### 7 CORE ISSUES for ADOPTED CHILDREN and ADOPTIVE PARENTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Adoptee</th>
<th>Adoptive Parent</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Loss</strong></td>
<td><strong>Loss</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>• Fears ultimate abandonment</td>
<td>• Infertility equates with loss of self and immortality</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Loss of biological, genetic, and cultural history</td>
<td>• Issues of entitlement lead to fear of loss of child and overprotection</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Issues of holding on and letting go</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Rejection</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>• Placement for adoption as personal rejection</td>
<td>• Feeling of being ostracized because of procreation difficulties</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Can only be “chosen” if first rejected</td>
<td>• May make partner the scapegoat</td>
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<td>• Issues of self-esteem</td>
<td>• May expel adopted child to avoid anticipated rejection</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Anticipates rejection</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>• Misperceives situations</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Guilt/Shame</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>• Feels deserving of misfortune</td>
<td>• Ashamed of infertility</td>
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<td>• Ashamed of being different</td>
<td>• May believe childlessness is a curse or punishment</td>
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<td>• May take defensive stance</td>
<td>• Religious crisis</td>
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<td>• Anger</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Grief</strong></td>
<td><strong>Grief</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>• Grief overlooked in childhood or blocked by adult leading to depression and/or acting out</td>
<td>• Grieve loss of “fantasy “child</td>
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<tr>
<td>• May grieve lack of “fit” in adoptive family</td>
<td>• Unresolved grief may block attachment to adopted child</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• May experience adopted child’s grief as rejection</td>
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<td><strong>Identity</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>• Deficits in information about birth parents, birthplace, etc. may impede integration of identity</td>
<td>• Experiences a diminished sense of continuity of self</td>
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<tr>
<td>• May seek identity in early pregnancies or extreme behaviors in order to create a sense of belonging</td>
<td>• “Role Handicap” – I am a parent/I am not a parent</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Intimacy &amp; Relationships</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>• Fears getting close and risking reenactment of earlier losses</td>
<td>• Unresolved grief over losses may lead to intimacy and marital problems</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Concerns over possible incest (unrecognized sibling)</td>
<td>• May avoid closeness with adopted child to avoid loss</td>
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<td>• Bonding issues may lower capacity for intimacy</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Control/Gains</strong></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Adoption alters life course</td>
<td>• Adoption experiences lead to “learned helplessness” where sense of mastery is linked to procreation</td>
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<td>• Aware of not being a party to initial adoption decisions, in which adults made life-altering choices</td>
<td>• Lack of initiative</td>
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<td>• Haphazard nature of adoption removes cause-and-effect continuum</td>
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Retrieved from: http://www.adoptionsupport.org/res/7core.php
# Successful Adoptive Families

**Holt International Children Services**

- Have realistic expectations for the adoption
- Are fully aware of the child’s needs
- Have a proven ability to handle problems
- Are flexible, optimistic, and have a sense of humor
- Have the ability to maintain a commitment to the child in spite of challenges
- Can appreciate the small gains the child makes
- Are comfortable using resources and treatment services when needed
- Can attach and bond to others
- Have strong marital relationships
- Maintain an open communication style

# Successful Adoptive Parents

**Spaulding for Children**

- Flexible family expectations
- Tolerance for the child’s rejection
- Ability to set structure and limits in a caring way
- Sense of humor
- Flexible family roles
- Parenting commitment – ability to fully claim the child as theirs
- Ability to use resources and meet personal needs
- Tolerance for their own ambivalent and negative feelings about the child
- Ability to delay parenting gratification
- Openness to connections with birth family

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# Characteristics of Foster Parents who Do Not Adopt Successfully

- Unresolved losses in the past and present, resulting in a need to revisit past relationships and an inability to meet the child’s needs
- Possessiveness of the child and an unwillingness to acknowledge and work with important people from the child’s past
- Rigidity in the family system
- Desperation for a child, resulting in unrealistic expectations of foster care and adoption
- High stress and anxiety levels
- Aggressiveness
- Power and control issues
Child Wellbeing Project

What you need to know: Implementation Road Map

- Review Project History: Understanding Success Coach Service Development

- **Select a Core Team** with a lead or co-lead to facilitate completion of the Stakeholder Readiness Survey and Agency Capacity Assessment. These assessments help determine if Post Care Services are a good and manageable fit for your agency.

- **Stakeholder Readiness Survey**: Determine if staff and community partners value and need post care services—goodness of fit for the agency
  - Hold Focus Groups to determine what stakeholder view as needs (suggested groups below)
    - Biological Parents
    - Adoptive Parents
    - Teens or Adults who experienced foster care
    - Guardians
    - Social Workers/Social Work Supervisors (Adoption, Foster Care)
    - Community Partners (Therapists, Eligibility Services Representatives)
  - Arrange for childcare during focus groups
  - Ensure location of focus groups in neutral, especially for families who have experienced the system
  - Complete the Stakeholder Readiness Survey
    - Survey Monkey to Staff
    - Compile results and share with staff

- **Agency Capacity Assessment**: Determine if the agency has the current capacity to implement the service with fidelity to the model and highlight areas where additional work is needed to assure readiness
  - Core Team works through assessment during a half-day retreat or over the course of several meetings
  - Compile assessment results and determine if there are areas where capacity needs to be enhanced
  - Plan work to enhance identified areas
SUCCESS COACH SERVICE

Success Coach Service Description

☐ Read through the Summary of the Success Coach Service (more detailed information is located in the Success Coach Manual)

Staff Selection

☐ Key staff need to be selected—typically the Project Manager and Supervisor are selected or hired first so that they can make the selection of the Success Coaches
  - Project Manager—It is important to determine how a post care unit fits into your agency. This person may already be part of the agency and post care is an additional responsibility or this may be a new position.
  - Supervisor—This position will be a new supervisory position in your agency because he or she will be supervising a new team.
  - Success Coaches
  - Support Staff (Administrative Assistant/Data Manager)—Support staff responsibilities can be incorporated into other positions.

Training

☐ Review Training Plan
☐ Ensure you have access to trainings or similar trainings
☐ Schedule all trainings that need to occur before service is implemented

Coaching

☐ Ensure Success Coach Supervisor is trained to provide conceptual feedback (need to note where the supervisor can acquire that training)
☐ Review Coaching Plan and adjust to meet your agencies needs

Program Reviews

☐ Identify key stakeholders to participate in Program Reviews and create a set date and time for these meetings. Ex. 3rd Wednesday of the month at 9:00 am (stakeholders include representatives from the adoption unit and foster care)
☐ Review Program Review Protocol (formatting may need to be adjusted but the content is essential to the review process)

Data Collection

☐ Access database is available to you
☐ You will need a programmer to modify the database to meet your agency needs
☐ Templates are available for reports to help in the program review process

Fidelity to the Model

☐ Review all fidelity checklist and ensure Success Coaches are familiar with all expected outcomes
☐ Review Coaching Plan for how fidelity reviews will be completed and monitored
EDUCATIONAL ADVOCATE SERVICE

Educational Advocate Service Description

☐ Read through the Summary of the Educational Advocate Service (more detailed information is located in the Success Coach Manual)

Staff Selection

☐ Key staff need to be selected—Educational Advocate
  ☐ School district representatives should be identified for each school system
  ☐ School designees, while not staff, will need to be identified at each school

Training

☐ Review Training Plan
☐ Ensure you have access to trainings or similar trainings

Coaching

☐ Review Coaching Plan and adjust to meet your agencies needs

Program Reviews

☐ Identify key stakeholders to participate in quarterly Program Reviews and create a set date and time for these meetings. Ex. 3rd Wednesday of the month at 9:00 am (stakeholders include representatives from school systems, foster care, adoptions)
☐ Review Program Review Protocol (formatting may need to be adjusted but the content is essential to the review process)
☐ Identify key stakeholders to attend a quarterly Educational Meeting to discuss systems issues and provide updates on key changes in the school systems and social services

Data Collection

☐ Access database is available to you
☐ You will need a programmer to modify the database to meet your agency needs
☐ Templates are available for reports to help in the program review process

Fidelity to the Model

☐ Educational Advocate checklist should be modified to meet the program modifications in your agency
☐ Review Coaching Plan for how fidelity reviews will be completed and monitored