable in their work with children.

### Lesson 3's suggested activities

1. As a team, have workers discuss the 8 suggestions listed below for helping a child struggling with loss, and the extent to which they carry these out in their practice, including in their work with parents. How might their practice be enhanced?
  - Help the child face reality. The pain needs to be acknowledged and the grieving process supported.
  - Encourage the child to express feelings. Support the child by explaining the reasons for the separation without denigrating the parents.
  - Tell the truth. Depending on the child's developmental level, the message should be that the parent(s) were not able to take care of the child. The permanency of the separation needs to be clear.
  - Encourage the child to ask questions. Be as truthful as possible without hurting the child. Never lie to the child. Prompt the child to ask questions that are on his mind.
  - Process with the child why the losses occurred. Ask the child what his ideas are about the reason for the moves and losses he has experienced.
  - Spend time with the child. Children who have experienced these profound losses will feel rejected, and sometimes guilty, as though they caused the loss. Spending time with the child talking about his feelings can build a trusting relationship and pave the way for other healthy relationships.
  - Encourage information about the past. This is a good time to use the Life Book to help the child recognize the continuity of his life, and to build the child's story. We have talked about the Life Book process and how important the child's story is. (Module 2, Lesson 3)
  - Understand your own feelings. It is difficult to share the pain of separation with a child and to be the one to voice the facts of the child's situation. As a child welfare professional it is important that you are able to hold the pain for the child while supporting him. If his feelings are not expressed and acknowledged, they will be suppressed and will re-emerge later, possibly jeopardizing a future placement.
2. As a group, discuss how workers' own painful feelings are triggered when they are working with children who are experiencing emotional pain. How might this impact their work? What can they do



to cope with their own feelings and still address the child's issues? How can you, as a supervisor, support workers in managing their painful feelings?

3. Have workers review the case of a child who demonstrates a significant grief reaction to moving to adoption or guardianship. What strategies from the lesson can you use to help him or her? Review the 5 goals of pre-placement work with children listed below and discuss how these might be addressed by workers or parents. Have workers roleplay how to have a conversation with parents about this work.
  - Diminish fears and worries of the unknown – This is for the child, the foster parents and the adoptive or guardianship parents.
  - Transfer attachments – The stronger the attachment to the previous parent is, the more important the transfer of attachment is. Contact between the current and future parent is important and may minimize divided loyalties.
  - Initiate the grieving process – Painful emotions can surface during the pre-placement visits, along with behaviors that can lead to hurrying the move. This could be a mistake. It is best not to move the child during the shock or denial stage of grief. It is better to move the child during the “sad” or “mad” stage of grief when the new parent can join the child in acknowledging the loss and help to use the strong emotions to aid in attachment.
  - Empower new caregivers – The new parents provide emotional nurturing and structure to create a safe environment for the child, and feel entitled to parent.
  - Encourage making commitments for the future – Everyone involved needs to make commitments about how they will work together on behalf of the child, including the child himself. This includes how contact will be maintained with important relationships, including siblings, therapist, former foster parents, and extended family members. This will help to minimize losses.
4. Have workers review Darla Henry's 3-5-7 model and discuss how these steps might be used in their work with a specific child who is approaching adoption or guardianship. How might the 3-5-7 model be incorporated into practice on a regular basis?
5. Ask each worker to practice using one tool from Module 5 to help children process grief.
  - Conversations with children about loss and grief
  - Supporting a child through separations
  - 3-5-7 Model
  - Life Books
  - Providing transition to Adoption or Guardianship

---

## Training for Mental Health Professionals

---

The National Adoption Competency Mental Health Training for Mental Health Professionals provides the foundational knowledge, values and skills needed to enhance adoption competency for mental health professionals providing or interested in providing therapeutic or clinical services to children, youth and families experiencing adoption or guardianship. Core competencies include understanding and addressing the complex and often nuanced mental health needs of children experiencing adoption and guardianship, with a focus on the impact of grief and loss, trauma, attachment, identity challenges, and the need for connection and belonging.

In addition to sharing clinical best practices in assessment and treatment and therapeutic parenting strategies, NTI provides an overview of evidence-based and evidence-informed treatment models that have been shown to be effective in helping children and youth heal from trauma and strengthen attachments.

### **Module: A Case for Adoption Competency**

This module provides an overview of the National Adoption Competency Mental Health Training for Mental Health Professionals and makes the case for the need for adoption competency in working with children, youth, and families experiencing adoption or guardianship. Lessons in this module orient participants to the training; highlight the guiding principles that provide the foundation for work with children and families from an adoption or guardianship lens; provide context for the changes in adoption and guardianship practice today; emphasize the urgent need for permanency for children; and introduce salient clinical issues for children and youth and their families experiencing adoption or guardianship from foster care, private infant adoption, or inter-country adoption.

**Lesson 1:** Course Overview and The Need for Adoption Competency

**Lesson 2:** The Language of Adoption

**Lesson 3:** Guiding Principles That Support Effective Mental Health Practice

**Lesson 4:** Achieving and Maintaining Permanence Is Key to Well-Being and Mental Health

**Lesson 5:** Pathways to Adoption and Guardianship Today

**Lesson 6:** Core Clinical Issues in Adoption and their Link to Mental Health

### ***Learning Objectives:***

- Acquire appropriate expectations for this course based on an accurate understanding of the focus, nature, and main goals of the training.
- Identify core knowledge, values, and skills that characterize an adoption competent mental health professional.

- Recognize the importance of using positive adoption language.
- Identify and integrate into your practice the guiding principles that inform adoption competent clinical interventions to address the unique mental health needs of children, youth, and their families.
- To understand the negative impact of impermanence on mental health and adjustment in adoptive and guardianship families.
- To integrate this understanding into the foundation of your practice with children, youth, and families.
- Describe the pathways to adoption and guardianship and how practice has changed over time.
- Identify common myths about adoption and describe the accurate information associated with each myth.
- The objective for this lesson is to identify the salient clinical issues associated with the various adoption and guardianship options.

### **Module: Understanding and Addressing the Complex Mental Health Needs of Children & Youth in Adoptive and Guardianship Families**

This module provides context for the complex mental health needs of children experiencing adoption or guardianship and the importance of helping children/youth understand their life stories. Lessons focus on: new frameworks for assessment; limitations of current diagnostic and medication practices commonly used with children with foster and/or institutional care experiences; skills and techniques for helping children/youth make sense of their adoption/guardianship stories; challenges related to developmental stages of the adoptive family life cycle; goals for therapeutic work and strategies for engaging families; and how to collaborate effectively with child welfare and other professionals to support appropriate treatment planning and intervention.

**Lesson 1:** The Big Picture: Understanding the Factors that Shape Children’s Adjustment in Adoptive and Guardianship Families

**Lesson 2:** Understanding the Impact of Early Childhood Experiences on Mental Health

**Lesson 3:** Tools and Techniques for Helping Children Integrate Their Life Stories

**Lesson 4:** Family Life is Paramount in Healing: Engaging and Working with Adoption and Guardianship Families

**Lesson 5:** Issues in Diagnosis and Treatment of Adopted Children’s Mental Health Needs

#### ***Learning Objectives:***

- Identify and understand the risk and protective factors for children and families through the lens of adoption and guardianship.
- Integrate the impact of risk and protective factors through the exploration of case examples.
- Understand how early life experiences and risk and protective factors impact a child's or youth's mental health and well-being, and to conduct assessment through an adoption and guardianship.
- Recognize the importance of knowing children’s unique and complete story and the negative impacts of missing or misinformation and secrets.
- Help children and youth construct a coherent life narrative that makes sense of their experiences and supports a positive identity.

- Identify and describe the developmental stages and challenges of the adopted individual's and adoptive family's life cycle.
- Recognize the need for family systems work with parents as primary agents of healing and the experts on their child.
- Identify and describe goals for family work and strategies for engaging families.
- Identify and describe the core mental health issues that are addressed in adoption competent clinical interventions with children, youth, and their adoptive and guardianship families.
- Recognize limitations of current diagnostic assessment and medication practices commonly used with children and youth with foster and/or institutional care experiences.
- Identify and describe strategies for effective collaboration with child welfare and other professionals that promotes information sharing, appropriate treatment planning and intervention, and parental involvement in the therapeutic process.

### **Module: Attachment, Child Development, and Mental Health - Promoting Security in Adoptive and Guardianship Families**

This module focuses on understanding the impact of early insecure attachment, poor nurture, separation, and abrupt moves on attachment and supporting the process of rebuilding or strengthening attachments. Lessons focus on understanding the continuum of attachment styles and challenges and the importance of accurate diagnosis of attachment disorders; provide tools for assessing attachment in children and parents and common goals for reparative work in your clinical practice; review behaviors associated with child and parent attachment styles and implications for clinical intervention; highlight therapeutic tasks for children and parents to promote attachment and bonding and integrate therapeutic parenting strategies to enhance children's safety and attachment; and discuss evidence-based/evidence-informed attachment-based therapies to address attachment challenges and create a healing environment that facilitates attachment. Additional models discussed include Attachment and Biobehavioral Catch-Up; Attachment, Regulation, and Self-Competency; Dyadic Developmental Psychotherapy; Trust-Based Relational Intervention, and Theraplay among others.

**Lesson 1:** Understanding Attachment as the Foundation for Child Development and Mental Health

**Lesson 2:** The Implications of Attachment Challenges in Treatment

**Lesson 3:** Assessing and Addressing Attachment Challenges in Children and Parents

**Lesson 4:** Practice Models for Working with Parents and their Children to Address Children's Complex Attachment Challenges

**Lesson 5:** Practice Models for Enhancing Parent-Child Attachment

#### ***Learning Objectives:***

- Comprehend attachment and recognize its critical importance for children's development.
- Synthesize an understanding of attachment patterns and challenges in your work with families and the importance of appropriate diagnosis of attachment disorders.
- Assess the impact of early insecure attachment on brain structure and social, emotional, verbal, and cognitive development.
- Integrate common treatment goals for reparative work in your clinical practice with children, youth, and families.

- Describe the process of early attachment formation and behaviors associated with child and parent attachment styles.
- Integrate adoption competent clinical practices to assess attachment history.
- Integrate into clinical practice strategies and therapeutic tools for helping families understand and honor their children's previous attachments and unique story.
- Integrate into clinical practice strategies and therapeutic tools for helping families:
- Address attachment challenges.
- Create a healing environment that facilitates attachment.
- Employ therapeutic parenting strategies that enhance children's safety and attachment.
- Identify clinical practices associated with attachment that are not effective and could even be potentially harmful.
- Identify and describe strategies and therapeutic tools for helping families understand and honor their children's and youth's previous attachments and unique story.
- Integrate therapeutic parenting strategies that enhance children's and youth's attachment.

### **Module: The Impact of Loss and Grief Experiences on Children's & Youth's Mental Health**

This module focuses on the central role of loss and grief in foster care, adoption, or guardianship and how ambiguous and unresolved loss, abandonment, rejection, and disenfranchised grief impact the mental health of children. Lessons will emphasize the different kinds of loss and grief, and children's developmental understanding of loss; focus on how loss and grief manifests developmentally, behaviorally, and emotionally; review therapeutic strategies and tools for helping children grieve and heal; provide strategies and evidence-informed therapies to help professionals and parents support grieving children; identify special issues in relative caregiving; and highlight the importance of, and provide strategies for, supporting openness and maintaining family, community, and cultural connections to mitigate losses.

**Lesson 1:** The Impact of Ambiguous Loss and Unresolved Grief on Emotional Adjustment and Mental Health

**Lesson 2:** Understanding Loss and Grief Issues in Adoption in the Context of Developmental Stages, Emotional Adjustments, and Mental Health of Children & Youth.

**Lesson 3:** Understanding the Stages of Grief in Adoption and Helping Youth Manage Their Losses.

**Lesson 4:** Impact of Abandonment and Rejection on Children's Mental Health

**Lesson 5:** Preparing and Helping Parents to Support Their Child's Grief

**Lesson 6:** Maintaining Openness and Connections

#### ***Learning Objectives:***

- To identify and describe principles and key features of grief models and the mental health impacts and behaviors associated with ambiguous loss and unresolved grief
- Describe the child's developmental understanding of loss in adoption.
- Describe the stages of grief for a child and common behaviors associated with those losses.
- Integrate two loss and grief models that support grief work in your clinical practice.
- Identify the impact of abandonment and rejection on mental health, how it presents clinically, how to support children through separation, and implications for therapeutic intervention, and

- Describe the nature and therapeutic value of life books, loss boxes, journaling, bibliotherapy, and other tools that facilitate reflection about losses and the grieving process and build readiness for new relationships.
- Identify and describe therapeutic strategies that help caregivers become aware of their own losses
- Understand their child's behaviors within the context of their loss and grief history
- Employ rituals and experiences that help children and youth put a voice to their loss and
- Identify special issues in relative caregiving, adoption, and guardianship

## **Module: Trauma and the Impact of Adverse Experiences on Brain Development and Mental Health**

This module focuses on the impact of trauma, including trauma from separation, on brain development, behavior, and mental health of children experiencing adoption or guardianship, as well as the implications for therapeutic interventions. Lessons focus on diagnostic limitations and tools to assess trauma history and its impact on functioning; the importance of helping parents shift thinking from “what’s wrong with you” to “what happened to you,” and strategies to support parents providing the healing environment and managing trauma triggers for their child; strategies and evidence-based/evidence-informed interventions to establish felt safety, build coping and regulatory skills, and readiness for children to process emotions related to traumatic experiences; and the impact of, and strategies to address, secondary trauma for parents and professionals. Several evidence-based interventions are shared, including Neurosequential Model of Therapeutics, Trauma-Focused Cognitive Behavioral Therapy, Eye Movement Desensitization Reprocessing, and Child Parent Psychotherapy.

**Lesson 1:** Traumatic Experiences of Children Achieving Permanency through Adoption and Guardianship

**Lesson 2:** Understanding the Impact of Trauma on Children’s Mental Health

**Lesson 3:** Assessing Trauma Exposure and Its Impact on Children

**Lesson 4:** Treatment Goals for Remediating the Consequences of Trauma

**Lesson 5:** Models for Addressing Complex Trauma

### ***Learning Objectives:***

- Identify and describe types of trauma and implications for therapeutic intervention with each
- Describe the impact of trauma and early and ongoing adverse experiences on brain development, behavior, and identity formation
- Identify relevant diagnoses associated with trauma and the diagnostic limitations
- Describe adoption competent clinical assessment practices and tools to assess trauma history and its impact on functioning to assure appropriate diagnosis.
- Identify and describe therapeutic strategies and interventions with children that establish feelings of emotional safety, build coping and regulatory skills, and readiness to process emotions related to traumatic experiences, and
- Integrate into your clinical practice therapeutic strategies that assist parents to provide the healing environment for their children to begin development of coping and self-regulation strategies
- Establish safety and readiness to help children process emotions

- Build coping and regulatory skills with children and youth
- Assist parents to provide structure and routines, experiences that nurture and heal
- Support the development of coping and self-regulation strategies.

## **Module: Identity Formation and the Impact of Adoption and Guardianship**

This module focuses on the nature of identity formation in the context of adoption and guardianship and the impact of missing and inaccurate information, and the implications of integration of one's adoption story. Lessons focus on understanding identity formation; barriers to positive identity; strategies to address the "Six Stuck Spots;" and the role of openness in positive identity formation. Also included are strategies for helping children and youth do the work of understanding who they are, where they came from, and where they are going; strategies for working with parents to integrate the history of birth family and influence of significant others in the lives of their children; the role of search and reunion in identity formation; and the importance of parental support in the search and reunion process.

**Lesson 1:** Overview: Identity Matters

**Lesson 2:** Identity Formation During the Adolescent Years

**Lesson 3:** Mental Health Professional's Role in Working with Children and Youth to Support Positive Identity Formation

**Lesson 4:** Mental Health Professional's Role in Helping Parents Support Positive Identity Formation

**Lesson 5:** Mental Health Professional's Role in Supporting Youth Search and Reunion

### ***Learning Objectives:***

- Identify and describe how our identity is shaped, and the impact of adoption on identity formation.
- Understand adolescence as the pivotal time for clarifying identity.
- Integrate identity work in your clinical practice with adoptive youth and families.
- Recognize adolescence as a pivotal time in identity formation and understand the importance of helping the youth integrate their story.
- Identify and describe the nature of "stuck spots" in identity formation experienced by adopted children and youth, related developmental tasks, and therapeutic interventions recognized as effective.
- Identify, and integrate clinical practices to assist youth in exploring dimensions of their identity and integrating their life story
- Integrate into your clinical practice strategies to help youth manage difficult or intrusive questions or comments about their adoption story.
- Identify and describe therapeutic interventions appropriate to assist parents to understand the identity formation process, support identity exploration, share difficult information and overcome their own fears.
- Describe the clinical implications of current search and reunion practices.
- Integrate into your clinical practice adoption competent strategies appropriate to assist parents to understand the identity formation process in connection with search and reunion, and the importance of their support during the search/reunion process if it occurs.



## **Module: Assessment and Treatment Planning with Children and Families Experiencing Adoption or Guardianship**

This module will integrate and apply the information learned from previous modules to the assessment and treatment planning process, with focus on the overlay of adoption and guardianship-related issues and questions that should be incorporated to assure that clinical work is provided with an “adoption lens.” Lessons will also focus on how to formulate treatment plans that support more secure attachment, resolution of grief, and promotion of self-regulation; the integral role of parents in therapeutic work; and special assessment issues of relative caregivers.

**Lesson 1:** Assessment Through the Adoption/Guardianship Lens

**Lesson 2:** Unique Assessment Issues when Working with Relative Caregivers

**Lesson 3:** Utilizing the Assessment in Goal Setting and Treatment Planning and Effective Practice Models with Adoptive and Guardianship Families

### ***Learning Objectives:***

- Understand and integrate an adoption competent assessment protocol into your clinical practice.
- Determine applicability of standardized assessment tools in working with adoption and guardianship families.
- Recognize issues in assessment unique to relative care providers across different cultures.
- Synthesize your understanding of these issues into your clinical practice.
- Formulate treatment plans that support secure attachments, resolution of grief and loss, self-regulation skills, and continued positive identity formation within a healing family environment.
- Recognize the family as the core client and demonstrate a commitment to family systems work.
- Understand the treatment implications regarding Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder for this population.

## **Module: Using Therapeutic Parenting Strategies to Address Children’s Challenging Behavior**

This module focuses on the nature of challenges and concerning behaviors commonly seen in adoptive and guardianship families and the therapeutic parenting strategies that professionals can teach and support parents to use. Lessons focus on supporting parents to promote attunement and felt safety with children; understand and reframe behaviors; develop realistic expectations; provide a balance of nurture and structure; and teach self-regulation and coping skills. The lesson also addresses challenging behaviors that are often the most problematic for parents and threaten adoption stability. Strategies are based on ARC, TBRI, Circle of Security, and Collaborative Problem-Solving models

**Lesson 1:** Laying the Foundation for Change

**Lesson 2:** Therapeutic Parenting Strategies for Connecting with Children and Youth Who Push Parents Away

**Lesson 3:** Teaching Self-Regulation Skills through Therapeutic Parenting

**Lesson 4:** Addressing Especially Challenging Problems with Youth and Families

**Learning Objectives:**

- Describe the therapeutic strategies for helping parents develop realistic expectations and reframe discipline as teaching.
- Help parents promote felt safety for the child and help establish parents as the primary agents of healing and safety.
- Identify and describe specific therapeutic strategies to assist parents to:
  - Develop nurturing, trusting relationships with children who have attachment and behavioral challenges,
  - Provide a healthy balance of nurture and structure in the parent-child interaction, and
  - Support the development of the child's capacity for self-regulation and healthy coping
- Support parents to provide a healthy balance of nurture and structure in parent-child interaction.
- Learn strategies that support the development of the youth's capacity for self-regulation and healthy coping
- Identify and describe very challenging child and teen behaviors and family problems experienced in adoptive and guardianship families.
- Integrate into your clinical practice specific therapeutic strategies with parents to address challenging behaviors and avoid power struggles.
- Describe therapeutic approaches that assist children and youth with deficits in brain development to make progress in treatment.
- Integrate into your practice motivational interviewing techniques to address lack of treatment progress.

**Module: Family Stability and Wellness Post Permanency**

This module looks at adoption as a life-long process including the factors that shape adoption or guardianship adjustment and either support or threaten children's and the family's ongoing safety, permanency, and well-being. Lessons will explore the needs of children and families after adoption or guardianship and the continuum of post-adoption/guardianship services that help to prevent adoption disruption or dissolution. Additionally, this module covers the importance of positive adoption language, as well as provides clinicians with the opportunity to reflect on the impact of this training on their clinical practice.

**Lesson 1:** Matching Child and Family Needs After Permanency with Effective Services to Maintain Stability

**Lesson 2:** Post-Adoption Therapeutic Services: Working with Families Across the Life Cycle and Across Systems to Maintain Stability

**Lesson 3:** The Impact of NTI Training on Your Clinical Practice

**Learning Objectives:**

- Recognize adoption as a life-long process, with ongoing elevated mental health needs often years after placement.
- Identify and describe the continuum of post-adoption mental health needs and the services that help to sustain families and promote stability.

- Understand the different types of adoption and guardianship instability and contributing factors present.
- Identify key characteristics of post-adoption work across the life cycle.
- Assess the need to collaborate and advocate with multiple systems to support family stability and child well-being.
- Engage relevant professionals and systems in addressing child and family needs.
- Identify your strengths as an adoption competent therapist and recognize areas in which you can expand your knowledge.
- Identify how this curriculum has impacted your clinical practice.

---

*Funded through the Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Children and Families, Children's Bureau, Grant #90CO1121, #90CO1144. The contents of this publication do not necessarily reflect the views or policies of the funder, nor does mention of trade names, commercial products or organizations imply endorsement by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. This information is in the public domain. Readers are encouraged to copy and share it, but please credit the National Adoption Competent Mental Health Training Initiative."*



# School-Based Mental Health Professionals Training

## Better Outcomes for Children & Youth!

***The School Based Mental Health Professionals Training*** provides the foundational knowledge, values and skills school counselors, social workers, psychologists, and school-based therapists need to effectively support the mental health and well-being of children experiencing foster care, adoption, kinship care and/or significant separation and loss of birth family, community, and culture.

Adapted from the nationally recognized National Adoption Competency Mental Health Training developed by C.A.S.E., core competencies include understanding and addressing the complex and often nuanced mental health needs of children who have experienced significant losses and/or trauma. This includes understanding the impact of loss and grief and early adverse experiences on well-being, development, attachment and identity. Also discussed are the implications especially for transracial and transcultural families. It includes foundational information, best practices, and therapeutic strategies to support children of all ages in the school setting, including strategies to assist educators and educational staff to effectively support children with challenging behaviors.

### **Module 1: A Case for Adoption Competency**

Module 1 provides an overview of the training and makes the case for the need for competency in working with children, youth, and families experiencing foster care, adoption, guardianship, or kinship care. Lessons in this module orient participants to the training; highlight the guiding principles that provide the foundation for work with children and families from an adoption or guardianship lens; and introduce salient clinical issues for children and youth and their families.

**Lesson 1:** Course Overview and The Need for Adoption Competency

**Lesson 2:** The Language of Adoption

**Lesson 3:** Guiding Principles That Support Effective Mental Health Practice

## **Lesson 4: Achieving and Maintaining Permanence Is Key to Well-Being and Mental Health**

## **Lesson 5: Core Clinical Issues in Adoption and their Link to Mental Health**

### ***Learning Objectives:***

- Acquire appropriate expectations for this course based on an accurate understanding of the focus, nature, and main goals of the training.
- Identify core knowledge, values, and skills that characterize an adoption competent mental health professional.
- Recognize the importance of using positive adoption language.
- Identify and integrate into your practice the guiding principles that inform adoption competent clinical interventions to address the unique mental health needs of children, youth, and their families.
- Understand the negative impact of impermanence on mental health and adjustment in adoptive and guardianship families.
- Identify the salient clinical issues associated with the various adoption and guardianship options.

## **Module 2: Understanding and Addressing the Complex Mental Health Needs of Children & Youth in Adoptive and Guardianship Families**

Module 2 provides context for the complex mental health needs of children experiencing foster care, kinship care, adoption, or guardianship and the importance of helping children/youth understand their life stories. Lessons focus on limitations of current diagnostic and medication practices commonly used with children with foster and/or institutional care experiences; skills and techniques for helping children/youth make sense of their adoption/guardianship stories; challenges related to developmental stages of the adoptive family life cycle; and how to collaborate effectively with other professionals to support appropriate treatment and intervention.

### **Lesson 1: The Big Picture: Understanding the Factors that Shape Children's Adjustment in Adoptive and Guardianship Families**

### **Lesson 2: Understanding the Impact of Early Childhood Experiences on Mental Health**

### **Lesson 3: Tools and Techniques for Helping Children Integrate Their Life Stories**

### **Lesson 4: Issues in Diagnosis and Treatment of Adopted Children's Mental Health Needs**

### ***Learning Objectives:***

- Recognize the importance of knowing children's unique and complete story and the negative impacts of missing or misinformation and secrets.
- Help children and youth construct a coherent life narrative that makes sense of their experiences and supports a positive identity.
- Identify and describe the core mental health issues that are addressed in adoption competent clinical interventions with children, youth, and their adoptive and guardianship families.
- Recognize limitations of current diagnostic assessment and medication practices commonly used with children and youth with foster and/or institutional care experiences.
- Identify and describe strategies for effective collaboration with child welfare and other professionals that promote information sharing, appropriate treatment planning and intervention, and parental involvement in the therapeutic process.

### **Module 3 – Attachment, Child Development, and Mental Health**

Module 3 focuses on understanding the impact of early insecure attachment, poor nurture, separation, and abrupt moves on attachment and supporting the process of rebuilding or strengthening attachments. Lessons focus on understanding the continuum of attachment styles and challenges and how attachment challenges manifest in the classroom, including strategies for supporting felt safety and security in the school setting.

**Lesson 1:** Understanding Attachment as the Foundation for Child Development and Mental Health

**Lesson 2:** The Implications of Attachment Challenges in Treatment

#### ***Learning Objectives:***

- Comprehend attachment and recognize its critical importance for children's development.
- Synthesize an understanding of attachment patterns and challenges in your work with families and the importance of appropriate diagnosis of attachment disorders.
- Assess the impact of early insecure attachment on brain structure and social, emotional, verbal, and cognitive development.
- Integrate common treatment goals for reparative work with children, youth, and families.

### **Module 4 – The Impact of Loss and Grief Experiences on Children's & Youth's Mental Health**

Module 4 focuses on the central role of loss and grief in foster care, adoption, guardianship, or kinship care and how ambiguous and unresolved loss, abandonment, rejection, and disenfranchised grief impact the mental health of children. Lessons will emphasize children's developmental understanding of loss and how loss and grief manifests developmentally, behaviorally, and emotionally. We will review therapeutic strategies and tools for helping children grieve and heal; identify special issues in relative caregiving; and highlight the importance of, and provide strategies for, supporting openness and maintaining family, community, and cultural connections to mitigate losses.

**Lesson 1:** The Impact of Ambiguous Loss and Unresolved Grief on Emotional Adjustment and Mental Health

**Lesson 2:** Understanding Loss and Grief Issues in Adoption in the Context of Developmental Stages, Emotional Adjustments, and Mental Health of Children & Youth.

**Lesson 3:** Understanding and Supporting the Stages of Grief in Adoption and Helping Youth Manage Their Losses.

**Lesson 4:** Impact of Abandonment and Rejection on Children's Mental Health

**Lesson 5:** Maintaining Openness and Connections

#### ***Learning Objectives:***

- To identify and describe principles and key features of grief models and the mental health impacts and behaviors associated with ambiguous loss and unresolved grief
- Describe the child's developmental understanding of loss in adoption.
- Describe the stages of grief for a child and common behaviors associated with those losses.
- Integrate two loss and grief models that support grief work in your clinical practice.

- Identify the impact of abandonment and rejection on mental health, how it presents clinically, how to support children through separation, and implications for therapeutic intervention.

## **Module 5 – Trauma and the Impact of Adverse Experiences on Brain Development and Mental Health**

Module 5 focuses on the impact of trauma, including trauma from separation, and its impact on brain development, behavior, and mental health, as well as the implications for therapeutic work. Lessons focus on tools to assess trauma history and its impact on functioning; the importance of shifting thinking from “what’s wrong with you” to “what happened to you;” how to manage trauma triggers and learn strategies to provide a healing environment in the school setting, including establishing felt safety, building coping and regulatory skills, and supporting readiness for children to process emotions related to traumatic experiences; and address secondary trauma for parents and professionals.

**Lesson 1:** Traumatic Experiences of Children Achieving Permanency through Adoption and Guardianship

**Lesson 2:** Understanding the Impact of Trauma on Children’s Mental Health

**Lesson 3:** Assessing Trauma Exposure and Its Impact on Children

**Lesson 4:** Treatment Goals for Remediating the Consequences of Trauma

**Lesson 5:** Models for Addressing Complex Trauma

### ***Learning Objectives:***

- Identify and describe types of trauma and implications for therapeutic intervention with each
- Describe the impact of trauma and early and ongoing adverse experiences on brain development, behavior, and identity formation
- Identify relevant diagnoses associated with trauma and the diagnostic limitations
- Describe practices and tools to assess trauma history and its impact on functioning.
- Identify and describe therapeutic strategies and interventions with children that establish feelings of emotional safety, build coping and regulatory skills, and readiness to process emotions related to traumatic experiences, and
- Synthesize therapeutic strategies and interventions in your work that help youth integrate their life story, establish safety and readiness to process emotions, provide structure and experiences that nurture and heal, and support the development of coping and self-regulation.

## **Module 6 – Understanding the Impact of Race, Ethnicity, Culture, Class, and Diversity on Children and Families**

In Module 6, participants will learn how race, ethnicity, culture, class, and diversity impact a child’s experience of adoption, guardianship, foster care or kinship care, especially in transracial and transcultural families. Lessons focus on supporting a sense of belonging, preserving children’s identity and sense of self; supporting healthy racial identity development; and providing therapeutic strategies to initiate important conversations.

**Lesson 1:** Understanding the Impact of Race, Ethnicity, Culture, Class and Diversity

**Lesson 2:** Understanding the Mental Health Needs of Children in Diverse Adoptive and Guardianship Families



### **Lesson 3: Talking About Race and Racial Identity**

### **Lesson 4: The Mental Health Professional's Role in Working with Youth with Diverse Sexual Orientation, Gender Identity, and Expression**

#### ***Learning Objectives:***

- Identify youth's awareness of similarities and differences developmentally.
- Understand the process of racial identity development throughout the lifespan.
- Demonstrate awareness of preserving and honoring children's and youth's identity.
- Integrate into your practice therapeutic strategies to initiate conversations with children to support the integration of identities.

### **Module 7 - Identity Formation and the Impact of Adoption and Guardianship**

Module 7 focuses on the nature of identity formation in the context of adoption, guardianship, foster care or kinship care, the impact of missing and inaccurate information, and the implications for integration of one's story. Lessons focus on understanding identity formation; barriers to positive identity; strategies to address the "Six Stuck Spots;" and the role of openness in positive identity formation. Also included are strategies for helping children and youth do the work of understanding who they are, where they came from, and where they are going.

#### **Lesson 1: Overview: Identity Matters**

#### **Lesson 2: Identity Formation During the Adolescent Years**

#### **Lesson 3: Supporting Positive Identity Formation**

#### ***Learning Objectives:***

- Identify and describe how our identity is shaped, and the impact of adoption on identity formation.
- Recognize adolescence as a pivotal time in identity formation and understand the importance of helping the youth integrate their story.
- Identify and describe the nature of "stuck spots" in identity formation experienced by adopted children and youth, related developmental tasks, and therapeutic interventions recognized as effective.
- Identify and integrate practices to assist youth in exploring dimensions of their identity and integrating their life story.
- Synthesize strategies to help youth integrate their life story and manage difficult or intrusive questions or comments about their adoption story.

### **Module 8 - Adoption and the Life -Long Journey: Providing Ongoing Supports for Youth**

Module 8 looks at adoption as a life-long process including the factors that support or threaten ongoing safety, permanency, and well-being. Lessons will focus on supporting children and youth in the school setting to develop self-regulation and coping skills, including promoting attunement and felt safety with children; understanding and reframing behaviors; developing realistic expectations; and providing a balance of nurture and structure. Lessons also explore the continuum of post-adoption/guardianship services that help to prevent

disruption or dissolution, as well as the need to collaborate across multiple systems to support child and family well-being.

**Lesson 1:** Teaching Self-Regulation Skills

**Lesson 2:** Unique Assessment Issues when Working with Relative Caregivers

**Lesson 3:** Supporting Stability and Wellness Long-term

***Learning Objective:***

- Describe the therapeutic strategies to develop realistic expectations and reframe discipline as teaching.
- Integrate approaches that support secure attachment, promote felt safety, provide a health balance of nurture and structure to support the development of self-regulation and coping skills in youth.
- Recognize and synthesize into your work issues in assessment unique to relative care providers across diverse populations and cultures.
- Understand the treatment implications regarding Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder for this population.
- Recognize adoption as a life-long process, with ongoing elevated mental health needs often years after placement.
- Identify and describe the continuum of post-adoption mental health needs and the services that help to promote stability.
- Assess the need to collaborate and advocate with multiple systems to support family stability and child well-being.



**National** Adoption Competency  
Mental Health **Training Initiative**

Advancing Practice for Permanency & Well-Being

TM

## Why Should Mental Health Professionals and Providers Invest in NTI?

### The Need for Adoption Competency Training

- Children and youth experiencing foster care, adoption, guardianship and kinship care experience early adverse experiences and the loss of birth family, community, and culture more than children and youth who haven't had these experiences.
- The losses children and youth experience are often complicated by multiple moves, rejection, uncertainty, and loss of control over their circumstances, contributing to an increased risk for mental, emotional, behavioral and developmental challenges.
- According to the Academy of Pediatrics, the greatest unmet need for children experiencing foster care is mental health. Around 80 percent of children in foster care have significant mental health issues, compared to 18-22 percent of the general population (The Academy of Pediatrics, 2020).
- Adoptees have twice the risk of experiencing psychiatric disorders, contact with mental health services, or treatment in a psychiatric hospital, compared to that of non-adoptees. Elevated risks were observed specifically for attention-deficit/hyperactivity disorders, anxiety disorders, conduct disorders/oppositional defiant disorders, depression, substance use disorders, and psychoses (Behle & Pinquart, 2016).
- Adoptive families have reported going to multiple therapists to find one that understands their family's needs; often having to "train" therapists on their unique challenges that are different from families formed by birth. (C.A.S.E. 2013; NACAC,

2011). Research shows that without appropriate care, 62% of individuals will have lifelong disorders.

- Most mental health systems are not achieving the mental health outcomes for this population and are paying for or providing services that are not achieving the desired results.
- Most mental health professionals did not receive specific training in graduate or post-graduate education that focuses on the core issues for children, youth and families experiencing foster care, adoption, guardianship, and kinship care:
  - Supporting youth through ambiguous loss and disenfranchised grief
  - Promoting attachment and bonding
  - Understanding the need behind the behavior and differentiating between won't and can't behaviors
  - Supporting positive identity formation, especially for those in interracial/intercultural placements
  - Conducting assessment and treatment planning through an adoption lens
  - Therapeutic parenting strategies to support behavioral challenges

### **The Benefits to Mental Health Systems/Providers:**

- Having adoption-competent staff can help systems/providers meet their network adequacy requirements, assuring enough trained providers to serve the population.
- Data gleaned from NTI participants can help provider leadership to better understand and target the knowledge/skills areas the workforce needs for further professional development.
- Having adoption-competent staff can help leadership assure equity in service delivery for the population of children, youth, and families who do not currently have their mental health needs met.
- NTI provides aligned curriculum for child welfare and mental health professionals – creating a shared understanding between the two disciplines to enhance collaboration.
- NTI can work with systems/providers to create learning cohorts and provide coaching for staff to support integration of learning into practice.

### **The Benefits for Mental Health Professionals/Practitioners:**

- Strategies and tools learned from NTI can help mental health practitioners be more efficient, responsive, and cost-effective in meeting the therapeutic needs of

children and youth who have been over-represented in higher levels and higher cost care that is not effectively meeting their needs.

- Strategies and tools learned from NTI can help mental health practitioners expand their toolkit, gaining confidence and competence to support families at all stages of their development.
- Coaching is available to NTI participants to support their application and integration of learning into practice.

### **The Benefits for Families Served:**

- Adoption-competent staff expands access to care for foster, adoptive, guardianship and kinship families, enabling them to receive support from professionals that understand their needs and challenges.
- Adoption-competent staff can help caregivers develop parenting strategies that will enhance their competence in meeting the needs of their children and youth resulting in improved caregiver retention and family stability.
- Families have access to adoption-competent staff to support them when needs arise – to minimize crises.

### **The Impact of NTI Training on Professionals**

- After completion of training, participants experienced statistically significant gains across all 10 modules.
- For NTI mental health participants during the period October 2023-March 2024, the modules with the lowest pre-test scores included Attachment, Positive Identity Formation and Assessment and Treatment Planning – acknowledging gaps in knowledge around these core issues.
- 94% of participants expressed satisfaction with the training and 98% indicated the training was relevant to their work.
- 92% of mental health participants indicated they had developed new skills and 96% indicated the training “will enhance the effectiveness of my work with children, youth and families.”

## **Why Should You Consider the NTI Training?**

- NTI Training is free.
- Training is web-based, self-paced – allowing systems to support learning at anytime and anywhere.
- 26.5 NASW and NBCC approved continuing education credits provided for free when accessing the training via the CASE Institute Learning Management System (participants must pass module post-tests f to receive certificate and CE credits).
- Participants have access to free coaching as they progress through the training to support application and integration of learning into practice.
- Downloadable resources, handouts and tools are available throughout the training that can be used in practice with children, youth and families.



**National Adoption Competency  
Mental Health Training Initiative**

Advancing Practice for Permanency & Well-Being<sup>TM</sup>

## NTI Mental Health Training Completers

### Join the National Directory of Adoption Competent Mental Health Professionals!

**Thank you for being so committed to strengthening adoption competent care through completing NTI Training!** We want to make it easier for families across the country to find licensed providers like YOU. That's why we're reaching out with this invitation to be listed in our [National Directory of Adoption Competent Mental Health Professionals.](#)

#### What are 3 top reasons why you should join the directory?

**Reason #1:** Families often struggle to find providers who understand the unique needs that stem from adoption and child welfare experiences

**Reason #2:** You and your organization's presence in the directory will help families to quickly and confidently access the right support

**Reason #3:** Timely, accessible, and responsive services mean better outcomes for children and their families

**Join the National Directory Today!**

#### National Directory of Adoption Competent Professionals

We are pleased to share the Adoption Competence National Directory, which offers access to hundreds of mental health therapists nationwide with formal training in adoption competence. The therapists listed in this Directory have completed training in either or both of the C.A.S.E. training programs described below. Explore our national database to find therapists in your area trained in adoption competence. \*

##### **Your Name Here**

Your Title  
Your Address

Send e-mail →

Call: 000-000-0000 →

##### **Adrianne Dietz**

LPC  
York County, SC

Send e-mail →

Call: 803-329-3177 →

##### **Ahmay Ya**

Orange, VA

Send e-mail →

Call: 651-443-1553 →



Shared by an adoptee who received care:

*"The most positive experience I had with a mental health professional was defined by deep empathy, adoption-informed knowledge, intergenerational insight, and empowerment. They met me where I was, embraced the complexity of my story, and helped me pass on a more honest, emotionally intelligent legacy to the next generation. For adoptees, adoptive parents, and families touched by adoption, these qualities are not just helpful; they are essential."*

Thank you for being part of this important work!

*Warm Regards,*

The **NTI** Team



nurture.  
inspire.  
empower.

# NTI Training Implementation Planning Checklist

We hope you find this planning tool useful as your team plans together for your full NTI implementation and kick-off day. This checklist will help you, your team, and your NTI Implementation Specialist gather the essential information for success!

## Training & Implementation Specialist:

- Name:
- Title:
- Phone:
- Email:
- State/Tribe/Territory:

## Lead Contact and Position:

- Name:
- Title:
- Phone:
- Email:
- State/Tribe/Territory:

## The Implementation Team: (title/email/phone/ mailing address/etc.)

Please specify who's on the implementation team:

- ✓ Chair of the Team:
- ✓ Programmatic Leads:
- ✓ Training Lead:
- ✓ LMS/IT Lead:
- ✓ Marketing/Communications Lead:

- Who else is going to champion NTI (this can be leadership or vocal direct service person with influence)?
- Who else needs to be involved?

## **What is the plan?**

- Who will oversee/coordinate implementation?
  - Name:
  - Title:
  - Phone:
  - Email:
- Where will NTI be hosted and what type of system is it (Moodle, Absorb, Thinkify, etc.)
- If not on internal LMS, will staff access NTI on C.A.S.E. LMS?
- Which NTI training will be integrated (CWP, CWS, MHP)?
- Who will manage the uploading to Learning Management System (LMS)?
  - Name:
  - Title:
  - Phone:
  - Email:
- Who will provide data reporting to NTI Team?
  - Name:
  - Title:
  - Phone:
  - Email:
- What support is needed to broaden the buy-in for NTI among leadership, other collaborators, and potential champions?
  - Name
  - Title:
  - Phone:
  - Email:

- Who needs to be involved in this from the start?
  - Name:
  - Title:
  - Phone:
  - Email:
- Are there any new policies or procedures that need to be developed to support NTI for example, training policies, amended contracts, etc.?

Please provide detail:

- What is the launch date that is planned to make training available to staff? (Allow time for signing host site agreement and training upload process.)
- 

## Target Audience/Access to Training

- Who is the target audience for each training course? Note that this training is appropriate across the continuum.
    - Department:
    - Staff Role:
    - Is training mandatory or voluntary for specific positions? **Please Specify:**
- 

- Will staff who are not required have access to the training? **Please Specify:**
- 

- Will contracted providers be required to complete NTI as part of a current or renewal contract? **Yes or No**

- Will contracted providers have access the training on your LMS or via C.A.S.E. LMS?
  - **Yes or No**
  - What is the anticipated number of staff who will enroll in the training? \_\_\_\_
  - How do we measure success? (i.e., What is the benchmark for enrollment and completion?)
    - % or number enrollment/completion \_\_\_\_

## Supports for Implementation

- What incentives or support will be provided to staff to complete? (protected time, recognition, day off lottery, wear jeans to workday, etc.)
- 

Will there be a timeframe for completion? (We recommend 3-4 months for completion.)

- Proposed timeframe:
  - Are there standard meetings of the target staff that we can occasionally attend to share information, benefits, strategies to complete and/or embed NTI in to practice?
- 

- What is the communication plan and who is responsible for communications?
  - Name:
  - Title:
  - Phone:
  - Email:

- What marketing/communication tools are needed? Connect with NTI Marketing Manager.
  - Name:
  - Title:
  - Phone:
  - Email:
- What Transfer of Learning activities will be used to support application of NTI? (tip sheets, TOL Guide, Supervisor Coaching and Activity Guide, coaching for supervisors, hybrid learning cohort model with virtual meetings)

- 
- Does the organization have the capacity to provide CE credits? If not, how will workers get credit? (Training is approved by NASW for C.A.S.E. LMS; if integrating into state/local system, the CE's are not transferable).
  - Who will be monitoring the enrollment/completion and pre-/post-test results?
    - Name:
    - Title:
    - Phone:
    - Email:
  - Who will the results be shared with?
    - Name:
    - Title:
    - Phone:
    - Email:

## **Cross-Promotion of Curricula**

- The goal of NTI is to impact system change and access to adoption competent professionals for families. If only CW is being integrated, what is the capacity to cross-promote curricula in the state to reach MH professionals/providers?

- Who do you identify as your key mental health partners?

---

- Who are the primary MH providers or managed care entities?

---

- How will NTI Training be actively promoted by the STT?

---

- What support do you need from NTI to develop strategies or materials to engage the MH community?

---

- Will the organization host a “preferred provider list of MH completers” for access/referral by professionals/parents? (incentive for increasing practice)
  - Yes or No
- We now have an adapted curriculum for School Based Mental Health Professionals, do you have connections with LEAs or School Leadership that we can share information with about this new curriculum?
  - Name:
  - Title:
  - Phone:
  - Email:



## Best Practices for NTI Implementation

Implementation planning can take many forms. This checklist highlights the best practices. We recognize that each organization's implementation plan and process will be tailored to its needs and specific circumstances.

1. **Invite leadership involvement and establish your planning team:** Establish a Site Implementation Team to support the implementation of NTI Training. The Site Implementation Team will be the drivers of implementation and integration of NTI into your organizational system. These are the people who will determine the primary goals for integrating NTI into your training system. This Team should include programmatic and training/development leadership to ensure alignment between programmatic and professional development needs. It is important for members of this team to have a thorough understanding of the training available through NTI.
2. **Assess the need for Adoption Competency:** For the purposes of this document, we will use the term "adoption-competency" to reflect the range of practices, skills, knowledge, attitudes, and values that supports the permanency, stability and well-being of children and youth and their foster, adoptive, and kinship families. When conducting a needs assessment to evaluate your organization's level of competency in doing effective work with foster, adoption, and kinship families, asking targeted and comprehensive questions is crucial. Here are questions and considerations to include for a thorough assessment:
  - Have your staff members been assessed for their current knowledge and skills in adoption and permanency-specific issues, including trauma, attachment, loss and grief, and identity development? If yes, how is this assessed and how are the results integrated into program planning and staff development?
  - Have staff reported any gaps in adoption/foster/kinship-specific training or competency?
  - Are the current practices around foster care, adoption, and kinship aligned with your organization's overall mission and goals for family well-being and permanency?
  - How do permanency outcomes align with your agency's long-term goals or strategic plans?
  - What metrics are used to assess the success/impact of services and support? How successful is your organization at hitting success measures?

- Does your organization have partnerships or collaborations with mental health providers specializing in foster care, kinship, and adoption-related trauma and challenges?
  - In what ways are staff trained to address the mental health needs of children and families pre- and post- permanency?
  - How does adoption competency integrate into your CSFR and FFPSA goals and agency plans/strategies?
  - In what ways have the results of this assessment been compiled and shared with leadership or otherwise disseminated?
3. **Develop a customized Implementation Plan:** Create an Implementation Plan to serve as a blueprint for implementation. This will be a living document to be re-evaluated and revised as needed. Possible elements of the plan include determining which training curricula will be implemented, who the target users are, enrollment/completion timeframes, Transfer of Learning (TOL) activities, data gathering and analysis, etc. [Sample Implementation Plan Template](#)
- The Site Implementation Team should focus on answering the following questions to guide planning and implementation:
    - *What are the overarching goals for integrating NTI within your system?*
    - *Who will make the decision to utilize the training?*
    - *Which stakeholders will you need to consult to get “buy-in”?*
    - *Who will make resources available to implement the training?*
    - *Who will lead the implementation of the training?*
    - *What type of “beta-test” process (if any) will need to be implemented to ensure a smooth rollout?*
    - *What ongoing feedback mechanisms will you use to ensure effective implementation?*
    - *What metrics will be reviewed and by whom to ensure the plan meets the organizations implementation goals?*
    - *Who will ensure sustainability long-term and how will implementation be sustained?<sup>1</sup>*
  - Create a plan for participant expectations and engagement: Decision-making around participation in the training is a critical step. Essential questions and concerns around participation and agency support include:
    - *Determine which NTI curriculum will be implemented.*
    - *Determine which internal positions and/or contractors will take the training*

<sup>1</sup> Adapted from Frontiers in Public Health: [“Implementation Mapping: Using Intervention Mapping to Develop Implementation Strategies.”](#)

- *Determine if supervisors will take the training first; establish expectations of supervisors*
  - *At what point in their employment will staff take NTI?*
  - *Will NTI be mandatory or voluntary?*
  - *What policy changes will be necessary to implement NTI?*
  - *What are the progression and completion goals?*
  - *How will performance and process be tracked?*
- Evaluate access options and technical integration: The training can be accessed in two different ways and the NTI Implementation Specialist can share the features and benefits of each option:
    - Access Option 1: C.A.S.E. Learning Management System (LMS): <https://adoptionsupport.org/nti/access/>.
    - Access Option 2: Integration of the training files into your organization's learning management system (LMS).
4. **Educate key stakeholders:** This includes those who may not be on the Site Implementation Team but are important to gain “buy in” for successful implementation of NTI. This could include traditional leaders who have decision-making authority, but it can also extend to include other natural leaders. For example, clinicians with strong credibility among their peers may help build excitement for implementing this training, using best practices, or using new tools.
5. **Establish an effective Transfer of Learning (TOL) Plan:** To effect system change, training implementation should incorporate a transfer of learning (TOL) plan. NTI's goal is to increase the capacity of child welfare and mental health systems to address mental health needs and improve permanency and well-being outcomes for children, youth, and their families experiencing foster care, adoption, or guardianship. The TOL process incorporates knowledge, skills, and values gleaned from the NTI Training into real-life situations and everyday practice.
- Coaching is a vital component of the transfer of learning process. It involves an intensive and systematic facilitation of result-oriented problem reflection and self-reflection. Coaching primarily aims to help individuals apply the skills they have learned in training to real-life situations, thereby fostering conscious self-change and self-development.<sup>2</sup> The NTI Team can provide coaching and assist sites in building the capacity to support coaching internally.
6. **Recommendations to support training participants:** Based on our experiences with sites implementing NTI, the following are best practice recommendations to ensure enrollment, completion, and a successful training experience for everyone:

<sup>2</sup> Greif, S. (2007) Advances In Research On Coaching Outcomes. International Coaching Psychology Review, 2(3), pp. 222-249

- **Mandate Training:** Making the NTI training mandatory ensures the highest completion rates and promotes a shared understanding across staff and positions within the organization.
- **Supervisor Support:** The level of support by supervisors including their ability to incorporate NTI learnings in supervisory practice, especially when participation is voluntary, can improve integration of NTI into practice.
- **Set a completion timeframe:** To keep participants engaged and motivated, we recommend completing the training within 4 – 6 months. According to evaluation the majority of participants complete the training within 6 months.
- **Protected time and space:** Protected time to focus on the training content is especially important. However, the need for protected space is just as critical and often overlooked. This may include a place outside of the office or workspace where users will have fewer distractions.
- **Incentives:** Are incentives to complete the training available? Examples of incentives include recognition, pay bonus, time off, free lunch, and/or free CEUs.
- **Reminders / Encouragers:** Overloaded workforces may find it challenging to prioritize in-depth, self-directed training. Participants will benefit from reminders to log into the training system and continue to progress. Organizations can also consider creative ways to encourage progress, including sending meeting invites to block time or providing reminders in group supervision/staff meetings, etc.
- **Recognition:** Recognition can be an important motivator for participants to complete NTI. Think of ways your organization can recognize and celebrate those who complete the training.
- **Provider contracts:** To ensure that all your contract providers have a foundational level of knowledge and skills, consider embedding the NTI requirement into their contracts or scope of work.
- **Testimonials:** Another approach is to solicit and pulse testimonials from natural champions for NTI within the organization, these can be shared in team meetings, departmental newsletters, etc.

7. **Develop a communication strategy to promote NTI:**

- Develop a strategy to communicate the value and benefits of NTI to participants.
- Know your audience: Do they respond more positively to email or in-person/virtual discussion? Who should deliver the message (leadership, supervisors, and peer champions)? What type of messages will motivate them?
- Consider revising or developing training policies to mandate or support the use of NTI, especially for staff or providers required to complete NTI.

8. **Determine the data needed for assessing NTI success:** Establish a plan for collecting and disseminating accurate data.

- Data to support NTI implementation: Data is used to understand how many people are using the training and how they are progressing. It can help the Site

Implementation Team understand if there are barriers to enrollment and if additional messages and support are needed to encourage participation and completion. We recommend involving an external evaluation team in discussions around implementation and to support the best use of data.

- Outcome data for evaluating NTI: There are several ways to evaluate NTI's outcomes, including knowledge gains, impact on practice (short-term and long-term), and system changes.
- Pre and post-test data can also be used to determine topic areas that require additional continued education for staff.

**9. Plan for sustainability and accountability:** What does system change look like? What systemic and practice changes do you expect to see? What would tell you that change has occurred?

- Practice changes: Do you see changes in the quality of supervision or clinical notes, the types of activities occurring during sessions, or the information clinicians share with families?
- Sustainable changes to systemic structures, policy, and processes: Are there changes to intake forms and referral processes, who is included in team meetings, and how does collaboration occur?
- Communication: Do you see changes in conversations between clinicians and parents/children and supervisors' conversations with their team?
- Relationships: Do you see changes in how clinicians collaborate with other disciplines and how they relate to the children/families they work with?
- Long-term Sustainability: What strategies are in place to ensure that adoption competency training and services remain sustainable over time? Are there plans for continued professional development and capacity building for staff around adoption competency? Are adequate resources, including financial, available to support the ongoing training and support needed to maintain adoption competency? Is this reflected accordingly in your agency's policies and procedures?

**10. Implementation Specialists & Support to Reach Your Goals Successfully:**

Implementation Specialists are instrumental in supporting the implementation and sustainability of NTI and are available to assist with the successful implementation and integration of NTI by:

- Providing guidance around the creation of the Site Implementation Team
- Facilitating Site Implementation Team meetings
- Planning kick-off and other launch events
- Hosting webinars or making presentations
- Providing links to marketing tools
- Providing transfer of learning and coaching support

For more information, implementation support, or consultation, please send an e-mail to [nti@adoptionsupport.org](mailto:nti@adoptionsupport.org).