

# Addressing Grief and Loss in Your Support of Adoptive, Foster, and Kinship Families

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# Before we begin



This webinar will be recorded and shared with you.



Submit your questions.



Please complete our survey at the end of the webinar.

# Our mission



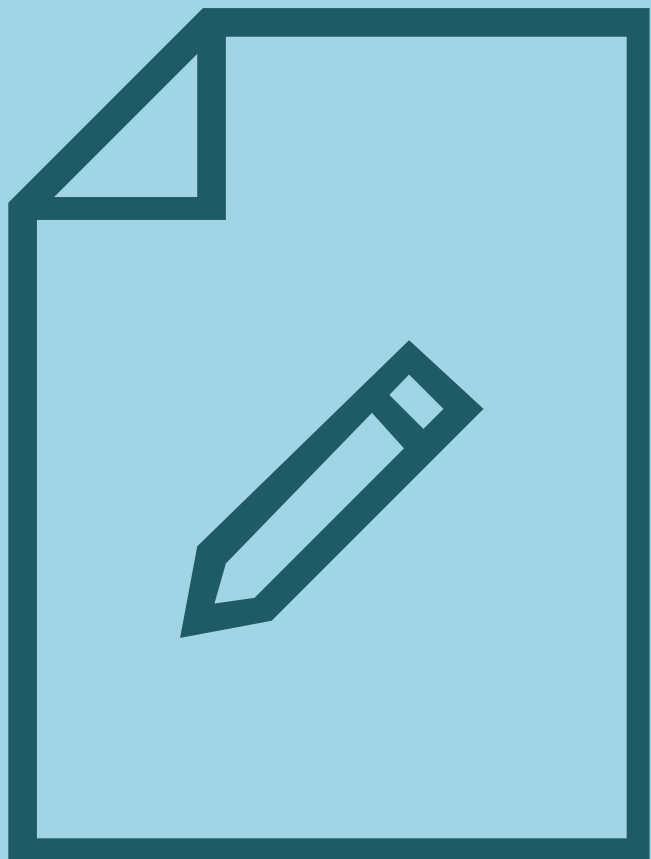
Raise public awareness about the need for foster and adoptive families for children in the public child welfare system



Assist US states, territories, and tribes to recruit, engage, develop and support foster and adoptive families

# Goals for this webinar

- 1 Discuss how grief and loss affect adoptive, foster, and kinship families
- 2 Demonstrate how the NTI training curriculum incorporates grief and loss
- 3 Highlight program models that incorporate grief and loss education and support
- 4 Offer tools and strategies to help you incorporate grief and loss into your support programs



# Audience polls



**Why do programs for resource families need to specifically address grief and loss?**

**Grief and loss  
affect the lives  
of resource  
parents in  
many complex  
ways.**



# Ambiguous loss

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Losses without social recognition can make grieving more complex, especially for children.



# To be successful, families need:



Preparation that addresses the impact of a range of grief and loss experiences



Support in helping children through grief



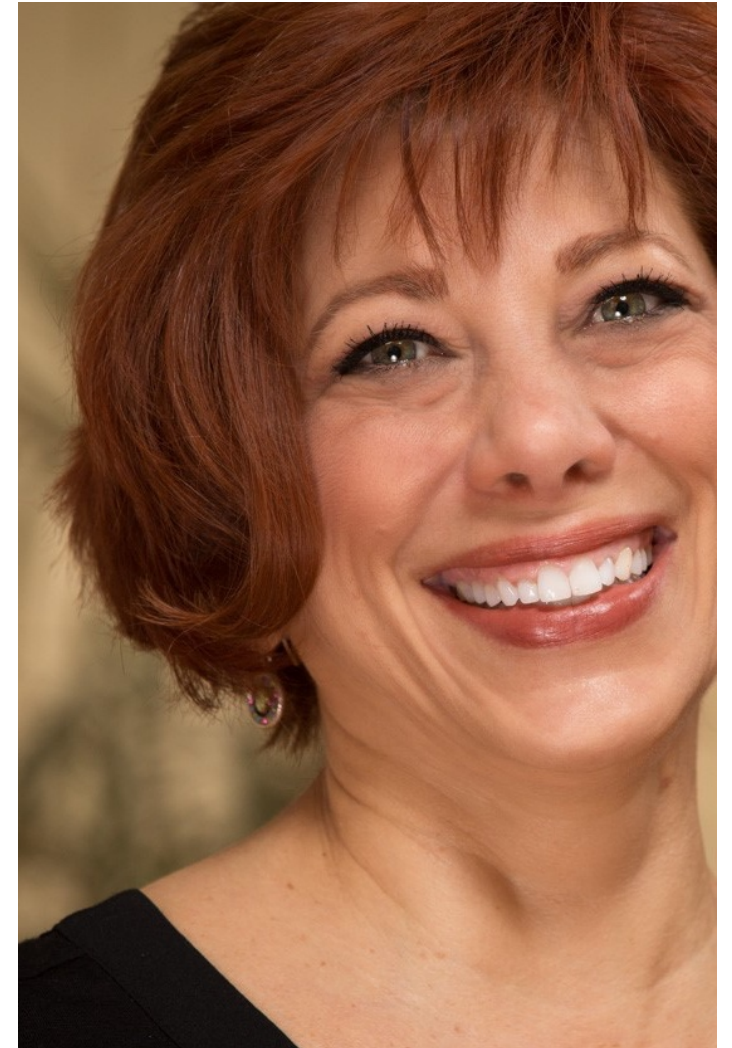
Support in coping with their own grief

# National Adoption Competency Mental Health Training Initiative (NTI)

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## Grief and loss education in adoption competency curricula

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# National Adoption Competency Mental Health Training Initiative

- Five year research initiative: 2014– 2019
- Create state of the art web-based trainings for child welfare and mental health professionals
- Enhance the capacity of professionals to understand and address the mental health challenges of children and youth in foster care, adoption, guardianship



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

Advancing Practice for Permanency & Well-Being

- **Free**, web-based, self-paced training
- Tools and resources to enhance casework and clinical practice
- Assessment and therapeutic strategies to address behavioral challenges
- A shared language for child welfare and mental health professionals

## Child Welfare Curriculum

20 hours, Category II CEUs  
Supervisors – 25 hours

### Child Welfare Curriculum Offers:

- 8 Interactive Learning Modules focused on Casework Practice (20 hours)
- 5 additional hours of supervisor-specific lessons with a downloadable “*Supervisor Coaching and Activity Guide*” to support application of learning to daily practice
- Approved by NASW for continuing education credits

## Mental Health Curriculum

30 hours, Category II CEUs

### Mental Health Curriculum Offers:

- 10 Interactive Learning Modules focused on Clinical Practice (30 hours)
- Includes new assessment and treatment strategies through an adoption lens
- Provides information on 12 evidence-based treatment interventions
- Approved by NASW for continuing education credits



# NTI competencies

- Understanding children's mental health challenges
- Loss and grief
- Impact of trauma
- Building strong attachments
- Positive identity formation
- Impact of race, culture, and diversity
- Providing post-adoption supports
- **Assessment and treatment planning**
- **Therapeutic parenting strategies**



**How does *not* having an understanding of these issues affect the work?**



# When providers don't have specialized skills

[Watch the  
Video](#)





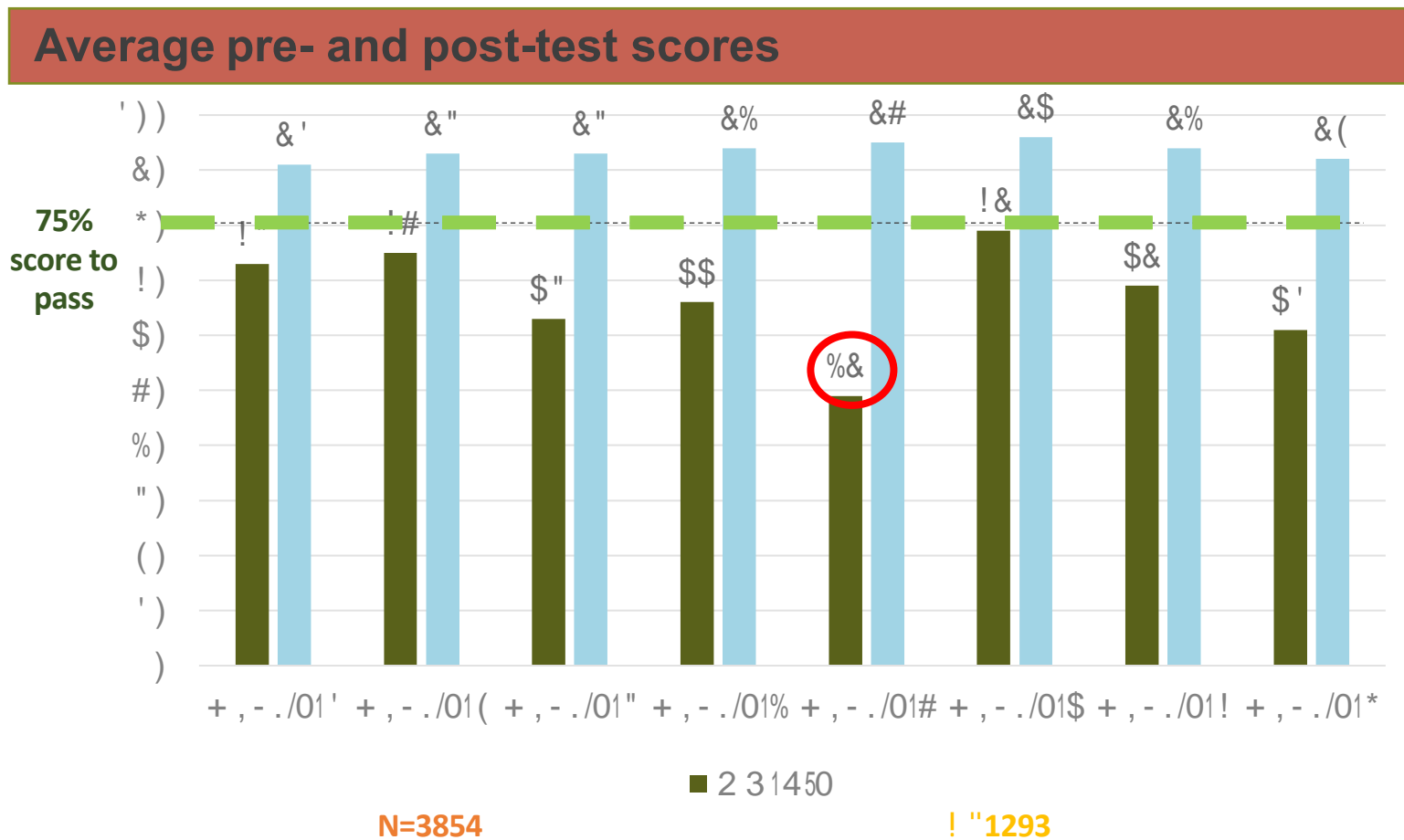
# What did we learn?



## **Piloted in nine sites:**

- **California**
- **Illinois**
- **Maine**
- **Minnesota**
- **Oklahoma**
- **South Carolina**
- **Tennessee**
- **Washington**
- **Cherokee Nation**

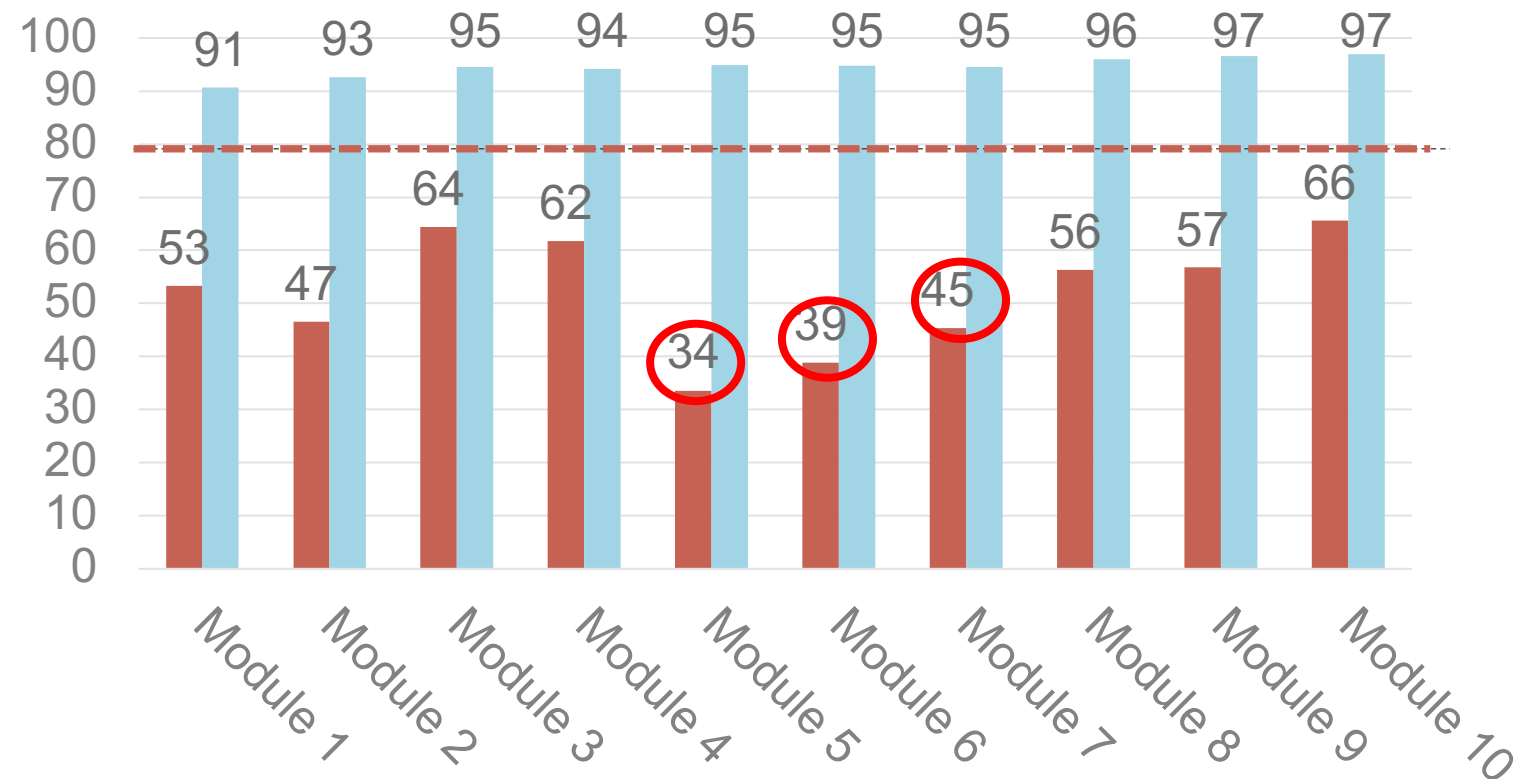
# Child welfare professionals findings



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

# Preliminary Mental Health Findings:

Average pre- and post-test scores (80% passing score)



1. Case for adoption  
MH competency

2. Understanding MH  
needs

3. Loss and grief

4. Early/ongoing  
trauma

5. Attachment/child  
development

6. Race, ethnicity,  
culture, and  
diversity

7. Identity formation

8. Assessment and  
treatment planning

9. Therapeutic  
parenting

10. Promoting family  
stability and  
preservation

# Professionals working with children and parents have a critical role in helping:

Children *understand/tell* their story

Parents *reframe their children's needs*

Parents *understand the impact of grief and loss and trauma* on their child's development, behavior, and ability to attach

Parents *honor and maintain their child's connections* with birth family, community, and culture

**Professionals  
can learn new  
tools to  
support  
healing from  
trauma, loss,  
and grief.**

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Does not require use of a new model

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Provides focus on neurobiology and impact of ACEs

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Provides therapeutic parenting strategies that differentiate “*can’t*” versus “*won’t*” behaviors

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Focuses on understanding the big picture factors shaping children’s adjustment in adoptive and guardianship families

A black and white photograph of a child's silhouette reaching for a red heart on a wall. The child is on the left, reaching up towards a red heart that is slightly out of focus. The background is a textured, light-colored wall with some vertical lines and small circular marks. The overall mood is contemplative and poignant.

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

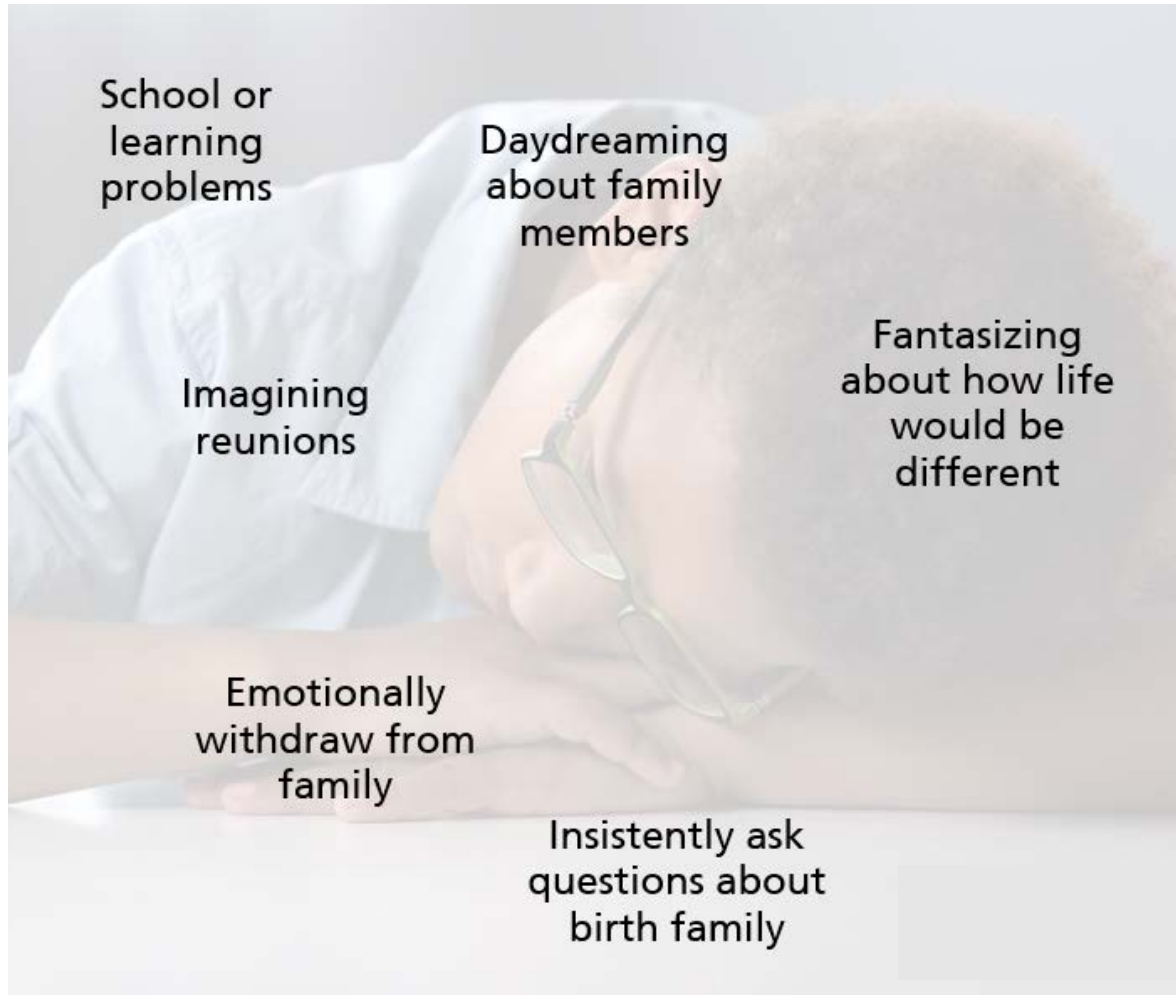








## [Loss & Grief](#)



# Common Behaviors Related to Loss and Grief

# Grief in adolescence

## Disenfranchised Grief

- Misunderstood behavior
- Misdiagnosis

## Grieve differently

## Grief = behavior

- Disinterested
- Aggressive
- Impulsive
- Hyperactive
- Distracted





# MSL1: Impact of ambiguous and unresolved loss and grief on emotional adjustments



# What can we do?



Help minimize the impact of loss and grief



Help parents understand and process their own loss and grief



Help children and youth process and manage their feelings of loss and grief



## Discuss ways to help a child struggling with loss

- ✓ Tell the truth
- ✓ Encourage questions
- ✓ Process the why
- ✓ Be there
- ✓ Use or create a Life Book
- ✓ Understand *your* feelings

# Sampling of NTI Tools and Resources



**BIRD'S NEST  
DRAWING  
MR. NOBODY  
WHOSE JOB WAS IT?**



**LOSS BOX  
MEMORY BOX**



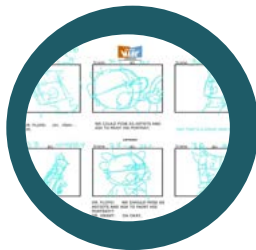
**LIFE BOOK  
WORK**



**JOURNALING**



**DIGITAL  
STORIES**



**STORYBOARDING**



**NARRATIVE  
THERAPIES**



**CASE STUDY REVIEWS &  
EVIDENCE-BASED PRACTICES**

# NTI provides the skills, strategies, and tools to:



Enable children to heal from trauma and loss



Provide parents with skills to parent more effectively



Improve outcomes for permanency and well-being



# Adoption-competent providers make a difference

"Like *NIGHT* and *DAY*!"

[Watch the  
Video](#)





About  
NTI ▼

NTI  
Trainings ▼

Access Options  
for Training ▼

Evaluation  
Outcomes ▼

Communication  
Tools to Share ▼

Webinars  
and Events ▼

NATIONAL NTI  
DIRECTORY

## Accessing NTI Web-Based Training

### *Get Ready to Experience NTI!*

#### *Options for Individuals & Organizations*

Whether you are a Child Welfare or Mental Health professional, or an administrator in an organization, you can choose your preferred way to access the free web-based NTI training. Administrators are encouraged to explore integration options, if needed, so your team can successfully make NTI trainings available to staff and others with the desired data, reporting, tracking and support options.

#### **Individuals can access either LMS:**

**Access on C.A.S.E. LMS**

– Free NASW CEUs + Help Desk

**Access on CapLEARN**

– Buy CEUs, No Help Desk

#### **Organizations' implementation options:**

**Access for Organizations**

#### Frequently Asked Questions



Would you like to receive NTI Updates?  
Please [Click HERE](#).

# **Program models that include grief and loss**

## **The 3-5-7 Model**

Designed to help  
parents and  
professionals work  
with children to  
address grief and  
loss

**Program models  
that include  
grief and loss**

## **UCLA TIES**

Loss  
Intervention for  
Families in  
Transition (LIFT)

**Program models  
that include  
grief and loss**

## **Project Revive**

Training and  
specialized  
support groups



# Strategies to incorporate grief and loss into programming

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**Require staff and providers  
to complete adoption-  
competency training with a  
grief and loss component**







**Incorporate grief and loss into preservice and ongoing training for parents and caregivers**





# Lead discussions on grief and loss in support groups

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- For parents and caregivers
- For children and youth

**Include enhanced  
supports during and  
after periods of  
transition**







## **Bring in experienced caregivers!**

- Training for staff and new caregivers
- Mentoring and other peer support
- Program evaluation and improvement



## Prioritize grief and loss at your agency.

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- Normalize talking about grief and loss
- Model the need for ongoing education and support around grief and loss



## Type into chat.

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How does your agency address grief and loss with children, youth, parents, and caregivers?



Questions?





# Resources

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## **The NTI curriculum**

[adoptionssupport.org/nti](https://adoptionssupport.org/nti)

## **AdoptUSKids resources for professionals**

[professionals.adoptuskids.org](https://professionals.adoptuskids.org)



# Resources

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## Discussion guides for parent group leaders

*Understanding Childhood Grief and Loss*

[professionals.adoptuskids.org/understanding-childhood-grief-and-loss-a-discussion-guide/](https://professionals.adoptuskids.org/understanding-childhood-grief-and-loss-a-discussion-guide/)

*Understanding Parental Grief and Loss*

[professionals.adoptuskids.org/understanding-parental-grief-and-loss-a-discussion-guide/](https://professionals.adoptuskids.org/understanding-parental-grief-and-loss-a-discussion-guide/)



# Resources

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## ***Support Matters***

[professionals.adoptuskids.org/a-comprehensive-guide-on-supporting-families/](https://professionals.adoptuskids.org/a-comprehensive-guide-on-supporting-families/)

## ***Support Services Assessment Tool and companion guide***

[professionals.adoptuskids.org/tool-and-guide-for-assessing-and-improving-family-support-services/](https://professionals.adoptuskids.org/tool-and-guide-for-assessing-and-improving-family-support-services/)



# Contact information

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## Need help?

Contact [consultation@adoptuskids.org](mailto:consultation@adoptuskids.org) for capacity building support.

## Stay informed!

Learn about the latest resources and upcoming events at [adoptuskids.org/newsletter-sign-up](https://adoptuskids.org/newsletter-sign-up).



# Contact information

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# AdoptUSKids

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