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

NTI is funded through a 5 year cooperative agreement between C.A.S.E. and the US Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Children and Families, Children’s Bureau, Grant #90CO1121.

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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?

**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

*individuals who consented to the NTI evaluation
Average Pre and Post Test Scores

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.”
Completers*: The impact of NTI

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<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Workers</th>
<th>Supervisors</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Already applied NTI in practice</td>
<td>59%</td>
<td>56%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shared something with co-workers</td>
<td>45%</td>
<td>63%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Agree/Strongly Agree that you can use in your current job</td>
<td>85%</td>
<td>90%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Likely to recommend NTI to others</td>
<td>82%</td>
<td>84%</td>
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*individuals who consented to NTI evaluation and completed the training
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
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 assess/verify their ability to be appropriate foster parents.
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.
More Honest Communication & Understanding with Youth

I have re-evaluated sibling separations.

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.
Improved Worker Confidence and Self-efficacy

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.

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.
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.
“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*
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

Resources for child welfare professionals

- Tip box
- State and local examples
Resources for legal professionals

- Tip box
- State and local examples
National Adoption Month website

Resources for Youth

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