



## **Best Practice Recommendations for Delivery of the NTDC Curriculum**

Thank you again for your willingness to be a pilot site for the National Training and Development Curriculum for Foster/Adoptive Parents (NTDC). With your help, the NTDC will move one step closer to providing access to a free, comprehensive curriculum that can be used by states, counties, territories and private agencies to prepare, train and develop foster and adoptive parents.

Soon pilot sites will need to make decisions regarding the best ways to deliver the components of the curriculum. This document outlines the NTDC project's recommendations for delivery. The NTDC partners are excited to join with you in piloting and evaluating the NTDC curriculum. We believe that your participation will help to make the NTDC curriculum an excellent resource for parents and sites across all states, tribes and territories, ultimately helping children and families in their efforts to thrive.

### **Background**

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

During the first year of the NTDC partnership, one of the primary goals was conducting a needs assessment, determining 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 professional and lived experience experts

- Review of competencies by NTDC partners (Spaulding for Children, Child Trauma Academy (CTA), The Center for Adoption Support and Education (C.A.S.E.); the North American Council on Adoptable Children (NACAC); National Council For Adoption (NCFA) University of Washington (UW) and the Children’s Bureau, Administration on Children, Youth and Families, Administration for Children and Families, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.)

As a result, 19 themes were determined to be essential for parents to receive high-quality classroom-based training (Please note two of these themes will be done online outside of the classroom). In addition to the 19 themes, 3 themes were created that are specific to a target population (Kinship Relations, Connections with Birth Families After Adoption and review of Hague Policies). We also developed a separate list of 14 themes that will be addressed through *right time* training. Competencies were developed to address important knowledge, attitudes and skills associated with each of these themes. The NTDC in-person and *right time training* will give parents the opportunity to learn, practice and incorporate essential competencies for parenting children with histories of trauma, separation and loss.

In addition to the classroom based training and *right time training*, the curriculum includes a self-assessment component that will give parents and facilitators the unique opportunity of receiving feedback that will allow them to hone in on specific areas of needed competency building by parents. The assessment will guide parents through self-discovery, maximizing opportunities to build their confidence, abilities, and motivation. It will enable parents who are fostering or adopting to reflect on and evaluate motivation, preparedness, qualities, characteristics, current knowledge base, and their strengths/weaknesses. Parents will be able to develop plans to leverage their key strengths and fill gaps to best meet the needs of children who will be placed with them.

It is with this understanding that 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. To best meet the modern adult learners’ needs, we are suggesting that pilot sites consider the following things when they plan for implementation of the NTDC curriculum.

### **Best Practices Related to Facilitators:**

- **Two facilitators:** Classroom training should be done by two facilitators. We recommend that one of the facilitators have lived experience as a foster/adoptive parent and one work in the child welfare field and have training experience. Both facilitators need to be fully trained on the curriculum and share equally in delivering the curriculum.
- **Engaging:** The in-person classroom 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:** All facilitators should go through the facilitator training 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 including all pre-work, videos, and parent resources prior to the class. It is essential that facilitators have a good understanding of not only the classroom training but the self-assessment and *right time training*.
- **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 afforded the right tools and support
  - An ability to engage, encourage, and inspire participants
  - A non-judgmental stance
  - Cultural competence and the ability to work with a diverse group of participants
- **Responsibility with pre work:** Facilitators will electronically obtain information that parents submit for the discussion questions. It is critical that facilitators review this information and use it to inform their delivery of the material. Facilitators will also need to track which parents are not completing the pre work and follow their site's guidance around what to do in these situations as it is required material. It is essential for facilitators to understand the importance of the pre-work and why it is so critical for parents to complete prior to coming to class.

### **Welcome/Introduction Session:**

- This session is part of the NTDC curriculum and is critical in that it provides an overview of all components of the curriculum. During the pilot, this session also includes time to complete the informed consent form and the pre-test, both of which must be done before starting the rest of the NTDC themes.
- During the welcome/introduction session it must be stressed that each parent needs to complete the self-assessment prior to coming back to the class. This is very important and will impact the evaluation if not done.

### **Preparation of the Environment for Classroom Based Training:**

- Facilitators will need to have internet access during the classroom training. The internet connectivity should be checked prior to the training. As a backup, facilitators should download all items for the session and have the material on their computer/jump drive so that they can access them if there are issues with connectivity.
- At least a week before each session, facilitators will need to review the supplies needed for each theme, as these may vary. It is critical that the facilitators have the necessary equipment to complete all of the activities.
- In every training, the facilitator will need a computer, LCD projector, screen, flip charts that hang on the wall and speakers. 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 try out 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 their pre-work and build upon their learning. If your site needs a different model of delivery, we will work with you to develop a schedule for curriculum delivery. Since the curriculum does entail a lot of content, it will be important for facilitators to manage time effectively so that the activities and discussion do not take up the time, preventing the facilitators from getting through all of the content. *Please see the last page of this document for suggestions on how the curriculum can be scheduled.*
- **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 trainer's guide. This is extremely important to the evaluation of the curriculum.
- **Pre work:** Each classroom theme will have approximately 30 minutes of pre work that parents are expected to complete prior to coming to class. It is vital that this pre work be emphasized and required. The pre work 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 parents that are not completing the pre work. The facilitator will know which parents are completing the pre work based on the submission of the questions after completing the pre work.

Although the pre work is designed for parents to complete on their own, sites can consider options for the pre work for participants who don't have internet access or who otherwise need assistance with assessing the pre work. This could include opening a classroom with computers one hour ahead of the class so participants can come in early and complete on their own. Another option is adding time to the classroom and doing the pre work as a group.

### **Self-Assessment:**

The self-assessment is a critical part of the curriculum. Each parent 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 facilitator will need to:

- Distribute a document that provides information on the self-assessment during the orientation
- 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 they will receive notification 90 days after their classroom training is over.

### **Right Time Training:**

The *right time training* is a component of the curriculum that allows families to continue their learning throughout their journey. Likewise, parents can go back to the NTDC portal and re-listen to podcasts and review additional resources that were included with the classroom based training. Facilitators will need to:

- Review the importance of *right time training* and the topics that are available and how they can use this material in advance.
- Require that all participants complete one *right time training* session at some point before they finish the classroom-based training. This will need to be tracked by the facilitator.

### **Scheduling Suggestions for NTDC:**

The classroom training component of NTDC includes an estimated 26 hours of content that is designed to be taught in person. An additional 4 hours of in person content has been designed for specific groups and would not need to be taught for all prospective foster/adoptive parents (referred to as addendum modules).

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 their pre-work and build upon their learning. Recognizing that sites may need to deliver this curriculum differently than the recommended mode, we have identified an alternative option that allows for parents to go through the class within a quicker timeframe.

### **Recommended Delivery**

Average of two hours per session, total of 12 sessions. Can be done one night a week for three months. Family could be going through the licensure process during the same time that they are doing the training. Families could start the licensure process after completing session six.

***Session One:*** Introduction and Welcome (includes informed consent and pre-test) -2 hours

***Session Two:*** Child Development- 1 hour

Attachment- 2 hours

***Session Three:*** Separation, Grief and Loss -2 hours

***Session Four:*** Trauma Related Behaviors- 2 hours

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

***Session Six:*** Effective Communication- 1 hour

Reunification- The Primary Permanency Planning Goal- 1.5 hours

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

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

Maintaining Children/Youth's Connections with Siblings, Extended Family Members and Their Community- 1 hour

***Session 9:*** Cultural Humility- 1 hour

Transracial/Cultural Parenting -2 hours

***Session 10:*** Mental Health Considerations- 1.5 hours

Impact of Substance Use- **1 hour**

**Session 11:** Creating a Stable, Nurturing, Safe Home Environment- **2 hours**

**Session 12:** Accessing Services and Support allow time for graduation- **45 minutes in class (plus Right Time)**

**Addendum Modules Depending on Class Population:**

Kinship Relations – **2 hours**

Connections with Birth Families After Adoption- **1.5 hours**

**Review of Hague Policies**

**Alternative Option for Delivery**

Average of six hours per session, total of five sessions. This would need to be done on a weekend. Training would last 7 hours which would allow parents one hour for lunch. If this option is chosen then facilitators would want to consider doing some of the pre-work in the classroom versus outside. Parents could do ½ of the pre-work on their own and then the other ½ would be done in the classroom as a group. If this is done then time will need to be added to the day of training to accommodate the additional work being done in the classroom. Can be done one weekend day over 1.5 months. Family could be going through the licensure process during the same time that they are doing the training. Families could start the licensure process after completing session three.

**Session One: Total of 5 hours-**

Introduction and Welcome (includes informed consent and pre-test) -**2 hours**

Child Development- **1 hour**

Attachment- **2 hours**

**Session Two: Total of 6 hours**

Separation, Grief and Loss -**2 hours**

Trauma Related Behaviors- **2 hours**

Trauma Informed Parenting- **2 hours**

**Session Three: Total of 5.5 hours**

Effective Communication- **1 hour**

Reunification- The Primary Permanency Planning Goal- **1.5 hours**

Foster Care-A Means to Support Families- **2 hours**

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

***Session Four: Total of 5.5 hours***

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

Cultural Humility- **1 hour**

Transracial/Cultural Parenting -**2 hours**

Mental Health Considerations- **1.5 hours**

***Session Five: Total of 3.45 hours- allows time to discuss right time completed and have a graduation event***

Impact of Substance Use- **1 hour**

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

Accessing Services and Support- **45 minutes in class (plus Right Time)**

**Addendum Modules Depending on Class Population:**

Kinship Relations – **2 hours**

Connections with Birth Families After Adoption- **1.5 hours**

**Review of Hague Policies**