



## The Technical Assistance Center for Lifespan Respite Fact Sheet Number 64, November 2019

### Respite as a Support Service for Adoptive Families

#### Introduction

Respite, a short break for caregivers and their families, is an important support service for parents who have adopted a child. It is particularly important for families who adopt a child with developmental, health related, or emotional needs, or one who has experienced abuse or neglect. This fact sheet provides strategies for addressing the needs of adoptive families using respite services, and the providers offering respite supports and services.

Based on adoption data from 2007 until 2014, the National Council for Adoption (NCFCA) estimates that there are approximately 134,000 total adoptions in the U.S. annually, including both related and unrelated adoptions. Between 2007 and 2014, special needs adoptions nearly doubled, increasing from 32,407 in 2007 to 61,341 in 2014. Special needs adoptions are defined broadly and include the adoption of children with disabilities (i.e., intellectual, physical, emotional) and special health care needs. Children who have experienced abuse, neglect, exposure to drugs or alcohol, abandonment, or were witnesses to family violence are also considered to have special needs. Recognizing the unique background and needs of each adoptive child ensures that their needs will be supported and met through the adoption process and into the future.

Research has demonstrated that adoption provides many benefits for children who need families. A permanent, nurturing home provides safety, security, and developmental support. Parents who adopt a child with special needs may need a range of

supports and services to help them care for their child. The type and availability of post-adoption services should be shared with the family at the start of the adoption process. An adoptive family that may have used neighbors or relatives for child care in the past may now discover that their adoptive child requires a higher level of care than an extended family member or neighborhood babysitter feels comfortable providing. In some situations, extended family members may not accept the adoption or may not live close enough to offer assistance. Respite can provide regular caregiving breaks for these families.

#### Universal Issues in Adoption

It is critical that individuals working with children who have been adopted and their families be aware of the unique issues related to adoption. Silverstein and Kaplan's essential 1982 article on *Lifelong Issues in Adoption* laid out seven key adoption issues that professionals and adoptive families continue to rely on to guide their understanding of adoption. The National Council for Adoption's 2016 article further describes how these core areas and others affect all adoptive families to some degree. It's important to consider these lifelong issues in adoption when developing and providing respite care options.

The following universal issues in adoption are important to consider when providing respite services. [Adapted from ARCH's 2010 adoption fact sheet written by Brenda Goldsmith]

**Loss, separation, and grief:** Loss is the feeling state experienced when something important is unexpectedly withdrawn. Separation from meaningful relationships precipitates an acute sense of loss. Grief is the process one passes through in order to recover from the loss.

Children who are adopted have experienced the loss of birth parents, possibly siblings, extended family members, and in some cases meaningful foster family members. Subsequent loss or threat of separation may seem more overwhelming for the child who has been adopted. Because loss is inherent to the adoptive relationship, it is important to understand the stages of grief. While grief will not proceed through the stages predictably and will never be fully resolved, it is critical to work through the grief experienced with each new loss in a supportive environment.

**Intimacy, bonding and attachment:** Bonding refers to a biological process between mother and child. Attachment, on the other hand, is the development of psychological ties between people. The ability

to form attachments is acquired as a child moves through the developmental stages of life. Most children adopted in infancy will develop the ability to form attachments; however, older children who are adopted may not have learned how to make meaningful attachments. These children may have difficulties in one or more of the following areas: impulse control, self-esteem, interpersonal interactions, and expression and recognition of their own and others' feelings. They may also experience a variety of developmental difficulties. Serious attachment disorders may require clinical attention and intervention.

**Rejection and entitlement:** Children who are adopted may feel a sense of rejection or abandonment as they struggle to make sense of their relinquishment. Both adoptees and their parents may struggle with a fear of rejection and the question of entitlement—or whether they have a “right” to one another. There are two forms of entitlement, legal and emotional. The court decides the former, while the latter is more complex. Parents who adopt may face external pressures from

## Variations in the Adoption Experience

Each adopted person will have unique feelings, experiences, and thoughts about his or her adoption. Some of these differences may be accounted for by individual personality traits, coping mechanisms, or other life events, but circumstances surrounding the adoption also may affect how an adopted person views the adoption. The following are examples of characteristics of adoptions that may have an impact on an adopted person:

- Being adopted transracially  
[childwelfare.gov/topics/adoption/adoptive/family-type/transracial](http://childwelfare.gov/topics/adoption/adoptive/family-type/transracial)
- Having lesbian, gay, bisexual, or transgender (LGBT) parents  
[childwelfare.gov/topics/adoption/adoptive/family-type/glbtfamilies](http://childwelfare.gov/topics/adoption/adoptive/family-type/glbtfamilies)

- Being adopted from another country  
[childwelfare.gov/topics/adoption/adoptive-ethics/types/intercountry](http://childwelfare.gov/topics/adoption/adoptive-ethics/types/intercountry)
- Being in an open adoption  
[childwelfare.gov/topics/adoption/birthfor/connections](http://childwelfare.gov/topics/adoption/birthfor/connections)  
or  
[childwelfare.gov/pubs/f-openadopt](http://childwelfare.gov/pubs/f-openadopt)
- Discovering later in life that you were adopted  
[childwelfare.gov/topics/adoption/adoptive-people/discovery](http://childwelfare.gov/topics/adoption/adoptive-people/discovery)

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relatives, community attitudes that question their right to their child, and employment policies which may not grant adoptive parents parental leave. Children who are adopted, especially those who have been abused or neglected, may fear rejection and question whether they deserve a family who loves and cares for them. Adoptive families need support in working through the issues of rejection and entitlement.

**Claiming:** This is the process by which adoptive parents come to accept the child who is adopted as their own. This process can be facilitated with the creation of new traditions that embrace the child into the family.

**Unmatched expectations:** Both children and families who are involved in adoption have high expectations. Frequently, the expectations that each brings to the relationship have little in common. This can pose greater challenges for the family than any other issue. Expectations are not easily changed and when change does occur, the loss of original expectations represents another loss to be grieved.

**Family integration:** When any family welcomes a new member, the balance of the family must shift. Birth children may resent the changes caused by the introduction of a new family member. Other children who have been adopted may feel insecure as this change causes them to re-experience emotions associated with their own adoption. This process takes time.

**Identity formation:** The process of developing a sense of “self” and recognizing that the self has boundaries and value. Personal identity is formed through interactions and exposure to other people, and by making decisions concerning who and what one will be. Without consistent role models, children who are adopted often struggle with this natural process.

**Mastery and control:** Most individuals strive for a sense of control or mastery over their lives. Families and children involved in adoption have had numerous experiences that threaten that mastery. These issues can impact family integration.

## Finding Respite Providers

Word of mouth from trusted friends with similar experiences is often the best way to find respite providers among adoptive families, especially if the child has mental health or behavioral issues. An organization with important resources and connections to other supportive families who have children with mental health issues is the **National Federation of Families for Children’s Mental Health**. To find a state or local affiliate, visit [ffcmh.org/our-affiliates](http://ffcmh.org/our-affiliates)

## Post-Adoption Services and Respite for Adoptive Families

Post-adoption services for adoptive families and children ensure that everyone’s needs are met after the adoption has been finalized. Although this is a joyful time, it is also involves adjustments, transitions, and coming together as a new family. Adoptive families typically need to access an array of post-adoption services and supports. Depending on the needs of the adoptive child and the adoptive parents, these can include:

- Case management and information and referral to specific services
- Support groups for adoptive parents and adoptees, specific to the child’s special needs, culture, background (in person and online)
- Education and information services including resources, publications, newsletters, videos, blogs
- Training on special needs and adoptive parenting
- Therapeutic counseling and mental health services
- Advocacy and support for education and school issues
- Home and community-based respite services (planned and crisis or emergency)

- Camps, recreation, and social events for adoptive families and children
- Support for connections with birth parents, other birth family members, and former foster families, when appropriate and possible
- Adoption financial assistance or subsidy for children adopted from foster care

### Adoption Assistance by State – Child Welfare Information Gateway (CWIG)

[childwelfare.gov/topics/adoption/adopt-assistance](http://childwelfare.gov/topics/adoption/adopt-assistance)

#### *Preparing Adoptive Families for Respite*

Respite is an important post-adoption support service and should be explored with adoptive families. Some adoptive families may not be familiar with “respite” and what options might work best for their family. It’s helpful to describe respite as a way to offer parents and caregivers a break from their daily caregiving responsibilities, much in the same way any family might use a relative or neighbor to provide child care.

Most adoptive families will make use of traditional child-care options such as day care, afterschool care, recreation programs, and babysitting through family, friends and neighbors. However, adoptive families caring for children with special needs may need more assistance accessing the respite break that will meet their needs.

Because adoptive parents may believe their ability to care for their child is being questioned when respite is offered, it must be clear that respite is a service to help support family stability. The following suggestions may be used to assist parents in understanding the value and need for respite:

- 1 Ask the state agency or private agency contact person with whom the family is familiar to talk about the positive effects of respite.

- 2 Ask adoptive families who have used respite services to meet with new adoptive families to share their experiences with respite.
- 3 Reassure families that the respite service is offered to all adoptive parents in the program’s service area.
- 4 Highlight the positive benefits of respite on the whole family and share success stories in newsletters that will reach adoptive families.

The benefits of respite for adoptive families are particularly important as respite can affect overall family well-being and stability by reducing stress levels, enhancing physical and emotional health, and improving family relationships. Respite has been shown to enhance protective factors such as parental resilience, social connections, and concrete supports in times of need.

Another common concern for parents regarding respite is the expertise of the providers. Adoptive parents may be concerned that the respite providers will not understand and be able to meet their child’s needs and/or manage behavioral problems that may occur. In some cases, parents may simply need reassurance and more complete information about the respite program, the providers, and the required provider training. Direct involvement of the parent(s) in the selection and training of the respite provider(s) can reduce concerns and build trust. Providers and families should meet face-to-face before the first respite stay to enhance the family’s comfort with the provider they have selected. If possible, one respite provider should be assigned to a family for as long as the relationship is a positive experience for all concerned.

Respite can play a role in ensuring positive sibling relationships. After adoption, siblings will experience a period of adjustment regarding their new family member. At times, families may want care for all their children, not just for the child who is adopted. This allows the siblings to stay together, rather than segregating the child who is adopted. This arrangement may also benefit parents, since they would only need to arrange for one child-care provider. However, at other times, siblings may

need a break from the new family member. Respite programs should have the flexibility to meet these changing needs.

### **Respite Options for Adoptive Families**

Respite care can be offered in a variety of ways. Families can receive a break for a few hours, a few days or even several weeks. Services may take place in the home, or outside the home, in a community or faith-based agency or organization, through an adoptive agency or program, at a day care or afterschool program, in a hospital or healthcare facility, or in a residential setting. Respite can also be provided through therapeutic recreation, inclusive recreation, and day and overnight camp programs designed specifically for adoptive children. Other family members, friends or neighbors may also be available to provide informal respite opportunities. Respite needs to be meaningful for the child as well as the adoptive parents.

#### **Tools to Assess Respite Needs**

Tools are available to assess respite needs: ***Time for Living and Caring: Making Respite Services Work for You*** at [archrespite.org/images/docs/Outside\\_Reports/Lund\\_TLCRespiteBrochure\\_2014.pdf](http://archrespite.org/images/docs/Outside_Reports/Lund_TLCRespiteBrochure_2014.pdf)

and to help families plan for respite: ***Charting the LifeCourse: Respite*** at [lifecoursetools.com/respite](http://lifecoursetools.com/respite)

For adoptive children with disabilities, respite care may be provided by a disability organization such as Easterseals, the Autism Society, United Cerebral Palsy, The Arc, through a home health agency, a community-based program, or by someone you hire on your own.

Volunteer services are available in many communities. Churches, synagogues and other faith-based organizations are increasingly offering

respite for children often using volunteers from the congregation.

Respite services may be free or offered on a sliding scale. Some respite service organizations support people within a specific age bracket or persons with specific conditions. In some cases, emergency respite services are available.

#### **Rec-n-Respite**

Rec-n-Respite is a post-adoption support service for adoptive families offered by **A Better Chance for Our Children** in Delaware. Rec-n-Respite is a place for adoptive children to come together and make friends and learn while having fun. The program is for adopted children between 6 and 14 years of age. [abcfoc.org/post-adoption-support](http://abcfoc.org/post-adoption-support)

Community agencies providing post-adoption supports and services can help adoptive families explore informal respite options by discussing whether any of the following respite or child-care options might be a good fit:

- Extended family members (grandparents, aunts, uncles)
- Neighbors and friends
- Faith community members
- Professionals who know your child(ren) (teachers, coaches, child-care providers)
- Adoptive parents and families you have met through support groups
- College and university students
- Community volunteers

#### **Finding Respite in the General Population**

These programs are available to help adoptive parents, families, and caregivers access respite services. Contact the organization listed for further details:

- The **Lifespan Respite Care Program** is available in some states to provide respite services. Some states provide planned and emergency respite services to persons who are unserved by other programs. Lifespan Respite programs often work closely with a State Respite Coalition partner. Depending on the state, the Lifespan Respite program or their State Respite Coalition may help you find respite providers or funding resources to help you pay for respite. For Lifespan Respite state contacts, see [archrespite.org/lifespan-programs](http://archrespite.org/lifespan-programs). For State Respite Coalition Contacts, see [archrespite.org/state-respite-coalitions](http://archrespite.org/state-respite-coalitions).
- If your state does not have a State Lifespan Respite Program or a State Respite Coalition, you can visit the **ARCH National Respite Locator Service (NRLS)** at [archrespite.org/respitelocator](http://archrespite.org/respitelocator) to find possible respite programs in your area. Many Lifespan Respite programs have developed online respite registries. Links to state registries can be found at [lifespanrespite.memberlodge.org/StateRegistries](http://lifespanrespite.memberlodge.org/StateRegistries)

## Family Caregivers Guide

ARCH National Respite Network and Resource Center – *The ABCs of Respite: A Consumer Guide for Family Caregivers* at [archrespite.org/consumer-information](http://archrespite.org/consumer-information)

- **No Wrong Door (NWD) Systems**, established jointly by the Administration for Community Living, the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services, and the Veterans Health Administration, are working in every state to make it easier for all people needing long-term services, including respite, to get the support they need. To find a local access point within a NWD system (also known as **Aging and Disability Resource Centers**) near you, visit the Eldercare Locator [eldercare.acl.gov](http://eldercare.acl.gov), Directory of Centers for Independent Living or call 1-800-677-1116. For

more information on NWD Systems, see [nwd.acl.gov](http://nwd.acl.gov).

## Respite for Children with Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities (I/DD)

- **State-funded developmental disabilities respite programs** are dedicated funds specifically for respite and other supports for the I/DD population. Contact your state disability agency for the most recent information at [nasddd.org/state-agencies](http://nasddd.org/state-agencies)
- **Local disability agencies** provide support to caregivers and can help you find respite services and options in your community for children with I/DD. Some agencies offer respite services.
- **Community-based disability organizations**, such as **Easterseals**, may provide adult day, in-home, and camp programs for people with intellectual and developmental disabilities. Find Easterseals services in your state at [easterseals.com/explore-resources/for-caregivers/respite-care.html](http://easterseals.com/explore-resources/for-caregivers/respite-care.html)
- **Advocacy agencies** often provide community-based respite services through their local and state affiliates – such as The Arc, the Autism Society and United Cerebral Palsy.
- **Inclusive community activities** offered by community centers, parks and recreation, YMCAs, arts programs, social clubs, faith-based organizations, camp programs, and others.
- Many states and local communities also offer **respite services in the private sector** through community-based respite providers specifically for children with intellectual and developmental disabilities, or independent respite providers.

## Barriers to Respite for Adoptive Families

Barriers to respite for adoptive families include limited respite options, affordability, inadequate fiscal resources to sustain or expand programs, too few trained providers, restrictive eligibility criteria for adoption support, and reluctance to ask for respite help.

Depending on the needs of the adoptive child and family, sometimes accessing traditional respite options may be more difficult. For families that are having significant adoption challenges with their adoptive children due to behavioral issues or mental health conditions, finding specialized respite services may be needed.

### Specialized Sitters

Adoptive parents who are caring for children with special needs or mental health issues can often find respite services through programs focused on these populations. One example is the **Specialized Sitters** program in Denver, Colorado that provides home-based respite services. [specializedsitters.com](http://specializedsitters.com)

Adoption agencies and programs can support adoptive families by:

- Carefully matching respite providers with families to ensure compatibility, comfort and sustainable relationships;
  - Helping adoptive families address behavioral and mental health issues first so that they can use more respite options long term;
  - Accessing respite through adoption agencies that have trained providers;
  - Providing home-based services while the adoptive parent(s) are in another area of the home or within a 5-10 minute radius until both the adoptive parents and the provider are comfortable with one another;
  - Starting with short respite breaks until the adoptive child, the respite provider and adoptive parents all feel comfortable;
  - Finding ways to ensure shared decision making between the respite provider and the adoptive parents while respite is being provided, including full access via cell phone;
- Considering therapeutic intervention settings for short-term respite; and
  - Exploring extended day-school programs that have a therapeutic approach.

### Adoption Therapists Guide

*Finding and Working With Adoption-Competent Therapists* – (November 2018)  
[childwelfare.gov/pubPDFs/f\\_therapist.pdf](http://childwelfare.gov/pubPDFs/f_therapist.pdf)

### Federal and State Funding Sources

There are a variety of federal, state, private, and other funding sources that can be used for adoption support and preservation services. Agencies must decide which mix of funding streams works best for them and the families they serve. It is helpful to establish a well-considered adoption support and preservation service plan before funding becomes available so you are prepared to make effective use of the funding once available. While individual agencies or adoption professionals may not be able to access many federal funding streams directly, they may work with their state adoption program manager to develop a comprehensive adoption services plan. To find your state's adoption program manager, access the National Foster Care and Adoption Directory at [childwelfare.gov/nfcad](http://childwelfare.gov/nfcad).

Organizations providing respite for adoptive families need to communicate clearly what funding options are available based on whether children were adopted through a public or private adoption process. **Certain state and federal public funds made available through the child welfare system are only available to children adopted from the child welfare system**, and not for those who are privately adopted.

## Possible Public Funding Sources for Respite

**State Funded Respite Programs:** States may provide respite through state-funded respite, caregiver or family support programs for children and/or adults with developmental and intellectual disabilities, and special medical or health care needs. Check with your State Lifespan Respite program for more information.

**Local Departments of Social Services:** Local child welfare agencies may offer “relative caregiver” services, benefits (e.g., TANF, SNAP), and other family support services. Adoptive parents who adopt children with special needs from their state’s foster care or child welfare system may be eligible for adoption stipends and other supports including respite care.

**Adoption Assistance:** The state or locality may determine that children cannot be adopted without adoption assistance. These children are designated “special needs” for the purposes of adoption assistance eligibility. In the U.S., approximately 90% of children adopted from foster care are eligible for adoption assistance and includes children who are in kinship foster care with relatives who then adopt them. Programs and benefits vary by state: [nacac.org/help/adoption-assistance/adoption-assistance-us/state-programs](http://nacac.org/help/adoption-assistance/adoption-assistance-us/state-programs)

For more information about adoption assistance go to [nacac.org/help/adoption-assistance/adoption-assistance-us](http://nacac.org/help/adoption-assistance/adoption-assistance-us)

One example of adoption assistance is the **Iowa Adoption Respite** program offered through the Iowa Foster and Adoptive Parents Association. Respite is available to adoptive families for their subsidized adopted children. Each adopted child who is subsidized is eligible for 5 days of respite services

per fiscal year. [ifapa.org/support/adoption\\_respite.asp](http://ifapa.org/support/adoption_respite.asp)

**Promoting Safe and Stable Families (Title IV-B of the Social Security Act):** State child welfare agencies are required to spend at least 20 percent of their funding on each of four categories of services: family support, family preservation, family reunification, and adoption promotion and supports. All of these categories permit funding for respite services and/or crisis nursery services for which adoptive families might be eligible, depending on their level of involvement with the child welfare system. For more information contact your state child welfare agency at [childwelfare.gov/organizations](http://childwelfare.gov/organizations)

**Medicaid:** Generally, every state offers some respite assistance through various Medicaid Waivers if a child with a disability meets the eligibility

requirements. To find out more about specific Medicaid waivers that pay for respite in your state, click on your state on the ARCH U.S. Map for Respite Funding and Caregiver Supports at [archrespite.org/respitelocator/respite-locator-service-state-information-map](http://archrespite.org/respitelocator/respite-locator-service-state-information-map) and scroll down to “Medicaid Waivers that Pay for Respite.” Please note that there may be waiting lists for Medicaid waiver services. Sometimes respite is available for Medicaid eligible

individuals through the Medicaid State plan. Note that not every state provides this optional benefit through Medicaid. Contact your local Medicaid office by visiting [medicaiddirectors.org/about/medicaid-directors](http://medicaiddirectors.org/about/medicaid-directors) for details about eligibility and providers under the Medicaid state plan.

### Consumer-Directed Respite

Some **Lifespan Respite Programs**, state-funded respite programs, and Medicaid waivers provide respite vouchers or a service budget that allow families to hire, train, and pay their own respite providers. Program names differ from state to state and are sometimes known as cash and counseling, parent or family stipend programs, or consumer, participant, or self-directed services.

## Private Funding Sources for Respite

**Private or Self-Pay:** Adoptive families may choose to pay for private respite services. They can contract for services through community agencies providing respite or find a respite provider through family or friends.

**Private Adoption Agencies:** Some adoption agencies provide post-adoption services for families including social options for adoptive parents and children, support groups, educational programs, and respite care services or referrals. An example is the **C2Adopt** in Richmond, Virginia that provides both adoption placement and post-adoption supports and services. [C2adopt.com](http://C2adopt.com)

**Cost Saving Options:** Many of the community-based programs and services mentioned earlier may provide financial support by offering sliding fee scales, payment plans, scholarships, and camperships. They may also have collaborative funding through local community service organizations that will support respite service options.

## Addressing the Needs of Adoptive Children

As noted earlier, children who are adopted will experience a range of emotions related to separation and loss while adjusting to their new family. They may also experience difficulties forming attachments. Although the new living situation is seen as positive by all of the adults involved in the process, the child may find the transition difficult. As the adoptive family works through this transitional period, stress and exhaustion may occur. Both the family and child may benefit from planned breaks in the caregiving routine provided by a respite program. Even after the initial transition period is past, planned respite will offer the family the same opportunities to vary their routine as are available to any other family.

Children adopted under the special needs adoption programs in many states have often been in multiple placements prior to adoption. These children may

## ABLE Accounts

The **ABLE Act** allows qualified individuals with disabilities and their families to save and use their own funds for disability-related expenses, including respite, through tax-advantaged investment ABLE accounts. The funds in the account, and distributions made for qualified disability-related expenses, are also not factored into determining eligibility for federally funded means-test benefits, such as Supplemental Security Income (SSI) and Medicaid. The ABLE National Resource Center has more information: [ablenrc.org](http://ablenrc.org)

## Family First Prevention Services Act

The **Family First Prevention Services Act** (FFPSA) has implications for foster, adoptive, and kinship care including relative foster family homes. Most important for states' adoption programs is that the FFPSA:

- Improves interstate placement of children in foster care, adoption, or guardianship using an electronic system to be implemented by states by October 2027.
- Continues incentives to states to promote adoption and legal guardianship by reauthorizing funding for the Adoption and Legal Guardianship Incentive Programs through FY 2022 – allows states to receive incentive payments based on improvement in increasing exists from foster care to adoption or kinship guardianship.
- Ensures states reinvest savings resulting from this adoption assistance program with at least 30% of these savings being earmarked for post-adoption and post-guardianship services and services that support permanency. (Casey Family Programs, 2018; Generations United, 2018)

fear that the respite provider will become yet another change in their family life. These fears need to be recognized and validated by encouraging the children to ask questions and share concerns about receiving respite. Whenever possible, the children should be included in the process of matching providers with families.

Special needs adoption programs include children who have experienced abuse, neglect, exposure to drugs or alcohol, and/or abandonment. Behaviors related to the abuse, as well as issues of loss and separation, should be identified for individual children and addressed by their families, their respite program's training coordinator, and their respite provider.

Children who have been adopted experience one, or a combination, of the stages of grief: shock, denial, anger, despair, depression, and/or acceptance/resolution. Children need to be encouraged to process this grief at their own pace. It will help if providers have knowledge of child development, as some adopted children experience developmental delays based on the trauma and many losses they have experienced. Providers should be trained to look for cues pointing to each stage (or state) of grief and how it may be expressed at different stages of the child's life.

## Addressing Respite Provider Needs

Respite providers working directly with adoptive families and children require the same general training as other respite providers. They must learn about the history and mission of the program, care techniques, first aid, confidentiality, universal precautions, and other related skills and information. Pre-service and in-service training should be required and offered on a regular basis. Beyond the typical training topics, there are others that may help providers working with families who have an adopted child, especially a child with special needs.

## Basic Adoption Training

- Child development
- Issues unique to adopted children and families
- The difference between foster care and adoption
- Separation and loss
- Bonding and attachment theories
- Family integration
- Behavior management techniques
- Independent living skills

## Special Adoption Training Topics

- How children are affected by abuse and neglect
- Disabilities, chronic and terminal illnesses
- Children affected by drugs or alcohol
- Care of children affected by HIV/AIDS
- Understanding families affected by HIV/AIDS
- Stress management
- Therapeutic interventions

The term "therapeutic interventions" refers to a level of provider training which is more specialized, but needed by providers serving families who have adopted children experiencing significant emotional

## Resources for Respite Providers

*Finding and Working With Adoption-Competent Therapists* (November 2018)  
[childwelfare.gov/pubPDFs/f\\_therapist.pdf](http://childwelfare.gov/pubPDFs/f_therapist.pdf)

*Taking a Break: Creating Foster, Adoptive, and Kinship Respite Care in Your Community* (June 2013) [adoptuskids.org/\\_assets/files/NRCRRFAP/resources/taking-a-break-respite-guide.pdf](http://adoptuskids.org/_assets/files/NRCRRFAP/resources/taking-a-break-respite-guide.pdf)

*Creating and Sustaining Effective Respite Services: Lessons from the Field* (2012)  
[adoptuskids.org/\\_assets/files/AUSK/respite-program/creating-and-sustaining-effective-respite-services.pdf](http://adoptuskids.org/_assets/files/AUSK/respite-program/creating-and-sustaining-effective-respite-services.pdf)

and mental health issues. Therapeutic skills are sometimes necessary to work with children whose behaviors may include aggression, suicidal tendencies, antisocial behavior, and depression. Some programs recruit specific providers to receive specialized training and to work with children experiencing significant emotional issues.

Respite providers may exhibit the classic signs of burnout from time to time. Sometimes it is enough to encourage them to take a few days of vacation. At other times, their workload or family match may need to be re-examined. Regular opportunities for the staff members to receive support and participate in skill-building will also help.

Respite providers need to know how important they are to the success of the respite program and be rewarded for their contributions to the program.

## Considerations/Recommendations for Lifespan Respite Programs and State Respite Coalitions

Expanding respite options and improving respite access, quality and options for parents and families caring for adoptive children involves collaboration across adoption agencies, child welfare programs, community respite providers and others working together with adoptive families. There are steps that Lifespan Respite Programs, state organizations and respite coalitions, respite providers and adoptive families can take to enhance existing post-adoption supports and services.

### *For State Lifespan Respite Grantees*

Lifespan Respite programs should ensure that they are identifying available services as well as gaps in services for adoptive families, and targeting training and recruitment resources to help meet needs.

- 1 Take the lead in bringing experts together to develop public awareness and education materials that focus on the unique needs of adoptive children, parents, and families.
- 2 Conduct and use statewide environmental scans or needs assessments to determine the level of

unmet need for respite services for adoptive families. Include questions to determine the specific barriers to respite for adoptive families and work to identify strategies to overcome these barriers.

- 3 Work to develop or expand emergency, overnight and extended respite opportunities to meet adoptive family needs.
- 4 Develop training programs for adoption peer mentors to assist other adoptive family caregivers facing similar issues and concerns.

### *For State Respite Coalitions*

- 1 Partner with adoption organizations, programs and advocates, providing information for family members to raise awareness about the need for respite services.
- 2 Advise the state Lifespan Respite Program in identifying gaps in respite services for this population and work with them to address gaps in services for adoptive children and parents.
- 3 Provide information sessions for adoptive families focused on how to seek support and find respite services in their community.

### *For Respite Providers and Community Agencies*

- 1 Conduct a community needs assessment to determine the need for daily, emergency, overnight and extended respite services for adoptive families in your local area. Include input from adoptive families to determine the preferred respite options needed.
- 2 Include adoptive parents and advocates as members of the planning team and encourage their input in the development and implementation of respite services.
- 3 In developing training materials to recruit and train respite providers and volunteers, seek expertise from the adoption professional community as well as adoptive parents.
- 4 Provide specialized training for current and new respite providers to ensure that they understand

the unique needs of adoptive children and parents.

- 5 When looking for volunteers to assist in respite service delivery, consider reaching out to university or community college students who are pursuing careers in adoption, social work, or related areas; faith communities; local adoption agencies providing post-adoption services; and/or look to state professional associations to find volunteers with adoption experience.
- 6 Offer participant-directed respite so that adoptive families have greater choice in hiring and training their own care providers from their trusted communities of support.
- 7 Develop and maintain culturally and linguistically competent respite providers to serve adoptive family needs.

## 9 Steps Fact Sheets

**ARCH Fact Sheet: 9 Steps to Respite Care for Family Caregivers of Children and Adults with Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities (I/DD)** at [archrespite.org/images/Caregiver\\_Fact\\_Sheets/9\\_Steps\\_IDD\\_Caregiver\\_web.pdf](http://archrespite.org/images/Caregiver_Fact_Sheets/9_Steps_IDD_Caregiver_web.pdf)

**ARCH Fact Sheet: 9 Steps to Respite Care for Grandfamilies** at [archrespite.org/images/Caregiver\\_Fact\\_Sheets/9-Steps\\_Grandfamilies\\_web.pdf](http://archrespite.org/images/Caregiver_Fact_Sheets/9-Steps_Grandfamilies_web.pdf)

### For Adoptive Parents/Families

- 1 Become involved with your state Respite Coalition and/or your State Lifespan Respite Program to share input regarding your specific respite needs.
- 2 Seek support and information from your local and state adoption agencies providing post-adoption supports and services.

- 3 Offer your expertise and input as new respite services are developed.
- 4 Connect and network with other adoptive families for mutual support and guidance in finding respite options in your community.
- 5 Seek support and use respite early and as often as appropriate. Plan your respite time to make it as meaningful as possible.

## Summary

Respite services serving adoptive families can offer high quality, temporary care that eases the transition for both children and parents and provides a regular opportunity for the family to pursue other activities. Effective services have a thorough understanding that the process of forming a family differs for adoptive and biological families. They recognize and are prepared to handle issues related to loss, separation, grief, bonding, attachment, entitlement, claiming, unmatched expectations, family integration, identity formation, and mastery as they change throughout the life cycle. Once family concerns have been addressed, respite can become a vital element in the life of an adoptive family, enabling them to stay rested, relaxed and together

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## Adoption and Respite Resources

### General Adoption Resources

**AdoptUSKids**  
[adoptuskids.org](https://adoptuskids.org)

A national project working to ensure that children and teens in foster care get safe, loving, permanent families.

**Child Welfare Information Gateway – Adoption**  
[childwelfare.gov/topics/adoption](https://childwelfare.gov/topics/adoption)

### Adoption Financial Resources

**Adoption Tax Credit – North American Council on Adoptable Children (NACAC)**  
[nacac.org/help/adoption-tax-credit](https://nacac.org/help/adoption-tax-credit)

**Financial Resources – National Council for Adoption (NCFCA)**  
[adoptioncouncil.org/families/resources/financial-resources](https://adoptioncouncil.org/families/resources/financial-resources)

**Grants/Loans/Tax Credit for Adoption – Child Welfare Information Gateway (CWIG)**  
[childwelfare.gov/topics/adoption/adoptive/expenses/grants-loans/](https://childwelfare.gov/topics/adoption/adoptive/expenses/grants-loans/)

**IRS Adoption Taxpayer Identification Number**  
[irs.gov/individuals/adoption-taxpayer-identification-number](https://irs.gov/individuals/adoption-taxpayer-identification-number)

### Post-Adoption Parenting Resources

**Adoption Assistance by State – Child Welfare Information Gateway (CWIG)**  
[childwelfare.gov/topics/adoption/adopt-assistance](https://childwelfare.gov/topics/adoption/adopt-assistance)

**Adoptive Families**  
[adoptivefamilies.com](https://adoptivefamilies.com)

The How-to-Adopt and Adoption Parenting Network (FREE & Fee Based).

**Adoption Parenting Pathways – Adoption Learning Partners**  
[adoptionlearningpartners.org/pathways](https://adoptionlearningpartners.org/pathways)

Searchable database to help parents find adoption-related information and support. Information about adoption camps, retreats, therapists, and support groups is available.

**Center for Adoption Support and Education (CASE)**  
[adoptionssupport.org](http://adoptionssupport.org)

National program focused on mental health services for the foster care and adoption community; provides resources for professionals and parents including fact sheets, articles, bibliographies, and recommended movies/TV shows.

**Foster Care & Adoption Specialists – AdoptUSKids**  
[adoptuskids.org/about-us/contact-us](http://adoptuskids.org/about-us/contact-us)

Foster care and adoption specialists available by phone or email.

**Parenting After Adoption – Child Welfare Information Gateway (CWIG)**  
[childwelfare.gov/topics/adoption/adopt-parenting](http://childwelfare.gov/topics/adoption/adopt-parenting)

**Parent Support Groups – North American Council on Adoptable Children (NACAC)**  
[nacac.org/connect/parent-group](http://nacac.org/connect/parent-group)

NACAC's parent group database contains almost 900 adoption-related support groups from across the United States and Canada. You can search the database by state or province, or by the type of group or the group's activity.

**Strengthen Your Forever Family: A Step-By-Step Guide to Post Adoption**  
[davethomasfoundation.org/library?strengthen-your-forever-family-a-step-by-step-guide-to-post-adoption](http://davethomasfoundation.org/library?strengthen-your-forever-family-a-step-by-step-guide-to-post-adoption)

**Support for Parents Who Adopt from Foster Care – AdoptUSKids**  
[adoptuskids.org/adoption-and-foster-care/parenting-support/for-adoptive-parents](http://adoptuskids.org/adoption-and-foster-care/parenting-support/for-adoptive-parents)

Subsidies, respite, support groups by state.

**Post-Adoption Adjustment and Therapeutic Services**

**Connect-A-Kid**  
[connectakid.org](http://connectakid.org)

Connect-A-Kid provides adopted kids with a safe and monitored mentorship program that provides a comfortable outlet to which they can look for support, advice, or companionship from someone who understands what it means to be adopted.

**Finding and Working With Adoption-Competent Therapists** (November 2018)  
[childwelfare.gov/pubPDFs/f\\_therapist.pdf](http://childwelfare.gov/pubPDFs/f_therapist.pdf)

**Impact of Adoption on Adoptive Parents** (2015)  
[childwelfare.gov/pubs/factsheets/impact-parent](http://childwelfare.gov/pubs/factsheets/impact-parent)

**Impact of Adoption on Adopted Persons** (August 2013)  
[childwelfare.gov/pubPDFs/f\\_adimpact.pdf](http://childwelfare.gov/pubPDFs/f_adimpact.pdf)

**The Theraplay Institute**  
[theraplay.org](http://theraplay.org)

Theraplay provides therapeutic child and family services focused on building and enhancing attachment, self-esteem, trust in others, and engagement.

**General Respite Information**

**ARCH National Respite Network and Resource Center**  
[archrespite.org](http://archrespite.org)

**ARCH National Respite Network and Resource Center – The ABCs of Respite: A Consumer Guide for Family Caregivers**  
[archrespite.org/consumer-information](http://archrespite.org/consumer-information)

**Charting the LifeCourse: Respite – Videos, Tools, and Resources for Respite**  
[lifecoursetools.com/respite](http://lifecoursetools.com/respite)

**Time for Living and Caring: Making Respite Services Work for You**  
[archrespite.org/images/docs/Outside\\_Reports/Lund\\_TLCRespiteBrochure\\_2014.pdf](http://archrespite.org/images/docs/Outside_Reports/Lund_TLCRespiteBrochure_2014.pdf)

**Respite Resources for Post-Adoption Programs**

**Creating and Sustaining Effective Respite Services: Lessons from the Field** (2012)  
[adoptuskids.org/\\_assets/files/AUSK/respite-program/creating-and-sustaining-effective-respite-services.pdf](http://adoptuskids.org/_assets/files/AUSK/respite-program/creating-and-sustaining-effective-respite-services.pdf)

**National Foster Care & Adoption Directory Search**  
[childwelfare.gov/nfcad](http://childwelfare.gov/nfcad)

Search by state for adoption agencies, assistance, support groups – Child Welfare Information Gateway (CWIG)

**Supporting and Preserving Adoptive Families: Profiles of Publicly Funded Post-Adoption Services**  
[adoptioninstitute.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/04/Supporting-and-Preserving-Families.pdf](http://adoptioninstitute.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/04/Supporting-and-Preserving-Families.pdf) Susan Livingston Smith, The Donaldson Adoption Institute (DAI) and Adoption Support and Preservation (ASAP)

**Support Matters: Lessons from the Field on Services for Foster, Adoptive and Kinship Care Families** (March 2015)  
[adoptuskids.org/\\_assets/files/AUSK/support-matters/support-matters-resource-guide.pdf](http://adoptuskids.org/_assets/files/AUSK/support-matters/support-matters-resource-guide.pdf)

**Taking a Break: Creating Foster, Adoptive, and Kinship Respite Care in Your Community** (June 2013)  
[adoptuskids.org/\\_assets/files/NRCRRFAP/resources/taking-a-break-respite-guide.pdf](http://adoptuskids.org/_assets/files/NRCRRFAP/resources/taking-a-break-respite-guide.pdf)

### ***Adoptive Children with Disabilities (or Special Needs)***

**ARCH Fact Sheet: 9 Steps to Respite Care for Family Caregivers of Children and Adults with Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities (I/DD)**  
[archrespite.org/images/Caregiver\\_Fact\\_Sheets/9\\_Steps\\_IDD\\_Caregiver\\_web.pdf](http://archrespite.org/images/Caregiver_Fact_Sheets/9_Steps_IDD_Caregiver_web.pdf)

**Autism Society**  
[autism-society.org](http://autism-society.org)

The Autism Society serves people with autism and their families and has a national network of almost 100 affiliates dedicated to providing respectful and caring services.

**Easterseals**  
[easterseals.com](http://easterseals.com)

Easterseals provides services, education, outreach, and advocacy so that people living with autism and other disabilities can live, learn, work and play in our communities. Programs include a variety of respite services for all ages, including in-home support and services, and camping and recreation opportunities.

**Family-to-Family (F2F) Health Information Centers (HIC)**  
[familyvoices.org/ncfpp/f2fs](http://familyvoices.org/ncfpp/f2fs)

Family-to-Family Health Information Centers (F2F HICs) are family-staffed organizations that assist

families of children and youth with special health care needs and the professionals who serve them. F2F HICs provide support, information, resources, and training around health issues. To find a F2F HIC in your state go to [familyvoices.org/affiliates](http://familyvoices.org/affiliates).

**The Arc**  
[thearc.org](http://thearc.org)

The Arc is the largest national community-based organization advocating for people with intellectual and developmental disabilities and their families. To find a local or state chapter go to [thearc.org/find-a-chapter](http://thearc.org/find-a-chapter).

**United Cerebral Palsy (UCP)**  
[ucp.org](http://ucp.org)

UCP educates, advocates and provides support services to ensure a life without limits for people with a spectrum of disabilities. Contact the local UCP affiliate in your area at [ucp.org/find-us](http://ucp.org/find-us)

### ***Specific to Grandfamilies and Relative Caregivers***

**The Grandfamilies State Law and Policy Resource Center**  
[grandfamilies.org](http://grandfamilies.org)

[Grandfamilies.org](http://Grandfamilies.org) is a collaboration among Generations United, The American Bar Association Center on Children and the Law, and Casey Family Programs and is a national legal resource supporting grandfamilies within and outside the child welfare system.

**GrandFacts: State Fact Sheets for Grandparents and Other Relatives Raising Children**  
[grandfamilies.org/State-Fact-Sheets](http://grandfamilies.org/State-Fact-Sheets)

GrandFacts provide valuable state-specific data, local program resources, benefits, and legal information.

**Generations United**  
[gu.org](http://gu.org)

Generations United improves the lives of children, youth, and older people through intergenerational collaboration, public policies, and programs for the enduring benefit of all. The National Center

on Grandfamilies at Generations United promotes awareness of grandfamilies, grandparents, and other relatives raising children, and how to help meet the needs of these unique families. [gu.org/explore-our-topics/grandfamilies](http://gu.org/explore-our-topics/grandfamilies)

**National Foster Parent Association**  
[nfpaonline.org](http://nfpaonline.org)

The National Foster Parent Association serves as a respected voice of foster, kinship and adoptive families through networking, education, and advocacy.

**Resources for Kinship Caregivers: Guides and Handbooks**

[childwelfare.gov/topics/outofhome/kinship/resourcesforcaregivers/guides](http://childwelfare.gov/topics/outofhome/kinship/resourcesforcaregivers/guides)

The Child Welfare Information Gateway provides an array of resources for grandparents and other relatives who are caring for children. The guides and handbooks provide information on financial assistance, legal assistance, health care, child care, finding support groups, trauma-informed parenting, and more. National, state, and local examples are included.

**Author:** Monica Uhl, M.A., Consultant

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