



National Training and Development Curriculum

FOR FOSTER AND ADOPTIVE PARENTS

Best Practice Recommendations for Delivery of the Classroom-Based Component of NTDC Updated 6/10/20

Background:

The high level of needs of children who enter the child welfare system have been well-documented, and we know that parents who are fostering or adopting will need to build knowledge, attitudes and skills that can help them parent children who have experienced separation, loss, and trauma. Because most children in the foster care system will return home, and all children will have connections to their families and communities, it is critical that parents who are fostering or adopting have essential knowledge, attitudes and skills for supporting and helping children maintain relationships with their families.

NTDC conducted a needs assessment to determine the competencies associated with successful foster and adoptive parenting. The process for developing competencies included:

- Literature reviews on the characteristics and competencies that are associated with successful foster and adoptive parenting
- Review of existing parent trainings
- Stakeholder interviews
- Focus groups with parents and professional groups
- Review of competencies through processes that facilitated consensus-building from experts and persons with lived experience across the country
- Review of competencies by NTDC partners

As a result, 19 themes were determined to be essential for participants to receive high-quality classroom-based training (Please note two of these themes are done online outside of the classroom). In addition to the 19 themes, 4 themes were created that are specific to a target population (Kinship Relations, Building Resilience for Kinship Caregivers, Connections with Birth Families After Adoption and Intercountry Adoption Overview). Competencies were developed to address important knowledge, attitudes and skills associated with each of these themes. The NTDC classroom-based person training will give participants the opportunity to learn, practice and incorporate essential competencies for parenting children with histories of trauma, separation and loss.

We think it is important that we not only look at the content included in the classroom-based training but the delivery of it so that we optimize learning. This document outlines the NTDC project's recommendations for delivery.

Best Practices Related to Facilitators (trainers):

- **Two facilitators:** Classroom-based training should be done by two facilitators. We recommend that one of the facilitators have lived experience as a parent who fostered or adopted and one facilitator have experience in the child welfare field and have training experience. Both facilitators need to be fully trained on the curriculum and equally share in delivering the curriculum. It is recommended that at least one of the facilitators be reflective of the participants in the class (i.e. American Indian Alaskan Native trainer if training American Indian Alaskan Native participants)
- **Engaging:** The classroom-based themes contain activities, discussion and lecture. It is critical that at least one of the two facilitators feel comfortable and have basic skills on how to engage adult learners.
- **Training of facilitators:** Facilitators should go through a train-the-trainer session and be well versed in the curriculum content. Both facilitators will need to review the information in advance and ensure that they feel comfortable with the material. Extra resources have been provided for the facilitators if they would like to develop a more comprehensive understanding of a theme. Facilitators must review all material before teaching a theme including prework, videos, handouts, and the facilitator classroom guide. It is essential that facilitators have a good understanding of the three components of NTDC (classroom-based training, right-time training and self-assessment).
- **Characteristics:** The facilitators should embody the following characteristics:
 - A commitment to lifelong learning, including a belief that they will learn from participants even as they are training
 - A belief in the ability of people to grow and learn
 - A sense of fun and humor in their presentation style
 - A belief that all children can heal, grow, and succeed in a family if the family is given tools and continued development
 - An ability to engage, encourage, and inspire participants
 - A willingness to find strengths in individuals and a desire to help participants build their skills
 - Cultural humility and the ability to work with a diverse group of participants
 - Be willing to have difficult discussions with participants
- **Responsibility with prework:** Facilitators will need to track which participants do not complete the prework and follow their site's guidance around what to do in these

situations. The prework is essential to the curriculum. It is essential for facilitators to understand the importance of the prework and why it is critical for participants to complete prior to class.

Introduction/Welcome Theme:

This theme is part of the NTDC curriculum and is critical in that it provides an overview of all components of the curriculum. The class needs to start with a warm, welcoming tone. Participants need to be praised for the tools they bring to the table and encouraged to expand their tools so that they can effectively care for a child who has experienced trauma, separation or loss.

Preparation of the Environment for Classroom-Based Training:

- Facilitators will need to either have internet access during the classroom training or ensure that all of the videos and materials are downloaded in advance. If using internet during the training, check the internet connectivity prior to the training. It is recommended to have all material downloaded in advance of the training and stored on a jump drive and on the computer that will be used during the session.
- At least a week before each session, facilitators will need to review the supplies and classroom handouts needed for the theme to ensure that they have everything that is needed.
- The facilitator will need a computer, LCD projector, screen, flip charts that hang on the wall and audio speakers for every session. This equipment should be checked in advance to ensure there are no compatibility issues.
- The room should be set up in manner that participants can see each other and the screen and can easily dialogue during the group discussions.
- Facilitators should practice activities prior to conducting them in the classroom. Videos of certain activities will be available on the NTDC portal to assist facilitators in capturing the essence of the activity.

Delivery of Classroom-Based Curriculum:

- **Delivery method:** To optimize learning, we recommend that the classroom-based training be conducted in shorter periods (no more than 3 hours at a time) so that participants have time to digest the information, complete all of the prework and build upon their learning. Since the curriculum entails a lot of content, it will be important for facilitators to manage

time effectively so that there is a good balance between the activities and discussion and the content that the facilitators need to provide.

- **Fidelity:** The curriculum has been designed in a specific manner and must be trained in this manner. The curriculum offers some areas of choice for facilitators that will be noted, but it is necessary that facilitators stick to training the curriculum as provided in the facilitator classroom guide.
- **Pework:** Each classroom-based theme will have approximately 30 minutes of prework that participants are expected to complete prior to class. It is vital that this prework be emphasized and required. The prework provides information that is pertinent to the theme and will lay a foundation for the material discussed in class. Sites will need to develop a process unique to their system on how they will handle participants who are not completing the prework.

Although the prework is designed for participants to complete on their own, sites can consider options for participants who don't have internet access or who otherwise need assistance with accessing the prework. This could include having a classroom with computers available to participants one hour ahead of the session or adding time to the classroom session so the prework can be done as a group activity.

- **Class Size:** Due to the number of activities and discussion included in each theme, it is recommended that no more than 25 participants be signed up for a session.

Recommended Delivery for Classroom-Based Themes

Average of three hours per session, total of 9 sessions. Can be done one night a week for just over two months. Family could be going through the licensure process during the same time that they are doing the training. An example of how the themes can be organized to accommodate this schedule is listed below:

Session One: Introduction and Welcome -1.5 hours

Session Two: Child Development- 1 hour

Attachment- 2 hours

Session Three: Separation, Grief and Loss -2 hours

Effective Communication- 1 hour

Session Four: Trauma Related Behaviors- 2 hours

Preparing for and Managing Intrusive Questions: A Primer for Foster/Adoptive Parents- 1 hour

Session Five: Trauma Informed Parenting- **2 hours**

Maintaining Children’s Connections with Siblings, Extended Family Members and Their Community- **1 hour**

Session Six: Reunification- The Primary Permanency Planning Goal- **1.5 hours**

Parenting in Racially and Culturally Diverse Families -**1.5 hours**

Session Seven: Foster Care-A Means to Support Families- **2 hours**

Cultural Humility- **1 hour**

Session Eight: Mental Health Considerations- **1.5 hours**

Impact of Substance Use- **1.5 hours**

Session Nine: Creating a Stable, Nurturing, Safe Home Environment- **2 hours**

Accessing Services and Support and closing and graduation from NTDC curriculum - **30 minutes for theme plus an additional 1/2 hour for closing and graduation and any site specific information that needs to be added.**

Additional Themes Specific to a Target Population:

Kinship Relations – **2 hours**

Building Resilience for Kinship Caregivers – **1.5 hours**

Connections with Birth Families After Adoption (specific to private domestic adoptions)- **1.5 hours**

Intercountry Adoption Overview (specific to intercountry adoptions) – **1 hour**

Alternative Option for Delivery

For sites that need to do more accelerated classes, the themes can be grouped together in different ways to meet the hours that are needed for the training session. It should be noted that if sites are combining multiple themes in one session, they will need to add some time during the classroom to go over the prework as a group. This is necessary because it will be difficult for participants to complete the prework for more than 2 themes in one week.

Self-Assessment:

The self-assessment is a critical part of the curriculum. Each participant is expected to take the initial self-assessment prior to the start of the NTDC classroom-based training and again 90 days after they have completed the in-person component of the curriculum. This must be emphasized to the participants and the sites will need to:

- Discuss the self-assessment and why it is important
- Stress that all participants must complete the self-assessment prior to starting the NTDC curriculum
- Track and ensure all participants complete the first self-assessment
- Follow up with families who do not complete the first self-assessment
- Emphasize the importance of taking the second self-assessment and explain how families will be notified 90 days after their classroom-based training is completed.

Right-Time Training:

The *right-time training* is a component of the curriculum that allows families to continue their learning. Facilitators will need to:

- Review the importance of *right-time training* and the topics that are available and how participants can use this material to continue their learning.
- Require that all participants complete one *right-time training* at some point before they finish the classroom-based training. This will need to be tracked by the facilitator. Participants will receive a certification when they complete a right-time training which can be shared with the facilitator. In doing this, participants will become familiar with this component of the curriculum and will be more likely to access it at a later time.