

What to know when you're looking for an Adoption Clinician

Adoption Competent Mental Health Clinician (C.A.S.E) This definition was developed by the Center for Adoption Support and Education in collaboration with a National Advisory Board comprised of leading adoption practitioners, researchers, advocates and policy makers and importantly, adoptive parents.

An adoption competent mental health professional has:

- The requisite professional education and professional licensure;
- A family-based, strengths-based, and evidence-based approach to working with adoptive families and birth families;
- A developmental and systemic approach to understanding and working with adoptive and birth families;
- Knowledge, clinical skills and experience in treating individuals with a history of abuse, neglect and/or trauma; and
- Knowledge, skills and experience in working with adoptive families and birth families.
- An adoption competent mental health professional understands the nature of adoption as a form of family formation and the different types of adoption; the clinical issues that are associated with separation and loss and attachment; the common developmental challenges in the experience of adoption; and the characteristics and skills that make adoptive families successful.
- An Adoption competent mental health professional is culturally competent with respect to the racial and cultural heritage of children and families.
- An adoption competent mental health professional is skilled in using a range of therapies to effectively engage birth, kinship, and adoptive families toward the mutual goal of helping individuals to heal, empowering parents to assume parental entitlement and authority, and assisting adoptive families to strengthen or develop and practice parenting skills that support healthy family relationships.
- An adoption competent mental health professional is skilled in advocating with other service systems on behalf of birth and adoptive families.

So How Do I Find One?

Selecting and Working With a Therapist Skilled in Adoption: Questions to ask

(Child Welfare Information Gateway. Available online at http://www.childwelfare.gov/pubs/f_therapist.cfm)

- What is your experience with adoption and adoption issues? (Parents should be specific about the adoption issues that affect their problem, such as open adoption, transracial adoption, searching for birth relatives, children who have experienced abuse or institutionalization, or children with attachment difficulties.)
- How long have you been in practice, and what degrees, licenses, or certifications do you have?
- What continuing clinical training have you had on adoption issues?
- Who oversaw your training?
- Do you include parents and other family members in the therapeutic process?
- Do you prefer to work with the entire family or only with the children?
- Do you give parents regular reports on a child's progress?
- Can you estimate a timeframe for the course of therapy?
- What approach to therapy do you use?
- What changes in the daily life of the child and family might we expect to see as a result of the therapy?
- Do you work with teachers, juvenile justice personnel, daycare providers & other important adults in a child's life?

Identifying a Trauma Informed Therapist: Questions to ask

- What are your credentials, education & training?
- What experience have you had in treating traumatic stress?
- How familiar are you with evidence-based treatment models for child trauma-related symptoms?
- How do you approach treatment of traumatic stress conditions?
- How do you approach therapy with children and their families who have been impacted by trauma?
- Describe a typical course of therapy (e.g. describe the core components of your treatment approach?)
- What would we do in a crisis? Would I be able to reach you? Who covers for you, if not?