



**November
Is National
Adoption
Month**

Youth Voices: Why Family Matters

October 10, 2019





Agenda

- I. Welcome and overview
- II. Insights from Children's Bureau grantee that can help permanency efforts
- III. Panel discussion—insights from lived experience
- IV. Resources for National Adoption Month 2019
- V. Questions and answers

Welcome and overview

June Dorn

National Adoption Specialist
Children's Bureau



Welcome and overview



- The National Adoption Month 2019 theme is “Youth Voices: Why Family Matters.”
- We’re emphasizing the importance of permanency for older youth
- This webinar focuses on engaging youth effectively in exploring adoption and why family matters to them.

Poll question

Does your agency have specific approaches that you use to engage youth in their own permanency planning?



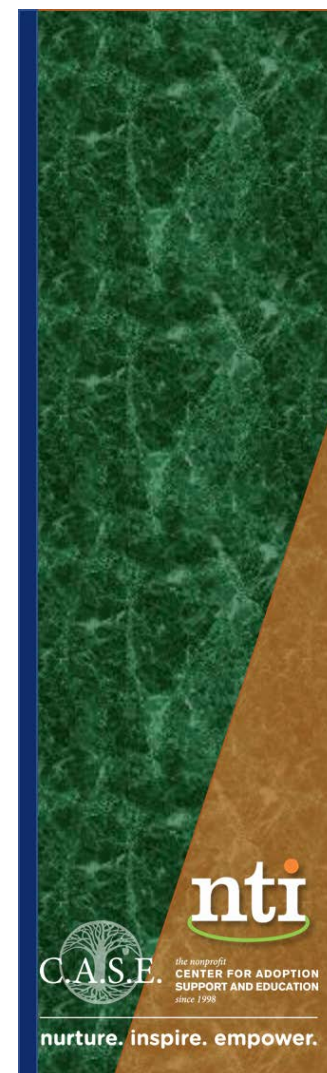


Review of Findings from NTI Child Welfare Professionals Training Pilot



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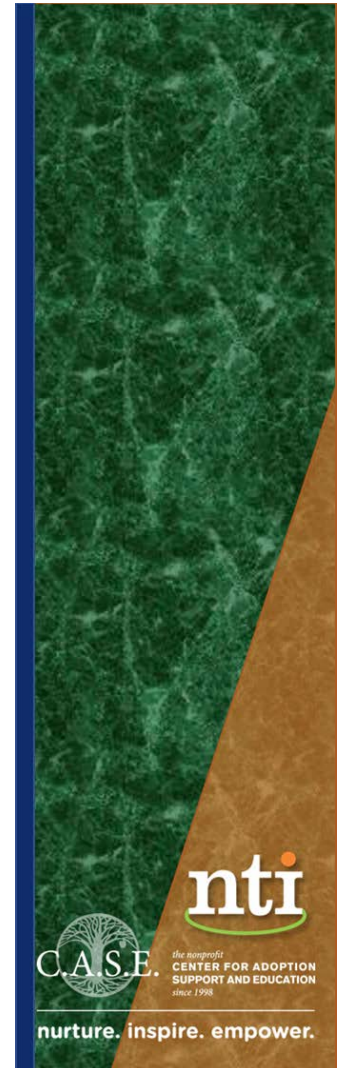


Child Welfare Training

- Piloted January 2017-January 2018
- 8 modules - 20 hours for staff/
23 for supervisors
- Focus on assessment, preparation,
and casework practice with children,
youth, and families
- Downloadable Coaching & Activity
Guide for supervisors
- Appropriate for public/private child
welfare professionals across the
continuum

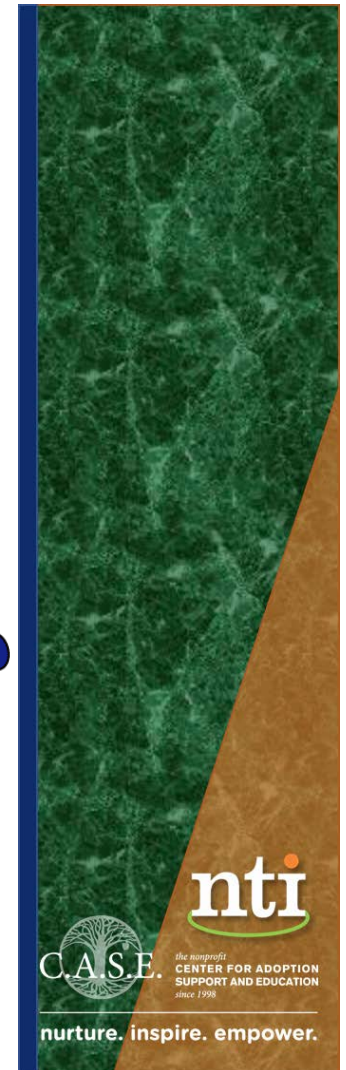
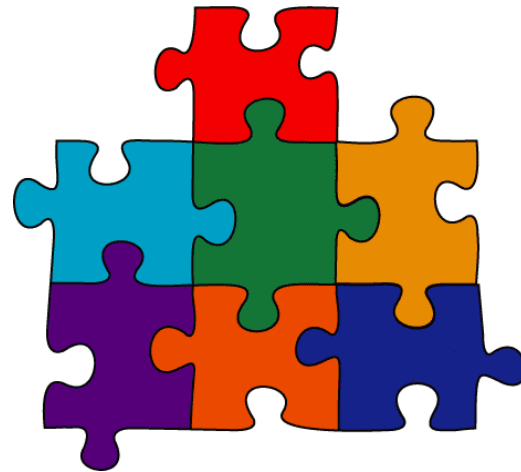


- 6,149 child welfare
professionals enrolled
across all 9 sites
 - 4,613 staff and 1,536
supervisors
 - Mix of mandated vs.
voluntary participants
- 72.5% completion rate



NTI Professional Competencies

- ✓ Understanding Children's Mental Health Challenges
- ✓ Healing from Loss and Grief
- ✓ Impact of Trauma on Brain Development & Behavior
- ✓ Re-building and Strengthening Attachment
- ✓ Supporting Positive Identity Formation
- ✓ Understanding the Impact of Race, Culture and Diversity on Adoptive & Guardianship Families
- ✓ Providing Post-Adoption Supports



Participants*: Who are they?

*individuals who
consented to the NTI
evaluation

Workers

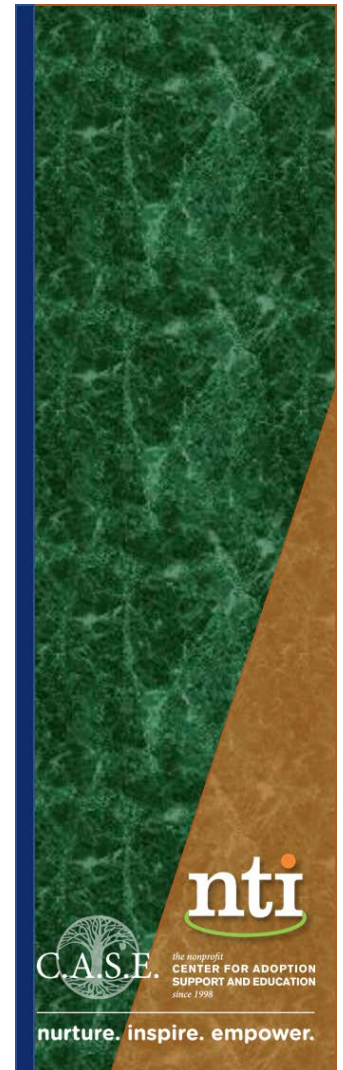
- 87% female
- 38 years old (range: 20-71)
- 7 years working in CW/5 years in adoption & guardianship
- 59% had Bachelor's degrees/37% Master's Degrees

N=3854

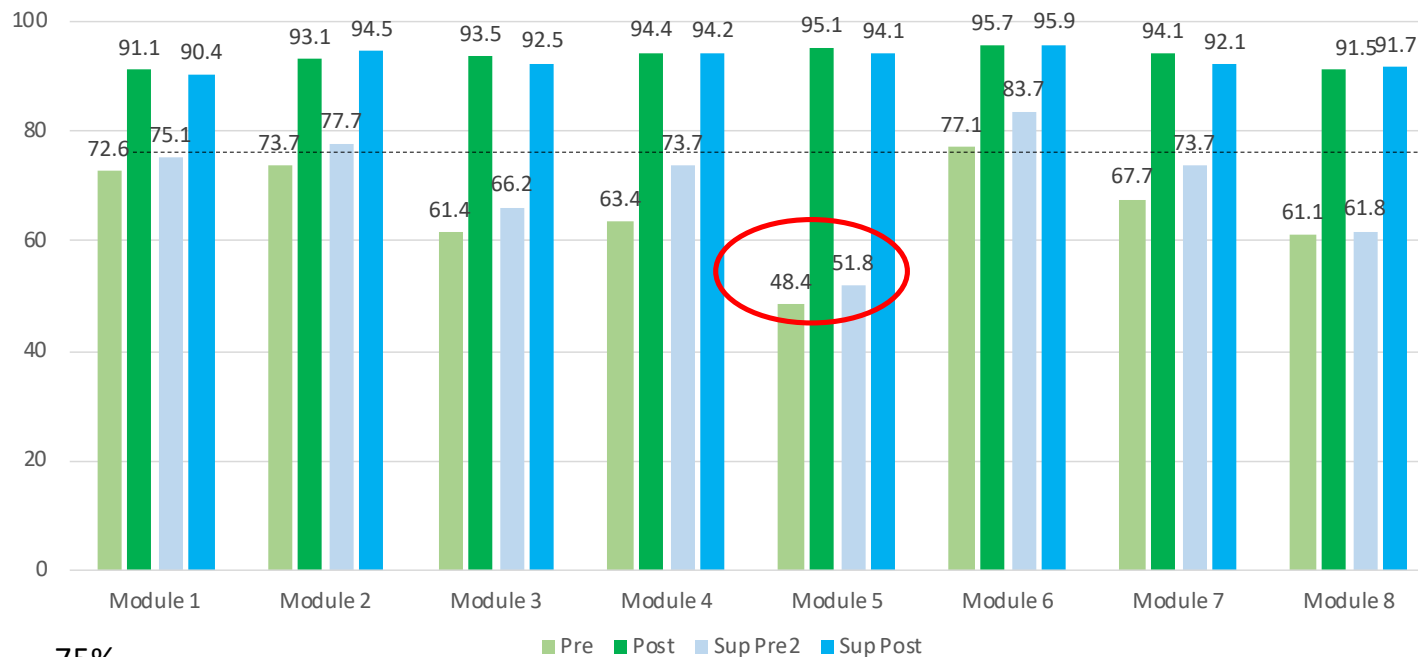
Supervisors

- 86% female
- 44 years old (range: 24-71)
- 15 years working in CW/11 years in adoption & guardianship
- 7 years as supervisor/supervise 8 people
- 64% Master's degrees/34% Bachelor's degree

N=1293



Average Pre and Post Test Scores



75%
passing
score

CW N=3854

CWS N=1293

1. Case for Adoption MH Competency
2. Understanding MH Needs of Children/Youth
3. Enhancing Attachment and Bonding
4. How Race, Ethnicity, Culture, and Diversity Impact Adoption Experience
5. Impact of Loss and Grief
6. Impact of Early/Ongoing Trauma
7. Positive Identity Formation
8. Promoting Family Stability and Preservation

Implications for Practice: Not Understanding Impact of Loss and Grief

"I think the lessons on grieving and culture/race had the greatest impact on me. Those lessons helped me to see how grief can be misdiagnosed and how culture can be overlooked, causing serious identity issues."

"We should explain to the children the reasons they left their parent's home. I really did not know that this should be told. By completing the training I understand the reasons behind that now."



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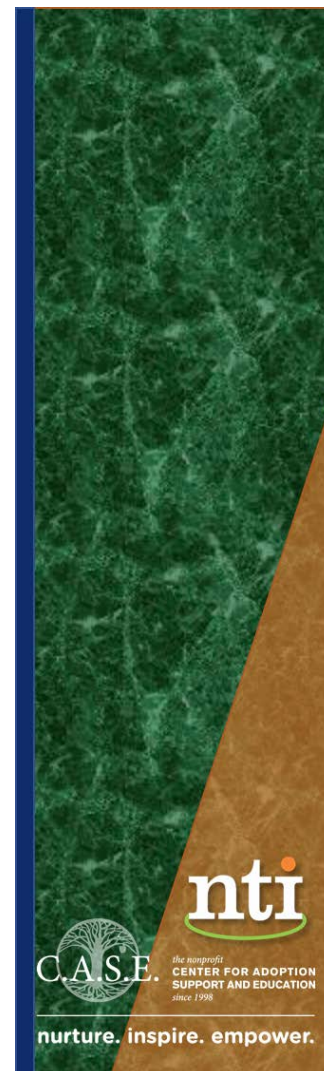
the nonprofit
CENTER FOR ADOPTION
SUPPORT AND EDUCATION
since 1998

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Completers*: The impact of NTI

*individuals who
consented to NTI
evaluation and completed
the training

| | Workers | Supervisors |
|---|---------|-------------|
| Already applied NTI in practice | 59% | 56% |
| Shared something with co-workers | 45% | 63% |
| Agree/Strongly Agree that you can use in your current job | 85% | 90% |
| Likely to recommend NTI to others | 82% | 84% |



NTI Areas of Impact on Child Welfare Practice (3-month follow-up study)

- Recruitment, Training, and Selection of Foster/Adoptive Parents
- Improved Assessments and Referrals
- More honest communication and understanding with youth and caregivers
- Improved confidence and self-efficacy



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Recruitment, Training, and Selection of Foster/Adoptive Parents

...I am excited to bring this new knowledge to foster parents in training and to mold their frame of thinking about foster care/permanency outcomes and challenges.

During my PRIDE parenting classes and home studies I educate the potential foster parents on issues related to trauma, adoption, and being a transracial family to asses/verify their ability to be appropriate foster parents.



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Improved Assessments & Referrals

Referring families to different, more appropriate evidence based practices, such as PCIT and EMDR instead of TF-CBT for a child with extreme complex trauma.

I have made 3 referrals for families to Evidenced Based Practice models since starting this training.



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More Honest Communication & Understanding with Youth

This training has allowed me to understand how the children that I work with yearn for bonding with birth parents, and this can manifest in their behaviors.

The main ways I have applied this training into my work is helping parents reframe their children's behaviors, discussing the importance of openness (when safe), and the negative side effects of keeping secrets.

I have re-evaluated sibling separations.



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Improved Worker Confidence and Self-efficacy

I get calls every day from families in crisis and often felt overwhelmed. Now I feel much less overwhelmed and much more confident in my ability and knowledge to assist them.

I spoke with a parent today on the phone, and because of this training, I had the confidence to give her an educational resource around her son's issues of acting out near adoption.



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NTI provides skills, strategies, and tools to:



- ✓ Support children to heal from trauma and loss.
- ✓ Provide parents with skills to parent more effectively.
- ✓ Improve child and family well-being to increase family stability.



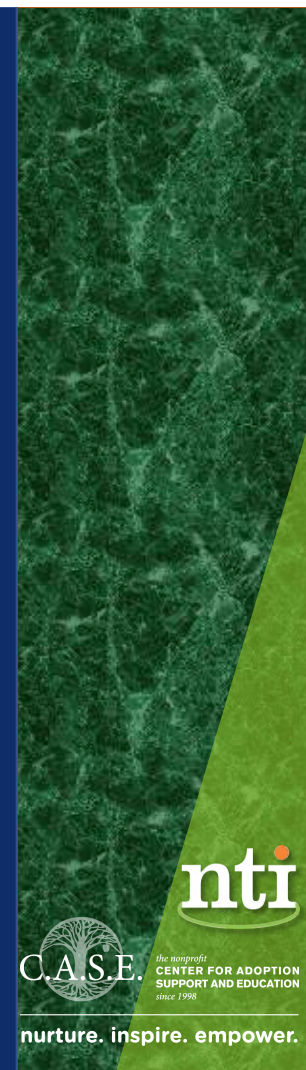
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“Imagine....with our new workers taking NTI along with their foundation training, just think what our workforce will look like in 5 years!” *Pilot Site Representative*



Insights from young adults—why family matters

Help youth understand what family, belonging, and permanency mean.

“[Help youth understand that] you cannot grow up in this world alone. That you actually do better with people around you, supporting you...people in your life that are going to help you get there, achieve your goals...Try to get youth to really think long-term and help them understand the importance of securing permanent figures in their life who can support them wherever they are. When my social worker explained what adoption was, I was like, ‘Oh my gosh. I want that!’ As much as I loved my birth mom, I knew I needed to be looked after. I knew I needed a better chance at life.”—Jo, adopted at 11

Insights from young adults—why family matters

Help youth explore their permanency options—what they want and why.

“I didn't know that I wished to be adopted. I knew I wanted to be loved and I wanted a place to live, but I was too scared to open my heart one more time. That's why I changed my permanency plan from adoption to extended foster care. Adoption seemed unreal to me. I was too old and too unlovable.”—Molly, adopted at 17

Don't allow independent living to be glamorized.

“Now that I'm 21 and I've aged out, I know that aging out is probably the hardest [part of foster care] because you are truly alone with no help from anybody. No one checks up on you... and everybody expects you to do the right thing and be a productive member in society despite not having the right tools to do so.... When I was younger I was excited about getting my own apartment [and exiting foster care]. However, now that I am older, I know that I am not well-equipped to have my own place just yet.”—Elena, aged out

Insights from young adults—why family matters



Recognize that family loyalties may affect youths' desire to pursue permanency.

“My greatest concern with being adopted was the feeling of betrayal to myself and to my family. I refused to change my last name. I did not want my biological mama to know that I was adopted. I felt shame because of it.” —
Teresa, adopted at age 17

Everyone's story is unique. Know the youth you work with. Listen. Advocate.

Panel discussion—introductions

Aria Williams



Joshua Christian



Panel discussion



- Why family matters to you
- Advice for professionals on how to talk with youth about family, adoption, and permanency
- Advice to share with youth in foster care about why family matters
- Other insights on engaging and empowering youth voices
- Responding to questions from participants

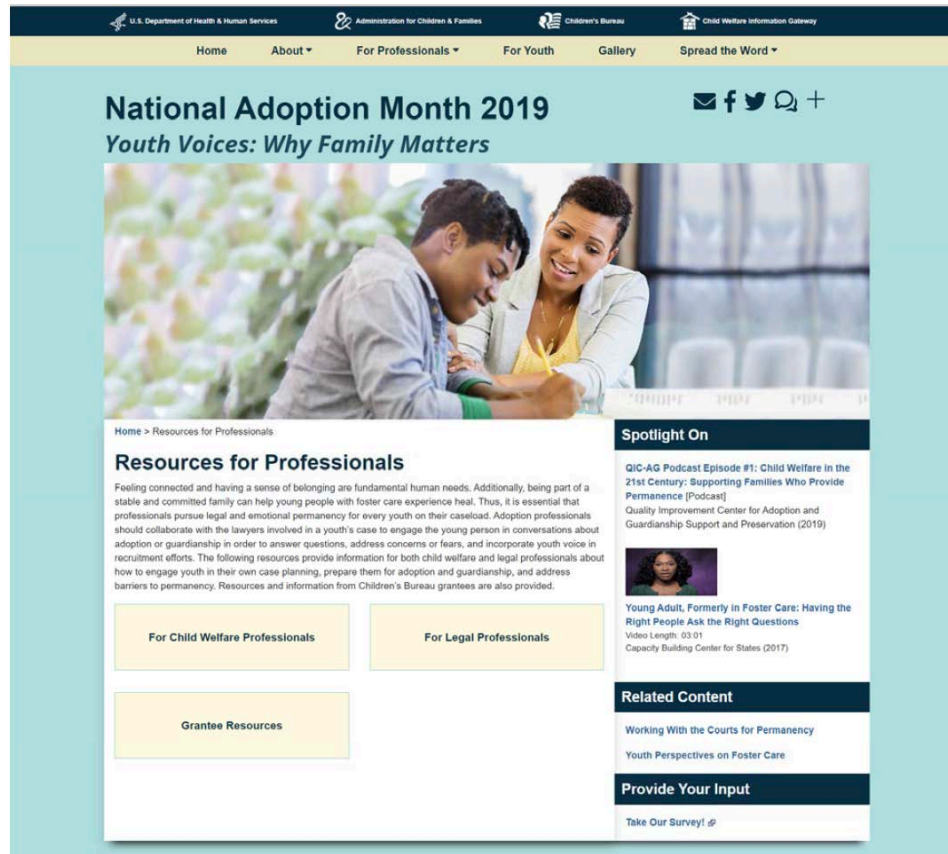
Information and resources



National Adoption Month 2019 website
www.childwelfare.gov/topics/adoption/nam/

- Resources and information on ways to engage youth and empower youth voices
- Examples and ideas from the field
- Videos that feature personal adoption stories
- AdoptUSKids photolisting featuring teens

National Adoption Month website



Resources for professionals

- Tip box
- State and local examples

National Adoption Month website

U.S. Department of Health & Human Services Administration for Children & Families Children's Bureau Child Welfare Information System

Home About For Professionals For Youth Gallery Spread the Word

National Adoption Month 2019
Youth Voices: Why Family Matters

Home » Resources for Professionals » For Child Welfare Professionals

For Child Welfare Professionals

For youth in foster care, adoption means that they belong and can feel connected to a family who will support them no matter what. While young people might initially be resistant to the idea of permanency, it is vital that professionals continue to talk to them about what family means and how positive relationships will benefit them even into adulthood. Below are resources to help professionals engage youth, prepare them for adoption, and convey the urgent need for legal and emotional permanency for young people in care.

Every Kid Needs a Family: Giving Children in the Child Welfare System the Best Chance for Success @ (PDF - 2.464 KB)
The Anne E. Casey Foundation (2016)
Emphasizes the importance of children growing up with families and outlines ways in which State and local leaders can work together to enhance family-oriented services and supports.

Helping Youth Connect @ (PDF - 17.725 KB)
Alta Innovations (2018)
Presents an effective four-phase framework—protect, grow, connect, and regulate—for helping youth heal from relational trauma and find permanency.

It's Time to Make Older Child Adoption a Reality @ (PDF - 1.100 KB)
North American Council on Adoptable Children (2008)
Provides policy and practice recommendations to address barriers to older youth adoption.

Preparing Children and Youth for Permanency
Child Welfare Information Gateway
Lists resources that can help professionals prepare youth throughout the permanency process. Resources include State and local examples.

Redefining Residential: Strategic Interventions to Advance Youth Permanency @ (PDF - 176 KB)
Lieber, Lieberman, and Sisson (2016)
American Association of Children's Residential Centers
Explains how residential intervention can provide an opportunity to address permanency concurrently with safety and well-being for youth.

Strategies for Authentic Integration of Family and Youth Voice in Child Welfare (PDF - 454 KB)
Capacity Building Center for States (2016)
Addresses ways child welfare agencies can authentically engage families and youth and include their voice and valuable lived experiences at the agency level to improve outcomes for children, youth, and families.

Unpacking the No: Helping Young People Explore the Idea of Adoption @
Brewers and Liberto (2018)
North American Council on Adoptable Children
Lists reasons why youth may not want to participate in adoptive family recruitment and possible ways that child welfare workers can respond.

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FOCUS ON: Engaging Youth

Develop specific prompts and tools to remind child welfare workers to talk with youth about what family and permanency mean to them.

Work with adopted youth to develop materials about what it means to have a permanent family, what adoption can mean for them, and how adoption doesn't mean replacing their existing relationships.

Strengthen your agency's prioritization of permanency, as suggested in the publication, *Creating a Permanency Drives Organization: A Guidebook for Change in Child Welfare* (PDF - 8.155 KB).

Use training materials from the National Adoption Competency Mental Health Training Initiative to understand the importance of achieving and sustaining permanency for healthy development.

Provide Your Input

Take Our Survey! @

Resources for child welfare professionals

- Tip box
- State and local examples

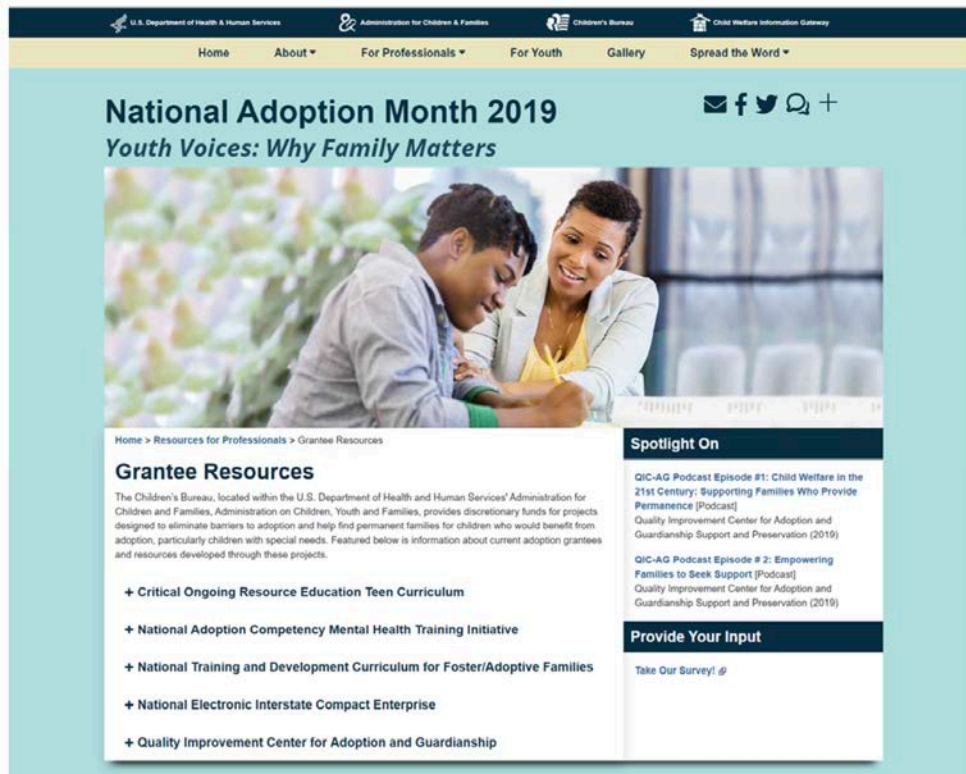
National Adoption Month website



Resources for legal professionals

- Tip box
- State and local examples

National Adoption Month website



Grantee resources

- Tip box
- Links to grant projects

National Adoption Month website

Home About - Resources for Professionals Resources for Youth Video Gallery Spread the Word -

National Adoption Month 2018

In Their Own Words: Lifting Up Youth Voices



Home > Resources for Youth

Resources for Youth

As a young person with experience in foster care or adoption, you have a powerful story and unique perspective that can help improve and shape child welfare processes and programs that impact youth as well as educate your community about what being a teen in foster care is all about. Hopefully, you have already been encouraged to get involved in your agency's recruitment or training efforts in some way. There may also be other opportunities for you to share your voice and provide input in ways you have not yet considered, such as joining your local foster care alumni chapter, helping with staff or resource family trainings, or becoming trained as a media spokesperson.

Below are some resources to help get you connected and involved as well as specific ways you can share your own unique story most effectively.

Transition (Aging Out): 21 Things: It's T Time <#>
FosterClub (2017)
Provides information and tools to help youth successfully transition from foster care. The website regularly features information about higher education and scholarships, permanency pacts, independent living, and more.

What You Gotta Believe Offers Youth <#>
You Gotta Believe
Highlights TV and radio shows <#> for young people where youth talk about the

FOCUS ON: Getting Involved

Share your talent in art, music, acting, or something else as part of foster and adoptive parent recruitment campaigns or events.

Tell your caseworker that you're interested in seeing families who want to adopt teenagers on the AdoptUSKids photolisting <#>.

Join your local foster care alumni chapter, youth advisory group, or a Foster Club discussion forum <#>.

Watch videos from the National Adoption Month website to hear stories from other youth who were in foster care and how they became part of a family.

Spotlight On

Resources for youth

- Tip box
- Publications, videos, and information to help youth share their story and explore permanency

Information and resources



Tip sheet: *Belonging Matters—Helping Youth Explore Permanency*

www.childwelfare.gov/pubs/bulletins-belongingmatters/

- Informs child welfare and adoption professionals as they help youth in foster care explore their permanency options and the value of secure permanent connections
- Based on interviews with young people who were either adopted from foster care or who aged out of the system
- Explores beliefs, concerns, and emotions that motivate youth to seek or to avoid legal or relational permanency.

Information and resources

AdoptUSKids resources

www.adoptuskids.org

- Photolisting: Features more than 5,000 children and approximately 2,500 families
- Family-finding tools: Search for approved families interested in adopting older youth
- Hub for professionals



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[Adoption & foster care](#)

[Meet the children](#)

[For professionals](#)

AdoptUSKids photolisting



For professionals

| | |
|---|---|
| AdoptUSKids photolisting | — |
| Meet the families | |
| Writing children's narratives | + |
| Interstate adoptions | + |
| Publications and resources | + |
| Minority leadership program | + |

[PRINT PAGE](#)

Information and resources



Capacity Building Center for States series on partnerships for permanency

<https://capacity.childwelfare.gov/states/focus-areas/achieving-permanency/engaging-partners/>

- *Engaging Faith-Based Communities to Achieve Timely Permanency for Children and Youth Waiting to Be Adopted*
- *Engaging Nongovernmental Organizations to Achieve Timely Permanency for Children and Youth Waiting to Be Adopted*
- *Engaging Philanthropic Partners to Achieve Timely Permanency for Children and Youth Waiting to Be Adopted*

Questions and answers



Poll question

What additional information and resources would help you engage and empower youth voices more effectively in your work?



The end



Thank you!

If you have questions, please contact
info@childwelfare.gov or info@adoptuskids.org.

