

# Adoption Advocate



## The National Training and Development Curriculum (NTDC): A Free and Comprehensive New Training for Foster and Adoptive Parents

BY NICOLE DAVI

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**T**he National Training and Development Curriculum (NTDC) is a newly developed, comprehensive free training curriculum to prepare and equip foster and adoptive parents. This program utilizes technology, multi-media, and adult learning theory to equip parents with the information they need to successfully foster and/or adopt. Developed for people who want to foster or adopt through the public child welfare system, this curriculum has been adapted for families who adopt via the private domestic or intercountry process.

Funded through a five-year cooperative agreement with the Children’s Bureau, NTDC was developed and is being led by Spaulding for Children in partnership with National Council For Adoption (NCFA), Center for Adoption Support and Education (C.A.S.E), ChildTrauma Academy, the North American Council on Adoptable Children (NACAC), and the University of Washington School of Social Work.

[NTDC Parent Testimonial<sup>1</sup>](#)

[NTDC Facilitator Testimonial<sup>2</sup>](#)

## Developed With Your Agency in Mind

After reviewing academic scholarship and existing curricula, interviewing parents and young adults, and working with content specialists, NTDC was developed. This curriculum has been piloted in seven states, one tribe, and a few private adoption agencies.

The National Training and Development Curriculum was created utilizing robust social science application in partnership with the nation’s leading content experts. The curriculum was informed by a variety of methods, including:

- A comprehensive systematic literature review to determine factors that promote successful parenting in foster care and adoption.
- A review of existing training materials for parents interested in fostering or adopting, and analysis of best practices used in implementing these trainings.
- A survey of state child welfare officials to determine essential training topics for parents interested in fostering or adopting; identify topics currently included in trainings; identify parent training topics

<sup>1</sup> <https://ntdcportal.org/about/key-messages/relatable-for-families/>

<sup>2</sup> <https://ntdcportal.org/about/key-messages/flexible-multi-use/>

required by policy or law; and gather feedback on how to improve training for parents interested in fostering or adopting.

- Individual interviews with stakeholders, including seasoned parents who have experience as foster or adoptive parents, young adults with lived experience in the foster care system, and adult adoptees. These interviews had two goals: to better understand what stakeholders wish they had known when preparing for their parenting role and to get feedback from young adults on what they wish their foster or adoptive parents had known.
- A review of expert opinions of more than 200 professionals and parents nationwide, regarding topics that should be included in a curriculum for parents interested in fostering or adopting.

Data gathered through these various sources were compiled into a list of topic areas/themes. That list was then provided to a panel of national experts who rated the listed items in terms of priority for inclusion in a curriculum that could be delivered in approximately 27 hours of training. This rating process (also known as the Delphi process) was used to reach consensus around the final topics selected for inclusion in NTDC.

NTDC was designed for three target populations:

- Families who foster, provide kinship care, and/or adopt children from the child welfare system,
- Families who adopt via the intercountry or private domestic process, and
- American Indian Alaska Native families who foster, provide kinship care, and/or adopt children from the tribal child welfare system.

## NTDC Curriculum

NTDC has three components—Self-Assessment, Classroom-Based Training, and Right-Time Training—all of which are equally important in supporting families in gaining the knowledge, skills, and attitudes they need to effectively parent children who have experienced trauma, separation, and loss.

### Self-Assessment

NTDC's Self-Assessment is a self-discovery tool that provides families who are preparing to become foster, kinship, or adoptive parents the opportunity to learn more about themselves as they consider the characteristics and competencies that are important when parenting children who have experienced trauma, separation, and loss. It is designed to be self-administered, which allows participants to recognize and build on their areas of strength, explore areas that would benefit from additional support and information, and identify areas that may cause the most challenges when parenting a child/youth. The Self-Assessment characteristics and competencies are highlighted throughout the curriculum, which supports the continuation of learning beyond the self-assessment.

[Access the Self-Assessment materials<sup>3</sup>](#)

[Self-Assessment Guide for Professionals<sup>4</sup>](#)

- This guide describes the development of the Self-Assessment and provides an overview of its use. It includes the Self-Assessment survey instrument, instructions on how to complete the survey, a scoring guide that offers guidance on how to calculate the scores, and recommendations on how

<sup>3</sup> <https://ntdcportal.org/general-curriculum-materials/self-assessment/>

<sup>4</sup> <https://ntdcportal.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/08/Self-Assessment-for-Professionals-June-2022.pdf>

participants can increase their sense of competence for those competencies and characteristics that have been identified as important when caring for children who have experienced trauma, separation, and loss. This guide helps professionals better understand what families will experience when they complete the Self-Assessment.

*NTDC's content provides foster and adoptive families with knowledge and skills that will help them to provide a loving, supportive home for their child.*

### Classroom-Based Training

The Classroom-Based Training themes provide a framework to build a strong foundation for parenting children who have experienced trauma, separation, and loss. Parenting children with such experiences requires a wide range of competencies and characteristics, which can be enhanced or built. Through shared learning with others who are parenting through foster care or adoption, and with the facilitation of an experienced professional and parent co-facilitator, families can provide the healing environment children need. Each Classroom-Based Training theme has clearly delineated competencies. The training provides concrete information on the roles and responsibilities of parents who foster and/or adopt as well as the knowledge, skills, and attitudes they need in order to effectively parent children who have experienced trauma, separation, and loss.

Downloadable materials are available for each theme, including PowerPoint presentations,

handouts, videos, evaluation tools, and resources for participants to extend their learning. A Facilitator Classroom Guide is also provided for each theme which contains details about how to use the curriculum materials for that theme. For some themes, a one-hour recorded Train-the-Trainer session and instructional videos for facilitating activities are also available.

[View materials<sup>5</sup>](#)

### Right-Time Training

The Right-Time Trainings are an online component of NTDC that provide ongoing virtual learning to help parents meet their family's changing needs. Adults learn best when information is applicable to their own situation, and parents who are fostering and adopting need trainings that are easily accessible and available when they need them. As families have children move into their homes, as children go through different developmental stages, and as families encounter new challenges, they need to have a way to access information and tools. The Right-Time trainings were designed to meet these needs. They are not intended to replace in-person training and seminars, but should supplement this information and provide families with an accessible training tool.

[View materials<sup>6</sup>](#)

### The Content

After years of development, implementation with pilot sites (States, private agencies, and a Tribal Nation), and rigorous evaluation, the National Training and Development Curriculum for Foster and Adoptive Parents is ready and publicly available.

<sup>5</sup> <https://ntdcportal.org/general-curriculum-materials/classroom/>

<sup>6</sup> <https://ntdcportal.org/general-curriculum-materials/right-time/>

NTDC's content provides foster and adoptive families with knowledge and skills that will help them to provide a loving, supportive home for their child. The curriculum is designed in a manner that provides agencies with flexibility in what themes are provided to families. NTDC's modular framework allows each of the one- to two-hour themes to be conducted on their own or stacked with other themes. In addition, the curriculum:

- Includes up-to-date information on trauma, separation, and attachment.
- Uses a layered content learning approach and incorporates the best principles of adult learning by using podcasts, videos, and experiential activities to practice and develop essential skills.
- Features the voices of parents, professionals, and youth.
- Offers comprehensive training for prospective adoptive parents and provides ongoing skill development that parents can access independently throughout their journey.
- Meets the federal requirements for Hague-compliant training (aside from country-specific and child-specific aspects).

NTDC is a comprehensive no-cost curriculum that tackles separation, loss, grief, trauma, and differences of race and culture in adoption and foster care. This cutting-edge resource offers adoptive, kinship, and foster parents

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culturally relevant and flexible education to empower them over the course of time and at the right time. There are six “key messages” that set NTDC apart:

1. **Expands the parenting paradigm:** NTDC is expanding the parenting paradigm for foster, adoptive, and kinship parents by offering transformational training experiences that help families understand their role in caring for children and help them build new and necessary parenting skills.
2. **Relatable for families:** Understanding and relating to others is a key element in helping foster, kinship, and adoptive parents effectively promote healthy development for children exposed to trauma, separation, and loss. Informed by the personal experiences of members of foster, adoptive, and kinship families, NTDC content ensures that parenting strategies are practical, relevant, and relatable.
3. **Trauma informed:** Understanding trauma and its impact on children is vital for foster, adoptive, and kinship families to have the tools they need. NTDC's curriculum focuses on providing the tools families need to provide a nurturing environment and promote healthy child development for children with histories of trauma, separation, and loss. NTDC's Trauma-Informed training was created in partnership with The ChildTrauma Academy and features Dr. Bruce Perry, Principal of the Neurosequential Network and co-author of the best-selling book “What Happened to You?” The focus on trauma throughout the curriculum makes trauma-informed parenting a realistic and achievable goal.
4. **Culturally relevant:** Foster, adoptive, and kinship families represent some of

the most diverse families in the country, reflecting different races, cultures, religions, and gender identities. NTDC provides insights, tools, and strategies to address the complexities of today's most diverse families. The curriculum was designed with adoptees, Tribal members, and adoptive, foster, and kinship parents who are parenting outside of their race, ethnicity, and sexual orientation. Infused throughout the curriculum, these unique perspectives provide straight talk on tough topics.

- NTDC provides foundational learning opportunities to help parents recognize the importance of honoring children's cultural identity and respecting families from varying races, religions, ethnicities, and economic statuses. The training also helps with openness to a child's sexual orientation, gender identity, and expression.
- Many NTDC materials include the stories and expertise of those with lived experience. For example, the Common Feelings Associated with Being Adopted Right-Time theme features multiple adoptees, who are also child welfare experts, sharing their personal experiences.
- NTDC offers a version of the curriculum designed for the American Indian Alaska Native community. A content committee comprised of American Indian Alaska Native representatives was developed to focus exclusively on the curriculum through the lens of American Indian Alaska Native parents who are fostering or adopting. The committee had diverse Tribal backgrounds that spanned different geographic regions. Several members also had professional State and Tribal child welfare experience in the areas of case management, clinical consultation, program administration, training, education, and academic research.

The committee also included parents who are fostering, Tribal elders, and professionals with lived experience in the child welfare system.

5. **Flexible and multi-use:** Whether one is looking to provide required training hours or offer specific training on relevant topics for today's families, NTDC offers training and tools with the flexibility needed to help committed professionals meet families where they are. NTDC's comprehensive yet flexible design allows systems to adapt the curriculum to meet the unique needs of families. From podcasts to videos to classroom and Right-Time training, NTDC has a balance of structure and quality content that allows professionals to confidently deliver complex subject matter and tools for practical problem-solving.
6. **Hague-Compliant training:** The federal government has regulations (22 CFR § 96.48) requiring prospective adoptive parents to have training on specific topics. NTDC is designed to be compliant with these federal regulations, aside from any child-specific and country specific requirements.

## Training Delivery

NTDC's classroom-based training themes were designed to be delivered in a traditional classroom setting but have also been piloted and adapted for use via online synchronous video conferencing. All Right-Time trainings are accessible online and include videos, podcasts, questions and answers, and resources, available any time parents need to add to their knowledge or skills.

The Implementation Manual provides professionals with a background on NTDC's development and information on all three components of the curriculum. This manual

also offers practical considerations for implementation of each component and a roadmap for implementing NTDC with integrity while recognizing the adaptations that many be required to meet unique jurisdictional needs.

NTDC Implementation Manuals are available for all three target populations. The first manual listed below includes implementation considerations for a variety of training audiences including general child welfare, kinship, intercountry, and private domestic adoption. The second manual was tailored specifically to the American Indian Alaska Native population.

General Child Welfare and Intercountry,  
Private Domestic Implementation Manual<sup>7</sup>

American Indian Alaska Native  
Implementation Manual<sup>8</sup>

## Accessing the Curriculum

There are four avenues for accessing NTDC curriculum materials. It is recommended that sites assess how each option fits with their existing structures and/or what work may be needed to develop the structure for professional staff and participants to gain the desired level of access. Each option also differs in the level of interactivity. Some options provide materials available for download only, while others allow participants to view videos (such as for Online themes and Right-Time themes) and access the Self-Assessment with automated scoring and feedback. Options differ as to whether professional staff can monitor participant course completion.

### 1. NTDC's website

- The website supports users in downloading curriculum materials to a local device.

The website includes files needed for the Self-Assessment, Classroom-Based, and Right-Time trainings. Organized by theme, each component includes all the curriculum materials needed such as resources, Facilitator Classroom Guide, PPTs, handouts, videos, and podcasts.

- The Self-Assessment files in this location are available only as a PDF. To access the interactive file for the self-assessment, go to CapLEARN or transfer the file to your site's Learning Management System. Videos and podcasts that are a part of the Classroom-Based and Right-Time themes cannot be watched/listened to directly from the site—they must be downloaded.

### 2. CapLEARN

- CapLEARN is an official website of the United States government. Access CapLEARN by visiting <https://learn.childwelfare.gov/> and registering to create a CapLEARN account. There is no cost to access or use CapLEARN.

### 3. Agency Learning Management System

- Upon request, sites can explore the possibility of transferring NTDC to their own Learning Management System (LMS). For sites interested in this option, contact Sue Cohick at [scohick@spaulding.org](mailto:scohick@spaulding.org) for additional information.

### 4. Spaulding Portal

- For sites interested in providing interactive access to their participants but not wanting to use CapLEARN or which do not have their own Learning Management System, Spaulding for Children will host and fully manage an interactive system.

## Evaluation/NTDC State Survey Results

A survey was conducted in November 2021

<sup>7</sup> <https://ntdcportal.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/09/General-Child-Welfare-and-Intercountry-Private-Domestic-Adoption-Implementation-Manual-June-2022-UpdatedSept20.pdf>

<sup>8</sup> <https://ntdcportal.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/08/American-Indian-Alaska-Native-Implementation-Manual-June-2022.pdf>

## *Participants showed improvement in 100% of the themes, with significant increases from pre- to post-test.*

to evaluate NTDC. This survey evaluated each step of the implementation process to identify any implementation barriers. A cost evaluation was also conducted to evaluate the total costs of NTDC implementation and the cost-benefit of NTDC as compared with sites' current training models.

### Evaluation Highlights

#### Classroom-Based Training Results

1. Participant competency gains are high
  - Participants showed improvement in 100% of the themes, with significant increases from pre- to post-test
  - Highest improvements: mental health considerations (48% increase), trauma related behaviors (43% increase), and impact of substance use (24% increase)
2. Participant satisfaction is high
  - Overall satisfaction was a 5.3 out of 6
  - Participants rated the pace of the training a 5.3 out of 6 as well
  - Participants cited most liking videos, engagement, lived experience stories, resources, and class discussion
3. Participants feel the skills being taught are important
  - Participants rated the importance of the content a 9.7 out of 10
  - Participants were very likely to use skills gained, rating on average a 9.4 out of 10
4. Participants feel confident
5. Participants scored confidence 9 out of 10

#### Right-Time Training Results

1. Participant competency gains are high
2. Participant satisfaction is high
3. Participants feel confident

#### Implementation Results

1. Facilitators report completing an average of 93% of curriculum activities
2. Facilitators feel confident in their ability to train the main objective of NTDC, rating themselves an average of 4.4 out of 5.
3. Facilitators feel strongly about the benefits of NTDC as a comprehensive, trauma informed curriculum
4. Participants experiences with the online setting are positive
  - Average reported 5.6 out of 6

Please review the resource list at the end of this article for links to all NTDC evaluation reports, literature reviews, and general resources.

#### Want to learn more?

Please reference the resources below. For more information and to see samples of some of these themes, visit the NTDC website at [ntdcportal.org](http://ntdcportal.org).

Still have questions? Email us at [ncfa@adoptioncouncil.org](mailto:ncfa@adoptioncouncil.org) and we'd be happy to connect with you.



## Resources

### Evaluation Reports

Evaluation of The National Training And Development Curriculum <https://ntdcportal.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/09/NTDC-Doc-v03-UpdatedStats-Sep162022.pdf>

Evaluation of the NTDC Right-Time Training [https://ntdcportal.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/08/Final-Right-time-evaluation-full-report\\_JF\\_v4.pdf](https://ntdcportal.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/08/Final-Right-time-evaluation-full-report_JF_v4.pdf)

### Literature Reviews

Literature Review of Relative and Non-Relative Foster/Adoptive Parent Factors Related to Placement Stability and Permanence for Children and Youth <https://ntdcportal.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/06/Literature-Review-of-Relative-and-Non-Relative-Foster-Adoptive-Parent-Factors-1.pdf>

Literature Review of Intercountry Adoption and Private Domestic Adoption <https://ntdcportal.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/07/2-Literature-Review-Intercountry-Adoption-and-Private-Domestic-Adoption.pdf>

Literature & Resource Review of Characteristics of Successful Foster, Adoptive, and/or Kinship Caregivers of American Indian, Alaska Native, First Nations, and Native Hawaiian (AIAN/FN/NH) Children and Suggested Training Themes for These Parents <https://ntdcportal.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/07/3-Literature-and-Resource-Review-Characteristics-of-Successful-Foster-Adoptive-Kinship-Caregivers-of-American-Indian-Alaska-Native-First-Nations.pdf>

Systematic Literature Review of Foster and Adoptive Caregiver Factors for Increasing Placement Stability and Permanency <https://ntdcportal.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/06/In-press-version.pdf>

### General Resources

Children and Youth Services Review: Assessing Caregiver Usability of the National Training and Development Curriculum for Foster and Adoptive Parents <https://ntdcportal.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/06/theater-test-in-press-version.pdf>

Thematic Review from Interviews of Caregiver Factors Related to Placement Stability and Permanence for Children and Youth Experiencing Foster Care or Adoption <https://ntdcportal.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/06/Qualitative-Report-of-Interviews.pdf>

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## About the Author

Nicole Davi joined the NCFA team in 2022 and serves as the Adoption Education Manager. In this role, Nicole coordinates and supports the development and production of NCFA's educational offerings including training courses, webinars, publications, online content, and the National Adoption Conference. She also works to disseminate the National Training and Development Curriculum (NTDC) through conference presentations, articles, and adoption events, as well as providing train-the-trainer sessions. She has previous experience in case management, research, and as a volunteer Guardian ad Litem. Nicole has a passion for strengthening families and advocating for permanency for youth experiencing foster care.

Nicole earned her bachelor's degree in Family, Youth, and Community Sciences, with a minor in Nonprofit Management and a concentration in Family Policy and Law from the University of Florida. She resides in Alexandria, Virginia.



This issue of the *Adoption Advocate* was edited by Ryan Hanlon and Nicole Davi.