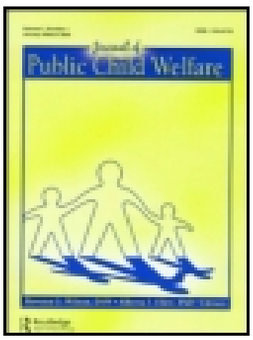

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# Maximizing the success of resource parents who care for adolescents: training recommendations from caregivers and child welfare professionals

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**ABSTRACT**

This study is one component of a larger project to design and evaluate a 12-hour national, in-service training curriculum for resource parents of adolescents who have experienced trauma. To inform curriculum development, this study explored perspectives and recommendations of resource parents and child welfare professionals on how trainings may adequately prepare resource parents for this role. Two major themes were identified. Participants believed that trainings need to be relatively more interactive than didactic to increase opportunities to develop skill and affective competencies (e.g., self-awareness). Participants also reported that trainings should include parent and adolescent trainers, who could provide a realistic understanding of resource parent struggles and successes.

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## Literature review

The number of adolescents entering foster care has increased steadily in recent years after a decline between 2005 and 2013 (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 2016). Adolescents in the child welfare system often have histories of maltreatment such as neglect and physical, sexual, and psychological abuse (Kisiel, Summersett-Ringgold, Weil, & McClelland, 2017; Salazar, Keller, Gowen, & Courtney, 2013; Stambaugh et al., 2013). As a result of these traumas, adolescents in care often experience health-related, emotional, behavioral, social and academic issues (Farmer et al., 2010; Griffin et al., 2011; Hall, 2012; United States Department of Health and Human Services [USDHHS], 2005). These adolescents are at higher risk for delayed development, mental illness, substance use disorders, pregnancy, and delinquency (Day, Edward, Pickover, & Leever, 2013; Griffin et al., 2011). They may also have difficulty forming trusting and healthy relationships with adults and peers (Chamberlain, 2009).

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The complex challenges child welfare-involved adolescents face are compounded when they experience multiple placement changes, as resource parents (foster, adoptive, and kinship caregivers) may not have the knowledge and skills necessary to successfully manage adolescents' feelings and behaviors (Chamberlain et al., 2006; Glisson, Bailey, & Post, 2000). Resource parents thus play a critical role in adolescents achieving permanency. Instability in placements may intensify existing emotional and behavioral issues in adolescents, impact their ability to form secure attachments (Gauthier, Fortin, & Jeliu, 2004; Harden, 2004; James, Landsverk, & Slymen, 2004; Keller, Cusick, & Courtney, 2007), and prevent them from securing permanency before reaching adulthood (Gets, 2012; National Foster Youth Institute, 2017). While placement instability may exacerbate socio-emotional issues, placement stability can mitigate them, when concerted efforts are made to nurture resource parents' relationships with the adolescents they are caring for (Pecora et al., 2005).

Resource parents must be well prepared in knowledge and skills to meet the complex needs of adolescents in their care, respond effectively to challenging parenting situations, and promote permanency. For example, resource parents should understand how trauma can negatively impact adolescents' behavior and socio-emotional functioning and learn techniques to de-escalate conflict and crisis, stabilize adolescents' behavior and affect, and develop routines, structure, and limits (Buehler, Rhodes, Orme, & Cuddeback, 2006; Chadwick Center & Chapin Hall, 2016; Lipscombe, 2003). For transracial placements involving adolescents of color, resource parents must learn to provide culturally competent care, including strategies to assist an adolescent's cultural identity and advocacy skills for when the adolescent experiences racism and discrimination (Buehler et al., 2006; Pecora & Harrison- Jackson, 2015).

Other needs of resource parents include skills that may reduce disruptive behaviors such as problem solving and positive reinforcement strategies and the ability to identify opportunities for adolescents to engage in activities that promote positive development (Vanschoonlandt, Vanderfaeillie, Van Holen, & De Maeyer, 2012). Further, resource parents need to understand the importance of maintaining a connection to the adolescents' birth family and, when appropriate, strategies to foster healthy connections (Buehler et al., 2006). Additionally, they need knowledge and skills related to their own self-care, including emotion regulation, stress reduction, and engagement in life-long learning (Buehler et al., 2006; Preston, Yates, & Moss, 2012). Yet, many resource parents do not receive adequate access to support resources or sufficient training to meet the complex needs of adolescents; this leads to parental dissatisfaction and, ultimately, placement disruption (Chamberlain et al., 2006; Hall, 2012; McWey, Holtrop, Wojciak, & Claridge, 2015; Spielfogel, Leathers, Christian, & McMeel, 2011; Turner, 2009).

When resource parents do receive training, it most commonly occurs before an adolescent is placed in their care (i.e., pre-service training), although variations in trainings exist across the United States. Pre-service trainings are used in part to aid potential resource parents in assessing whether resource parenting would be a good fit for their family (Dorsey et al., 2008; Turner, 2009). Pre-service trainings such as Parent Resources for Information, Development, and Education [PRIDE], Keeping Foster and Kin Parents Supported and Trained [KEEP], and Multi-dimensional Treatment Foster Care have been associated with positive outcomes for those who complete them, including greater role satisfaction, less burnout, and an increased sense of well-being (Price et al., 2008; Whenan, Oxlad, & Lushington, 2009; Whiting, Huber, & Koech, 2007). Additional benefits of pre-service training include resource parents' increased knowledge of support services, willingness to nurture connections with the youth's[1] biological family, ability to form relationships with youth, and ability to meet the youth's developmental needs (Nash & Flynn, 2016; Whenan et al., 2009; Whiting et al., 2007). Although pre-service training constitutes a critical form of support, resource parents often also need further training when a child is placed in their care, or in-service training, to acquire additional knowledge and skills.

Research, however, has found mixed results on the effectiveness of existing in-service trainings on youth and resource parent outcomes. For example, an evaluation of a training on behavior management found limited impact on youth behavior and resource parent abilities (Pithouse, Hill-Tout, & Lowe, 2002). A more recent evaluation examined the benefits of a Maryland-based replication of the Keeping Foster and Kinship Parents Trained and Supported program, which focused on parenting children with externalizing behaviors (Greeno et al., 2016). While this evaluation showed no effects on parental stress or permanency, improvements were found in the children's behavior. By contrast, a meta-analysis of 16 evaluations of resource parent trainings from 1984 to 2014 indicated minimal improvements in youth behavioral issues, but moderate increases in resource parents' knowledge and skills (Solomon, Niec, & Schoonover, 2017). Though promising, these existing in-service training curricula focus primarily on primary-school-aged children. Therefore, a training curriculum that is well designed for resource parents who are or will be caring for adolescents is needed.

Because instructional delivery can impact knowledge and skills attainment and retention (Dorsey et al., 2008), it is critical to consider which components of instruction are linked to maximizing training outcomes when developing a training for resource parents of adolescents. Indeed, the second stage of training development, following the identification of target competencies (Patterson et al., 2018; Day et al., 2018), is to identify components that influence training effectiveness. Learning theories, such as

Adult and 21st Century Learning theories, highlight different components of the learning process that may generally impact instructional effectiveness (Arghode, Brieger, & McLean, 2017).

Adult Learning Theory (ALT) posits that education of adult learners, such as resource parents, must be responsive to their unique needs, including flexibility, control, feedback, and a self-determined pace (Frey & Alman, 2003; Halpern & Tucker, 2015). According to ALT, adult-centered instruction should incorporate relevant experiential and problem-based activities while making connections to learners' prior work and life experiences (Halpern & Tucker, 2015; Kenner & Weinerman, 2011; Merriam, 2008). It should also recognize that learners' other concurrent responsibilities that may limit their margin for learning (Frey & Alman, 2003). Complementarily, 21st Century Learning theory emphasizes the need for instruction to respond to the contemporary learning environments, modes, and technologies against which learners are situated (Gunn & Hollingsworth, 2013; Sontag, 2009), and explores how virtual means such as online instruction may facilitate collaborative learning (Beagle, 2012; Graesser, 2013; Qian & Clark, 2016). While learning theories offer useful frames to examine instructional delivery, the core components of resource parent training instruction have yet to be defined, as evaluations of existing trainings have largely focused on child outcomes (i.e., placement stability and permanency).

To inform the second stage of curriculum development, we explored the perspectives and recommendations of resource parents and child welfare professionals about training. In particular, the research question explored in this study was how can training be delivered to prepare resource parents to care for adolescents adequately? The current study is one component of a larger project to design and evaluate a 12-hour national, in-service training curriculum for resource parents of adolescents who have previously completed a pre-service training. Specifically, the curriculum will be for people who are resource parents to adolescents who have experienced trauma and subsequently been identified as having severe and persistent behavioral issues.

## Methods

The current study involved a collaboration between two teams. The project team (the last four authors) recruited participants, collected data for the current study, and provided de-identified data to the evaluation team. The evaluation team (the first four authors) was responsible for data analysis. The two teams worked collaboratively by co-developing the interview and survey protocols, providing training and guidance on data collection, and providing each other with feedback throughout the project. The study was approved by the University of Washington Institutional Review Board.

### Procedures

Semi-structured interviews were conducted with resource parents and an online survey was administered to child welfare professionals, to obtain their perspectives on resource parent training. Individual interviews were conducted by the project team who obtained informed consent prior to data collection. Interviews were conducted by phone or in-person and ranged from 40 to 94 minutes, with an average of 55 minutes. The online survey was administered via Survey Monkey. Responses to each survey question varied in length, with some participants writing a few sentences and many providing longer paragraphs.

### Sample

Purposive sampling was used to identify foster and adoptive parents of adolescents and professionals (N = 44) who have knowledge of and experience with foster, adoptive, or kinship care and training. Participants were recruited and interviewed by professionals from the North American Council on Adoptable Children, a national organization with expertise in foster, adoption, and kinship care, as well as a researcher with expertise in tribal child welfare. To identify potential participants, project team members searched their national organization's databases for caregivers and professionals who were knowledgeable about the factors that contribute to placement permanency and the well-being of adolescents in care. Resource parents were contacted by email or phone and were provided with information about the purpose of the project. Those who expressed interest in participating were scheduled for an interview. Child welfare professionals were sent an email explaining the purpose of the project, a list of survey questions, and an invitation to participate in an online survey.

These recruiting efforts continued until saturation was reached (e.g., participants were conveying the same themes but new themes did not emerge) and yielded 44 participants: 18 resource parents and 26 professionals. As shown in Table 1, the caregivers were primarily women (88%), and more than half (61%) identified as Caucasian. Eighty-three percent of the caregivers had at least one teen placed in their care whose ethnicity was different from their own. As shown in Table 2, more than half of the professionals were also women (58%) and Caucasian (54%). Half of them had 15 or more years of experience in child welfare.

### Interview guide

The qualitative interview protocol and survey were informed by the literature on factors that influence successful placements of adolescents with moderate to severe behavioral issues, as well as by national experts

**Table 1.** Phase 1: Descriptive statistics for resource parents (N = 18).

| Characteristic | Frequency | | % |
|---|---|---|---|
| Gender | | | |
| Female | 16 | | 88.9 |
| Male | 2 | | 11.1 |
| Ethnicity | | | |
| Caucasian | 11 | | 61.1 |
| Black/African American | 3 | | 16.7 |
| Multiracial | 2 | | 11.1 |
| Native American | 2 | | 11.1 |
| Parent Role | | | |
| Foster Parent | 13 | | 72.2 |
| Adoptive Parent | 10 | | 55.6 |
| Kinship Parent | 6 | | 33.3 |
| Transracial Placement (Current or Past) | 15 | | 83.3 |
| Geographic Location | | | |
| Midwest | 8 | | 44.4 |
| West | 4 | | 22.2 |
| Southwest | 3 | | 16.7 |
| Southeast | 2 | | 11.1 |
| Northeast | 1 | | 5.6 |
| Characteristic | *M* | Min. | Max. |
| Years of Experience | 15.5 | 0.92 | 38 |

in foster, adoptive, and kinship care. The resource parents were asked ten questions in addition to demographic questions during the interview. The majority of the questions asked participants to describe the knowledge, skills, and characteristics that helped them care for adolescents as well as the knowledge, skills, and characteristics that they wish they possessed when they first became a resource parent. These data were utilized to identify competencies for curriculum development (see Patterson et al., 2018). Following these questions, the participants were asked how training could help resource parents achieve these competencies. For example, the participants were asked 'How would you change or improve training for foster, adoptive or guardian parents if you had the opportunity to do so."

The professionals were asked to complete four open-ended questions. The survey began by asking the participants to describe the essential knowledge, skills, and characteristics needed for resource parents to provide adequate care for adolescents. These data also were utilized to identify competencies for curriculum development. Following these questions, the participants were asked how training could help resource parents achieve these competencies. For example, the participants were asked 'how can training help foster, adoptive, and guardian parents develop skills and characteristics you mentioned in the interview." Participants were asked to provide basic demographic characteristics and personal/professional background and experiences.

**Table 2.** Phase 1: Descriptive statistics for professionals (N = 26).

| Characteristic | Frequency | % |
|---|---|---|
| Gender | | |
| Female | 15 | 57.7 |
| Male | 6 | 23.1 |
| Unknown | 5 | 19.2 |
| Ethnicity | | |
| Caucasian | 14 | 54.0 |
| Black/African American | 3 | 11.5 |
| American Indian | 3 | 11.5 |
| Multiracial | 2 | 7.7 |
| Latino | 2 | 7.7 |
| Asian Indian | 1 | 3.8 |
| Did Not Report | 1 | 3.8 |
| Professional Area of Expertise* | | |
| Adoptive Parents | 23 | 88.5 |
| Kinship Parents | 22 | 84.6 |
| Foster Parents | 19 | 73.1 |
| Families Preparing to Adopt | 16 | 61.5 |
| Youth in Care | 14 | 53.8 |
| Youth in Permanent Families | 14 | 53.8 |
| Youth in Congregate Care | 14 | 53.8 |
| Families Preparing to Foster | 12 | 46.2 |
| Emancipated Youth | 5 | 19.2 |
| Geographic Location | | |
| Midwest | 9 | 34.6 |
| Southwest | 5 | 19.2 |
| West | 4 | 15.4 |
| Southeast | 4 | 15.4 |
| Northeast | 4 | 15.4 |
| Professional Experience | | |
| 1–5 years | 9 | 34.6 |
| 5–10 years | 4 | 15.4 |
| 10–15 years | 4 | 15.4 |
| 15–20 years | 6 | 23.1 |
| 20+ years | 3 | 11.5 |

## *Data analysis*

The analysts from the research team reviewed the qualitative data several times to gain a comprehensive understanding of the participants' perspectives (Miles, Huberman, & Saldana, 2014). Next, the data were examined word-by-word to develop an initial list of codes (Miles et al., 2014). The data were coded by a team of seven analysts with at least two analysts coding each interview or survey (95% agreement). When there was a discrepancy in the coding, the team discussed and clarified the meaning of the excerpt, and then revised the coding after reaching consensus. Finally, the analysts reviewed the coded excerpts to identify patterns and relationships among the codes, which led to categorical formation (Patton, 2002). The analysis indicated a strong congruence between the resource parents' and professionals' perspectives on improving future resource parent training.

## Results

The findings identified two major themes for the development of a training for resource parents of adolescents, and for the improvement of future resource parent trainings more broadly. First, the participants believed that the training should be more interactive and less didactic to allow resource parents the opportunity to facilitate skill and affective competencies (e.g., self-awareness). Second, the participants reported that the training could benefit from the inclusion of parent and adolescents trainers, who could provide a more realistic understanding of resource parent struggles and successes.

### *Interactive training delivery*

Several participants believed that the training instruction needed to be more interactive and less didactic to go beyond knowledge development. In particular, they believed the training should include role-plays, case studies, and problem solving to foster skill development (N = 10 Professionals; N = 6 resource parents). Some participants (N = 5 professionals; N = 5 resource parents) also believed that the instruction should include experiential activities, group discussion to share interpersonal challenges, and self-assessment to develop affective dimensions such as empathy for adolescents in care and self-awareness to help resource parents recognize how their emotional well-being impacts their parenting:

> Practice, practice, practice. Give them the knowledge and skills they need, the ability to ask questions/problem-solve [Professional #20].

> People today expect way more hands-on, learning by doing, NOT lecture. Get people engaged kinetically [Resource Parent #9]

> Our pre-adoptive trainer went through a guided imagery exercise that helped me get in touch with the intense feelings a foster child feels as they move into a home. It was 25 years ago and I still remember it vividly. I wish I better understood that the change that needed to happen to heal a child with trauma was the change in me... the change in the child would follow … helping families figure out their own past trauma that is causing the triggers within themselves and then bringing everyone back to a place of understanding and connection.. [Resource Parent #13].

As noted by the participants, an interactive training allows resource parents to develop skills beyond knowledge. These participants also believed inclusion of affective dimensions might help resource parents recognize the importance of self-care, including seeking therapy for themselves and the family, rather than waiting for issues to emerge. Still, these participants indicated that skill and affective development may be limited until placement occurs.

> We must also teach these skills after their kids come as well. That is when it will have a much greater influence on the families is after they get their kids… We should re-teach many of the same things and then focus on trauma-informed parenting after their children arrive. Preparation before kids come is very important. Training after they arrive is essential [Professional #3].

> Training typically takes place before children are placed. The lessons learned are not fully digested until they have a child in their home. Training on trauma needs to be on-going [Professional #4].

Participants noted that a post-placement, or in-service, training may reinforce and deepen the competencies gained in a pre-service training. Further, an in-service training would provide an opportunity for resource parents to develop competencies necessary to meet the unique needs of the children in their care. However, some participants (N = 6 professionals; N = 4 resource parents) raised the concern that it could be difficult for resource parents to attend a lengthy training after placement because they are managing new family responsibilities. As such, these participants suggested that an online or blended training (i.e., online and in-person) might be more feasible for an in-service resource parent training.

### *Resource parents & adolescent trainers*

More than half of participants (N = 11 professionals; N = 13 resource parents) suggested that the inclusion of resource parent and adolescents trainers would provide new resource parents with the opportunity to gain a realistic understanding of the experience of parenting adolescents in care. Some of the participants believed the prior trainings had been too academic, and that it would be helpful for resource parents to learn directly from other resource parents and adolescents about their struggles and successes.

> I would change it so much – so much of it. First off, someone who's actually done it [resource parenting] needs to be a big part of the training. It needs to be so much more realistic – it was too academic. – include parents who are going to be the real deal [Resource Parent #1].

> Have "teen panels" during the training where the teen can provide realistic information to caregivers; what work and doesn't work. Have them identify situations that had a positive impact on them over time that perhaps the current caregiver didn't ever get to see the improvement because the teen left their care beforehand. Teens can be powerful presenters on the impact of care-giving on their lives [Professional #17].

> Don't pull punches. Be really REALLY honest about the struggles. Bring in people who are already parents and ask them to speak candidly about their experiences– give people every opportunity to opt out before a kid is involved [Professional #12].

As illustrated in these responses, several participants believed it was essential for resource parents to hear honest, real experiences from parents and adolescents because prospective parents need realistic expectations of foster care and adoption. They surmised that realistic expectations reduce unwanted surprises and normalize the behaviors that they may observe in the adolescents in their care. Similarly, they believed that real-world examples might crystallize the connection between those behaviors and trauma, or other emotionally painful experiences. They also noted teen and parent trainers could share the interventions that worked for them, along with how those interventions collectively affected the adolescents over time. Furthermore, this realistic picture may help prospective resource parents to make a more informed decision on whether resource parenting would be a good fit for their family, and to assess the areas of growth needed to provide adequate care.

## Discussion

Adolescents in the child welfare system often experience complex needs and challenges due to histories of maltreatment (Kisiel et al., 2017). As such, resource parents need relevant, quality training to prepare them to meet the needs of adolescents in their care. Because training delivery can impact participants' attainment and retention of knowledge and skills (Dorsey et al., 2008), the current study explored what aspects of resource parent trainings have been effective to people who have received or administered a training in the past, and their recommendations on how to improve training delivery to adequately prepare resource parents of adolescents. Overall, the findings identified two key areas of instruction that participants believed would improve the effectiveness of a training.

First, participants described training format as one area through which parental engagement and learning in trainings may be optimized. Several participants believed that training instruction should be relatively more interactive than didactic to foster skill and affective development in resource parents. Participants elaborated that resource parents' development in these areas may be limited until placement occurs. Thus, participants believed that some resource parent training should occur after placement, to deepen and reinforce the competencies gained in a pre-service training as well as develop additional competencies specific to adolescents in their care. Further, they believed that online or blended (i.e., online and in-person) learning might be more feasible than in-person trainings for resource parents to complete while they are managing new parenting roles and responsibilities.

Participants' recommendation of interactive, in-service and online training is consistent with adults' needs for experiential, highly relevant, self-paced, and flexible education as described in the literature on Adult and 21st

Century Learning Theories (Frey & Alman, 2003; Halpern & Tucker, 2015). It also implies a preference among participants for some as-needed instruction, which is consistent with evidence that providing excessive content within a training may reduce knowledge retention (Dalley, Candela, & Benzel-Lindley, 2008). This finding also expands the literature on resource parent trainings by identifying a core element of instruction that may impact resource parents' acquisition of knowledge and skills.

Participants identified the identities of trainers as a second key dimension of improving the effectiveness of resource parent trainings. Participants suggested that parent and adolescents trainers would be a valuable asset to a training, because they could help resource parents attain a more realistic understanding of the challenges and successes of parenting adolescents, as well as the impact of interventions or strategies utilized. Although the inclusion of adolescents as trainers is less common in resource parent training, Collins, Amodeo, and Clay (2007) found that adolescents trainers were instrumental with helping child welfare professionals understand the underlined reasons for adolescents behavior and decision-making. Therefore, adolescent trainers might help resource parent training participants understand the connections between their histories and behaviors (Hall, 2012).

This finding is consistent with the evidence that when resource parents are able to gain a more realistic understanding of resource parenting, they are able to evaluate their capacity to be a resource parent and the additional competencies they may that need to deliver suitable care; this can be accomplished by linking the classroom content to the personal experiences (Cultural Orientation Technical Assistance Program, 2010; Knowles, 1970; Mann, 2014; Vandenberg, 2011). This finding contributes to the literature by identifying, importantly, that the personal experiences of people who hold trainer positions may affect a training's effectiveness.

The current study builds upon previous evaluations of resource parent trainings by establishing core components of instructional delivery that may affect a training's overall effectiveness. By highlighting the roles of training format and trainers as influencing participants' development and retention of knowledge and skills, the findings of this study offer directions for improving existing trainings, and developing trainings for resource parents of adolescents.

### *Limitations*

The inclusion of resource parents' perspectives on training methods, which are understudied in the literature, strengthen this study. It could have been further strengthened by including more participants with underrepresented resource parent identities. The participants in this study were majority white and women, which reflects the racial and

gender imbalances present in the overall population of licensed foster and adoptive parents. Therefore, a more racially diverse sample population of resource parents could likely have introduced essential perspectives on trainings, as resource parents of color may have strengths and needs that differ from white foster parents. Moreover, given the deep and persistent racial disparities among adolescents in the child welfare system, the perspectives of adolescent and families of color should be centered in future research on resource parent trainings. The study could have been further strengthened through purposive sampling to capture the voices of LGBTQ resource parents, whose identities were not measured in our demographic questions, and through additional perspectives of male foster parents. Similarly, the majority of professional participants were white women. It is possible that a more gender and racially diverse sample of professionals would have yielded different perspectives about the training.

## Conclusion

The current study explored the perspectives and recommendations of resource parents and child welfare professionals on the ways in which a training might be delivered to adequately prepare resource parents to care for adolescents. The findings suggest that interactive and participatory instruction could prove more beneficial to resource parents than largely didactic transmissions of knowledge from instructor to participant. This supports the concept that examples and demonstrations support retention of knowledge and skill (Friedman, 2013; Mann, 2014). The results also indicate that including trainers who are themselves resource parents or adolescent in care could provide participants with realistic expectations of the relationships between them. This correlates with the other finding of more interactive and engaging trainings. These findings are important in that they reaffirm previous findings, and emphasize the need for more in-depth evaluation of trainings and curriculums, as well as the development of a more relationship-centered training program for resource parents (Van Camp et al., 2008, 2008).

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## Note

1. The term "youth" is used in this paper when a study or training focused on children and adolescents.

## Notes on contributors

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***Lori Vanderwill***, MSW, is a research scientist at the University of Washington and a Ph.D. candidate at Wayne State University in the School of Social Work. Ms. Vanderwill's area of expertise includes fidelity measures and trauma-informed practices for children and youth across systems. Other research interests include social and emotional learning, youth and adolescent mental health, child wellbeing, and foster and adoptive outcomes.

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***Kim Stevens***, M.Ed., is a Program manager at the North American Council on Adoptable Children, where she directs efforts to expand post-adoption services in the United States and Canada. She is a collaborative partner in two federal curriculum development projects and takes a lead on legislative advocacy efforts. She has been at NACAC, first as a board member and president, then as staff, for over 20 years. Kim was recognized as an Angel in Adoption in 2017.

***June Simon*** is a Master's of Social Work student at the University of Washington in Seattle. Currently, she researches and advocates for policy changes to promote the health and well-being of youth.

***Sue Cohick***, MSW, LSW, is currently employed by Spaulding for Children, serving as the Project Director for a 3-year grant from the Children's Bureau focused on creating a curriculum for families who support older youth from the child welfare system. Ms. Cohick has over 30 years of experience in the human services field, working mostly in leadership positions. She has also served as Adjunct Faculty for two higher education institutions and as a trainer for multiple organizations to ensure best practice delivery of services.

***Kris Henneman***, MSW, has worked to support families and communities for over 34 years, including experience in mental health and child welfare. He has been the Project Director on seven federal grants (state and nationally focused). He has provided training and technical assistance for the National Resource Center for Adoption and has been involved in developing national curriculums for child welfare professionals, foster/adoptive families and health care professional. Kris has facilitated numerous organizational strategic planning processes designed to improve organizational outcomes. Most recently, he has developed numerous online courses and national surveys.

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