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inspire.
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The Case for Adoption-Competent Mental Health Care

What the Evidence Shows About
What Families Need and What
Works to Support Them

THE REALITY

Children, families, and individuals connected to adoption, foster, and kinship care experience unique and lifelong mental health needs shaped by loss and grief, identity development, family transitions, and more.

However, new national data confirms what this community has long voiced:

**Mental health support is essential —
but adoption-competent care remains hard to find.**



WHAT WE KNOW

Based on a national survey with **500 participants** across **44 states and one U.S. territory**, including adoptees, adoptive parents, birth parents, adoptive siblings, birth siblings, and others:

High Need

86% → **3x**
have used mental health services
the rate of the general population

Low Access

22%
rated their clinician as adoption-competent

Real Harm When Care Misses the Mark...

Adoptees reported clinicians failing to validate:

- Adoption-related trauma and grief
- Identity and belonging challenges
- Lifelong impacts of adoption

Some described shaming or dismissive clinical practices

When Adoption-Competent Care Is Available...

A multi-state effectiveness study found that families working with adoption-competent-trained clinicians experienced:

- Stronger therapeutic relationships
- Higher satisfaction with care
- Better child and family outcomes
- Nearly 3x greater engagement in treatment

The difference isn't whether families seek care—it's whether the care understands them.

WHY THIS MATTERS

Adoption-competent mental health care is not a niche specialty. It is a necessary standard of care for millions of children, families, and individuals, and it must be embedded across:

- Mental health systems
- Child welfare and permanency services
- Schools and pediatric settings
- Policy, funding, and workforce development

THE PATH FORWARD

To close the gap between need and access, we must:

- Expand specialized training
- Define clear standards for adoption competence
- Improve system-wide integration
- Ensure families can find and afford qualified care



Ready to learn more?

Dive deeper and join the movement: adoptionsupport.org/stateofpractice

Be part of advancing adoption-competent mental health care nationwide.