

Workshop Descriptions

Friday, March 12, Session A (Workshops 1-5) 11:00 am-12:30 pm

Transracial Adoption: Understanding and Navigating Race, Ethnicity and Culture in the Parenting of Children (CEH SW-1) (AD, AP, BP, CW, ED, FP, HC, HP, KG, PA) Children who have been transracially adopted comprises a large percentage of the adoption statistics in the U.S. Overall, 40% of adopted children are of a different race, culture, or ethnicity than both of their adoptive parents (or their sole parent if there is only one parent in the household). Professionals and parents need to understand the ways in which multiracial families can face particular stresses given society's definition of race and family. This presentation will focus on the research and practical strategies that parenting a child of a different ethnic or racial identity than the adoptive parent(s), which is of essential importance to both parents and the professionals that intervene with these parents and children. Issues covered that are of value to parents and to those who work with these parents and transracially adopted children include developmental differences in how children perceive race, cultural identity, not only the child but of the parent; and if these should be integrated, how to discuss race, and also strategies to foster ecological competence. This is a didactic and experiential presentation allowing for input from the participants and a safe place to discuss and explore a sometimes difficult topic. *Margaret O'Donoghue, Ph.D., LCSW*

Birth Mothers Tell Their Stories (CEH SW-4) (AP, CW, HP, PA, Therapists) A panel of birth parents will discuss their adoption journey as a means to provide insight to their perspective which will enable practitioners, adoptive parents and adoptees to gain empathy leading to effective communication. They will address such questions as "Why did you choose adoption for your child?" "How did you locate adoptive parents?" "What factors were important to you in your choice of adoptive parents?" "Do you have contact with the adoptive family?" "What sources of support did you find most helpful?" "How has adoption impacted your life?" The panel will be moderated by an adoption attorney and agency director, who will also discuss the roles of agencies and attorneys in providing services to birth parents in compliance with regulatory, legal and ethical requirements. Attendees should leave this workshop with an understanding of adoption from the birth parents' perspective, as well as an understanding of the proper roles of agencies and attorneys in providing services to birth parents. This knowledge will assist practitioners and adoptive parents in creating a mutually satisfying adoption plan between birth and adoptive parents. *Debra Jaques, Executive Director, Family Options; Jean M. Cavaliere, Esq.*

Medical Issues in Domestic Adoption (FP, KG, PA) This workshop will focus on issues relating to some of the medical risks prospective parents may encounter when matching with a birth mother - drug exposure, infections, chronic medical conditions, social characteristics, etc. Different scenarios will be presented and how they may or may not affect the health and well-being of a pregnancy will be discussed. The discussion will include medical risks and factors that are very concerning as well as those that are not. *Melissa Goldstein, MD*

Emotion Regulation: Building Healthy Coping Strategies (AP, CW, FP, HC, HP, KG) Regulating our emotions is essential for navigating life's peaks and valleys. Emotion regulation is the ability to effectively manage and respond to emotional experiences. It is through emotion regulation that we achieve both mental and physical wellbeing. This workshop will cover the basics of emotional regulation, including the evolutionary purposes of emotions, how to identify our emotions and the ways in which our bodies experience them. Various coping strategies including breathing techniques, muscle relaxation, guided imagery, and others will be discussed and practiced. The second half of the workshop will focus on regulating child's emotional distress to enhance their socioemotional wellbeing. *Gabriella John, BA*

Understanding the Triad (CEH SW-4) (AD, AP, BP, CW, HC, HP, PA) The adoption triad is fluid and dynamic, and within this, each member experiences trauma and loss. While the nature of the trauma differs for each, it very much intersects. Social workers, adoptive parents, adoptees and birth parents, attending this workshop will learn about the perspectives of each of the triad. The importance of and strategies for exploring and contextualizing each member's personal experience, trauma and loss will be highlighted as a first step in addressing and healing trauma which supports a successful adoption. *Laura Hoffman, MSW, LCSW*

Saturday, March 13, Session B (Workshops 6-10) 9:15 am-10:45am

Planning Next Steps After High School for Teens who have been Adopted or in the Foster Care System (AD, AP, CW, ED, FP, HC, KG, PA) Teens who have been adopted or in foster care have a unique challenge in making the transition from high school to whatever, or wherever their futures bring them. It is a tumultuous time for these teens, and informed intervention by parents and professionals is the key to their success. There is a wide range of options that social workers and parents who guide these teens can draw from, helping the teen to make a better choice. This workshop will provide the knowledge needed to help prepare teens for post-secondary success in college or career/technical education, or other areas of interest. If the teen has been involved with Child Protection & Permanency (CP&P) Foster Care, they may be eligible for the New Jersey Foster Care Scholars Program, and other scholarship assistance which may fund their future. This workshop will prepare teens, parents and the professionals who work with them for the ins and outs of transitioning out of high school into postsecondary education. *Marjorie Blicharz, MEd*

Staying the Course: The Importance of Emotional Regulation for Adoptive and Foster Families (CEH SW-2) (AP, CW, HC, FP, KG) This workshop will provide information on the importance of emotional regulation for all members of the adoptive or foster family; causes of dysregulation; and a variety of tools and strategies for fostering emotional regulation and building tools for self-regulation. This is critical information for both adoptive/foster parents and the social worker or family therapists who work with them. *Sharon Sorrentino, PhD; John O'Keefe, BA*

A Primer for Child Development and How to Discover and Address Delays (CEH SW-4) (AP, CW, FP, HC, KG, PA) This workshop will review the developmental and psychological aspects of adoption. There will be a review of how children who live in orphanages or foster care can have developmental delays which can be addressed through early intervention and special education. Children adopted domestically also have an increased risk of developmental delays due to poor pre-natal care, drug/alcohol exposure and family history. There will be a review of how the medical profession defines delays and how parents, and the professionals who work with them, can secure the services needed to help adopted children achieve in school and be independent and successful long term. *Jane Aronson, DO*

Integrating Emotional Intelligence and Parenting (CEH SW-4) (AD, AP, CW, FP, HC, HP, KG, PA) As a clinician serving children and families touched by adoption, the topic of adoption and managing emotions often leaves the parent(s) / caregivers with a sense of being a weather forecaster. Yes, not being sure what to expect yet being responsible for preparing the family for the pending weather storms. These challenges often leave the family members in the role as a weather forecaster, addressing the emotional and parenting needs of the family. This workshop seeks to examine adoption and emotional intelligence within the context of strengthening the connections and the understanding of how both adoption and emotional needs can co-exist within the family. *Jacqueline Adams, LCSW*

Who Am I? The Complexity of Teen Identity and Adoption (CEH SW-4) Adolescence is a tough time for almost all teenagers. The changes during this time are extensive and include physical, emotional, psychological, behavioral, social and sexual changes. Adopted teens struggle with these same issues, but do they face different challenges than non-adopted teens? This workshop will examine the complexity adoption adds to developmental tasks of teenagers. Techniques and strategies will be explored with parents and professionals to help prepare for and support their adopted child as they enter into adolescence and begin to ask "Who am I?" and "Where do I belong?" *Rebecca Gallese, LCSW*

Saturday, March 13, Session C (Workshops 11-15) 11:00 am-12:30 pm

Helping the Adopted Child Be Successful in School (CEH SW-4) (AP, CW, FP, HC, KG, PA) Adopted children have higher than average potential for learning and or behavior problems at school. When this occurs, advocacy by adoptive parents and professionals who work with them is important to ensure that public schools accommodate these needs. Participants will gain an understanding of children's legal rights that require public schools to provide the necessary educational and therapeutic resources to meet the child's learning needs. Further, attendees will learn that it is the child's legal right for public schools to provide the child with a free education that is calculated to the child's unique needs so that the child can learn and progress, taking into account the child's potential. Very often, parental and professional advocates may not know about the array of services required by law that the public schools must offer children facing difficulty in school. Many children's learning needs have gone unmet and thus become frustrated in school, resulting in issues such as acting out behaviors, anxiety and depression. The earlier potential educational issues are addressed by parents and professionals, the better the outcome for the child to succeed and thrive in school. This workshop will inform both parents and professionals on knowledge and advocacy skills necessary to successfully advocate for the adoptee within the school setting. *Linda Sweet Marks, Advocate and Attorney*

Why Adoptees Struggle Talking About Adoption(AD, AP, CW, FP, ED, HC, HP, KG, PA) Why do adoptees only share certain aspects of their story at certain times and with certain people? The workshop presenter will begin to unpack some of these complexities by examining: fears (Adoptee and adoptive parent) that prevent conversation, common, but often unspoken questions adoptees and adoptive parents have for each other, the reasons why being different matters, and perceived differences between adoptive parent and Adoptee that lead to challenges in the relationship. Coping strategies and ways to improve and promote honest parent/child communication will be shared. *Steve Kalb, LMSW*

Behavior Management with Adopted Children (CEH SW-2) (AP, CW, ED, FP, HC, KG, PA) This workshop will address many of the topics that adoptive families often experience around post-adoption issues. The workshop will be based on the understanding that our responses to behavior issues need to be grounded in an appreciation of trauma's impact on brain development and behavior. Participants will gain an understanding of how to approach dysregulation, transitions, school issues, food and sleep difficulties, lying and manipulation with a focus on meeting the underlying need in the presenting behavior. The workshop will touch on approaching parenting behavioral difficulties with Dan Hughes' PACE model emphasizing playfulness, acceptance, curiosity and empathy. *Leslie Hampson, LMSW*

Adoption 101: Domestic and International (PA) Adoption 101 will provide an overview of the domestic private and foster care adoption and international adoption process. Information about the New Jersey home study process and needed paper work for international adoptions will be reviewed. An overview of the post placement process and finalization will be provided along with key items to consider as you journey towards becoming an adoptive family. *Sama K. Alghali, MSS, LSW; Desiree Huffnagle, MSW, LSW; Deborah Rodriguez, MSW; Katherine Twomey, MSW*