Ohio Child Welfare Training Program
Assessor Training: Tier I

Post Finalization Adoption Services

An Adoption Perspective
Peter Kirk, age 12

“The child who is born into his family is like a board that’s nailed down from the start. But the adopted child, him the parents have to nail down, otherwise he is like a loose board in mid-air…”

What are children bringing to their adoptive homes?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Factor</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Serious neglect</td>
<td>63%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Physical abuse</td>
<td>33%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sexual abuse (placed young; didn’t know)</td>
<td>17%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prenatal substance exposure</td>
<td>60%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Multiple moves home</td>
<td>18%</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

- Experienced 2 factors: 61%
- Experienced 3 or more factors: 39%
Post Adoption Challenges Confronting Families

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Behavior problems</th>
<th>51%</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Learning disabilities</td>
<td>47%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Emotional disturbance</td>
<td>35%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Developmental delays</td>
<td>32%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chronic medical problems</td>
<td>18%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mental or physical handicap</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Most common unmet need: educational services; tutoring

Child factors associated with disruption/dissolution...

- Age
- History of severe abuse/neglect
- Multiple losses of caregivers
- Early trauma
- Multiple placements
- Severe behavior, health, mental health, or developmental problems
- Desire to be reunited with birth family
- Continuing relationships w. birth family not supportive of adoption

Parent factors associated with disruption/dissolution...

- Inadequate understanding
- Unrealistic expectations
- Inability to meet child’s needs
- Conscious or unconscious deception in assessment process
- Unresolved infertility issues
- Parental loss
- Inexperience as parents
- Divorce or death of parents

NACAC, 2010

Program factors associated with disruption/dissolution...

- Poor prep of child
- Poor prep of parents
- Inadequate support for family
- Expensive services
- Lack of information re: services

System factors associated with disruption/dissolution...

- Lack of available services
- Lack of expertise
- Lack of services to preserve birth family
- Lack of training to develop assessment, case management skills
- Policies that promote quantity over quality

Yet... 95% of families express satisfaction with adoption. And...

When compared with youth emancipating from foster care, adopted youth are:

- More likely to complete high school or equivalent
- More likely to attend and complete college
- Less likely to be teen parents
- Less likely to abuse drugs and alcohol
- Less likely to have mental health problems
- Less likely to be arrested and incarcerated
- More likely to be employed
- More likely to have adequate incomes

NACAC, 2010
Handout #1a

What are differences between parenting by birth and by adoption?

Positive differences?

Challenging differences?

Adoptive families do face risks...

What are they??

Psychological presence

“The symbolic existence of an individual in the perception of other family members in a way that influences thoughts, emotions, behavior, identity or unity of remaining family members…”

Dr. Deborah Fravel
Coping With Adoption Issues

Deny differences
Insist on differences
Acknowledge differences

H. David Kirk,
Shared Fate

Tasks of Caring for Traumatized Children

Believe and validate experiences
Tolerate child’s affect
Manage own emotional responses

Cook, et.al.
Complex trauma in Children and Adolescents, 2005

Compassion fatigue

Feeling numb, burned out, and unable to emotionally handle the child’s sad history
Developmental Understanding of Adoption

Age 0-3
- Practice story
- Collect info

Age 3-7
- Concrete thinking
- Parrot story
- Magical thinking

Age 8-11
- Understand story
- Concerned with fairness
- May go "underground"

Age 12-15
- Identity concerns
- Wants control, independence
- Anger, confusion

Age 16-18
- Intimacy issues
- Emancipation concerns
- Considering search

Age 19 +
- Establishing independence
- Ambivalence re: birth family
Adoption Issues

- Loss/Ambiguous Loss
- Control
- Divided Loyalty
- Abandonment/Fear of Rejection
- Shame/Guilt
- Trust
- Identity

Ambiguous Loss

a physical loss of someone or something remaining as a psychological presence

"With ambiguous loss, there is no closure; the challenge is to learn how to live with the ambiguity."

Ambiguous Loss: Learning to Live with Unresolved Grief, Pauline Boss

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Loss/Grief</th>
<th>Possible Indicators</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>WHY:</td>
<td>Over-reactions to loss of pets, friends</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Panic if parents become ill or go away on a trip</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Panic with sleepovers, camp</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>School phobia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Difficulty emancipating from home after graduation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WHEN:</td>
<td>Lifelong, especially when triggered by losses</td>
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Post Finalization Adoption Services, 2015
Your Turn!!

- Why is this an adoption issue?
- Are there times it might be more likely to surface?
- What are the behavioral indicators a child/teen is struggling with this issue?

Events that might trigger issues

- Child's birthday
- Anniversaries of separations
- Mother's Day
- Holidays
- Transitions/Moves/Losses
- Medical crises (parent or child)
- Adolescence
- Graduation
- Engagement/Marriage
- Pregnancy
- Mid-life crisis
- Death of adoptive parents

Adoption Issues for Parents

- Loss
- Unmet expectations
- Infertility
- Feelings of failure/guilt
- Entitlement
- Fear/threat of birth parent
- Isolation
- Control
- Relationship of birth and adopted siblings
Post Adoption Services...

- Education/Training
- Associations
- Support groups
- Crisis intervention
- Family networking/mentoring
- Family therapy
- Respite care
- Day treatment
- Kinship placement
- Residential treatment and...

Handling inquiries from triad members...do not disclose:

- Name: first, last, alias, or maiden
- Social security number
- Address
- Telephone number
- Place of employment
- Statewide MIS number

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Top Barriers to Accessing Post Adoption Services...</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Inability to find needed services</td>
<td>43%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Providers who don’t understand adoption</td>
<td>39%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Services that cost too much</td>
<td>33%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Providers who don’t accept Medicaid</td>
<td>30%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Meet Marcus

Issues?
Triggers?
Services?

Closure

What do you think?

- How did adoption issues play out in the lives of all parties involved: Brian, Angela, adoptive mom, adoptive sister, birth mother, birth siblings, birth father?

- What are your thoughts about her adoptive mother’s response to her need to search? Her sister’s response?

- What are your thoughts about how Angela initiated her search and how she contacted her birth parents for the first time?

- Why did Angela’s birth mother initially reject her?
Read your role

Begin your search

Get to know one another

Why do triad members search?

- Need medical information
- Identity—Who am I like?
- Facing a life transition
- Answers….Why?
- Need to connect
- Others?

Why do triad members decide not to search?

- Lack of interest
- Loyalty to adoptive parents
- Wonder if they have a right
- Fear of rejection
- Others?
Expectations

ADOPTEES
- Emotions/fears
- Fantasies: “perfect family”
- What will be role of birth family in life?
- Do I want answers or relationship?

ADOPTIVE PARENTS
- Reminder of failure/loss
- Inadequacy/rejection
- Fear adoptee may be hurt

Phases of Reunion

- May happen in any order
- Some do not experience all phases
- Most logical progression

First Meeting
Honeymoon
Post Honeymoon
Resolution
Post Reunion
Facts or Fantasy Quiz

Would any of your answers change after attending this workshop?

Questions??

How will you use this information in your practice?

Visit the OCWTP website for additional training resources
www.ocwtp.net