Integrating Family Support from Inquiry through Post-Adoption

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AdoptUSKids
Together we hold their future
Our mission:

• Raise public awareness about the need for foster and adoptive families for children in the public child welfare system

• Assist states, territories, and tribes to recruit, engage, develop, and support foster and adoptive families
Goals for this workshop

• Review the value of providing support to families throughout each part of the adoption and post-adoption process

• Discuss how families’ support needs change as they move through the adoption process

• Provide examples of valuable forms of support within each step of the adoption process

• Discuss approaches for the implementation of these forms of support across different jurisdictions
Introductions

- Name
- Role
- Jurisdiction
- What you hope to get from this workshop
What is integrated support?

Shift in thinking

• Support not as a specific set of services, but as a systemic value
• Excellent customer service as support
• Development as support
Why integrate support from the beginning?

- People start with a positive interaction with the child welfare system
- Prospective parents don’t drop out
- Prospective parents are well-informed and prepared
- Accessing support is normalized from the outset
What does integrated support look like?

Let’s look at forms of support by process stage:

1. Initial inquiry to application
2. Throughout the approval process
3. Waiting for a match
4. Between match and placement
5. Post placement and ongoing
Initial inquiry to application

Prospective parents are seeking…

• Answers to their questions.
• General information about how the process works.
• Guidance in deciding if this is right for them.
• Welcoming and knowledgeable people to talk to.

Initial inquiry provides an opportunity to build a family’s expectations

• Of the agency
• Of the needs of the children
• Of themselves and their networks
Initial inquiry to application

- Frontload clear and complete information about the process
- Parent liaison or navigator
- Tips for what to do next
- Reading material
What does integrated support look like?

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1. Initial inquiry to application
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5. Post placement and ongoing
Throughout the approval process

Prospective parents are seeking…
• More detailed information.
• To be adequately prepared for placement.
• Encouragement and reassurance through a daunting approval process.

This stage grants an opportunity to normalize…
• Accessing support services
• The need for ongoing training
Throughout the approval process

- Continued frontloading of information
- Trauma-informed training
- Introduction to peer-to-peer support
What does integrated support look like?

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Waiting for a match

Prospective parents are seeking…

• Support managing complex feelings
• Guidance in finding a child or children whose needs they can meet
• Encouragement and reassurance during a time when their role is unclear

This stage can be a particularly challenging time as families manage anticipation, anxiety and frustration.

• Be clear with what they can expect during this time (from the agency, from themselves)
Waiting for a match

- Peer-to-peer support
- Ongoing training
- Opportunities to be of service
- Opportunities to engage with the agency
- Encourage their development of support networks
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Between match and placement

Prospective parents are seeking…

• Detailed information about the child and how to meet their needs
• Support managing complex feelings

This stage is unique to adoptive placements

• Opportunity for child-specific preparation that foster families may not normally have
• Families may need help understanding the reason for an extended period of transition
Between match and placement

- Trauma-informed assessment
- Child-specific preparation
- Increased contact and open communication
- Ongoing training and reinforcement of learning
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Families are seeking...

- Knowledge and support about how best to parent their children, especially when challenges arise
- Crisis response
- Access to needed support services

Offering support only during the immediate post placement period is not enough

- Access to comprehensive support throughout their lives is critical to preserving the adoptive family
Post placement and ongoing

- Peer-to-peer support
- Ongoing training
  - Normalize the need for continued skill-building
- Information and referral
  - Help lines, navigators, newsletters, websites, etc.
- Ready access to any needed medical, mental health, or educational service
Post placement and ongoing

- Respite care
  - Normalize use of respite care
  - Build opportunities for respite into other activities
- Services for the children
  - Therapy, camps, support groups, leadership training
  - Form of respite
Post placement and ongoing

- Case management
- Educational supports
- Material supports
Post placement

• Crisis response
  – On-call rotation
  – How is it accessed?
  – Normalize the need to call for help
Discussion

• How could you expand supports you are already providing so that support is integrated throughout the adoption process?
Tips to move your system toward integrated support

- Be guided by your data
- Normalize the experience of accessing supports
- Ensure that your approaches are family-friendly and engaging for both parents and youth
- Offer a continuum of support
- Coordinate your support services staff and providers
Resources

- **Supporting Families Publications and Webinars**
  https://www.adoptuskids.org/for-professionals/publications/supporting-families

- **Support Matters**

- **Respite Care Services**
  https://www.adoptuskids.org/_assets/files/AUSK/Publications/Respite%20Care%20Services-web508_FINAL.pdf
Resources

- **Support for Youth**
  https://www.adoptuskids.org/_assets/files/AUSK/Publications/Support%20for%20Youth-web508_FINAL.pdf

- **Effective Response System Strategies**

- **How Family Support Connects to CFSR Outcomes**
Questions?
Contact

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