



A Service of the Children's  
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# The ROUNDTABLE

National Resource Center for Adoption  
Volume 26 • Number 2 • 2013

## The Need for Community Engagement in Building a Comprehensive Post-adoption System of Care

By Gregory J. Kurth, MA

Collaboration is certainly not new to child welfare systems and communities providing post-adoption services. Throughout the country, public and private leaders are creating partnerships, developing meaningful collaborations, and coordinating professional service arrays to support the record number of children in adoption and guardianship arrangements. While a number of state, regional, and county child welfare systems are building continuums of ongoing adoption support, there has certainly not been a consistent pathway that best assesses a community's readiness or assets for a robust ecosystem of post-adoption activities.

While much has been written about best practice needs for post-adoption supports and services, little has been developed about how to build a comprehensive, evolving, and cohesive community-based post-adoption system. Supporting an evolving and organic ecosystem of post-adoption activities must move beyond simply advocating for more government-funded services.

Top-down service delivery models must be supported with bottom-up civic and parent engagement. The bottom-up model requires child welfare systems to think outside their box and creatively identify ways in which they can partner and engage the community-at-large, also referred to as the big "C". The big "C" includes local businesses, resource families and their connections, civic organizations, government agencies and bodies of faith. All of these groups have significant resources that, if tapped appropriately, can help create a robust post-adoption program. The best and most creative post-adoption communities are aware of these assets and provide opportunities for them to be leveraged. Making creative connections and building innovative relationships is the heart and soul for any community.

Greater emphasis on community development and parent engagement strategies is imperative in developing, leveraging, and refining both formal and informal supports. These approaches must be developed, resourced and nurtured in a manner that increases their awareness of and their ability to respond to the unique needs of adoptive families. This proactive strategy moves away from the common practice of waiting for the community to reach out and hoping that they will be able to appropriately respond to requests for assistance.

Adoptive parents, in particular have unique gifts to share, not just for their children, but for the broader community. Adoptive parents or their community supporters cannot be simply viewed as traditional consumers or providers of standard supports. They must be made aware of the core issues affecting adoptive families and how best to respond. As consumers, they offer critical insight into the system and how it

(see *The Need* - next page)

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*"Embracing partnerships that build strong foundations for the adoption of waiting children in the child welfare system!"*

can be improved to better meet the needs of children and families. Their passion can be cultivated into leadership positions that help to hold systems accountable while also leveraging their own resources and connections to improve the base of the system. Parents must be engaged as leaders, identified as community connectors, and empowered to design creative solutions. Adoptive parents should be viewed as “civic entrepreneurs”—those who can shift the power dynamic and make real change possible on an individual and community level (Goldsmith, 2010).

Likewise, innovation is key in working with civic organizations, bodies of faith and businesses. Identifying how a group can meet their own mission while also supporting the services and program needs of the child welfare system is critical. In order to do this, child welfare systems have to actively strategize to identify the key areas that would help to bolster their post-adoption programs. These areas have to be identified and flushed out yet have the flexibility to be tweaked based on the needs of the partnership. The child welfare system will also need staff that have the skills to bridge these partnerships. Utilizing professionals outside the field of social work can sometimes be beneficial for these roles, especially if they have experience in marketing or public relations. Engaging the big ‘C’ involves a great deal of up front work; however, if done correctly, it has the potential to leverage a great deal of support that strengthens the post-adoption program already in place.

In order to secure greater community engagement, it is critical to view system development through an asset-based community development approach—focusing first on the gifts of potential partner, followed by inclusion of informal associations, and finally coordination with formal institutions. Ultimately, such processes must be nurtured in a network approach that implements activities into impactful outcomes for children and families.

Research from the consulting field on the changing dynamics in the social sector can be helpful. In 2011, the social sector-consulting firm, Foundation Strategy Group (FSG), wrote an influential article in the Stanford Social Innovation Review (Kania & Kramer, 2011) on collective impact strategies. The authors noted that social change and support on a larger scale requires broad cross-sector coordination and significant adaptive leadership. Nevertheless, the field and funding of social services usually focuses on intervention strategies provided by few staff or individual organizations.

NRCA is developing a Readiness Assessment Tool for a Community-based Post-adoption System. The tool will be a guide for communities in building a coordinated and integrated system of care to assist families and children before and after adoptive placement. The Tool will particularly emphasize components needed for the development of an adaptive and coordinated system of community and formal resources, communication, civic engagement, and parent leadership. The Tool will build on components of a network approach that LaPiana Consulting has identified in trends impacting the social sector (Campos et. al., 2009). Such leaders in post-adoption systems can accomplish the following per LaPiana:

- Expand their reach and deepen their impact through networks and coalitions of both organizations and individuals.
- Use network mapping tools to understand, strengthen, and grow such networks on a continuous basis.
- Think more systemically about the challenges they seek to address and about possible approaches and partners.
- Organize the work as a collaborative, evolving process, rather than as something they can completely control internally.

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**Adoptive parents cannot be simply viewed as traditional consumers of services. Rather, parents must be engaged as leaders, identified as community connectors, and empowered to design creative solutions.**

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These values and characteristics will not yield greater impact unless components of achieving “collective impact” are reinforced as conceptualized by FSG. FSG has influenced the field with its work in collective impact as strategies that move beyond the traditional collaborations of joint funding, private-public partnerships, and informal networks. Collective impact strategies involve a centralized infrastructure supported by a “backbone” organization where systems are robust but flexible and such where data is utilized in decision making. Ultimately, partners in such a strategy improve the quality and efficiency of their work. Most importantly, beneficiaries

*(see The Need - page 9)*

## FROM THE DIRECTOR

### Melinda Lis

Although the Reuters articles on “The Child Exchange: Inside America’s Underground Market for Adopted Children” (<http://www.reuters.com/investigates/adoption/#article/part1>) primarily focused on international adoptions, it shined a light on several important factors that are prevalent in all adoptions. First, children who have experienced trauma are likely to exhibit both short- and long-term symptoms and behaviors that require a level of expert support to navigate the journey. Second, families who are raising these children will likely need some level of support along the journey. When families perceive that the services are not available, they will look for alternative forms of support, which may not always be in the best interest of the children.


This should cause all of us to look introspectively at our systems to assess how well we are preparing families and the depth of services and supports that we offer to them along the journey—not just at crisis points. Helping children heal from traumatic events they have endured is extremely rewarding but can also be taxing. In order to truly succeed, all of the significant players in the children’s lives must be part of the solution and work toward the same goal. This entails the education system, recreational facilities, day care providers, mental health providers, juvenile justice and the adoptive families’ natural circle of

support. It entails a paradigm shift in how we, professionals in the child welfare system, view adoption and our role in ensuring the long-term stability and well-being of all children who enter our doors.

This issue of *The Roundtable* will review several areas related to the paradigm shift. The lead article by Gregory Kurth assesses the role the larger community should play in developing a robust post adoption program. It provides innovative ideas for engaging the community and moving adoption from just a child welfare issue to an issue that is understood and addressed by the entire community.

The article by Russell Pretz discusses the need to engage parents early in the process with some level continuing after finalization.

The article by Debbie Riley reports the outcomes of the nine site competency-based training program for licensed mental health clinicians who provide pre- and post-adoption services for the families of children who have experienced trauma.

Future volumes of *The Roundtable* will assess different components of the continuum that must be in place from entry to past finalization to ensure permanency support and preservation services are in place to fully meet the needs of children and families. 

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### Understanding and Complying With Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and the Multiethnic Placement Act of 1994, as amended January 28, 2014, 1:00 to 3:00 p.m. EST

This presentation will focus on federal laws that apply to the consideration of race, color, and national origin and how they interrelate; practical guidance on how child welfare agencies and social workers can comply with MEPA in their programs and daily practice; enforcement of Title VI and MEPA; compliance tips and resources. Watch for the announcement on this webinar, coming soon.



### Adoption Tapestry: Adoption Stories Around the Nation

In celebration of National Adoption Month, the National Resource Center for Adoption is unveiling Adoption Tapestry: Adoption Stories Around the Nation. The virtual weaving together of adoption stories from around the nation allows readers to create a picture of the adoption experience. You can hear these stories by going to <http://www.nrcadoption.org/map>.

# The Vital Need for Parent Engagement Post Finalization

By Russell L. Pretz

*Russell recently, completed a dual internship on Capitol Hill with Senator Roy Blunt while also interning as a foster youth intern for the Congressional Coalition on Adoption Institute. He published a policy report titled, "Failed Adoptions: The Need to Put Permanency over Placement," and was briefed by a member of congress this summer advocating for change in the adoption system. He currently works at a brokerage firm as a private client assistant in Washington, DC.*

The good news is that there is increasing attention on the need for post-adoption support services. Even though it was difficult to hear the individual stories of the youth in the Reuters' article, "The Child Exchange Inside American's underground market for adopted children," it has helped to shine light on the critical need for supports and services for the entire adoptive family.

The goal of the child welfare system should be the well-being of children within healthy families. There appears to be a heightened awareness of the need for State agencies to develop and offer supports and services post finalization. However, there has not been a lot of conversation on how systems can engage families so that they are aware of the available services and supports and so that they seek the services prior to a crisis situation. Increasing child welfare engagement with adoptive parents is a critical component to achieving long-term positive adoption outcomes. This article

provides two ideas on how to develop a framework of services and supports that establishes engagement before a situation reaches crisis proportions.

I know the desperate stages of a crisis all too well. My adoption was a casualty of the failure of my parents to avail themselves of needed supports and services, resulting in the dissolution of my adoption and the adoptions of my three siblings. My adoptive parents severed their ties with me in my senior year of high school, causing me to become homeless before I even had my high school diploma.

As I think back, I can readily identify specific times that my adoptive family was in a crisis. My adoptive parents were not provided with the information and resources about trauma and its impact on children. As a result, they were not equipped to handle some of our behaviors. Likewise, their parenting style was not conducive to helping children heal. Instead of being nurturing and trying to understand the reasons behind the behaviors, they enlisted a litany of rules and structure that ultimately caused me and my siblings more damage. Eventually, the adoption failed and my siblings and I were ripped apart. In my perspective, the adoption failure was primarily related to two issues: (1) my parents' unmet need for post-adoption resources, information, support, and services, and (2) my parents' inability or unwillingness to seek the help they so badly needed.

Sustained engagement with adoptive parents must continue past finalization to facilitate information sharing, support, and access to services. A paradigm shift is needed so adoption does not end with finalization. While some adoptive parents have realized the benefits of on-going engagement with the child welfare agency, more must come to understand that it is in the interests of their children and their families to remain connected and engaged with services and supports that are offered. In order to maintain this ongoing engagement, child welfare agencies must ensure that a continuum of supports and services are easily accessible and address the needs of adoptive families.

By the time finalization occurs, families may feel that their involvement with the agency has been onerous and intrusive. Some families may have surmounted barriers and are eager to "start a new life," breaking ties with the system. Although this separation may be necessary and even healthy for the newly-formed families to step back from formal systems for a period of time, it is essential that adoptive parents have been thoroughly prepared and comprehend that issues may arise throughout the adoption journey.

*(see Vital Needs - next page)*

Engagement-post finalization is partially dependent on the depth and quality of training and education families receive while involved with the system. The training has to prepare adoptive families to anticipate issues that may arise at different developmental stages, some of which may require assistance from professionals. The families need to have a base understanding of trauma and how it can impact children in both the short- and long-term. There needs to be a realization that emotional issues, as a result from their previous trauma, can transpire at different developmental stages and impede their ability to function. Adoptive parents' ability to understand, anticipate, and realize that these behaviors are a sign of the need for help is critical to engagement after finalization.

Another way that child welfare systems can foster this engagement is through regional adoptive parent mentors. These mentors can be matched with adoptive parents prior to finalization and then stay connected afterwards through emails, newsletters, and personal contact. The adoptive parent mentors can provide basic information that sometimes is lost in translation, assist with parenting techniques, provide referral and resources, and become a pillar of support to the families.

In the event that a crisis should arise, the mentors can help families immediately get connected with services. The mentors provide a peer level of support that may appear less threatening. It allows newer adoptive parents to learn from the real life experience of others.




The adoptive parent mentors can also be a great resource for child welfare systems, informing them of trends and issues among adoptive families which can help to inform practice. Furthermore through their on-going interactions, regional adoptive parent mentors can keep a watchful eye on the well-being of the children and connect families to additional supports and services that may be needed to stabilize the adoption. Two important aspects of any great relationship are trust and communication. By using adoptive parent mentors to foster continued communication with new adoptive parents based on trust, child welfare agencies can move toward providing more adoptive families with post-adoptive services and supports and, ultimately, reduce the number of failed adoptions.

Another idea to foster on-going engagement is to set up a system that requires re-evaluations of subsidies at certain critical milestones that are often times when emotional issues arise for youth. Implementing these re-evaluations would provide an opportunity to check on the child's well-being, ensure that the necessary services are in place, assess the stability of the placement, and make adjustments to the subsidy that may be necessary. This mechanism would be an opportune time to discuss current issues families are encountering and ensuring that they are aware and connected with post-adoption services within their communities.

Staff that conduct the re-evaluations would need to have strong adoption competences and be skilled in family engagement so that the evaluations can balance the families' right to privacy and the systems need to ensure the safety and well-being of children.

Engagement must start at the front door. It involves adequate education and training along with communication throughout the journey. A continuum of services must be accessible that further helps to engage families and works with them proactively to meet their needs. These services need to hold out a helping hand for parents who may be harboring a latent shame that restricts them from seeking help. More importantly these services need to ensure the well-being of children before and after finalization.

**Russell L. Pretz** remains very active in the area of adoption reform and would love to hear your thoughts. You can contact him at [rpretz@janney.com](mailto:rpretz@janney.com). 

# Training for Adoption Competency

By Debbie Riley, LMFT

In 2007, the Center for Adoption Support and Education (C.A.S.E.) launched a multi-year initiative—Training and National Certification for Adoption Competent Mental Health Practitioners.

C.A.S.E.'s Training for Adoption Competency (TAC) is the first major product of that initiative. The TAC provides licensed mental health professionals with the knowledge, skills, and values they need to provide adoption competent mental health services. This standardized, manualized training curriculum has been developed in collaboration with national experts in the field of child welfare, adoption, and mental health. It is designed to provide professionals in mental health and child welfare fields with the clinical knowledge and skills needed to effectively serve the adoption kinship network.

The long-term goals of TAC are to expand the access of prospective adoptive parents, adopted individuals, adoptive families, and kinship families to adoption competent mental health professionals; provide adoptive families with the mental health services they need to be stable and healthy and reduce rates of adoption disruption and dissolution; and strengthen post-adoption services offered by the mental health and child welfare systems nationwide.

Research shows that children with traumatic experiences of abuse, neglect, abandonment and challenging behavioral and emotional responses are at high risk of presenting with adjustment problems within their adoptive families. Their emotional issues are often complex, and adoptive parents often identify these issues as

the primary contributors to family stressors post adoption.

Access to adoption-competent mental health services is a critical factor in promoting positive outcomes for these children and their adoptive families and the success of their adoptions. Adoptive families often express their need for adoption-competent mental health professionals to assist them.

The TAC is a 13-session (78 hours) competency-based training program followed by monthly case consultation sessions over a six-month period. Eleven sessions are classroom-based, one session is an at-home module, and the final session provides participants with an opportunity to integrate learning. Each session combines

information sharing, written handouts and resources, and experiential learning including case studies, role plays, and introspective work. At the completion of the classroom-based training, participants complete a six-month case consultation program to further apply their new knowledge and skills in the context of their own cases.

Sites are selected for the TAC based on a range of factors, including the agency's history and outcomes in serving members of the adoption kinship network, the agency's commitment to full and ongoing implementation of the TAC in order to build community capacity to provide adoption-competent mental health services, and the agency's ability to

## The Funders

- **Freddie Mac Foundation**
- **Dave Thomas Foundation for Adoption**
- **WWK Kellogg Foundation**
- **The Annie E. Casey Foundation/Casey Center for Effective Child Welfare Practice**
- **Jockey International Foundation**
- **Swett Foundation**

## Current TAC Implementation Sites

- **Catawba County Department of Social Services, Hickory, North Carolina**
- **Center for Advanced Studies in Child Welfare, University of Minnesota**
- **Foster and Adoptive Care Coalition of St. Louis**
- **Lilliput Children's Services, Sacramento, California**
- **Lutheran Family Services of Nebraska**
- **Massachusetts Adoption Resource Exchange (MARE)**
- **Montgomery County, Ohio**
- **The Villages of Indiana**
- **University of Connecticut School of Social Work, West Hartford, Connecticut**

(see TAC - page 9)

# Connecticut's Permanency Round Table

By Karen Miskunas

"APPLA" aka "Another Planned Permanent Living Arrangement." What does this mean to child welfare staff? More importantly, what does it mean to our youth in care? These are two very important questions that if asked everyday might lower the number of our youth with this designation. Its intent is for a youth in State care to be living with a related or non-related family on a permanent basis. It is what happens for some of the youth, but not for all youth.

In July 2013, Connecticut Department of Children and Families explored the population of youth in the gray area of APPLA—those who did not have a significant caring adult or family relationship and placement. Over 130 youth were identified to be teamed, discussed, and planned for in a Permanency Round Table. Each day for two weeks, the teams spent two hours together focused on one person, the youth in care.

Each team consisted of the youth's social worker, the social worker's supervisor, a permanency consultant, a permanency guide, a facilitator and a scribe. Members of the team came from a variety of experience in permanency and/or child welfare work. Some were Casey Family program staff from across the United States, child protection and mental health staff, and permanency and adolescent programs. Each team member was tasked with being an active participant during and after the Round Table process, sharing ideas on youth/family engagement, sharing promising permanency practice from other states, and in bringing creative and solution focused ideas in a nonjudgmental/helpful manner.

Our goal was to encourage creative thinking, to provide transferrable learning, and to identify realistic yet purposeful tasks to be implemented by team members and the youth's social work staff, toward achieving permanency for the youth.

With our tight two hours of time together, we began with welcomes and an overview of the process ahead. Next, the social worker presented the youth's information using a previously developed presentation guide providing information on the following: placement; developmental; social history of the youth; his/her

presented were rated within the "fair" to "poor" range.

In the next 25 minute phase of the meeting called "Brainstorm" work began with the following five questions:

1. What will it take to achieve permanency?
2. What can we try that has been tried before?
3. What can we try that has never been tried before?
4. How many things can we do concurrently?
5. How can we engage the youth in planning for permanence?

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Our team's goal was to build upon and support their hopes, knowing that when a social worker had hope and the right tools, they could truly listen to their youth and achieve more by working together.

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strengths, supports and challenges; his/her siblings, family, and other noted positive community relationships; current caregiver information; current permanency and or concurrent permanency plans; current services; agency factors including policy/practice/systems barriers encountered and next steps; and possible changes to the current permanency plan.

The next step was for the team to ask questions and clarify the information presented. Based on the information by consensus the team rated the youth's current permanency status by using a tool called the "Permanency Action Plan." Ratings ranged from permanency achieved to aged out without a permanent connection. The majority of the youth

The team was given permission to "think outside the box" and make suggestions regarding solutions that might have been denied in the past. In some instances, the social worker didn't realize the youth's potential adult resources. Tools were shared regarding engagement of the youth and the potential resources. Technology tools were available within the department to assist the social worker in locating potential related or unrelated resources.

In phase five, strategies identified in the "Brainstorm" phase were prioritized by the facilitator for the team. Here team members offered assistance to the social worker by taking on specific tasks to help achieve the goals developed by the team.

(see Connecticut - page 10)

## Update on Institute

By Janice King, LMSW

The Minority Adoption Leadership Development Institute (MALDI) offers emerging leaders of color the opportunity to enhance their leadership skills through participation in a mentorship and action research on-the job project. The MALDI program has offered four institutes, beginning in 2006, 2008, 2011, and the most recent learning session was completed in July 2013.

Participants who work with a mentor, usually the adoption program manager in their local jurisdiction, also work on a specific problem, process, practice, or policy impacting the well-being of children who are disproportionately impacted by abuse and neglect and or time spent in the child welfare system. The goal of MALDI is to effectively improve systems, through the emerging leaders who focus on practice and/or policy issues for children in the child welfare system.

Both mentees and mentors attend two 3 day Institutes where national leaders in child welfare provide an opportunity to broaden the knowledge base and perspectives from local to national concerns for children in the child welfare system. Each learning session is an important step in building the leadership and knowledge of the emerging leaders.

MALDI participants leave the first institute with a plan to begin their problem solving work for the year–action research project. Each participant receives coaching support



*Mentees attended the MALDI Adoption Leadership Institute in Washington, DC, after completing 12 months of job-related assignments. (L to R) Barbara Nalls, Washington, DC; Rui Rosa, Massachusetts; Cynthia Jeffers, South Carolina; Alesia Clement, Oklahoma; Fabiola Esposito, Colorado; Evraline Applewhite, Indiana; and Sonia Sanchez, New Mexico.*

throughout the year by the National Resource Center for Adoption's staff.

There have been a total of 34 graduates from the Institutes. When our MALDI graduates were asked about the Institute, 84 percent of the mentees indicated that as a result of the Institute, "they are better prepared to continue their journey as emerging leaders."

In the most recent 2013 Institute, eight graduates presented projects that focus on various topics ranging from post-adoption services, language barriers when placing children, community-based adoption recruitment, to permanency services for children re-entering child protective services. What we see in the final presentations of MALDI participants is a very systematic approach to

increasing their knowledge about their chosen topics through, research of their topics, surveys of workers, parents, youth, providers and the communities.


All of this work allows participants to make recommendations to the administration on approaches for system changes. Another, one of the avenues for learning, is through the program and/or practice pilots that they conduct during the course of working on a specific issue.

Outcomes from the MALDI action research projects include recommendations for changes in practice within agencies, education of staff, and communication with providers and communities. MALDI participants join executive committees as subject matter experts. They move  
*(see Protocols - next page)*

## Protocols *(continued from page 8)*

into new positions; and they offer knowledge to the field of adoption, permanency support and preservation that supports the safety, well-being, and permanency of children, youth, and families in the public child welfare system.

The presentations of the 2012-2013 Minority Adoption Leadership Development Institute are posted to the National Resource Center for Adoption website at <http://www.nrcadoption.org/programs/maldi/action-research/4686-2/>.

**Janice King, LMSW**, is the Program Manager of the National Resource Center for Adoption and Coordinator for this column. She may be contacted at [jking@nrcadoption.org](mailto:jking@nrcadoption.org). 


## The Need *(continued from page 2)*

are impacted and communities can demonstrate meaningful outcomes over time (Kania & Kramer, 2011).

NRCA looks to support the field by developing a Readiness Assessment Tool for a Community-based Post-adoption System. The Tool, which will be released this winter, will be a guide for communities in building a coordinated and integrated system of care to assist families and children before and after adoptive placement. The Tool will particularly emphasize components needed for the development of an adaptive and coordinated system of community and formal resources, communication, civic engagement, and parent leadership.

<sup>i</sup>Kretzman, J. & McKnight, J. (1993). *Building Communities from the Inside Out: A Path Toward Finding and Mobilizing a Community's Assets*. Goldsmith, S. (2010). *The Power of Social Innovation: How Civic Entrepreneurs Ignite Community Networks for Good*. Jossey-Bass.

<sup>ii</sup>Kania, J. & Kramer, M. (2011). *Collective Impact*. Stanford Social Innovation Review, Winter 2011, 36-41.

<sup>iii</sup>Campos, M.M., Gowdy, H., Hildebrand, A., LaPiana, D. (November 2009). *Convergence: How Five Trends Will Reshape the Social Sector*. 

## TAC *(continued from page 6)*

fully participate in the TAC's rigorous evaluation.

Once an agency is selected to provide the TAC, the agency identifies two or three trainers to be trained to provide the TAC. Those trainers attend an intensive 36-hour TAC Trainer Orientation at the C.A.S.E. offices where they are fully oriented to the TAC and are required to teach selected portions of the curriculum.

At the same time, C.A.S.E. works closely with the agency leaders, providing technical assistance and consultation in the TAC marketing, student recruitment, and planning for and implementation of the TAC. As sites implement the TAC, ongoing technical assistance and consultation are provided, including monthly conference calls to debrief with trainers regarding each module.

The TAC has been subject to ongoing, rigorous evaluation designed to assess training delivery, outcomes, and effectiveness. TAC students have scored an average 31.29 points higher on post tests than groups of comparably qualified professionals not enrolled in the training.

Survey-based assessments of changes in clinical practices are conducted at the midpoint and conclusion of the TAC. Based on 185 responses that contained 760 separate narrative responses describing ways practices were influenced by the

training, it was found that all TAC participants, to date, report change in at least two of the six defined aspects of practice; 54 percent report change in all five aspects at the individual clinician level; and 58 percent report change in programming and services at the organizational level.

The TAC places emphasis on the application of learning to clinical practice and is designed to move students from beginning levels of awareness and knowledge to regular, effective application in practice. At the conclusion of the TAC:

- 88 percent of ratings reported either having a substantial understanding with regular application (49.76%) or having mastered with ability to explain to others (37.80%); only 2 percent of participant ratings remained at the beginning stage of any of the competencies rated.
- Beginning level ratings were reduced from 30.51 percent to 2.02 percent while advanced level ratings increased from 35.09 percent to 87.56 percent.

C.A.S.E. plans to further replicate the TAC and welcomes the opportunity to talk with interested communities.

**Debbie Riley, LMFT**, is CEO for the Center for Adoption Support and Education. 

## BARRIERS TO ACHIEVING PERMANENCY



Discussion led by the permanency consultant or the permanency guide to re-examine the child's current APPLA permanency goal by sorting through barriers and encouraging expansion to include adoption or guardianship. Target dates were established by the team facilitator in conjunction with the above.

During this phase, team members were able to add to the list of barriers impeding permanence and possible strategies to change or overcome them. Many identified were based on Department of Children and Families (DCF) practice and policy. Systems barriers, which included other State department's programs

serving families and children, were discussed. Suggestions and strategies were suggested allowing presented or adopted children/youth to access the same service array afforded to children/youth in DCF foster or congregate care.

Additional barriers to achieving permanency were identified. Some were directly related to DCF policy including the agency's definition of relative, which does not include "fictive" kin or those who are not related by blood, marriage or adoption. Others

identified included lack of necessary and appropriate services for children and families, and DCF adolescent staffing capacity to implement a new practice of engagement with youth and families based on their current number of case assignments.

The team scribe, with permanency and/or experience in working with adolescents, participated in ongoing discussions as they recorded the work done by the team, thus creating a road map for the social worker to follow.


The final phase "Debrief Case Consultation" was led by the facilitator with support from the team to address the following: Was the worker confident they could explain the action

plan developed by the team to the youth and his/her families, caregivers, providers and others addressing the team's unanswered concerns and/or questions; and could what was learned in the process be applied by the social worker with other youth they are responsible for.

Many social workers eloquently and passionately described the youth's current/future needs and hopes for their future. Some were less able. As a facilitator and permanency guide during four days of Round Table discussions, I witnessed some DCF staff as initially skeptical of the process yet hopeful for a positive outcome.

Our team's goal was to build upon and support their hopes, knowing that when a social worker had hope and the right tools they could truly listen to their youth and achieve more by working together. An important theme for the teams I participated with was to be sure that whenever possible, the youth's voice was present in future planning.

The Permanency Round Tables were a great beginning for changing the lives of 130 plus children and youth who we have been entrusted to create successful futures.

**Karen Miskunas** is Program Manager at Connecticut Department of Children and Families, Office of Foster and Adoption Services. 

# The Center Source

## CHILD WELFARE PRODUCT SALES & TRAINING RESOURCES

Listed below are a several products and training resources that are featured in the Spaulding Institute's Catalog. View complete catalog at <http://spaulding.org/wp-content/uploads/2011/04/CS-Spring-2013.pdf>.

### BARGAINS!

#### **Adoption Competency Curriculum DVDs,** **National Child Welfare Resource Center for Adoption**

These DVDs are designed to be used with the *Adoption Competency Curriculum*. This comprehensive curriculum speaks to all the issues in the adoption of children/youth from the child welfare system and focuses on some of the common issues and challenges that occur in transition: The Day Everything Changed, Child Assessment and Preparation, Family Assessment and Preparation, Decision Making and Matching, Talking About Adoption Assistance and Post Adoption Services. No shipping or handling charges!

DVDs	2010	\$20/each	\$120/set of 6
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#### **Attaching in Adoption: Practical Tools for Today's Parents,** Deborah D. Gray

This book provides adoptive parents with specific information that applies to children like theirs. It matches children's emotional needs and stages with parenting strategies designed to enhance their children's happiness and emotional health.

#181	2002	<del>\$24.95</del>	\$19.95
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#### **Adopting: Sound Choices, Strong Families,** Patricia Irwin Johnson, MS

Winner of the 2009 Benjamin Franklin Award as best new book in the self help genre. It tackles very personal questions and addresses the difficult issues that must be examined, preparing the reader to make the best decisions possible as they embark on the journey to family-building through adoption.

#500	2008	<del>\$28.95</del>	\$21.95
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#### **Brothers and Sisters in Adoption, Helping Children Navigate Relationships When New Kids Join the Family,** Arleta James

Winner of the 2010 Benjamin Franklin Award as best book in the psychology genre. This comprehensive book goes beyond the common concerns for foster and adoptive families, and focuses on families which already contain children born into them or adopted by them who are developing normally and assists the family in accepting unfamiliar behaviors and different cultures, ultimately helping the new children heal so

that the family can forge strong connections and attachments to one another.

#501	2009	<del>\$30.00</del>	\$21.95
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### BEST SELLERS!

#### **Parents As Tender Healers (PATH),** Spaulding for Children

PATH is an eight-session competency-based curriculum designed to prepare resource parents (foster, adoptive and kinship parents) for parenting children who have been abused, neglected and spent time in the child welfare system. The jargon-free Trainer's Guide is readily used by both parent and professional trainers. The six video vignettes highlight experiences of children and resource families and provide guidance to potential resource families (1997). Now available on DVD.

First Curriculum	#124	\$495.00
Participant Handbook	#125	\$12.95

#### **Core Issues in Adoption,** Spaulding for Children

This DVD discusses issues unique to adoption (separation, loss and grief; bonding and attachment; claiming; entitlement; mastery and control; unmatched expectations; family integration; identity formation) through interviews with adoptive parents, adult adoptees and birth parents. By discussing the ways that they have worked through these issues, the individuals reinforce the idea that adoption is different. Their candor provokes excellent discussion about these core issues and helps the audience gain an understanding of the lifelong impact of forming a family in this way. (25 min.)

#119	1996	\$95.00
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#### **The Children Who Wait,** Spaulding for Children

Special needs adoption practice is shaped and driven by the needs of children who wait for adoption placement. This DVD illustrates how children come into the child welfare systems, behaviors they develop to survive living in the system, and the implications for parenting. It includes parents, children and professionals speaking to these issues. (30 min.)

#035	1989	\$95.00
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# Your Feedback is Important to Us!



The National Resource Center for Adoption (NRCA) needs your feedback about *The Roundtable*. Please go to the following website to participate in a brief survey provided by Public Research and Evaluation Services, Inc., the independent evaluation firm of the NRCA at <http://surveys.pres-online.org/s3/NRCA-Roundtable-Survey-2013>.

Your participation in this survey is voluntary and will not affect your interaction or participation in services with the National Resource Center for Adoption. Your responses are confidential and will be reported in group summary only. Thank you.

Sharonlyn Harrison, PhD, Director  
Public Research and Evaluation Services, Inc.

## We're Here To Help!



NRCA helps States, Tribes, and Territories (STT) identify strengths, needs, and actions that can improve adoption outcomes. This is done through an array of activities including distribution of resources, webinars, tools, curricula, publications and technical assistance. NRCA is available to partner with STTs to increase the number and timeliness of permanency options, improve adoption systems, enhance permanency support and preservation programs and increase cultural awareness and sensitivity. The NRCA can assist STTs specifically to:

- Build capacity related to adoption programs including timeliness to permanency, number of adoptions achieved, preparation of all parties, and quality of the adoption process.
- Develop, expand, strengthen, and improve the quality and effectiveness of permanency support and preservation services.
- Increase cultural awareness and sensitivity.
- Integrate policy and practice.
- Establish effective interagency cooperation and collaborations involving all stakeholders, including youth.
- Promote public-private coordination of adoption programs.
- Promote leadership development of minorities and improve professional competency in the adoption field.
- Develop culturally-competent child welfare services.
- Develop a system for full disclosure.
- Insert adoption competencies throughout the child welfare system including mental health providers.
- Develop an evaluation framework for permanency support and preservation services.
- Provide evidence based and promising practices information.
- Develop, refine, and implement policies and practices consistent with federal legislation, including MEPA/IEP, ICWA and ASFA.

Upon request and approval, the Center will provide technical assistance, consultation, information and research materials specific to the needs of the organization. Contact us at: Email: [nrc@nrcadoption.org](mailto:nrc@nrcadoption.org) or (248) 443-7080. 📞

### THE ROUNDTABLE

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