

**Child Welfare Information Gateway Podcast**  
**Building Parenting Skills to Address Trauma, Grief, and Mental Health TRANSCRIPT**

Presenters: Female Narrator; Tom Oates, Child Welfare Information Gateway; Sue Cohick, Spaulding For Children; Francis Agyakwa, Colorado Department of Human Services; Katina Hand, FamiliesFirst Network; Jessie Howell, FamiliesFirst Network

[00:00:00]: [Music Introduction]

**FEMALE NARRATOR** [00:00:02]: This is the Child Welfare Information Gateway Podcast, a place for those who care about strengthening families and protecting children. You'll hear about the innovations, emerging trends and success stories across child welfare direct from those striving to make a difference. This is your place for new ideas and information to support your work to improve the lives of children, youth, and families.

**TOM OATES** [00:00:31]: And welcome in to another episode of the Child Welfare Information Gateway podcast, everyone, I'm Tom Oates and happy to have you with us once again. In fact, happy and honored to have you with us for more than 75 episodes. We began this journey in 2016 to bring you the innovations, perspectives, and insights happening across the child welfare field. And hopefully along the way, there's been something that maybe you've learned to help your work supporting children, youth and families. Well and speaking of learning, that's what we're talking about in this episode. Specifically, the training child welfare agencies provide to prospective adoptive and foster parents on key parenting skills and meeting the needs of the children and youth that come into their care. The training offered by agencies can and do vary. They can vary in how they're delivered, the amount and type of content that's shared, the competencies that the trainings may focus on, and even the cost that jurisdictions incur. Now, as agencies from the federal level down to county and local agencies work to establish and maintain permanency and strengthen families, they're realizing the unique needs children and youth seeking adoption or entering foster care may have. They may have mental health needs or be impacted by trauma or grief.

[00:01:52]: And all parents need to be equipped with the skills, not just an understanding of how to recognize different types of behaviors and support children in youth and their families, in healing and maintaining a safe and supportive environment. Plus, parents recognize they may not walk into these situations with a proper cultural perspective to address racial inequities or to understand diverse populations. So, the Children's Bureau funded a grant to Spaulding for Children and a group of partners to develop and then evaluate a training program to prepare foster and adoptive parents to effectively parent children exposed to trauma and to provide these families with ongoing skill development to understand and promote healthy child development. The result is the National Training and Development Curriculum for foster and adoptive parents - you'll hear us say NTDC. And that goes live this month, June of 2022, for states, counties, tribes, territories, and private agencies to have access to a free evaluated curriculum to prepare, train, and develop foster and adoptive parents.

[00:03:01]: So, we're joined by Sue Cohick, the NTDC Program Manager from Spaulding for Children. Francis Agyakwa, a learning and development team supervisor from Colorado's Division of Child Welfare, along with Katina Hand, a licensing Training Specialist, and Jessie Howell Foster, an adoptive and foster parent and training co-facilitator, both from the Families First network out of Florida. We're going to dive into the training and what may be different from other parent training programs, how a trauma informed and culturally competent lens is applied to a series of classroom-oriented themes in online and on-demand resources. We'll also talk about the flexibility trainers and facilitators have to tailor the themes that best meet their agencies and their parents' particular needs, along with how parents themselves have reacted during the pilot phase. A great conversation and we're talking foster

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care and adoptive parent training a little bit deeper to improve Permanente and strengthen families, here on the Child Welfare Information Gateway podcast. Francis Agyakwa, Jessie Howell Foster, Katina Hand, Sue Cohick - thanks all of you for joining here on the Child Welfare Information Gateway podcast. And, and Francis, I want to start with you, with taking a look at the landscape here of trying to train those foster and adoptive parents. And I'd love for you to be able to explain for the audience some of the technical and administrative challenges that jurisdictions currently face when they're trying to choose in and trying to implement training for those foster and adoptive parents.

**FRANCIS AGYAKWA [00:04:37]:** Thank you, Tom. I'll speak directly about Colorado, some of the challenges that we faced and I'm sure there are other child welfare systems out there who have the same structure here in Colorado. As a state supervised county administered child welfare system, it means that we have 64 counties that we are working with. And every county gets to choose whatever they are doing. It is very difficult for the state to monitor and ensure that all the curriculum that our foster parents are being trained to are standardized. And the difficulties that we've had really is people just going for any curriculums at all without any approval, without any state stamp saying this is a great curriculum. And so, individuals are receiving training that are not sufficiently preparing them for it. Some of the difficulties that we've had in terms of the technical aspects really is in the remote communities where we don't, people do not have access to internet and laptops, it makes it difficult for them to access training, even if they have cell phones they are not able to assess training online. And also, the universality of transference application. So, a foster parent might train in one of the counties here in Colorado, and if they happen to move, it means they have to start training all over because then their receiving county is saying unfortunately we don't recognize this training, this training is not approved by our county. And so, you have to start the training all over, which then discourages people from really continuing with the certification when they move to another jurisdiction.

[00:06:23]: And I think that has been some of the challenges that we face here in Colorado, and I'm sure that other child welfare structures with the same state administered county supervised, sorry, state supervised county administered also go through. And I think having a one curriculum that is recognized by the state, it makes it easier. Results are better, especially when they, the competencies we want child, we want our foster parents to have during training. And so and NTDC has been one of the really great, great curriculums that we've had the opportunity to pilot here in Colorado. And currently have adopted and encouraging to be our preferred curriculum.

**TOM OATES [00:07:13]:** So, I get the value of a streamlined curriculum across the entire state. And having it technically feasibly something that people can use no matter where they are, what kind of connectivity. But let's talk a little bit about the content or actually the knowledge commonly being shared through many of the different curricula that are out there. I'm curious when you take a look at the landscape and you may not all, may have just the view from Colorado. But in your mind, in your opinion, what's that, I don't know, common content. What's, what's missing from what's out there right now?

**FRANCIS AGYAKWA [00:07:48]:** I mean, I would say about pre-pandemic I took an opportunity in my previous role as a foster parent training specialist for our child welfare system, I took a travel talk to many different counties to review, review what curriculum they had. And one of the things that I saw missing was an actual trauma context. You know, how to really work with, train foster parents to understand the impact of trauma and how to work with children who have experienced trauma. I also recognized that a cultural piece is missing, in terms of how do you really work with children from multicultural background, equipping our foster parents to really understand that we did not have, a lot

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of the curriculum were missing with that. And also looking at children who identify as LGBTQ. We did not have content that sufficiently addressed those. So that were the key pieces that NTDC brought that we were not universally having a lot of our counties train our foster parents in.

**TOM OATES** [00:08:57]: So, that perfectly leads me into, you know, you've identified a problem. And so, Sue, now let's maybe talk about a way to kind of create the solution in the curriculum being, being built and developed and then really vetted. So, I'm curious, based on where you guys were, what the competencies and the characteristics were, that you wanted to make sure that this curriculum was sharing with those, with those parents.

**SUE COHICK** [00:09:25]: Well, and, you know, it's a, it's a good question because if you just think of what Francis shared and some of the gaps, how do you create a curriculum that addresses the gaps and includes all of the information that families need to move forward? It's an overwhelming thought, right? So, in our first year of really putting this together, that, that was the question to us, what do we want this content to be? And so, we brought in content experts. We talked with families with lived experience, young adults with lived experience - helping us identify what those core competency areas are that families really need to consider when they're moving forward in being a kinship caregiver, a foster parent, an adoptive parent. It was, the information was enormous and overwhelming. So, we actually gathered all this information from those conversations, from looking at publications, from doing focus groups, and narrowed it down through working with some of those content experts and some of those voices of families and young adults to make it much more manageable. And identifying those prioritized areas that really do need to be addressed to adequately prepare families. So, you're looking at attunement, right? You're looking at attachment, you're looking at trauma, separation, grief, and loss, right? The list goes on of really what those primary areas are that really need to be addressed. But, it was the voices of families and young adults and content experts that really guided us through that process.

**TOM OATES** [00:11:07]: Now, I'm going to go down a rabbit hole here because I'm curious how many of us - and we all raise our hands virtually - have gone through the various types of training curricula that you have to for either your job or, you know, who knows what it is that you're going through, but we've all kinda gone through it. But we're not behind the scenes developing it. So, this is curious. I'm just curious here. First off, how long did this period take?

**SUE COHICK** [00:11:34]: Well, this is a five-year project, right? So, year one was a lot of gathering that information together and then beginning to develop the curriculum that extended into year two. And then keep in mind, once you create something, you want to test it, right? You want to make sure that it's going to work. So, we not only collected information, put it together, created it, but then we also tested it in pilot sites across the country so that we could see was our premise, right, did it really work. So, we've been testing it since year three, getting feedback from those pilot sites, all of which Katina and Jessie from Florida were involved in, Francis from Colorado. All of that feedback came back to us and now we're just doing the final edits based upon all of the improvements that they suggested we consider.

**TOM OATES** [00:12:30]: You mentioned how much and the volume of what you guys had collected, and I'm sure all of it had value. How did, how did you help narrow it down?

**SUE COHICK** [00:12:40]: Yeah, not easy, right? Because every idea is a good idea. But again, it was really going back and vetting it with those families that have lived experience because they really know what

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information they need. It's those young adults that had had some engagement in our child welfare system helping to guide us again on, here's this slant that you really need to consider. Or content experts. You know, somebody like Bruce Perry, who is internationally known for his knowledge on trauma and brain development, really going to him and saying which way do we lean on this? So, it wasn't that, it wasn't that we created the edits. We responded to the information that was coming back to us that really was suggesting the editing process.

**TOM OATES** [00:13:31]: So, you mentioned pilot sites. Could you walk, walk me through, you know, kind of who and what that was consulted and able to provide some review and feedback?

**SUE COHICK** [00:13:43]: Sure. Sure. And help me - there's eight - so help me keep track that I'm citing eight. So, a combination of sites like Francis that were a state administered, state overseeing, county administered. So, Colorado was one of those. And then sites that were state administered, that might include Missouri, Kansas, Illinois. We had privatized state, Florida. We had Oklahoma, Georgia. And then we also had the Salt River Pima Maricopa Tribe pilot it so that we could also see how this curriculum needed to be adapted to support the culture of American Indian Alaska Native.

**TOM OATES** [00:14:30]: Well, that's eight, there you go. Congratulations. When, when you received the feedback, I'm curious, too, was there anything there that surprised you?

**SUE COHICK** [00:14:43]: I don't think anything surprised us, not that I can actually recall. We were, we were relieved, to be honest, when the feedback came back saying this is good. We found that our participants loved the videos, they loved the interaction, the activities. I know Jessie and Katina and Francis can speak to that probably better than myself. But a lot of feedback was, this is, this is what we need. We did focus groups and there was two critical messages or themes that came back from those focus groups to help us really evaluate the effect of this. One of those pieces of feedback was this, we finally understand what trauma-informed means. It's not just using the word trauma-informed. It's actually we now understand how that impacts the development of the child and how it impacts how they respond to things, right? It's not, I'm choosing to act out. It's, I'm demonstrating the pain that I felt from something that happened to me previously.

[00:15:58]: And the second message that we heard consistently across the focus groups was, I now recognize my journey is more than just supporting the child. It's actually also supporting the child's family because most likely this child is going to be returning home. So, I have to understand, accept, and value the role that the child's family plays so that I can help support them, as well. And I, I'd really, I'd ask Jessie and Katina just to add to that because they were in it and know much more. So, Jessie, do you want to share?

**JESSIE HOWELL** [00:16:41]: Yeah. I was just going to say I think the feedback we've gotten has been amazing about partnering with families, just like Sue said, and just what that looks like and it's just exciting to watch. But then also just them going to the trauma informed, I think there's a lot of curriculums out there that tell you about trauma, but they don't tell you what to do. How do you partner with this child? How do you help them heal and attack - not attack - but, like, address what is causing this trauma so they can move forward and heal in a way that they didn't even think was possible. That's what I love about NTDC and that's the feedback we get is, you know what, we know how to partner with children in a way that we wouldn't have if we hadn't done NTDC. And having trained other curriculums, I just never saw a good, like, stepping stool of how to do that. It's more like, oh, just

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beware, this is going to happen. But not really, hey, here's what to do. And so, that's the feedback we've gotten is people feel equipped. And I think it's exciting.

**KATINA HAND** [00:17:54]: And I think it also causes people to really think through things and understand, okay, this child is not just acting out just because but there's a reasoning to it. And the main thing that I've seen is that people are so compelled about learning, about the brain. And that's like one of the big aha moments, learning how the brain is affected by trauma. And now we are giving them tools. This is what you can do to help in this situation. So, I agree with Sue and Jessie.

**FRANCIS AGYAKWA** [00:18:23]: Yeah and, Katina, one of the things that sort of surprised me, but not, not really was also to see the forgiveness that foster parents who were coming in with, right? A lot of times they hear about things that have happened to a child in the child welfare system perpetrated by the family. And they come with this anger and this resentment for their family and thinking that they don't deserve these children. And NTDC really prepared our foster parents to see the family themselves, the trauma the family themselves have been through, right? And how that historical piece has impacted their own parenting abilities and supporting them as Sue was saying earlier, that this was not just a curriculum that let's bring foster parents together, train them in the care of the children. However, making sure that they also understand that healing and caring involves the parents of the children as well, right? I heard this beautiful saying that has never left me saying that you can't take a sick tree from a sick forest and grow and heal it and then bring it back to the sick forest. You have to really heal the entire forest. And I think that NTDC made that concept very real and clear to our parents who were coming into the training.

**TOM OATES** [00:19:51]: Thank you guys so much for going into kind of like, the depth and truly the aha moments. And I want to get, I want to pull some of that more as we continue on, but let's get into the nuts and bolts, right, just at the very beginning, start talking about like that, maybe some of the technical barriers or, or how is this actually being, being delivered and the content itself. So, Katina, let me start with you about this content in the curriculum being delivered because there are classroom trainings and classroom themes and then there's what's called right time training. Could, could you break down for me at the beginning of alright, how does somebody receive this curriculum?

**KATINA HAND** [00:20:31]: So, the training is easy to administer, definitely. It can be either done in a classroom or it could be done remote. And for us, we immediately had to go into remote. Because when the pandemic happened, I had one in-person class and the very next week we were doing remote. So, it was a lot of trial and error of learning remote, but we got through it. So, the curriculum is providing structure because all of the materials that's provided to you with your training guides, the parent guides, they're easy to follow. They're easy to maneuver through. It tells you exactly what to do, what to say, how to do the different activities that are being provided. And I think it, it does very well with the whole concept.

[00:21:21]: As far as the right time trainings, those trainings are provided when you need them. So, for instance, if a foster parent is in the midst of fostering and they want to know more about sensory integration - well, they can go and take a training on sensory integration which will give them more additional information on that topic. But I think it's really well put and easily able to be delivered.

**TOM OATES** [00:21:46]: But just to confirm - yeah, go ahead, Sue.

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**SUE COHICK** [00:21:48]: I was just going to add if you'll allow me, - there's actually three components. So, I just want to make sure that we are clear about all three of those. So, the first one is the self-assessment, which is actually a survey that the family takes, right? If I'm a family and I want to become a foster parent, what NTDC provides is the opportunity for that parent to do a little bit of self-discovery about themselves before they even get into the classroom environment. So, I learn a little bit about my strengths, my challenge areas, so that I can tune in a little bit more in that classroom environment to those areas. And then from that, I go into the classroom environment which Katina said remote or in person, I learn about more content. And then as I graduate through that classroom environment, the right time training, as Katina said, is available for families throughout their journey. It could be when I finish classroom instruction. It can be after I have a placement. It can be after I adopt a child. Those right time trainings are available at any point in time. So, sorry, Tom. I just wanted to make sure we got all three components in there.

**TOM OATES** [00:22:59]: No, I just, yeah, I wanted to make sure that people understood that the classroom is not kind of self-paced. It's you're, you are with a group of people, just like you would be physically in class. But this right now, right now, being delivered remotely, but then the right time trainings become something you need at the right time when someone's got an initial question, how can I understand what's going on and then have the tools to maybe do something about it. Right. So, Katina, you mentioned that this was easy to facilitate. So, explain to me for an agency that says, hey, this sounds like a great idea - who's going to teach it? What do you require from a facilitator or a trainer in this case?

**KATINA HAND** [00:23:44]: I think it's helpful for a facilitator to have knowledge about child welfare, have some good organizational skills, the ability to engage a class. The curriculum is designed in a way that it gives you again, the step-by-step directions on what to do, what to say, how to do the activity. It's easy to learn. I would say it helps to deliver the curriculum with a co-facilitator which is a foster or adoptive parent, because they give so much lived experience based on the topics that we're teaching. It's well laid out that practically anybody can pick it up and teach it, I would say.

**TOM OATES** [00:24:25]: Well, you talk about a co-facilitator so, let's talk with your co-facilitator. Jessie, explain to me, you know, then what the, not only as a facilitator or a trainer, but then what else you're able to add? So, if someone is thinking about great, we can have this staff person provide the training, but if we partner them with a co-facilitator, talk to me about the benefit on that side.

**JESSIE HOWELL** [00:24:49]: Yeah. So, I think the benefit that I can bring as a foster parent is just that lived, like she said, lived experience where that's, this, let me tell you the story of how this played out in my home. And let me tell you how this really did work for me. Because so often, we're getting training in all areas of life, right, that we're like, yeah, that sounds good, but none of you've actually lived it. And so, just having that to say, hey, actually this made a big difference and it's helpful. Just, it's almost like the little amen at the end of the curriculum of amen, this is going to work and it's worth sticking to. And so, I think that's really what that foster or adoptive parent brings to this curriculum because it's really laid out well, it's got the information, but just that amen at the end really helps paint it to life and allow people to have more buy-in.

**TOM OATES** [00:25:42]: Well, there's got to be a value of explaining a situation and talking to a group about it versus saying, okay, here's what this looks like. And if you had something here, reactions such as this or I had a scenario where it was x, y, and z and here's how - like whatever topic we're talking about - here's how that's going to be and, you know, here's how it's going to be displayed, here's. And

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meanwhile, you're already stressed. So, how do you manage yourself in this situation? So, getting that kind of, you know, preparing for or thinking about, oh my gosh, that's, this is exactly what Jessie talked about. So, I do X, Y, and Z, or I take a deep breath and I step back.

**SUE COHICK** [00:26:24]: And you know, the other advantage that we heard from the evaluative feedback as it was coming back is that the participants felt more comfortable being transparent in the classroom environment, saying what they knew and what they didn't know. They were much more candid and feeling much more comfortable about being candid with a parent being in the room and sharing their experiences. So, it worked both ways.

**TOM OATES** [00:26:52]: Interesting. It's almost being talked at versus having a conversation back and forth. Katina?

**KATINA HAND** [00:26:59]: I also want to add that having the foster parent, adoptive parent, co-facilitator adds another piece to it. It provides the participants an added support. This is your first support person here, that if you have any other questions about how this process works or have you gone through this or how did you do, how did you deal with a certain situation? They can always go back to that co-facilitator to ask those questions. And that's the great thing about it. It's providing them connections, right in class.

**FRANCIS AGYAKWA** [00:27:31]: And I'll also add to that, the component of what makes NTDC such a unique curriculum is that their component also gives you a reality check as a foster parent coming in, right? Because when you do the self-assessment, you get an awakening realizing, oh, you know, I really didn't know all of this about myself and am I ready, even, to go through this process? Or do I need to take time to really work on myself and be ready to go through the process. And as a trainer, you also get this idea and layout of how do I go into the training knowing that people already know something before coming in, so, how do I make the time very valuable by not going back to talk about things that they already know but really discussing the areas that they might need improvement and support in. And I, so far, I have not seen any curriculum that provided that for our foster parents.

**TOM OATES** [00:28:32]: Well, you bring up a neat part of the, the content, and Sue had touched base on this earlier. But you've got these various themes and they are from what I understand, they're a bit interchangeable. That jurisdiction if they, hey, we want to hit on these certain topics or those certain topics, they're able to have some flexibility. Would you be able to - and I'm not sure if this, if Sue or Katina or whoever wants to open this one up, I'll toss it out there for you - explain the various themes at a high level and maybe how a jurisdiction or even a trainer would, would use them and the flexibility that they're allowed.

**SUE COHICK** [00:29:13]: So, I could start and then I'm going to turn it over to the rest of you guys to really add in. But we use that terminology a lot when we're describing NTDC - a Lego model. So, if you think about, if I would give each of us the same Legos in our hands - five red, five blue, five purple, five yellow - we all start out with the same Legos. But if I would ask each of us to build something out of the Legos that are in our hands, even though we all had the same Legos, our pictures, our sculptures would be different. So NTDC is like that. We're giving the Legos and we're saying based upon our experience, here's a good way to consider how to put the Legos together. But because each state, each site, each jurisdiction, each tribal community is different, we wanted to build it so that you could use the Legos that are in your hand and your picture is going to look different than mine. So, everybody has the opportunity to take out, put in, rearrange. But all of the content is provided, right? So, we're giving you

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all the Legos. How you build it is up to you. But you guys talk a little bit more about that. I know Francis, Katina, Jessie - you have different experiences with it.

**KATINA HAND** [00:30:38]: I think that's what I like a lot about the curriculum is that there's so much to choose from because you have anything from child development to attachment, kinship parenting, adoptions, parenting children with trauma - there's just so much to choose from. And like Sue said, depending on that particular agency, you can pick and choose which one meets your agency's requirements. And I think that is the greatest thing about having that flexibility. Sometimes you want to do all of them, but because you have certain amount of hours for the trading, it's not possible to do all of them, but you have a wide range.

**FRANCIS AGYAKWA** [00:31:18]: Yes, Katina, and I love what you're saying. We were looking at it, sort of categorize it into, like, this four big blocks. Like, what are the foundational level classes that you can help teach? So, for instance, we are child development, attachment, separation, and then you go to expanding family. What does that look like and what are those topics or themes that can go under like unification, foster care as a means of support, not just for adoption, preparing and managing intrusive questions. And then you go to those specialized areas like mental health consideration and impacts of substance abuse. And then you also have the power in the practicality. And so, you get to, as an agency or as a county, depending on the work that you guys are already doing, what would be the important blocks that you need to focus on? Do I do more foundation? Do I do more expanding families? Do I do more sort of specialized content? And so NTDC, that is the flexibility that it provides that. Other curriculums, you buy it and you have to just follow a regimen that hasn't been designed by the developers and there's no room for any flexibility.

**TOM OATES** [00:32:36]: You know, with that, it sounds like at first glance, if something's not there, like one of the Legos isn't there, then it's not there. But I want to - and this is something that we had talked about before we had recorded and I want to get this, this out and I want you guys to be able to articulate this - that there are a couple of key overarching messages and topics that are woven across all the themes. And this really gets back to some of those big picture characteristics that Sue talked about. Can you explain kind of those woven topics, what they are and why it's so important that participants hear this message kind of in multiple themes through multiple areas.

**SUE COHICK** [00:33:17]: So, I can start and then you guys add in, okay. So, definitely some of the themes that go across all of, all of the content. The importance of the child's family, how to value, how to support, how to be inclusive of the child's family. And we don't even use terminology within the curriculum. We don't say the child birth family, we say the child's parents because the child still belongs to their parents until there's a legal change. So, that's one of our themes that goes across, Certainly the impact of trauma and how trauma can influence the brain development. That's another theme that goes throughout is really about trauma and what causes that trauma. So, for our children that experience separation from their family, they're also experiencing grief and loss. And how that separation grief loss can lead to traumatic events, right? For children, its much more significant time is defined much differently than for adults. So, even though we look at things and we say, well, you know, the child was only in the system a few months - to that child, it felt like an eternity. So, really the impact of that separation loss and grief, and how that results in a traumatic event for that child. What else do you guys, help me think about other things that might be themes throughout.

**JESSIE HOWELL** [00:34:52]: I think the importance of attachment - and that goes back to the family and just that connection there. And just then also how to help create healthy attachments with you. And

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then also that it's not - and you being the foster family - but it's also not like a choice, that it's and, they can have a love for their foster family and an attachment to their foster family and their family. And so, I think that picture allows like just so much breath of life for these families who are going to partner with the, the whole family for healing and just allows them, it, because it's an, it's so consistent in every class, that message just keeps going back to, we're going to partner with families. And just that attachment that the room for grief, the room for trauma and healing. It's just, it's such a good, it continues in every lesson. It shows you how it plays out in real life. And so it's, it's just really great in each theme.

**KATINA HAND** [00:35:59]: Just want to add one of the great things that I like about each one themes is that it has a section for reflection and relevance. And that really provides the participant to really look into things a little bit deeper. Questions that will relate to them personally. Things they may not have even realized before that was there. Feelings that they may have about certain things. So, it really gets them to think deeply into this particular, a particular topic and how it relates to them personally.

**FRANCIS AGYAKWA** [00:36:34]: Yeah, and Katina, in addition to that, is also what is the cultural relevance to all of the things that we're talking about, right? It's woven into it. And I think until NTDC, personally as somebody who had trained and developed curriculum in, in, in my previous careers, that to be able to understand that trauma is experienced culturally from different individuals who identify differently. It's really important and relevant to preparing our foster parents, and that is also within and throughout. So, I like that.

**TOM OATES** [00:37:12]: You guys have all mentioned in these how personal it becomes for the parent, for the student. And that it's either the learning from or the interaction at the right time training. I wonder if we can peel this back a little bit because I'd love for somebody to, to get a sense of, of, kind of what's in it for the parents that they would be teaching. Would you have any senses or examples off the top of your head on where NTDC actually helps building skills versus just sharing information.

**KATINA HAND** [00:37:47]: I'd like to start with that. I think when we talk about the three R's in trauma - the regulate, relate and reasoning - participants in the class are able to grasp that concept that they must be regulated first before they can help regulate a child. And the way they respond to the situation is going to be dependent on, is it going to further escalate the situation, or it's going to calm the situation. They understand throughout classes that they are building a relationship with the child, and that's the foundation. So, they must do something relationally with that child, even after they regulate the child. Because their main goal is to get the cortex open so they can have that conversation. And so, it takes time. And even though they might not understand what were those three R's again, they can understand, okay, I need to get myself regulated first before I can regulate the child. I need to ensure the child is in a good, calm place, let's do something relational. Let's go take a walk, let's go take a drive in the car or whatever it is we need to do so that then they can be at that moment, okay, now we can go through the reasoning part because now they've calmed down enough, they're able to have a conversation with me now. And they understand that going through that technique is helpful. It's meaningful when you can go through the process that way. Because I think one of the aha moments for our parents is that okay, that really resonates. I can't calm down a child if I'm so riled up.

**TOM OATES** [00:39:16]: Well, it also gives somebody a sense of okay, I, I can control aspects of how I react, which can then impact those around me, as opposed to the event happened to me. It, the event happened, how do I react, how do I manage, and what do we do from there? It sounds like that people get a little bit more of a, of a game plan as opposed to a, just, a reaction and identification of what it is.

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**KATINA HAND** [00:39:46]: And what I love about the curriculum is that we go through questions and things as far as helping that participant identify how do you know when you're getting upset? And people can start thinking about it, like, what really does happen to me when I get upset? My palms get sweaty, my heart starts beating fast. For them to recognize those cues, okay, this is what's happening when I'm getting upset. So, if you know this about yourself, then we talk about what do you do to calm down? What helps you to get back to calm? And so, they can think about those things before they interact with the child. Okay, these are my cues I'm getting upset. Let me go do X, Y, or Z so I can calm down so that I can come back in. And it's all about being attuned also. And that's one of the characteristics we talk about throughout the entire curriculum is being attuned, because not only are you being attuned to yourself and those cues about yourself, but you're also recognizing those cues about the child. How do you know when they're getting upset? What are their little cues that you can recognize?

**TOM OATES** [00:40:54]: Jessie, I'm watching you nod your head here and talk about this resonating, it sounds like it really does resonate, not only from your experience as a, as a co-facilitator, but also as a parent, as well.

**JESSIE HOWELL** [00:41:06]: Oh, yeah. Learning how to identify where you are before you address anything going on in the room, that's a game changer. And I think that's just one of those things that we missed so big in our first training, you know, it was like, how, how do you handle yourself first? Because that's the thing you can control, you know? And so, just helping get that. And I love, we start off every class with the color wheel. Like where are you emotionally? Are you ready to learn? And so, just that, that piece alone of, like, a lot of people are not attuned. They don't know, like, oh, I'm really preoccupied right now. And we, and I think we get tired a lot, which we've decided was preoccupied and just, just having that conversation at the beginning of class of like where are you? Are you ready to learn? Helps get them in this rhythm of like, yeah, I need to know where I am when I'm dealing with my children. I need to know where I am when I'm learning in a class setting. It's just, it's a powerful tool to give to people and it's one I think most people lack. And so, it's just, it's, it's like, to me I love, because I think you walk away just a better human even and not just a foster parent. And so, that's what I love, you know, about that.

**TOM OATES** [00:42:22]: That's almost like an hourly check. Where are you right now and are you ready to deal with whatever it is in your life? That's, it's a skill that I think just, if you interact with any other human being on the planet, you know, you could probably benefit. You know, we talked about, like, the flexibility. So, but now I'm going to flip it a little bit and actually ask about the themes. When you guys think about all the themes available, I'm curious to if you would consider any specific ones, the ones you'd, you really must have or you really must share for any of those agencies out there that are, that are considering this. If there were a couple of those themes that, you know, you'd highlight and say, this one's really good. Or, we've had great experiences with this, with these themes. What would you recommend to others?

**KATINA HAND** [00:43:10]: For me, I would say trauma related behaviors and trauma-informed parenting, those are my favorites. Those are the ones that you really can see the light, the light bulbs going off in people's brains about the impact of trauma. Definitely.

**JESSIE HOWELL** [00:43:28]: I also think that child development is so good, because understanding what is a typical child development, how is that interfered during trauma and how do you start back with that

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and what does that look like? I also, the one I was thinking of is, well, my brain went blank, I'm sorry. I'll come back to it.

**TOM OATES** [00:43:51]: Okay.

**FRANCIS AGYAKWA** [00:43:52]: I will, I will step in. For me, I think, you know, as a state being part of Family First, implementing Family First here in Colorado, one of the themes that I cherish most is foster care as a means to support families and not as a means to adoption. And I'm not personally or professionally against adoption. But I think that a lot of times in my experience doing training, we have foster parents who are coming in and the main goal is these parents are evil. We are here to rescue these children and put them in our home because our home is safer. Versus no, we are here to support the families, to really learn the skills to care better for their children. Because children, no matter what, belong with their family and that theme is very, very critical. It also helps set the stage for really checking expectations of our foster parents who are coming in. In my experience, they've been so many disappointment with foster parents after they complete training and they think, oh, you know what, I'm going to just keep the kid, after fostering them, I'm going to keep the kid, And NTDC really supports you to understand the goal is to support an entire family and not just the child.

**KATINA HAND** [00:45:17]: I think it's so great you say that, Francis, because I don't think there's anybody that leaves class not knowing that they're going to work with the child and the family. And I love foster care means to support also because that hits home to let them know that sometimes these things are generational, the trauma that's going on. And I loved the Christy video that's been imported into that particular training, I've seen people tearing up and crying in class when they see that. I've had people tell me before I came in with this disposition, like you said, that parents are evil, they don't deserve their kids. But now when they can see, okay, I can understand, they were not supported in the past.

**TOM OATES** [00:46:00]: Yeah, Katina, you mentioned the Christy video. Can you explain that?

**KATINA HAND** [00:46:04]: Well, the Christy video just goes through a timeline where in the beginning you may think that it's the child that you're looking at, that you're hearing about. But it starts off with the child that grows up to be that parent that goes through that same trauma and now her child gets taken away. But you can understand because of her circumstances, she didn't have anybody that showed her how to parent or how to support her through what she was going through. Her parent was absent, so she could only handle what she could, what was before her and didn't have that support. So, now that cycle is repeating. Now her baby's in foster care, she's having to go through the same thing. And with that, when you think about it, I usually ask my class when she's given a case plan to say that she needs to go through substance abuse treatment, she needs housing, she needs a job, some mental health - just all kinds of things. If she doesn't have that support, she's going to feel hopeless. And sometimes that foster parent is that support for that parent to get through things. So, if they can have that empathy and compassion, it helps them to be able to work closely with that parent.

**TOM OATES** [00:47:13]: Guys, before we wrap up, I want to, and you shared a little bit - but when you think of those aha moments that parents have, have shared with you, what is, what are those things that pop to mind first, Jessie?

**JESSIE HOWELL** [00:47:28]: Not to just keep on this same train, but obviously the partnering with parents is the thing that I see over and over. And then also like I, we, we used to teach another

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curriculum and I would get calls like, what do I do? We're in this situation, we talked about this in training. And now I'm getting calls saying like, hey, so, my kid was flipped, you know, they were dysregulated and what do I do? They, they knew exactly what to do. I did exactly what you said because we practiced it, because we knew how to handle it. I checked myself and I realized I needed to do something first, you know, just watching the curriculum have hands and feet in these families and the way it's changing families for the better, is just like, it's just the most beautiful thing. So, I think there's aha moments for everybody, but the big ones are, how do we partner with families well, and how do we make sure that we're fighting - fighting for this child is fighting for their family. And if you get nothing out of NTDC, you will get that for sure. And then also then, the how do we help children when they're having these behaviors? Because they don't know what to do with them, how do we help them have words and voice and to figure out what to do with those so that they can heal and their families can heal?

**TOM OATES** [00:48:52]: Well, the excitement that you guys have shared both in the development but also how you're seeing these kind of reactions from the implementation is really exciting to hear and thank you guys for sharing, right as we are on the cusp of of the release of this, to be able to share the, the what's to come hopefully when it comes, when it comes to training. Francis?

**FRANCIS AGYAKWA** [00:49:18]: I think one thing we haven't mentioned from the system perspective, I want to share to everybody that this is the most quality free thing you ever going to get in child welfare. I'm just saying I, as a training manager here in Colorado, we just spend about a 100 and, thousands to bring a trainer here to come train in a specific area that we needed. And a lot of curriculum out there, you are going to pay money for it. NTDC is free. And I know that when people hear free, they always think, oh, you know what, the quality must be bad. I'm telling you that this is free with an excellent quality. You will never get anywhere.

**TOM OATES** [00:50:07]: Well, if we hadn't heard it enough, just at what unfortunately, we're not recording the video of this Zoom call because all you'd see are smiles. And that's and that's what I'm getting back from Francis Agyakwa, Jessie Howell, Katina Hand, and Sue Cohick. Guys - thank you so much for diving deep into NTDC and sharing your time with us here on the Child Welfare Information Gateway podcast.

**FRANCIS AGYAKWA** [00:50:33]: Thank you for having us.

**KATINA HAND** [00:50:35]: Thank you.

**TOM OATES** [00:50:83]: Of course, we will have links to NTDC for foster and adoptive parents on this episode's webpage. Just head on over to [childwelfare.gov](http://childwelfare.gov) and just search podcasts. We'll also point you to additional training resources, including CAP learn, the Children's Bureau's learning management system, and additional resources surrounding supporting families. You can find all the episodes of the Child Welfare Information Gateway podcast by, well, subscribing to the Child Welfare Information Gateway podcast on Apple podcasts, Google Podcasts, Spotify, Stitcher, and SoundCloud. We are so happy to be able to bring you new episodes featuring what's new or interesting within child welfare each and every month.

[00:51:18]: Now if you're looking for any kind of information surrounding child welfare, including supporting your staff, tools and resources for families, data, policies, publications, contact information

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for partners or organizations in your area - just head on over to [childwelfare.gov](http://childwelfare.gov) or you can reach out to our information support specialists at [info@childwelfare.gov](mailto:info@childwelfare.gov). And they can help you find what you need to support your work, improving the practice, programs and services you provide to help strengthen families and protect children. Again, thanks so much for joining us each and every month. And my thanks to Sue Cohick from Spaulding for Children, Francis Agyakwa from Colorado's Division of Child Welfare, and Katina Hand and Jessie Howell from the Families First Network. Thank them all for spending their time with us here on the Child Welfare Information Gateway podcast. I'm Tom Oates. Have a great day.

**FEMALE NARRATOR** [00:52:13]: Thanks for joining us for this edition of the Child Welfare Information Gateway podcast. Child Welfare Information Gateway is available at [childwelfare.gov](http://childwelfare.gov) and is a service of the Children's Bureau, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services Administration for Children and Families. The views and opinions expressed on this podcast do not necessarily reflect on those of Information Gateway, or the Children's Bureau.