

# Adoption Assessor Refresher Training

Ohio Child Welfare Training Program

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## Tier II



- Cultural Issues in Permanency Planning
- Openness in Adoption
- Achieving Permanency Through Interagency Collaboration
- Gathering and Documenting Background Information

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### Cultural Issues in Permanency Planning Major Themes



- ☑ Workers must be culturally competent in order to make good family and child assessments, make good matches, and establish positive relationships with children and families.
- ☑ Culturally competent workers understand the values, beliefs, attitudes, and traditions of the groups served; know cultural norms; learn about the family's culture from the family; acknowledge cultural differences; clarify subtleties of communication; know and abide by social rules of the group, and choose services that are culturally responsive.
- ☑ A culturally competent worker understands federal legislation (ICWA and MEPA) relating to race, ethnicity and the placement of children in foster or adoptive homes.

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### Cultural Issues in Permanency Planning Review



- Cultural competence
- Cultural competence in assessing children: stages in racial identity formation
- Impact of culture on assessment categories

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### Culturally Competent Workers Must Be Able to:

- 📄 determine difference between normal, abnormal, and culturally based developmental patterns;
- 📄 establish a trusting, professional relationship with clients;
- 📄 communicate with children and families of other cultures;
- 📄 assess a child's understanding of his/her own culture based on age and developmental level;

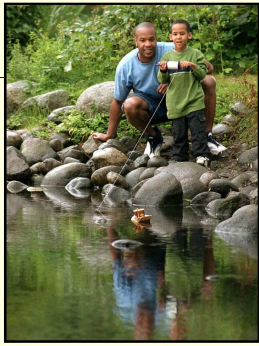
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### Culturally Competent Workers Must Be Able to:

- 📄 provide culturally appropriate support services to assist the family;
- 📄 identify community resources that families can access to assist them in parenting children with cultural needs;
- 📄 recruit and train families from various cultural groups.


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*Development of Racial/Ethnic Identity*



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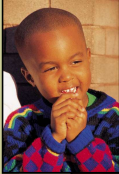

STAGES OF RACIAL/ETHNIC IDENTITY FORMATION  
IN NON-MINORITY PERSONS



Stage One: No social consciousness  
Stage Two: Acceptance  
Stage Three: Resistance  
Stage Four: Redefinition  
Stage Five: Internalization

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STAGES OF RACIAL/ETHNIC IDENTITY FORMATION IN PEOPLE OF COLOR



Stage One: Pre-encounter  
Stage Two: Encounter  
Stage Three: Awakening/Immersion  
Stage Four: Internalization

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Why do assessors need to understand the process of racial identity formation?  
How is this important?



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**Assessment - A Look in Depth**

Discuss your selected category and identify two or three possible cultural differences which may be observed and potentially misunderstood.



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**Assessment Categories**

- Motivation/Expectations of Adoption
- Personal and Emotional Maturity
- Stability and Quality of Interpersonal Relationships
- Resilience, Coping Skills, and History of Stress Management

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### Assessment Categories

- Openness of Family System
- Parenting Skills and Abilities
- Empathy and Perspective-Taking Ability
- Entitlement
- Ability for Hands-On Parenting
- Lifelong Commitment

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### Updates in Cultural Issues in Permanency Planning

- MEPA Monitor Process




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### FOUR KEY POINTS: MEPA, as amended

-  A child's race, color, or national origin cannot be routinely considered as a relevant factor in assessing a child's best interests.
-  Social workers cannot assume that needs based on RCNO can be met only by a same RCNO parent.
-  In making placement decisions, broad assumptions or stereotyping about prospective parents who can meet children's needs must be put aside.
-  In each child's placement decision, the consideration shall be the child's individual needs and the ability of the prospective caregiver to meet those needs.

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### IMPORTANT NOTE:



Even when justified, the consideration of RCNO shall not be the sole determining factor in the placement decision and does not equate that only a same-race placement shall be considered. All families who can meet the child's needs shall be considered.


However, if in extreme circumstances which are likely to be rare, a social worker feels that RCNO must be considered, the JFS 01688, "Individualized Child Assessment" process must be followed.

Even when the JFS 01688 is completed, the agency still cannot use RCNO as a reason to seek out homestudies for a same race placement or use RCNO to differentiate between placements.

*RCNO cannot be the sole factor considered in the placement decision-making.*

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### Permissible? Non-Permissible?



Review your card.

Place your card on the Permissible or Non-Permissible Poster.

We will review to determine your accuracy!

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### THE MEPA MONITOR

- ✓ Every PCSA and PCPA shall designate a person as their **MEPA MONITOR (MM)**.
- ✓ Non-custodial agencies are not required to have a **MM**.
- ✓ The **MM** reviews and monitors foster care and adoption placement decisions when RCNO is considered a relevant factor.
- ✓ The **MM** cannot be the child's SW or SW Supervisor or the agency's civil rights coordinator.
- ✓ When multiple agencies are involved, the child's custodial agency's **MM** will review the placement decision.


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Process for Custodial Agency to Authorize Consideration of RCNO as One Factor in a Matching Decision

1 of 3




2 of 3



3 of 3




**Is this a problem?  
MEPA Jeopardy**



- Is this a problem legally?
- Why or why not?
- How should the social worker proceed with placement?

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**BONUS TRIVIA QUESTION**  
????????????????????????????????????



**"WHY ARE NATIVE AMERICAN CHILDREN EXCLUDED FROM MEPA, AS AMENDED?"**

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**"THE WHO-WHAT-WHERE-WHEN QUIZ"**

Important Abbreviations:

**PCSA** = Public Children Services Agency-the 88 county agencies in Ohio

**PCPA** = Private Child Placing Agency-may take custody via voluntary surrenders, conducts homestudies, facilitates adoptions

**PNA** = Private Non-custodial Agency-does not take custody, conducts homestudies, facilitates adoptions

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### Openness in Adoption Major Themes



- Central theme—meet needs of child
- Birth and adoptive families should be empowered to determine parameters of relationship
- Birth families can enhance child's development of positive identity
- Openness is not legally enforceable and depends on integrity of participants
- Openness exists along a continuum, and each open relationship is unique
- Openness requires flexibility to accommodate change and manage conflict

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### Openness in Adoption Review



- Options along the continuum of openness
- Benefits of openness for various triad members
- Why birth or adoptive parents might withdraw from the open relationship

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### Definitions Along the Continuum

**Closed Adoption:** No identifying information is shared. Also called *confidential* or *traditional* adoption.

**Openness in Adoption:** refers to the continuum within relationships that can exist between members of the birth family and adoptive family.

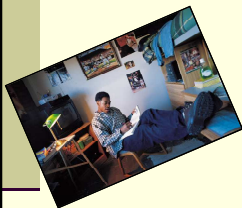
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### A working definition of open adoption relationship:

**OPEN ADOPTION** means that everyone involved in the process, whether adoptive or birth parent, is open to meeting and talking with each other both prior to and subsequent to the placement. In an open adoption, the assumption exists that there will be as much talking as possible within the limits of courage, compassion, and common sense.

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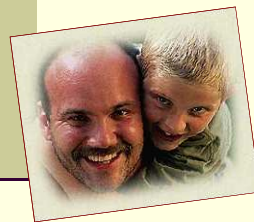
### Benefits of the Open Adoption Relationship for the Adopted Person



1. Gives freedom to ask questions
2. Gives access to the person who has the answers
3. Gives permission for the child to bond with adoptive family
4. Gives a sense of biological connectedness

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### Benefits of the Open Adoption Relationship for Adoptive Parents



- Gives parents a sense of control
- Aids parents in laying fears aside
- Gives parents access to ongoing information that they would not have had
- Gives parents the emotional permission to parent their child

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## Benefits of the Open Adoption Relationship for the Birth Parents



1. Gives them the knowledge that their child is safe and nurtured
2. Aids them in ability to process grief/loss
3. Gives them a sense of control in decision making
4. Helps alleviate feeling that they have abandoned their child

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## Benefits of Openness for the Worker

- Gives them the knowledge that they will have access to information gathering in the future
- Aids them in dealing with the issue of guilt in disengaging the family relationship
- Allows the worker to release control in decision making

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## Why Some Birth Parents Fade Out of the Picture

- Grief
  - Lack of importance
- Life changes/events
- Moving on in life stages

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## Why Some Adoptive Parents Withdraw

- Not truly committed to the open arrangement
- Become possessive of child; fear birth parents
- Ambivalent about value of relationship; little or no support
- Parents' guilt over life changes

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## Updates in *Openness in Adoption*

- *Structural Openness vs. Communication Openness*
- *Ethical Issues in Openness*




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- **Open Adoption Structure**—how the family plans the openness relationship
- **Adoption Communication**—how the family talks about adoption and openness relationship

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## Ethical Issues in Openness Practice



- Principle 1: Responsibility to Clients and Self-Determination
- Principle 2: Integrity
- Principle 3: Care and Protection of the Most Vulnerable
- Principle 4: Communication, Honesty and Truthfulness

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# Let's Play Openness Jeopardy

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## Interagency Collaboration Major Themes



- Permanency planning is a fundamental child welfare value
- Interagency collaboration is essential to meet the needs of children waiting for permanent homes, to comply with federal law, and to be responsive to families using internet
- Complimentary missions demand collaboration to assure children find permanent families
- Insensitivity to other organizational cultures hampers collaboration

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## Interagency Collaboration Review



- **Ingredients of successful collaboration**
- **Barriers to successful collaboration**
- **Cultural differences between organizations**
- **Stages of collaboration**

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## Ingredients of Successful Collaborations



1. Collaborating parties share a vision for their clients
2. Purpose of collaboration is clearly understood by collaborating parties
3. Respective missions are clearly understood by collaborating parties
4. Procedures for collaboration are delineated
5. Communication is high at all phases of work including feedback on what happened to the case

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## Ingredients of Successful Collaborations



6. There is agency and community support for the collaboration
7. Collaborating parties trust one another and believe that the parties will follow through
8. Collaborating parties are committed to working together
9. Cross-systems training is provided

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### Why Collaborative Efforts Fail



- Role Confusion
- Power and Control Issues
- Lack of Mutual Respect
- Lack of Participation
- Lack of Flexibility
- Scheduling Problems
- Lack of Leadership
- Lack of Cooperation
- Lack of Direct Communication
- Lack of Sense of Humor

--Adapted from work by The Rapid Response Team, 1994  
Children's Protection Section  
Ohio Attorney General's Office


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**Agencies' Cultural Differences**

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### The Dance of Collaboration: Transforming



**Forming:** Shall we dance?

**Norming:** Who's going to lead?


**Storming:** Hey! I thought I was leading!

**Performing:** Wow! We're dancing!!

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### Updates in Interagency Collaboration


- Personal work styles



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### Interpersonal Collaboration

- Check the word or phrase in each box that is most like you
- Complete the scoring graph




**Column 1: Directives**  
**Column 2: Emotives**  
**Column 3: Supportives**  
**Column 4: Reflectives**

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### Work Styles

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### Gathering/Documenting Background Information Major Themes



- Adopted children should be given complete and accurate information in a developmentally appropriate manner
- Resource parents need complete information
- All agency staff should be engaged in collecting and documenting information
- Early disclosure promotes trust, attachment, and removes the fear of accidental disclosure

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### Gathering/Documenting Background Information Review



- Wrongful adoption
- Why is information important to children?
- Why is information important to families?

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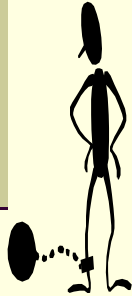
### Agencies Failed to Provide Information about...



- Child's risk factors
- Child's Disabilities
- Behavioral problems of the child
- Background of birth family
- Medical or other health related factors

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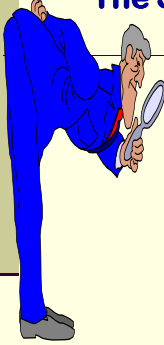
### Types of Wrongful Adoption



- Intentional Non-disclosure/ Deliberate Concealment
- Intentional Misrepresentation
- Negligent Misrepresentation
- Negligent Non-disclosure

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### The Scope of Duty to Disclose



- The Duty to Investigate
- Communicating Facts vs. Suspicions
- Genetic Testing
- Disclosing Facts vs. Giving Interpretation
- Duty to Provide Updates

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### Why Background Information is Needed for Children



- Magical thinking/guilt
- Unrealistic fantasies
- Divided loyalties
- Identity confusion
- Fears and unanswered questions

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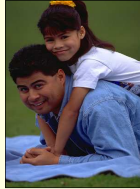
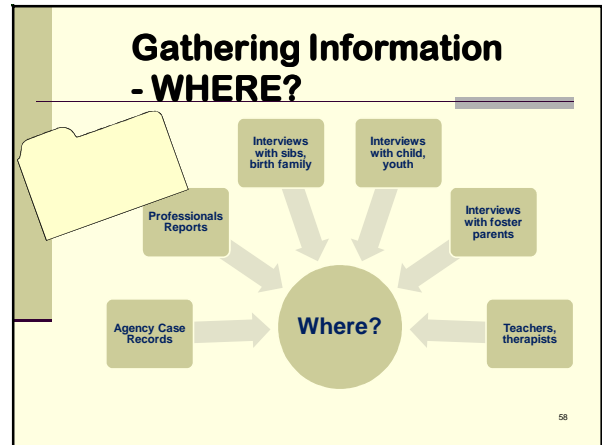
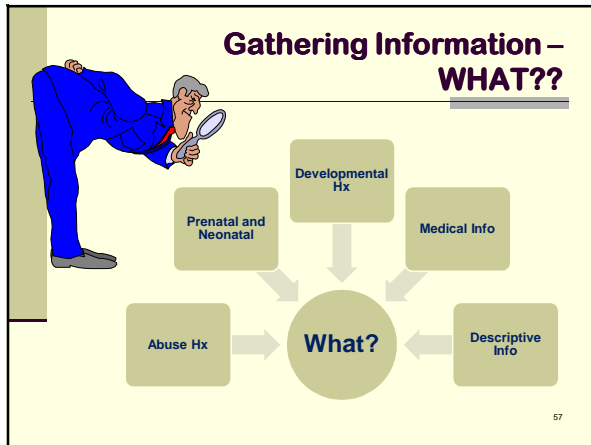
### Why Background Information is Needed for Children

- Feeling disconnected
- Fears of future abandonment
- Lack of trust in authority
- Control issues
- Self-esteem and shame



### Why Background Information is Needed by Adoptive Families

- To answer child's questions honestly and truthfully
- To understand the trauma and neglect the child experienced
- To fill gaps in child's memory

### Gathering Information – WHO and WHEN??

#### WHO?


- Adoption Worker
- Child's Worker
- Previous Workers (Intake, Ongoing)
- School Professionals
- Therapists

#### WHEN?

- At all phases of child's involvement
- Use concurrent planning approach

### Updates in Gathering/Documenting Background Information

- Family Search and Engagement



## Barriers to Gathering Information

Getting intake and ongoing workers to collect information

- It's a team effort: Train them!

Finding relatives

- How to identify and search

Working with hostile birth family members

- Strategies for engagement

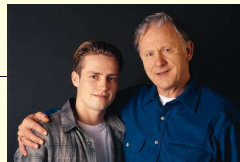


### Steps of Family Search and Engagement

Adapted from the following sources:  
 Kevin Campbell, Seneca Center  
 Casey Family Programs  
 SIX STEPS TO FIND A FAMILY: A Practice Guide to Family Search and Engagement

## Identify

- 👉 Genograms
- 👉 File mining
- 👉 Family visits
- 👉 Family/child interviews
- 👉 Family team meetings



Try to find 44 connections!

## Search

- Websites
- Governmental agencies (Child support, prison records and websites, public assistance, pension agencies)
- Obituaries/Death Records/Cemeteries
- Family team meetings/Family interviews
- Family "convener" (person who arranges reunions, holiday parties, funeral plans)
- Former employers, neighbors



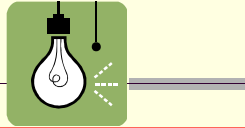
## Engage

- Clear, honest communication
- Commitment to family-centered practice
- Sufficient frequency/length of contact
- Strengths-based approach
- Shared decisions and planning
- Confidentiality
- Praise and recognition
- Respect for family's culture



## Strategies for Working with Reluctant Birth Families

- Affirm the relationship with a respectful and sensitive invitation for a meeting.
- Bring a gift made by the child.
- Distance yourself from the court proceedings, and, if possible, the caseworker who terminated parental rights.
- Inquire about the child's likes and dislikes.
- Recall pleasant memories of the child.
- Recall happy, difficult, or important memories from the parent's childhood.



- 1. What information was a good reminder, validating information already incorporated into your practice?
- 2. What information was new to your practice? How will you incorporate that into your practice?

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