

Adoption Support & Preservation Services

A Public Interest



***The National Consortium
for Post Legal Adoption Services***

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The National Consortium for Post Legal Adoption Services

The National Consortium for Post Legal Adoption Services spent nearly three years listening to families, talking with service providers, and reviewing state pilot projects to distill from them the best ways to preserve and support families that are created through adoption. Many of the dollars spent on adoption support and preservation services fund long-term residential treatment services for adoptive children. In some states, families had to dissolve their adoptions before residential treatment services could be accessed for their children.

The National Consortium believed that many of these children would require less intrusive intervention and that the adoptive families would not seek adoption dissolution if an adequate safety net of therapeutic, supportive, and financial support services could be woven together. Such a system involves an array of family centered services available whenever problems arise, not just when a crisis threatens to tear apart the adoptive family.

On behalf of the adoptive family, the National Consortium was pleased to provide this information to the field.

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Introduction

“I used to be naive. I thought I could take children who had been seriously hurt and give them unlimited love and fix them. I’ve learned that we can’t fix them. All we can do is give them love and support and fight for them to get the services they need. We can’t protect them from what’s already happened to them.”
— *Adoptive Mother*

Adoption is not just a legal act or a time-limited social process. It creates a unique family experience and has a lifelong impact on all whose lives are touched by it. Adoptive families and adopted children face issues that other families do not face.

These core issues are based on the fact that forming a family through adoption is different than forming a family biologically. Preparation for the arrival of a child, social support, rituals and celebrations are often different for adoptions than for births. Adopted children also arrive with a past and with ties to another family. Differences are highlighted by the following issues, all of which will be part of an adoptive family’s life:

Mastery or Control

Most people strive to gain a sense of mastery or control over their environment. These efforts are often challenged during the adoption process. Adoptive families are “studied” before they are “approved” for a child, and their innermost hopes and dreams are made known to others. Agencies and courts maintain responsibility for a child for a specified period of time, and as a result, the family’s ability to control its own destiny is challenged.

Entitlement

Adoptive parents and adopted children struggle with entitlement—whether they have a “right” to one another. The legal entitlement is granted with the court decree of adoption. Emotional entitlement, however, is much more complex and develops slowly over time.

Claiming

Claiming is the process by which the adoptive parents come to accept the adopted child as their own and as a full-fledged member of their family. Older children who have memories of earlier families also must come to accept the adopted family as their own.

Unmatched Expectations

Often times, adopted children and the families adopting them have different expectations for the new relationship. Clarifying and perhaps changing expectations may be crucial to family stability.

Family Integration

Adopted children bring with them biological family ties and their ways of functioning in other families. Adopting families also have had their own way of functioning prior to placement of the children they adopt. Blending these styles into a new way of functioning can be an extremely complex task.

Separation, Loss and Grief

These very powerful emotions are experienced by all persons touched by adoption. In addition to physical separations, there are emotional losses and grief resulting from these issues that will impact individuals throughout life.

Attachment

Attachments with others are based on human interaction. These attachments are formed through experiences in early childhood, which determine the ways in which an individual will view the world. Attachments in adoptive families are unique because they require integrating the children's past histories, experiences, and bond with their birth families into new trusting relationships.

Identity Formation

A sense of personal identity is formed, both consciously and unconsciously, through experiences, interaction with and exposure to other people and by making decisions concerning who and what one will be. Being born to people who did not rear them and being reared by people who did not give birth to them, present a unique developmental challenge to people who are adopted. Adoptive parents also may struggle with their identity not only as a family, but also an adoptive family.

These issues emerge and reemerge as the family and adopted child go through life and may be compounded when children who have been adopted also have experienced the trauma of abuse, neglect and living in multiple settings. Historically, adoptive families have been expected to "go it alone" and many cannot access services needed to meet the challenges they face. Most communities do not offer comprehensive services geared to the unique needs of adoptive families.

Recent years have brought a cascade of changes in adoption, including the redefinition of "adoptable child." Agencies have become increasingly sophisticated about finding families that will adopt children with a multiplicity of needs. Unfortunately, policy makers and community leaders continue to be unaware of the urgent need to support and preserve these adoptive families after they are formed.

Adoptive placement, once viewed as an ending, is now viewed as a beginning. Adoption professionals and others now recognize that adoptive families need a variety of services long after the adoption is finalized. Adoption support and preservation services must be available for all adoptive families who need them, regardless of the age or special needs of the child when adopted.

Adoption Support & Preservation Services Defined



Adoption support and preservation services can be described as the array of services provided to families designed to support and preserve the family unit and maximize the child's potential and integration into the family. Such services are family centered, recognize underlying adoption issues which may affect the child and family, build on the family's strengths and empower parents to make decisions about the best interest of their child and family.

These services are detailed and illustrated by The National Consortium for Post Legal Adoption Services Adoption Support and Preservation concept map.

Guiding Principles of Adoption Support & Preservation

“Our whole family had become dysfunctional. Our marriage was coming apart. We did not know how to cope with our daughter. No one had ever told us about any of what she was going through. We had this fantasy that adoption was the same as forming a family biologically. We were not prepared to help our children, especially our daughter, with the grieving process, the guilt, the anger.”

– Adoptive Parent

There are four guiding principles which underpin a competent adoption support and preservation service system. These principles recognize the impact of adoption on families and serve to facilitate an appropriate interdisciplinary response to the ongoing needs of the adoptive family:

1. *Families created by adoption are different from families created by birth.*

Adoption creates special circumstances which families, professionals and society need to validate and address for the healthy development of the adoptive family.

2. *Adoption is a lifelong experience.*

As a lifelong experience, adoption presents unique opportunities and challenges for families and communities based on the history of the child, the developmental stages of the child and family, the supportive community network available to the family; and the adoption issues which affect integration of the child into the family.

3. *Adoption is beneficial to parent, child and society.*

Adoption provides positive rewards for the child, the family, the family’s community, and society in general. The child is helped by becoming part of a stable, nurturing relationship within an adoptive family which allows the child to grieve past losses and build new attachments. The adoptive family benefits from the growth they experience in nurturing a child who otherwise may not have had a permanent, stable family.

The community is enhanced by building strong, self-sufficient families, rather than expending resources to maintain children in public service systems such as juvenile justice and child welfare. Society at large benefits from adoption, the connecting of parents with children, and the consequent social and economic contributions of both.



4. *Society is responsible for providing support and preservation services to the adoptive family.*

Society sanctions adoption through its concern for children, its policies and laws; therefore, society must actively support the adoptive family and provide a service network which takes into account the effects of adoption on the child and family. Society has a special obligation to families who have adopted children who were formerly in foster care and experienced abuse and neglect. Because of their multiple emotional needs, families who adopt these children need greater support than other families.



System of Service Delivery

“The constant struggle with a system that does not pay care providers in a timely manner causes further damage to the integrity of the adoptive family. When we know our provider is not being paid or are asked to leave a service facility for lack of payment, parents lose self-esteem.” — Adoptive Parent

An adoptive family may need support and assistance from a variety of programs and service systems. A network of parents, adoptees, and professionals from various service systems and agencies, both public and private, need to work together to ensure that such a system of service is available and easily accessible.

The adoptive family, adopted children, adult adoptees, and birth parents are the experts about the system of care and support they need. Working in partnership, mental health and child welfare professionals, as well as school and court personnel need to play a major role in developing the array of services that are coordinated and allow individuals and families to access services from all agencies, systems, and funding sources.

Adoption Support & Preservation Services

"One of our older children had to be hospitalized and the hospital was very happy to say we'll put him in a long-term residential placement after the hospital. And the course of treatment was going to be about two and a half years which meant that they would take him until adulthood. So they really disempowered us."
– Adoptive Father

Rather than a single approach to helping families involved in adoption, adoption support and preservation services must rely on the coordinated delivery of an array of services as determined by the family in conjunction with supportive helpers. As such, the services which may be needed vary greatly in terms of number, intensity, expense, and type. For this reason it is essential that a local network oversee the establishment of the entire array. The following services are illustrated on the concept map:

Advocacy

Experience tells us that true systems change is spearheaded by the efforts of consumers whose needs are not being met. Adoptive families have expressed concern for quite some time about the helping professionals lack of awareness of adoption issues. Their advocacy efforts resulted in the development of post adoption resources in some areas of the country.

Advocacy needs to continue until all adoptive families can choose service providers who are knowledgeable about adoption issues. This can be done most effectively by developing partnerships between members of the adoption triad, (adopted persons, adoptive parents and birth parents) and the professional community. Results can be measured by the increased awareness and competency of the professional community about adoption issues and the increased abilities of individual families to access resources and supports to keep their families together.

Another area of adoption-related advocacy is health care reform. Advocates are asking for treatment to be provided for pre-existing conditions of adopted children. Particular focus is being placed on mental health counseling to work through grief and loss issues.

Family Education

On-going education provides the opportunity for adoptive families to understand how the addition of a child through adoption affects the relationships and balance within their own families and how their experiences differ from those of birth families.

Information about the developmental stages of the adoptive family and identification of typical crisis points for all members of the adoptive family are essential parts of this education. This information can be taught by professionals or shared among families who have common experiences.

Information and Referral

It is important that adoptive families have information about available adoption resources when they identify a question or need. Prompt referral and easy access to an appropriate resource can prevent escalation of problems that lead to crisis. Maintaining a reference of up-to-date information about adoption resources and supports available in the community is the key component in this service. A means of identifying and evaluating adoption competent service providers must also be developed.

Financial Supports

Financial support, as a service, refers to money made available to families who adopt children from the child welfare system. Eligibility requirements, as well as criteria for how funds are to be spent, vary greatly. There continues to be debate about families' eligibility for financial support.

Financial support may cover the cost of legal fees related to the adoption process; medical care for adopted children who are not covered by existing family insurance; some day-to-day expenses of families; and expenses associated with the special needs of the child. State and federal subsidies are generally available to families adopting children who have come out of the foster care system.

All financial assistance systems available to families and individuals must be responsive to the needs of adoptive families. Supplemental Security Income, Social Security Disability Insurance, special education, Head Start and public assistance programs for families need to train staff to assess and intervene with adoptive families.

Family Support

Adoptive families are likely to need resources and supports to help them cope with the changes that result from adding a new and often challenging member to their family. Respite care, on a planned and/or emergency basis, is extremely helpful and has been shown to be effective in averting crisis by reducing the build up of stress in adoptive families.

Parents who are members of adoptive family support groups report that the experience of sharing with and learning from the similar situations of other adoptive parents is often more helpful than other, more intensive types of services.



Community Support

Informal community supports help maintain and strengthen the adoptive family and may lessen the need for more formal or intrusive intervention. When a family does seek outside help, they first look for resources within the community that are familiar to them. Many community institutions, agencies and associations such as, churches, schools, recreation centers, neighborhood organizations and parent groups, have the potential to offer support and assistance to the adoptive family. Their effectiveness, however, hinges on their understanding of the unique needs of adoptive families. It is critical to involve the local community in all efforts to increase sensitivity to adoption-related issues so that they can successfully respond to an adoptive family's needs.

Psycho-Social

A cross-system approach to social and emotional support services which is focused on keeping families together is the essence of adoption support and preservation services. In keeping with practice standards, treatment must be offered in the least restrictive environment. In many communities, an array of services are available, which range from outpatient, group counseling, intensive day treatment programs to locked inpatient treatment. Adoptive families who find themselves in need of intensive treatment for their child are often only aware of residential treatment as an option. There are also a number of other options for out of home placement, including bridge families, therapeutic foster care, therapeutic respite care, camps and therapeutic day care which can offer relief to the family while addressing the issues unique to adoption.

Awareness of adoption-related issues by psycho-social service providers is particularly important, because efforts must focus on the entire family and build attachments between family members in order to be successful. They must also address the underlying emotional issues of the "acting out behaviors" of the adopted child in order to facilitate change. With these outcomes in mind, home based treatment is often more effective than office based intervention.

Reunion and Past History Inquiries

Information about one's past is part of the knowledge base that defines a person's present and future. Some past information, like medical history, may be essential to a person's life. Inquiries for such information from adult adoptees, some of whom are 70 years old or more, reinforce the fact that the effect of adoption is lifelong. Over the years, adult adoptees have demanded greater access to their past through information in their adoption records. More recently, birth parents and birth siblings have begun voicing the need for greater access to information about the adopted individual. Adoptive parents also request information from records either for medical providers or so they can work with service providers to help their child resolve past life experiences.

Many states have changed their laws to allow access to non-identifying information in adoption records and to provide central registries or search intermediaries to facilitate reunions between birth parents and their adopted offspring. Assistance from someone familiar with the unique nature of adoption is essential to all members of the adoption triad, especially during such search experiences when emotional stress and excitement is intense.

Mediation and Problem Solving

The deep and powerful emotions that accompany adoption lend themselves to the possibility of conflicts among the involved parties, which most commonly include members of the adoption triad. Mediation and problem solving is helpful when conflicts arise at any point in the life cycle of the members of the triad. Instances where mediation is helpful may be those associated with ongoing relationships between the birth family and the adoptive family through an open adoption arrangement. Helping families to reach amicable solutions to problems such as, the type and degree of contact is one way that mediation and problem solving is utilized. In addition, issues related to adoption search lend themselves well to the use of this service such as, the provision of a neutral party to act as an intermediary between the adoptee and the birth parent. Along the same vein is the mediation of visitation between brothers and sisters by birth who have been placed in different adoptive families. Keeping those very vital sibling relationships intact is often difficult for non-related adoptive families to accomplish on their own. Finally, mediation is used when the adoptive family is considering the dissolution of the adoption and relationships with other helping professionals have broken down.

Service Coordination

Service coordination allows families access to needed services and resources which may otherwise be difficult for them to find. This includes resources not otherwise linked through formal organizational structures or funding sources. When this service is needed, it is essential that one primary service coordinator be identified who will access all services needed, on behalf of the family, regardless of system or agency boundaries.



Characteristics of Adoption Support and Preservation Services

“It saved our family from totally splitting up. I had gone everywhere I could think of for help. No one had proper help for us—until the adoption support services.”
— *Adoptive Parent*

Specific characteristics distinguish a model of adoption support and preservation services. These characteristics provide the framework within which adoption preservation and support services will be provided:

Family Centered

Adoption support and preservation services are generally accessed by the adoptive family on a voluntary basis. In this model, all services provided are offered with the adoptive parents as partners in the process. It is important that adoptive parents be the decision makers for their child because they have the day-to-day responsibility for and the lifetime commitment to the child. Research indicates that the most effective services are those which are offered within the context of the adoptive family, with interventions designed to help the family deal with the specific needs of the adopted child.

Strength Focused and Normalizing

Services that recognize and build on the strengths of the adoptive family and its members, while normalizing the adoption experience, help families to face any new challenges with greater understanding and strength.

Directed by the Family

It is essential that the adoptive family direct the services they require and be fully involved in all decisions about their child. Families often receive primary support from other adoptive families or parents. These community links are less intrusive than professional intervention and parents often report them to be more helpful.

Community Based

Community based adoption support and preservation services that are easily accessible to the adoptive family through a variety of systems within the community, assure that services are used by all types of adoptive families. Community based services are also more likely to offer interventions which keep the adopted child within the family.

Multi-Disciplined

The adoptive family may have a variety of service needs which can span a number of systems and require a multi-disciplinary approach to intervention. No one-service system is likely to be able to provide for the complex needs of some adoptive families. This model specifies collaboration among service systems through a local, cross-system network which provides an array of family support services. The network would also determine a process for identifying a single services coordinator for a family in order to maximize the resources available and facilitate access to resources.

Adoption Sensitive and Competent

Services are most effective when made available by providers who understand the differences that are inherent in families created through adoption and how these differences may impact the adoptive family throughout their life span. Providers who have received training in adoption issues and have gained a degree of competence regarding the unique needs of the adoptive family are more likely to be seen as credible resources by the adoptive families they are serving.

Culturally Sensitive and Competent

Adoption support and preservation services providers must be aware of cultural factors relevant to the families needing services. Adoption poses many unique issues which have to do with race and ethnicity. Families who have adopted children cross-racially or cross-culturally have special challenges integrating the child into the family and may need assistance in helping their child



cope with racism in society. Practitioners working with families of color who have adopted children of like culture, ethnicity and race, need to be sensitive to the role of culture, ethnicity and race in family dynamics. Working with families who are not of the same race or culture as the practitioner requires additional skills on the part of those offering adoption support and preservation services.

Outcomes

“We have all grown to understand adoption and ourselves better. We’ve learned it’s okay that we can’t always take away our children’s pain—but we can help them cope with it. We have become more open with our inner thoughts. We’ve learned to share as a family—to be supportive.

– Adoptive Parents after receiving adoption support and preservation services

At least six major outcomes are associated with a successful adoption support and preservation system. They may be described as follows:

Strengthened Family Integration

A primary outcome of adoption support and preservation services is to assure that adoptive families stay together as a integrated family system that has incorporated their children’s histories, needs and behaviors.

Strengthened Attachment

Attachment issues for adoptive children and their families vary greatly, depending on the developmental history of each member, and how they view the world. Successful adoption support and preservation services build upon a child’s former attachments to birth parents, siblings and other significant individuals that serve to strengthen the child’s attachment to the adoptive family.

Strengthened Family Functioning

A measure of family functioning is its ability to manage and to solve problems without outside assistance. Strengthened family functioning is enhanced when the family controls the type, extent and location of services provided.

Strengthened Parental Entitlement and Claiming

Adoption support and preservation services maximize the extent to which the family makes the child its own and develops a permanent family identity that includes all adopted children equally in family life.

Strengthened Identity Formation of Family Members

Successful adoption support and preservation services enhances the identity development of each of the family members within the context of the new relationships created by adoption.

Strengthened Community Networks

Adoption support and preservation services maximize the extent to which families can access readily available and coordinated community based services which reflect the cultures of the families being served.

Resource Issues Implementing Adoption Support & Preservation Services

To ensure that an array of services is developed into an effective, coordinated delivery system, there are several major considerations that must be addressed at the state and local level related to public and private resources. Solutions to these issues are complex and will require joint leadership from both the public and private sectors. The primary issues regarding resources are funding, training, staffing and automation:

Funding



Without adequate funding, even the best designed system will fail. Unfortunately, a discrete funding source for adoptive family support and preservation services does not currently exist. There are, however, a variety of funding sources that can be used in developing an effective system. Various federal resources, which have included Title IV-E, Title IV-B (Part 1), Title IV-B (Part 2) of the Social Security Act, Early Periodic Screening and Diagnostic Testing, Medicaid, Supplemental Security Income, Title XIX, Title XX, and Adoption Incentive Funds. Some states have state and local funds allocated for family preservation and support services that can be used to assist the adoptive family. A cross-agency team at the state level, made up of adoptive family members and representatives from all agencies serving these families, would be a good place to begin to coordinate and identify what is currently available. Advocacy for state funding of adoption support and preservation must be ongoing.

Training

Training is essential when building a competent system of adoption support and preservation services. Training of members across various service systems enhances frank dialogue about differences and helps to eliminate barriers to cross-system collaboration. Therefore, it is important to have the training process fully encompass members of the cross-system network and allow opportunities to discuss collaborative efforts.



The outcome of training is to empower the participants to enhance and improve adoption support and preservation services within their agencies and organizations. The best training models require active participation, integration, and investment on the part of the participants. All training curricula designed to enhance skills in the provision of services need to incorporate the following concepts:

- ◆ Services are built upon the knowledge and appreciation of the differences and unique issues adoption brings to family life.
- ◆ Services are focused on supporting and preserving the adoptive family.
- ◆ Services are culturally competent, provided in a non-deficit approach which builds upon the strengths of the adoptive family.
- ◆ Services are based upon educating, supporting and modeling for parents and facilitating access to resources.
- ◆ Services are based on a multisystem collaborative approach.

Designated and Trained Staff

There are two staffing issues which are highly relevant to quality adoption support and preservation services.

The first issue addresses the availability of staff to help families when they are experiencing problems or are in crisis. While true specialization is recommended, when this is not possible due to limited resources, it is important to at least designate which staff (or which unit) will carry primary responsibilities for adoption support and preservation services. Ideally, the work load of this staff or unit will be controlled and given sufficient flexibility and authority to react promptly to parents' request for help and support.

The second issue addresses the need to assure that staff are competent to provide adoption support and preservation services. Successful staff must possess knowledge about community services, adoptive family dynamics, dynamics of difference in cross-cultural work, funding streams, agency and legal procedures, multi-disciplinary networks, team building, and any other area which can serve to help the adoptive family. Access to ongoing training and consultation is needed to develop and maintain the skills and the breadth of knowledge needed for a competent staff.

Automation

Planning for automation of the adoption support and preservation information system is an important part of any state's plan for implementing adoption support and preservation services. It is critical to develop ways to identify and track need, resources and utilization of the services. Ideally, this information could be a part of a state child welfare agency's statewide information system. The system would allow providers to spend more time supporting and assisting families directly and less time managing cumbersome record keeping systems. These systems will work best if providers are given input into their design and implementation.





Summary

For moral, social, and economic reasons, it is in the public interest to assure that families remain intact and strong. The pendulum has swung and society again recognizes the importance of strong family systems in combating society's ills. Adoption support and preservation services help build strong foundations for families created by adoption. By developing and implementing these services, families involved in adoption, service providers and policy makers are assuring adopted children of every opportunity to become useful, productive citizens.

An effective adoption support and preservation service system requires a full commitment by adoptive families, communities, private and public agencies, helping professionals, administrators and policy makers. The commitment extends to building a jointly coordinated, jointly funded, multi-disciplinary system of public, private and community services. Alternatives to limited categorical funding or block grants need to be identified and advocated for at the federal, state, and local levels. Communities must become adoption sensitive and recognize the need to include the adoptive family in service planning and service delivery.

Cross-system, cross-discipline training is an essential element in achieving successful outcomes. Also essential, is that services are provided in locations convenient to families and that they respect the culture and ethnicity of families being served. In essence, an effective adoption preservation and support service system is built upon the recognition that it is important to support and preserve adoptive families and that it is within the public interest to do so.

"Our family has come a long way. We still need improvement. We're struggling to pay for counseling now for my daughter and my husband and I together. I, as an adoptive mother, need the support of others going through the same thing. I need someone to suggest ways of handling certain situations. I need to know what are adoption issues and what are just ordinary growing up issues. Please do all you can to keep these programs going and open to all adopted families. These programs give us hope that one day our family will be coping and functioning 'normally'. Hope that we will learn how to get through some of those barriers the trauma of the past life has formed in our daughter. Get through the anger our son has—that our family has been in such a turmoil. We need the adoption service!"

*— Adoptive Mother who has received
adoption support and preservation services*



NATIONAL CONSORTIUM ON POST LEGAL ADOPTION SERVICES ADOPTION SUPPORT AND PRESERVATION

The following principles

Adoption is different. The dynamics of a family created by adoption are different from the dynamics of a family created by birth.

Adoption is lifelong and its impact creates unique opportunities and challenges for families and communities.

Adoption is mutually beneficial to parent, child and society.

Society is responsible for supporting and aiding integration and preservation of adoptive families.

serve as a guide

A LOCAL CROSS-SYSTEM NETWORK OR TEAM
of
Adoptees, Parents, Peers and Professionals

who deliver and facilitate services

- ADVOCACY
- FAMILY EDUCATION
- INFORMATION & REFERRAL
- FINANCIAL SUPPORTS
- FAMILY SUPPORT
- COMMUNITY SUPPORT
- PSYCHO-SOCIAL SERVICES
- REUNIONS & RECORD INQUIRIES
- MEDIATION & PROBLEM SOLVING
- SERVICE COORDINATION

that are

- Community Based
- Family Centered
- Adoption Sensitive & Competent
- Multi-disciplined
- Strength-Focused & Normalizing
- Directed by Family
- Culturally Sensitive & Competent

and that result in

- Strengthened Family Integration
- Strengthened Attachment
- Strengthened Family Functioning
- Strengthened Parental Entitlement & Claiming
- Strengthened Identity Formation of Family Members
- Strengthened Community Networks

Glossary



Adoption: The legal relationship of parenting a child or children not born to you.

Adoption support and preservation: Community based interventions provided for the adoptive family with the goal of keeping the family together.

Adoption triad: Birth parents, adoptive parents and adopted individuals.

Attachment – bonding: An affectionate bond between two individuals that endures through space and time and serves to join them emotionally. (Klaus, 1976) Bonding and attachment are used synonymously.

Birth parent: An individual who bears a child who ultimately becomes a part of another family. Sometimes referred to as natural or real parent.

Claiming: The process that enables adoptive parents to raise their adoptive child in the same manner as children born to them.

Collaboration: The process of working across agency and professional boundaries to provide effective, efficient services.

Cultural competence: The essential, critical characteristic of knowing, appreciating and utilizing the culture of another in assisting with the resolution of human problems.

Disruption: Irreconcilable differences in the adoptive family that occur before an adoption is legally finalized and results in moving the adopted child or children to another setting.

Dissolution: Irreconcilable differences in the adoptive family that occur after an adoption is legally finalized and result in negating the legal relationship and moving the child or children to another setting.

Empowerment: The ability and capacity to cope constructively with the forces that undermine and hinder coping; the achievement of some reasonable control over one's destiny. (Pinderhughes, Elaine, 1983)

Entitlement: The right to parent a child, which includes both legal and emotional components.

Family integration: The process by which the adopted child and adopting family form a new family system.

Finalization: the process of legalizing an adoptive relationship through the civil court system.

Identity formation: The process that individuals go through to clarify their values and determine who they are.

Mastery and control: The ability to influence one's fate and destiny.

Permanency planning: A value, philosophy and approach that holds that all children need stable, permanent families for healthy growth and development.


Separation: An emotional or physical break in relationships with significant people, objects and environments.

System children: Children who have entered the public child welfare system and are living in foster homes, adoptive homes or group care.

Unmatched expectations: Hopes, dreams and wishes of adoption triad members that are not in sync.



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* *These publications may be purchased through the Spaulding for Children. To view our product sales catalog, The Center Source, visit our web site at www.spaulding.org/institute/products.*



Appendix

National Adoption Resources

AdoptUSKids

Adoption Exchange Association
8015 Corporate Drive, Suite C, Baltimore, MD 21236
(888) 200-4005 ♦ www.adoptuskids.org

The Association of Administrators of the Interstate Compact on Adoption and Medical Assistance

1133 19th Street, NW, Washington, DC 20036
(202) 682-0100 ♦ www.aaicama.org

Child Welfare League of America

1726 M Street, NW, Suite 500, Washington, DC 20036
(202) 688-4200 ♦ www.cwla.org

Child Welfare Information Gateway

1250 Maryland Avenue, SW, Eight Floor, Washington, D.C. 20024
(800) 394-3366 ♦ www.childwelfare.gov

National Resource Center for Adoption

16250 Northland Dr., Suite 120, Southfield, MI 48075
(248) 443-0306 ♦ www.nrcadoption.org

North American Council on Adoptable Children

970 Raymond Ave, Suite 106, St. Paul, MN 54114-1149
(651) 644-3036 ♦ www.nacac.org