The Adoption Competency Curriculum is available to download on the National Resource Center for Adoption’s web site at www.nrcadoption.org
Philosophy Underlying the Curriculum

The Adoption Competency Curriculum (ACC) is based on the belief that children and youth in the child welfare system whose parental rights have been terminated are entitled to a permanent family. For the majority of these children and youth, that permanent family is created through legal adoption. Given their past experiences of abuse and/or neglect and being a child/youth in the child welfare system, these children/youth have developed systems of coping that might be similar to others. Many need additional understanding and support to successfully adapt to being a child/youth in a family. This Curriculum focuses on some of the common issues and challenges that occur when children and youth transitioned from foster care to adoption. It emphasizes the roles of the adults—child welfare practitioners, foster parents, relatives, adoptive parents—in accepting the child/youth unconditionally, understanding the impact of the child welfare system on the child/youth, and supporting his/her transition to adoption.

Central Concepts in the Curriculum

ACC is designed as a comprehensive curriculum for training child welfare practitioners in public and private agencies who provide adoption services for children/youth who have been abused or neglected. ACC provides opportunities for participants to:

- assess their own knowledge, strengths and resources.
- apply knowledge to real case scenarios.
- determine their need for further information and provides guidance on where to obtain that information through a comprehensive bibliography.

The participant exercises are designed to be relevant and applicable to practitioners new to child welfare adoption practice as well as those who have been in the field for many years.

ACC recognizes that adults learn differently and provides information in a number of different ways to help trainees integrate the information they are learning. This Curriculum also integrates the knowledge and experiences of the participants and encourages them to share that knowledge and those experiences with others during the course of the training.

Cultural competence is a central concept in ACC. By this, we mean recognizing and celebrating diversity, treating others with respect, and working to understand differences rather than to make judgments about them.

ACC also is based on a series of competencies, or skills, that participants will develop over the course of the training. Curriculum competencies are listed in each module.
**Modules**

- Federal Laws and Policies Impacting Adoption Placement
- Child Assessment and Preparation
- Family Assessment and Preparation
- Decision Making and Placement Selection in Adoption
- Negotiating Title IV-E Adoption Assistance Agreements
- Post Adoption Services
- Compassion Fatigue: Secondary Traumatic Stress Disorder, Burnout, Vicarious Trauma

**Technical Assistance**

The National Resource Center for Adoption specializes in providing technical assistance, tools and on-site support to enhance the practice knowledge, skills and abilities of States, Tribes and agencies. Technical assistance is available to State agencies, upon approval from your State’s assigned Children’s Bureau Federal Regional Office, utilizing this Curriculum. The Center can help you customize the Curriculum with your State’s internal policies and procedures as well as hosting a “training of trainers” within your State.

For technical assistance requests, please contact John Levesque, Director of Training and Technical Assistance, at 207.809.0041 or jlevesq7@maine.rr.com.
Overview of the Curriculum Structure

All modules contain these components:

✓ Videos
✓ Trainer’s Comments or Mini-lectures
✓ Individual Exercises
✓ Team Exercises
✓ Large Group Discussions

Assumptions

• Builds on integrity and experience of the participants.
• Encourages active participation, integration and investment.
• Learning activities build knowledge and skill through accumulation of experiences.
• Recognizes and addresses realities and constraints of child welfare systems.
• Uses adult learning model (Bloom’s Taxonomy).
Federal Laws and Policies Impacting Adoption Placement

Contents

- Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964
- Multiethnic Placement Act (MEPA) of 1994 as amended by the Interethnic Adoption Provisions (IEP) of 1996
- Indian Child Welfare Act (ICWA) of 1978
- Adoption and Safe Families Act (ASFA) of 1997
- Safe and Timely Interstate Placement Act of 2006
- Adam Walsh Child Protection and Safety Act of 2006
- Child and Family Services Improvement Act of 2006
- Deficit Reduction Act of 2006
- Fostering Connections to Success and Increasing Adoptions Act of 2008
- A discussion of concurrent planning in the context of the Child and Family Services Reviews process.
Federal Laws: Objectives

- Explore values and assumptions regarding race, color and national origin (RCNO) in foster care and adoptive placements.

- Explore the requirements of the Multiethnic Placement Act of 1994 as amended by the Interethnic Adoption Provisions of 1996 (MEPA).

- Explore the requirements of Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, and how they are linked to MEPA.


- Define concurrent planning.

- Identify and discuss the legal, policy and organizational requirements.

- Identify the processes for implementing it in participants’ practices.
Federal Laws: Competencies

Participants will be able to:

• Articulate changes in adoption legislation over history.

• Identify their own personal values and how they impact their professional practice.

• Identify the impact on MEPA and Title VI on recruitment and adoptive placements.

• Identify the best practice issues related to impact of MEPA/IEP and ICWA on family services.

• Apply concurrent planning to a specific case scenario.

• Identify organizational/structural barriers to implementing concurrent planning in their agency.

• Define and implement action strategies to address the organizational/structural barriers to implementing concurrent planning in the agency.
Child Assessment and Preparation

Contents

• Policies and Processes in Child/Youth Assessment and Preparation
• Transitioning from Foster Care to Adoption
• Older Child Adoption
• Adoption of Sibling Groups
Child Assessment and Preparation: Objectives

- Examine the current needs of the adoption field and the participants within it.
- Build knowledge and skills in conducting an adoption process based on empowering children/youth and prospective adoptive parents.
- Build knowledge and skills in writing a child/youth assessment and preparation.
- Identify ways in which adoption impacts growth and development.
- Understand the unique needs of adopted children/youth.
- Heighten participant awareness of the need for preparation of children/youth who are being adopted by their current foster parents or relatives.
- Help clarify, from the child/youth’s perspective, the differences between being a child/youth in foster care and being a child/youth who has been adopted.
- Practice reframing “problem” behaviors as “survival” behaviors.
Child Assessment and Preparation: Competencies

Participants will be able to:

• Complete a comprehensive child/youth assessment.

• Utilize an assessment and preparation process to make placement decisions, develop service plans, and prepare a child/youth for any change in placement or relationship with the current foster family or relatives.

• Utilize a variety of tools and techniques to engage, assess, and prepare children/youth for better placement.

• Collaborate with others more effectively in the assessment and preparation process.

• Assist a child/youth in understanding the role the practitioner plays in the assessment and preparation process.

• Assist children/youth to gain a better understanding of what has happened and what will be happening, and engage children/youth in the planning for their present and future life experiences.

• Prepare children/youth to transition from being in foster care to being adopted in the same household.

• Engage the children/youth actively in preparing to be adopted by their current foster parents or other parents.
Family Assessment and Preparation

Contents

• The Family Profile/Home Study/Social History and Assessment and Preparation Process

• Kinship/Relative Adoption

• Nonrelated Foster Parent Adoption

• Newly Recruited Foster Parent Adoption

• Recording and Assessing Information in the Family Profile/Home Study/Social History and Assessment
Family Assessment and Preparation: Objectives

- Build skill in the family identification, preparation and assessment process.
- Review concepts and tools in the family assessment and preparation process.
- Identify different issues related to family preparation and assessment in kinship/relative adoptions, nonrelated foster parent adoptions, and newly recruited family adoptions.
- Consider the strengths of adoptive families in order to empower them.
Family Assessment and Preparation: Competencies

Participants will be able to:

• Write a family profile/home study/social history assessment using a family empowerment model.

• Complete an assessment of the family’s suitability for a specific child/youth or a child/youth with certain characteristics.

• Identify the content necessary in preparing current caregivers (foster parent or relative) to make the transition from fostering to adopting.

• Develop a plan for recruiting families for children/youth who will not be adopted by relatives or foster parents.
Decision Making and Placement Selection in Adoption

Contents

• The Decision Making and Placement Selection Phase
• Group Decision Making Model
Decision Making: Objectives

- Build skills for deciding whether a family is appropriate to adopt a specific child.
- Build skills for using teams in decision making.
- Build skills in engaging children and families in the decision-making process.

Decision Making: Competencies

Participants will be able to:

- conduct decision making and select children and families successfully.
- use a family group decision-making approach to resolve disputes about who should adopt.
Title IV-E Adoption Assistance Adoption Assistance Agreements

Contents

• Adoption Assistance History in the United States

• Federal Law, Policies, and Eligibility Requirements for the Title IV-E Adoption Assistance Program

• Discussing and Negotiating Title IV-E Adoption Assistance Agreements

• Discussing Adoption Assistance with Older Children/Youth

• Case Scenarios: Applying Your Knowledge and Skills
Title IV-E Adoption Assistance Adoption Assistance Agreements: Objectives

• Provide State staff information regarding negotiating and discussing Title IV-E Adoption Assistance and medical assistance with prospective adoptive parents.

• Identify and discuss the legal, policy, and procedural requirements for the Title IV-E Adoption Assistance Program.

• Equip staff with the skills necessary to negotiate and discuss adoption assistance agreements.

Title IV-E Adoption Assistance Adoption Assistance Agreements: Competencies

Participants will be able to:

• understand eligibility requirements for the Title IV-E Adoption Assistance Program.

• apply Title IV-E Adoption Assistance policy and regulations to specific case scenarios.

• identify barriers to implementing negotiation in their agency.

• discuss adoption assistance with older children/youth.

• negotiate Title IV-E Adoption Assistance Agreements with prospective adoptive families.
Post Adoption Services

Contents

• Post Adoption Services Constellation
• Challenges in Post Adoption Services
• Planning for the Adjustment to Adoption
• Managing Crises
• Adoption Disruption/Dissolution
Post Adoption Services: Objectives

- Define various types of post adoption services and how to develop effective programs to preserve and support adoptions.
- Identify and discuss the current post adoption services within the state as well as who provides those services.
- Identify what families and children request for post adoption services.
- Identify and define the developmental issues and survival behaviors of the adoptee.
- Understand crisis as a normal, predictable part of the adoption process.
- Provide participants with information and tools to help families in crisis.
- Provide an opportunity for participants to experience a sample family’s journey throughout services and to practice assisting in developing the family’s services.
- Understand disruption and dissolution and its impact on the child, the adoptive parent(s) and other family members.
Post Adoption Services: Competencies

Participants will be able to:

• understand what services are necessary in supporting adoptive families and the children/youth after the adoption.

• understand essential elements to create a successful post adoption services plan.

• provide information about services and training topics necessary to fully support families.

• understand developmental stages and survival behaviors, and their effects on adoption preservation.

• explain the process for crisis stabilization and how to develop a crisis contingency plan.

• develop an individualized plan for family support.
Compassion Fatigue: Secondary Traumatic Stress Disorder, Burnout, Vicarious Trauma

Contents

• What is Compassion Fatigue?
• Reason Why Child Welfare Practitioners are Vulnerable to Compassion Fatigue
• Symptoms of Compassion Fatigue
• How to Decrease Vulnerability to Compassion Fatigue
Compassion Fatigue: Objectives

- Gain a theoretical understanding of compassion fatigue and burnout.
- Identify symptoms of compassion fatigue and burnout.
- Discuss causes and consequences of compassion fatigue and burnout with consideration of social, psychological, spiritual, biological/neurological, systemic, organizational, and societal correlates.
- Practice some self-administered stress reduction/relaxation techniques.

Compassion Fatigue: Competencies

Participants will be able to:

- take part in self-report questionnaire of compassion fatigue and burnout.
- identify personal risk factors, self-care plan, prevention, and interventional strategies for compassion fatigue and burnout.
- use stress reduction/relaxation techniques to help themselves.
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