

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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National Center for Adoption Competent Mental Health Services

Building Bridges to Improve Mental Health

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New Data Show Families in Adoption and Foster Care Lack Adoption-Competent Mental Health Care: Rhode Island Aims to Close the Gap

Washington, DC— Two national landmark [reports](#) released today by the Center for Adoption Support & Education (C.A.S.E.) reveal that adoptees, birth parents, adoptive parents, and kinship caregivers seek mental health services at nearly 3 times the rate of the general U.S. population. Yet only about a quarter of families say their clinicians are adoption competent. These findings highlight an urgent need for providers to be trained to understand the complexities of adoption and foster care, including issues related to attachment, identity, and loss.

To help address this gap, Rhode Island is working with the [National Center for Adoption-Competent Mental Health Services](#) (National Center) to strengthen its mental health workforce and expand access to specialized adoption-competent care statewide. The National Center is an initiative of C.A.S.E.

Rhode Island is one of five states proactively working with the National Center to close this gap. Through the partnership, the state is enhancing coordination across child welfare and behavioral health systems and expanding access to clinicians trained in adoption-competent care. Adoption Rhode Island, which recently

became a licensed behavioral health organization, is helping to increase the state's capacity to deliver adoption-competent mental health services to children, youth, and families.

"These new national findings reinforce the urgent need for systems that truly understand the unique experiences of children, youth, and families navigating foster care, adoption, and kinship care," said **Mary Wichansky**, Director of the National Center. "We're proud to partner with Rhode Island as they build on their cross-agency collaboration and expand access to adoption-competent support."

"Children and families deserve access to mental health providers who understand the complexities of adoption and foster care," said **Darlene Allen**, CEO and Executive Director of Adoption Rhode Island. "Our partnership with the National Center gives us a roadmap for building that capacity statewide. Together, with our other state partners, we're laying the foundation to offer more coordinated, specialized services that meet children and families where they are. This work will ultimately support better outcomes and stronger family bonds."

This statewide effort includes collaboration among the Rhode Island Executive Office of Health and Human Services, Rhode Island Department of Children, Youth, and Families, Providence Public Schools, Rhode Island Department of Education, Family Service Rhode Island, The Providence Center, Parent Support Network of Rhode Island, Tides Family Services, Neighborhood Health Plan of Rhode Island, Rhode Island Department of Labor and Training, Optum, and Adoption Rhode Island.

The initiative is supported through a grant from the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services' Administration for Children & Families (Children's Bureau).

Read the reports:

[Perspectives on Mental Health Services from Birth and Adoptive Parents, Adoptees, and Other Members of Adoption Kinship Networks](#)
[Training for Adoption Competency Effectiveness Study](#)

To request an interview with Darlene Allen or Mary Wichansky, please contact Joann Donnellan.

About the National Center for Adoption-Competent Mental Health Services

The National Center strengthens the bridge between child welfare and mental health systems by increasing access to clinicians trained in adoption-competent care. Through evidence-informed training, targeted technical assistance, and a national Knowledge Hub, the nonprofit equips states, Tribal Nations, and Territories to better support children, youth, and families involved with foster care, guardianship, and adoption.