



PennState



adoption

Creating your Family

Hybrid Implementation Facilitation Manual



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Overview





Web-Based Thrive Universal Parenting Programs

The Thrive Initiative, which is a collaboration between the Department of Defense’s Office of the Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense for Military Community and Family Policy (DoD MC&FP) and the Clearinghouse for Military Family Readiness at Penn State (Clearinghouse), is a portfolio of evidence-informed parenting programs that are designed to empower parents (and caregivers) as they nurture children from the prenatal period through 18 years of age.

There are four developmentally age-appropriate core, universal parenting programs within the Thrive Initiative—Take Root, Sprout, Grow, and Branch Out—that are available in a web-based format at no cost to military and civilian parents. Each of the Thrive Initiative parenting programs convey knowledge, skills, and strategies within three overarching learning domains: positive parenting practices, stress management, and child physical-health promotion.

Parents and caregivers can register and complete a Thrive program by visiting the Thrive website at <https://thrive.psu.edu>. Anyone who requires assistance can contact the Clearinghouse Thrive Team at thrive@psu.edu or call the Clearinghouse Technical Assistance Team at 1-877-382-9185.

Thrive Initiative Program Areas			
Universal Parenting Programs			
Take Root	Sprout	Grow	Branch Out
Infants (0 to 6 months)	Preschool (3 to 5 years)	Grades K–5 (5 to 10 years)	Grades 6–12 (10 to 18 years)
Infants (6 to 12 months)			
Infants & Toddlers (1 to 3 years)			



Thrive Initiative Universal Supplemental Parent-Education Modules

The Thrive Initiative’s supplemental parent-education modules explore a variety of topics and offer families opportunities to build on information and strategies they have learned in any of the Thrive Initiative’s four core, universal parenting programs. The supplemental modules are available in a web-based format at no cost to military and civilian parents, and each module takes approximately 2 hours to complete. Participating in an age-appropriate universal parenting program before engaging with any of the supplemental modules may help parents attain the most benefits as they work to reach the goals they set for their families.

As a professional, you can incorporate supplemental modules into your educational outreach for military or civilian families by using this manual. The manual should be used as a guide as you engage with families in the hybrid implementation of a supplemental module. This implementation can involve group-based, synchronous facilitation (i.e., face-to-face or virtual) while parents complete a supplemental module online. A description follows that explains how a supplemental module can be offered to participants in a hybrid implementation format.

Regardless of the type of delivery selected, facilitators must receive training, as outlined in this facilitation manual, prior to hybrid implementation.

Delivery Type 1: Supplemental Extension

If you are offering group-based, hybrid implementation of one of the Thrive Initiative’s core, universal parenting programs, a supplemental module can be added as an extension to the existing virtual or face-to-face sessions. Just add two additional meeting times.

Delivery Type 2: Supplemental Stand Alone

You may have previously offered one or more of the Thrive Initiative’s core, universal parenting programs to various groups. If so, you can recruit participants who have completed any of the four core, universal parenting programs to become part of a new group. These participants may have completed one or more universal parenting programs as a member of a hybrid implementation group(s), or they may have completed programming online independently. In addition, you may be aware of families who are seeking to adopt a child who could benefit from participating in this supplemental module. As a result of your recruitment efforts, a new group will be formed to complete the supplemental module online. This group will meet three times, face-to-face or virtually, to discuss the supplemental module’s content.



Purpose of the *Adoption: Creating your Family* Hybrid Implementation Facilitation Manual

This facilitation manual offers professionals guidance regarding how to coordinate and deliver the ***Adoption: Creating your Family*** supplemental module in a hybrid implementation format. Specifically, this manual will provide the facilitator with implementation instruction for group-based—face-to-face or virtual—synchronous interactions while parents complete the supplemental module online asynchronously.

The ***Adoption: Creating your Family*** supplemental module includes six sessions. The supplemental module can be accessed by parents on the Thrive Initiative’s website: <https://thrive.psu.edu/modules/supplemental/>.

Objectives of the *Adoption: Creating your Family* Hybrid Implementation Facilitation Manual

- Outline the components of the ***Adoption: Creating your Family*** supplemental module.
- Provide guidance to professionals as they implement face-to-face or virtual group meetings with parents as the parents complete the supplemental module.
- Offer templates that can be used as or part of recruitment tools, parent workbooks, scheduling examples, and preprinted resources.

Training





Hybrid Facilitation Training



The Thrive Initiative provides general facilitation training to prepare you, the facilitator, for hybrid implementation of a supplemental module.

- _____ If you have previously delivered a Thrive Initiative universal program or supplemental module in a hybrid implementation format, you likely completed the recommended *Hybrid Facilitation Training*. Please proceed to the next section in this facilitation manual titled **Supplemental Module Training**.

- _____ If you are a new facilitator who has not facilitated a core, universal Thrive Initiative parenting program, you will need to complete the *Hybrid Facilitation Training* in order to offer a supplemental parent-education module in a hybrid format to parents and caregivers who have previously participated in a core, universal Thrive Initiative parenting program.

If you have not already done so, please complete the online *Hybrid Facilitation Training* to learn about the following aspects of quality facilitation:

- Fidelity;
- Program reach;
- Participant responsiveness;
- Logistics, dosage, and content adherence;
- Delivery quality; and
- Facilitation skills to assist during challenging situations encountered with parents.

To register for the *Hybrid Facilitation Training*, visit the Thrive Initiative's Facilitator Portal at <https://thrivefacilitator.lms.militaryfamilies.psu.edu>

Enter (or create) a user name and password to log in. Under "Thrive Facilitator Training," you will see a row titled "Hybrid Implementation Facilitation Training." Click on it, and select "Hybrid Facilitation Training" to access the course.

The *Hybrid Facilitation Training* takes approximately 2 hours to complete. You can complete this course at your own pace. It does not need to be completed all at once. You can take breaks as the online management system will recognize where you are in the completion process upon your return to the course.



Supplemental-Module Training

The next step in this training is to complete each web-based supplemental module that you wish to facilitate in a hybrid implementation format. This manual will guide you as you complete the web-based **Adoption: Creating your Family** supplemental module and will help prepare you to implement the supplemental module to a group of program participants using a hybrid approach.

When you are logged in to the Thrive Facilitator Portal, you are automatically enrolled in and have access to the Thrive Initiative's web-based universal parenting programs and supplemental parent-education modules. Click on the **Adoption: Creating your Family** supplemental module, and select "Go to course" to begin. As you complete the supplemental module, download the tools and resources provided. You can use these resources to learn more about a topic and to support your discussions during your face-to-face or virtual meetings with the group of participants you enroll in hybrid implementation of the supplemental module.

Use of the Hybrid Implementation Facilitation Manual

After you complete the online *Hybrid Facilitation Training* and the online **Adoption: Creating your Family** supplemental module, continue to use this facilitation manual as your guide to prepare for hybrid implementation of the supplemental module to a group of program participants.



Do not move forward until you have completed the Hybrid Facilitation Training and the Adoption: Creating your Family supplemental module.

Planning





Roles of Facilitator(s)

In the *Hybrid Facilitation Training*, you learned about two roles that a facilitator may fulfill—the coordinating facilitator and the delivery facilitator. These roles may be fulfilled by two separate individuals, or you may perform both roles.

If an individual is the designated **coordinating facilitator**, this individual will likely support the following aspects of coordination for hybrid implementation of the supplemental module:

- Participant recruitment;
- Participant registration;
- Participant attendance tracking; and,
- General preparation for delivery of the face-to-face or virtual group meetings that will discuss the supplemental module, such as scheduling meeting times, conducting marketing efforts, setting up a meeting space (e.g., reserving a location, scheduling a teleconferencing platform like Zoom), preparing or purchasing supplies, providing technical assistance on the day of meetings, and offering general support for the delivery facilitator.

If an individual is the designated **delivery facilitator**, this individual will likely do the following:

- Prepare for each meeting according to this facilitation manual, which is specific to the **Adoption: Creating your Family** supplemental module.
- Facilitate the discussion at each hybrid implementation meeting.

Initial Preparation

Format

Determine if you will be offering face-to-face meetings, virtual meetings, or a combination of the two. When group-based hybrid programming is offered for supplemental modules in any format, the participant groups are intended to include 10 – 12 families. Depending on your organization’s specifics and limitations, unique factors may influence your planning (e.g., limits on a face-to-face group size due to space restrictions). This facilitation manual provides a framework for small, multi-family group meetings. Remain flexible so you can focus on serving your families in the best way possible.

Location

- If you are offering face-to-face meetings in a group format, you will need to find a meeting space that can accommodate a group comfortably (e.g., ample tables and chairs; a safe, accessible location).



- If you are offering virtual meetings, choose a virtual or video conferencing platform (e.g., Microsoft Teams) that does not require paid access for your families and offers adequate privacy protection. Ensure that the individual(s) who assume the role(s) of coordinating facilitator and delivery facilitator have ample training on utilizing the platform and/or they understand how to access technical support.

Recruitment and Advertising for Hybrid Implementation

Recruitment and Advertising Strategies

For hybrid implementation of the **Adoption: Creating your Family** supplemental module, recruit parents who are considering adoption, are currently involved in the adoption process, or who have expanded their family through adoption. Recruitment will vary depending on the way you plan to offer hybrid programming. Consider the following delivery types:

Delivery Type 1: Supplemental Extension

If group-based, hybrid implementation of the supplemental module is being added as an extension of existing virtual or face-to-face sessions of one of the Thrive Initiative core, universal parenting programs, you will form your group at the time you recruit participants for that identified universal parenting program. Follow the recruitment guidance in the *Hybrid Implementation Facilitation Manual* for the selected core, universal parenting program, and proceed to [page 27](#) of this facilitation manual to learn how to add two additional meeting sessions for this supplemental parent-education module.

Delivery Type 2: Supplemental Stand Alone

If you previously offered one, or more, of the Thrive Initiative's core, universal parenting programs to various groups, your recruitment efforts for facilitating this supplemental parent-education module will result in a new group being formed. Participants of this group will complete the web-based supplemental module independently and engage with you, the facilitator, as a group in three face-to-face or virtual meetings. The meetings will involve interactive discussions of the supplemental module's content. To recruit participants, use the contact information you have collected from previous program participants to market the parent-education module and create the new group. Consider creating a flyer and disseminating it and other invitational messaging via email, paper mail, or social media. You may also extend your marketing to families who have independently completed one or more of the Thrive Initiative's universal parenting programs.

In addition, you could consider mass marketing strategies like advertising in child care centers, local schools, youth centers, gyms, shopping centers, grocery stores, family centers, community centers, websites, social media pages, local newspapers, adoption agencies, and organizational newsletters.



Before you start recruiting and advertising, confirm how the group will meet (i.e., virtually or face-to-face), and secure the dates and the times you will be meeting. When recruiting and advertising, share how the group will meet and the location (if meeting in person); explain some basic information about the dates, times, structure, and time commitment; and list a Point of Contact (POC) for questions. Other information that you may want to consider adding could include whether child care will be provided, whether snacks or refreshments will be available, or whether there is a registration requirement (e.g., must have previously participated/completed a Thrive core, universal parenting program).

Registration

A participating parent should have completed one (or more) of the Thrive Initiative age-graded core, universal parenting programs (i.e., Take Root, Sprout, Grow, or Branch Out) prior to engaging in any of the Thrive Initiative supplemental modules. Therefore, the participants you recruit will have already created a Thrive account prior to your first hybrid implementation meeting for the supplemental module, and they will understand the expectations of hybrid implementation. Upon registration, ensure parents have already participated in a Thrive core, universal program.



Note: Participants who participate in a Thrive Initiative core, universal program receive a Certificate of Completion upon finishing the program.

To help with any organizational paperwork that may need to be completed as you recruit and register participants, the Thrive Initiative has created a template for tracking participant recruitment. See *Appendix B*.

Attendance

During hybrid implementation meetings for the supplemental module, you are encouraged to take attendance in accordance with your organization's policies.

Program Preparation

Prepare and Disseminate Meeting Information

Whether your hybrid implementation is face-to-face or virtual, you will need to provide your participants with the following:

- The Parent Welcome Letter for the **Adoption: Creating your Family** supplemental module.



Note: There is a Parent Workbook and Syllabus for each delivery type (i.e., Supplemental Extension or Supplemental Stand Alone). Please be sure to access, download, and share the appropriate Parent Workbook and Syllabus with your participants.



This workbook provides detailed information on how to access the supplemental module on the Thrive Initiative website and specific information about the dates, times, location, topics, and homework for each meeting.

Prior to hosting the first session of your hybrid implementation meetings, prepare and disseminate a welcome letter to the registered participants. Include information such as the name and contact information of the facilitator(s), the dates and times of the meetings, and the meeting location (i.e., physical address or web link). See *Appendix C: Parent Welcome Letter template*.

In addition, list the specifics of your implementation, such as the dates and times of each meeting and homework due dates, in the *Parent Workbook and Syllabus*. After the file has been personalized with your delivery information, decide whether you will print and mail copies or share the file electronically with participants. Ensure all participants receive a copy of the *Parent Workbook and Syllabus* upon registration or before the first meeting.

Check Your Supplies

Hybrid implementation of the supplemental module in a **face-to-face format** will require the following:

- Computers for participants to sign in to the Thrive Initiative website and to use to complete the supplemental module,
- Internet access for participants and the facilitator(s),
- A physical meeting space with tables and chairs,
- A flip chart or whiteboard/blackboard with markers or chalk, and
- Pencils/pens for participants.

Hybrid implementation of the supplemental module in a **virtual format** will require the following:

- Computers for participants to sign in to the Thrive Initiative website and to use to complete the supplemental module;
- Internet access for participants and the facilitator(s) for the online meetings; and
- Access for participants and the facilitator(s) to a virtual or video-conferencing platform that includes shared workspaces such as screen sharing or a whiteboard feature.



Note: For virtual hybrid implementation, the facilitator or designated support person should have a telephone available and should have provided the telephone number to participants prior to the meetings in case they encounter technical difficulties in joining the virtual platform.

Implementation





Overview of Hybrid Implementation of the Supplemental Module

During the hybrid implementation of a supplemental module, parents independently complete portions of a supplemental module online, and, then, they meet with you (or the delivery facilitator) either virtually or face-to-face to discuss the content and further their knowledge gains and skill acquisition.

Online Supplemental Module – *Adoption: Creating your Family*

The *Adoption: Creating your Family* supplemental module includes six sessions. The supplemental module can be accessed on the Thrive Initiative website at <https://thrive.psu.edu/modules/supplemental/>.

- **Below is a brief summary of the supplemental module content:**

- **Session One: Welcome**

This session includes an overview of the module that includes a welcome and learning objectives.

- **Session Two: The Adoption Process, Key Decisions, Language**

This session describes the 7 steps of the adoption process and the key decisions potential parents must make as they embark on the adoption journey. The session also includes a glossary of terms that are commonly used by adoption agencies and other organizations that work with families who are considering or pursuing adoption.

- **Session Three: The Triad & 5 Core Issues**

This session explores the adoption triad (e.g., birth parent(s), adoptive parent(s), adoptees) and examines five core issues that affect and influence each member of the triad.

- **Session Four: Types of Adoptions**

This session outlines the various types of adoption options available to families and the specific requirements prospective families must meet for each type of adoption.

- **Session Five: Welcoming the Adoptee into the Home**

This session covers how families can prepare for a child's arrival, strategies to support the child's transition into the home, tips for talking with the child about adoption, how to navigate various challenges (e.g., medical, developmental, behavioral), and the importance of incorporating the child's birth culture into your family life.

- **Session Six: Wrap-Up**

This session outlines the key steps to completing an adoption and concludes the module.



Supplemental Module Meetings

Interactions with parents related to the supplemental module can be completed in two or three group-based meetings, depending on the delivery type (i.e., in person, virtually, or a combination of the two).

In this facilitation manual, the schedule of events, potential discussion questions, and activity prompts are provided for the two types of groups that can be formed for hybrid implementation meetings.

Overview of the Types of Hybrid Implementation for Supplemental Module Meetings

An outline follows that discusses the two hybrid supplemental module implementation delivery types covered in this facilitation manual.




*Please note, the agenda and delivery instructions for each type of implementation are color-coded in this facilitation manual. Delivery Type 1 is color-coded as **green**.*

Delivery Type 1: Supplemental Extension

After the hybrid implementation of one of the Thrive Initiative core, universal parenting programs has occurred, a supplemental module can be added as an extension of the existing virtual or face-to-face sessions of that universal parenting program by adding two additional meeting times.

- In this delivery type, the facilitator introduces the supplemental module meeting content during the final session of hybrid implementation of the offered core, universal parenting program. Allow approximately 20 additional minutes to explain the supplemental module and provide instructions on how to access the module. At this time, assign participants homework that includes *Sessions 1, 2, and 3* of the Adoption supplemental module.
- Supplemental Module Meeting 1: Discuss *Sessions 1, 2, and 3* (45- to 60-minute meeting). Assign *Sessions 4, 5, and 6* as homework.
- Supplemental Module Meeting 2: Discuss *Sessions 4, 5, 6, and Wrap-Up and Resource Sharing* (60-minute meeting).



 Please note, the agenda and delivery instructions for each type of implementation are color-coded in this facilitation manual. Delivery Type 2 is color-coded as **purple**.

Delivery Type 2: Supplemental Stand Alone

This delivery type encompasses the formation of a new group of families that consists of individuals who may have previously participated in a Thrive Initiative core, universal parenting program. These participants may have completed one or more universal parenting programs as a member of a hybrid implementation group(s), or they may have completed programming online independently. In addition, you may be aware of families who are seeking to adopt a child who could benefit from participating in this supplemental module. As a result of your recruitment efforts, a new group will be formed to complete the supplemental module online. This group will meet three times, face-to-face or virtually, to discuss the supplemental module's content.

- Participants are recruited based on their completion of any of the Thrive Initiative core, universal parenting programs (i.e., group-based or independent completion).
Note: Participants who participate in a Thrive Initiative core, universal program receive a Certificate of Completion upon finishing the program.
- Intake Meeting: Overview of the Supplemental Module (45- to 60-minute meeting). Assign participants *Sessions 1, 2, and 3* as homework.
- Supplemental Module Meeting 1: Discuss *Sessions 1, 2, and 3* (45- to 60-minute meeting). Assign *Sessions 4, 5, and 6* as homework.
- Supplemental Module Meeting 2: Discuss *Sessions 4, 5, 6, and Wrap-Up and Resource Sharing* (60-minute meeting).

Meeting Agenda



Facilitator's Meeting Guide

The next section of the facilitation manual will guide you through the meeting agendas, so you can engage participants in processing and practicing skills from each of the sessions of the online supplemental module. Before each meeting, read the appropriate meeting agenda thoroughly, and prepare to use the prompts to lead discussions.



There are two parts for this section. You only need to review the part that reflects the hybrid implementation delivery type you have selected.

Delivery Type 1: Supplemental Extension



[Content begins on page 27](#)

This is an extension of a hybrid implementation of one of the Thrive Initiative core, universal parenting programs that should be delivered to an existing group.

Delivery Type 2: Supplemental Stand Alone



[Content begins on page 65](#)

This encompasses the formation of a new group of families that consists of individuals who have participated in a Thrive Initiative core, universal parenting program or individuals who are contemplating adoption..

Delivery Type 1: Supplemental Extension



This is an extension of a hybrid implementation of one of the Thrive Initiative core, universal parenting programs that should be delivered to an existing group.

Introduction



Delivery Type 1: Supplemental Extension

The following instructions are only relevant to the ***Supplemental Extension*** of hybrid implementation of the supplemental module. Because your group is currently formed and already participating in active sessions, you will need less time to explain the meeting process or engage in participant introductions. Include the following steps in your final session of the hybrid implementation of the universal parenting program you are offering. Allow 20 additional minutes for these steps to be covered.

Introduction (20 minutes)
Homework

Overview: Introduction Meeting

(20 minutes added to last universal program session)

Step 1: Provide Overview of the Supplemental Module

Step 2: Review Syllabus

Step 3: Share Expectations

Step 4: Registration and Check for Online Content Access

Step 5: Assign Homework



Step 1: Provide an Overview of the Supplemental Module (10 minutes)

Discuss the following topics with your participants:

- _____ **Adoption: Creating your Family** is an online supplemental module for parents and caregivers who are considering expanding their family through adoption.
- _____ This module is designed to provide information parents and caregivers can use to prepare for, understand, and engage in the adoption process.
- _____ During the online supplemental module sessions and throughout the hybrid implementation meetings, information and parenting strategies that parents can use and adapt, as necessary, to fit their individual circumstances and family needs will be disseminated. The supplemental module content is designed to help parents and caregivers build on their existing skills and strategies, so they can effectively make decisions about and navigate the adoption process.
- _____ Some of the content that is read and practiced in the supplemental module and discussed in the hybrid implementation meetings may be familiar to the parents, and they may already know about and use the disseminated information. Therefore, they may use the meeting time as an opportunity to realize, appreciate, and share what already works for them and their family.
- _____ **Adoption: Creating your Family** includes six sessions.

After participating in the online supplemental module sessions and the hybrid implementation meetings, parents and caregivers should be able to do the following:

- Understand key adoption terms and legal requirements.
- Outline the seven steps of the adoption process in international and domestic adoptions.
- Consider key decisions before beginning the adoption journey, such as the type of adoption to pursue and whether prospective parent(s) want/have to work with an adoption agency or a law office.
- Recognize how identity, grief and loss, guilt and shame, and rejection affect birth parents, adoptees, and adoptive parents.



- Consider the different types of adoptions, and compare the advantages and disadvantages of international and domestic adoptions.
- Understand the unique needs of children in the foster care system and the foster care adoption process.
- Define special needs adoption, and explore the resources that may be available to families who choose this adoption path.
- Identify potential medical, developmental, and behavioral conditions of internationally adopted children and the resources available to support the child and family.
- Explore what cultural competence means and how to interact with people from different cultures, and learn how to integrate a child's culture and traditions, especially in international adoptions, into family life.
- Understand adoption considerations for military families and available resources.

Step 2: Review the Syllabus (5 minutes)

Provide copies or screen share a copy of the Parent Workbook and Syllabus for the **Adoption: Creating your Family** supplemental module. Review the Summary of Training, and highlight the section where the participants can find pertinent information.

Step 3: Set Expectations (2 minutes)

Set realistic expectations with your participants. Let them know they will be asked to independently complete the online supplemental module and come to meetings ready for discussion. Because the participants will be independently completing the module sessions, you must ensure your participants complete the supplemental module in its entirety. By completing the module, participants will gain valuable knowledge from the content and interaction activities.



In the two following meetings, you will use content, covered in the supplemental module, to facilitate interaction that provides participants opportunities for community building, reflection, and discussion with you and other participants who are considering or currently involved in the adoption process.



Step 4: [If needed] Registration and Check for Online Content Access (2 minutes)

Explain how participants can access the supplemental module online. Offer support to help with any technological questions. All participants will have previously set up a Thrive account, but you need to ensure they can log in and find the information they need to get started or progress in the supplemental module.

Step 5: Assign Homework (1 minute)

Ask participants to complete the following module sessions from the **Adoption: Creating your Family** supplemental module in advance of the second meeting:

- Session One: Welcome
- Session Two: The Adoption Process, Key Decisions, Language
- Session Three: The Triad & 5 Core Issues

If possible, show the pages in the Parent Workbook and Syllabus for the **Adoption: Creating your Family** supplemental module. Encourage your participants to complete all of the exercises and discussion questions for the assignments **prior to each of the meetings.**

Supplemental Module Meeting 1 should be scheduled **at least 1 week** after the *Wrap-Up* and *Resource Sharing* meeting from the Thrive Initiative core, universal parenting program hybrid implementation has been completed. Using this timing allows your participants 1 week to complete the supplemental module content for *Session One (Welcome)*, *Session Two (The Adoption Process, Key Decisions, Language)*, and *Session Three (The Triad & 5 Core Issues)*, and gives them time to practice some of the strategies they have learned.

Meeting 1



Discuss Sessions 1, 2, and 3

Meeting (*60 minutes*)
Homework

Overview of Meeting 1

Step 1: Provide Reintroduction

Step 2: Restate the Ground Rules

Step 3: Start Discussion

Step 4: Assign Homework

Step 5: Adjourn



Step 1: Allow Families an Opportunity to Reintroduce Themselves (3 minutes)

Lead a quick, fun, or positive icebreaker for additional community building. Revisit the list from the Intake Meeting section of the Thrive Initiative core, universal parenting program Hybrid Implementation Manual (i.e., Take Root, Sprout, Grow, Branch Out) that was implemented, and incorporate a new icebreaker that was not used during those meetings.

Step 2: Restate the Ground Rules (2 minutes)

Review the ground rules previously brainstormed, and ask if any new rules need to be added.

Step 3: Start Discussion (50 minutes)

During Supplemental Module Meeting 1, discuss the following questions as a group.

Session One: Welcome (10 minutes)

Provide an overview of the supplemental module using the following points that are taught in the supplemental module:

- Creating a family through adoption can be exciting, nerve-wracking, overwhelming, stressful, and wonderful.
- Adoption is a topic you may have only heard about, or you may know people who have gone through the process. You may know you want to adopt, but you may also want to be sure you have all of the information necessary as you start the process.
- By participating in this module, you will be able to consider your readiness for adoption and find answers to questions you may have to help you make informed decisions for your family.

After completing this learning module, you will be able to do the following:

- Understand key adoption terms and legal requirements.
- Outline the seven steps of the adoption process in international and domestic adoptions.



- Consider key decisions before beginning the adoption journey, such as the type of adoption you want to pursue and whether you want/have to work with an adoption agency or a law office.
- Recognize how identity, grief and loss, guilt and shame, and rejection affect birth parents, adoptees, and adoptive parents.
- Consider the different types of adoptions, and compare the advantages and disadvantages of international and domestic adoptions.
- Understand the unique needs of children in the foster care system and the foster care adoption process.
- Define special needs adoption, and explore the resources that may be available to families who choose this adoption path.
- Identify potential medical, developmental, and behavioral conditions of internationally adopted children and the resources available to support your child and family.
- Explore what cultural competence means and how to interact with people from different cultures, and learn how to integrate a child's culture and traditions, especially in international adoptions, into your family life.
- Understand adoption considerations for military families and available resources.



Ask the participants the following questions to generate discussion:

_____ You were encouraged to think about and reflect on a variety of questions related to adoption, such as your motivation for pursuing adoption and the type of adoption you wish to consider. What motivations do you have for pursuing adoption?

_____ You were also asked to consider whom you could talk to about all of the decisions you will have to make during the adoption process. Who are the family members or friends in your support system, and how can they help you as you navigate this journey?



Ask the following question, and solicit answers from a few participants to generate discussion:

_____ What is one goal you hope to achieve by completing this supplemental module?



Session Two: The Adoption Process, Key Decisions, Language
Step 1: Research and Select Adoption Type; Step 2: Choose an
Adoption Professional; Step 3: Complete Paperwork: Interaction
and Discussion (5 minutes)



Review this section of the module with the participants by offering the following information:

- Regardless of the type of adoption you decide to enter into, you will need to complete seven steps in order to adopt a child and bring that child into your home.
- Prospective adoptive parents need to consider the following factors when researching and selecting the type of adoption they wish to pursue:
 - o Domestic or International
 - o Open or Closed
 - o Infant or Older Child
 - o Same Race or Different Race
 - o Adopt or Foster to Adopt
- Prospective adoptive parents need to decide how much professional support they want and what type of help they would like to receive. Options include working with an adoption agency or obtaining assistance from an attorney or law firm to complete the adoption process.
- Depending on the type of adoption you choose, you will need to complete paperwork, such as an agency’s application form and an adoptive parent profile. If pursuing a domestic adoption, you may be asked to write a “Dear Birth Mother” letter. If you decide to pursue an international adoption, you will be asked to complete a Dossier, which includes documents, such as financial statements and reference letters.



Generate discussion among participants using the following questions:

- _____ What kind of professional support would you like to have as you proceed with the adoption process, and why did you choose that option? If undecided, what questions do you still have?

- _____ Have you crafted a “Dear Birth Mother” letter or video to share with an agency? If so, what did you include in the letter/video?



Step 4: Complete a Home Study: Interaction and Discussion

(5 minutes)

Review this section of the module with the participants by offering the following information:

- Step 4 of the adoption process includes completing a home study. During a home study, a social worker will work with your family to learn about all family members and will discuss with you why you want to adopt a child. The social worker will also visit your home to make sure it is safe and suitable for a child.
- In the session, you had the opportunity to listen to the Taylor family's experience with Steps 2-4 of the adoption process.

Generate discussion among participants using the following question:

_____ Consider the Taylor family's experience with choosing an adoption professional, completing paperwork, and participating in a home study. What part of their experience resonated with you or raised questions for you? Feel free to share your perspective with the group.

Step 5: Search for Child; Step 6: Bring Child Home; Step 7: Finalize Adoption: Interaction and Discussion (5 minutes)

Review this section of the module with the participants by offering the following information:

- If you are working with an adoption agency, they will match the needs and strengths of your adoptive family with those of a child. If you are searching for a child on your own, you might use social media platforms or hire an advertising agency to create an adoptive parent profile that can be circulated online and in community settings.
- After you are matched with a child, you will need to complete paperwork, and the type of paperwork you must fill out will depend on where the child lives. You will also have to travel, often on short notice, to pick up your child.
- Adoptive families must also complete post-placement visits to assess adjustment and connect parents to resources.
- Approximately 6 months after the child is placed in the home, you, as adoptive parents, will go to court to finalize the adoption process. After the court hearing, your new family has the same rights and responsibilities as a biological family.



Generate discussion among participants using the following questions:

The Taylor family's experience with Steps 5-7 of the adoption process is highlighted in the module.

_____ What is one idea, reaction, or feeling you had while listening to the Taylor family share about their experience in searching for their child, traveling to pick up their child, and finalizing their child's adoption?

Key Decisions in the Adoption Process; The Language of Adoption: Interaction and Discussion *(5 minutes)*

Review this section of the module with the participants by offering the following information:

- Prospective adoptive parents begin their adoption journey by making several key decisions. These key decisions include answering the following questions:
 1. Should we pursue a domestic or international adoption?
 2. Do we want an open or closed adoption?
 3. Will we need to work with an adoption agency, or can we adopt independently using a private attorney?
- In addition, the session provided a list of glossary terms you can reference to help you understand the concepts discussed in the module. You can download the glossary and use it as you complete the module.

Generate discussion among participants using the following question:

_____ Do you have questions about any of the concepts and terms discussed, thus far, in this module?

Facilitator Tip

If needed to aid discussion, download and have the glossary of terms accessible to you during the group discussion.



Session 3: The Triad & 5 Core Issues

Triad Group Member: Birth Parents (Identity, Grief, Loss, Guilt and Shame, and Rejection): Interaction and Discussion (6 minutes)



Review this section of the module with the participants by offering the following information:

- Adoption is a lifelong experience that unites and links three groups of people—birth families, adoptees, and adoptive families—into a triad forever. Each member of the triad will experience and be impacted by the following five core issues:
 - Identity
 - Grief
 - Loss
 - Guilt and Shame
 - Rejection
- Birth parents are the least studied, least understood, and least served members of the adoption triad and are often considered the invisible members of the adoption triad.
- The isolation and invisibility experienced by some birth parents may be a personal choice or could be a result of the adoption system and its legal requirements of full relinquishment, secrecy, and anonymity.
- The module discussed how birth parents can experience the five core issues and how you can support birth parents during and after the adoption process. You also had the opportunity to hear about how Colette, a birth parent, experienced some of the core issues.



Facilitator Tip

If needed to aid discussion, you can share some of the ways in which birth parents can experience the five core issues.

- **Identity:** Birth parents may feel incomplete because they are parents, but a child is not physically present in their lives. In addition, their status as parents is generally not acknowledged among family and friends.
- **Grief:** After the birth and placement of the child, birth mothers' grief may manifest as sorrow or depression as the loss becomes more real.



- **Loss:** Birth parents may also experience loss due to the absence of recognized grieving processes or rituals—such as openly acknowledging the adoption, which is often hindered by stigma—and from unanswered questions, which result from the confidentiality of closed adoptions, they may have about the child.
- **Guilt and Shame:** Birth parents may experience deep shame and guilt that stems from unplanned pregnancy, societal stigma, secrecy, and the belief that placing their child for adoption reflects personal failure. These feelings can be intensified by a lack of open acknowledgment, supportive dialogue, and opportunities to process their emotions.
- **Rejection:** Birth parents (especially birth mothers) may struggle with feelings of irresponsibility; fear of judgment; and real and anticipated rejection from society, loved ones, and even their child. These feelings can lead them to avoid social situations and expect rejection in many areas of their lives.



Generate discussion among participants using the following questions:

In the session, you had the opportunity to consider how gaining insight into the birth parents' experiences could guide your family's approach to the three key decisions in the adoption process.

- _____ What are your thoughts about pursuing a domestic or international adoption?
- _____ What are your thoughts about completing an open or closed adoption?
- _____ What are your thoughts about using an adoption agency or adopting independently using a private attorney?

Triad Group Member: Adoptees: (Identity, Grief and Loss, Guilt and Shame, and Rejection): Interaction and Discussion (7 minutes)



Review this section of the module with the participants by offering the following information:

- Adoptees, like all triad members, will experience the five core issues at different points throughout their lives.
- Due to circumstances beyond their control, adoptees often have incomplete knowledge about why they were relinquished, and many may wonder if they were simply a "mistake" or an "accident."



- The module discussed how adoptees can experience the five core issues and how you can support adoptees during and after the adoption process. You also had the opportunity to hear about how Emily, an adoptee, experienced some of the core issues.
- The module also described how using positive adoption language can help promote a healthy self-image for adoptees.



Facilitator Tip

If needed to aid discussion, you can share some of the ways in which adoptees can experience the five core issues.

- **Identity:** Adoptees may struggle to form a stable sense of identity due to limited knowledge of their past, which can lead to complex emotions such as anger, rejection, or confusion toward birth and adoptive parents. They may also experience feelings of rootlessness and self-hatred. Adolescent adoptees may fantasize about who and what their birth parents are like.
- **Grief and Loss:** Infants sense and grieve the loss of the birth mother's familiar voice, smell, and pattern of movement. For adoptees who were part of closed and/or international adoptions, they lose their birth parents and, possibly, extended family members. Adoptees may also lose their medical history and background, which could impact most aspects of their lives.
- **Guilt and Shame:** Adoptees may believe they are to blame for their adoption, and they may feel guilt and shame for being and/or looking "different" from their adoptive family. They might struggle with guilt because they want to learn about or meet their birth parents and fear this desire will hurt their adoptive family. Some also feel guilty for having a better life than their birth family, especially if their birth family faces hardship (e.g., poverty, limited opportunities).
- **Rejection:** Adoptees, as children and/or as adults, may wonder why they were placed for adoption or what was "wrong" with them that caused their birth parents to "give them up" and reject them.



Generate discussion among participants using the following questions:

_____ How can you use positive adoption language when discussing adoption and the adoption triad with others?

_____ After participating in this discussion and in relation to supporting adoptees with the five core issues, what is one strategy or idea you would like to try in your own family?



_____ Which one of the three key decisions in the adoption process has been most influenced by what you learned about how adoptees experience the five core issues? How so?

Triad Group Member: Adoptive Parents (Identity, Grief, Loss, Guilt and Shame, and Rejection): Interaction and Discussion (7 minutes)

 **Review this section of the module with the participants by offering the following information:**

- Adults and families who choose to create or grow their family through adoption are unique, but many share some common characteristics, such as experiencing infidelity or wanting to care for a child in need.
- Adoptive parents also encounter the five core issues as they navigate parenthood through adoption. The issues may be heightened for first-time parents, who are stepping into their roles without prior caregiving experience, compared to those who have already parented biological children.
- The module discusses how adoptive parents can experience the five core issues and how you can support adoptive parents, such as yourselves, during and after the adoption process. You also had the opportunity to hear about how Matt, an adoptive father, experienced some of the core issues.

Facilitator Tip

If needed to aid discussion, you can share some of the ways in which adoptive parents can experience the five core issues.

- **Identity:** For many adoptive parents, becoming “mom” or “dad” fulfills a long-held dream, but some struggle to fully embrace this new identity. New and experienced parents may find it difficult to feel like a “real” parent because they did not have the child biologically. Families that have adopted through foster care may need time to develop and settle into their new identities. Parents who adopt internationally may work to build a family identity that honors and includes their child’s culture, race, and ethnicity.
- **Grief:** Adoptive parents, who cannot physically have a child, must grieve the fact that fertility treatments are not an option or did not work.



- **Loss:** Adoptive parents who have struggled to have a biological child and who want to create their family through adoption have likely experienced much loss. Whether due to infertility, failed pregnancy, stillbirth, or the death of a child, these adoptive parents have suffered tragedy and, perhaps, hardship. They may have lost the child they had dreamed of having and/or their combined genetic creation.
- **Guilt and Shame:** Some adoptive parents may struggle with guilt or shame related to infertility, question their bodies' abilities, or feel they have let their partners or families down. They may also feel conflicted about adopting a child from difficult circumstances, especially when they have the financial means that the child's birth family did not.
- **Rejection:** Adoptive parents may feel rejected by their own bodies, or even by God, and may worry that their partner or a child's birth parents won't see them as "good enough." These feelings can resurface after adoption, particularly if bonding is slow or when their child later explores his or her identity during adolescence.



Generate discussion among participants using the following questions:

- _____ How might adjusting your expectations about the adoption journey help you better support yourself and your child as your relationship grows over time?
- _____ In what ways can seeking support from others help you process your own emotions and create a more open, supportive environment for your child?

Step 4: Assign Homework (3 minutes)

Ask your participants to complete the following supplemental module sessions before your next meeting:

- Session 4: Types of Adoptions
- Session 5: Welcoming the Adoptee into the Home
- Session 6: Wrap-Up



Step 5: Adjourn (2 minute)

Supplemental Module Meeting 2 should be scheduled **at least 1 week after *Supplemental Module Meeting 1* has occurred**. This timing allows your participants 1 week to complete the supplemental module content for *Session Four (Types of Adoptions)*, *Session Five (Welcoming the Adoptee into the Home)*, and *Session Six (Wrap-Up)*.

The *Wrap-Up* section provides time for participants to practice some of the strategies they have learned and reflect on their progress in achieving their parenting goals. In addition, during this meeting, the supplemental module content is wrapped up, and additional resources are provided.

Meeting 2



**Discussion of Sessions 4, 5, and 6,
and the Wrap-Up and Resource Sharing**

Meeting (60 minutes)

Homework (none)

Overview of Meeting 2

Step 1: Provide an Icebreaker

Step 2: Restate the Ground Rules

Step 3: Start Discussion

**Step 4: Direct to Additional Resources/Register for
Additional Thrive Initiative Programming**

Step 5: Thank and Adjourn



Step 1: Engage Families in an Icebreaker Activity (4 minutes)

Lead a quick, fun, or positive icebreaker for additional community building. Revisit the list from the Intake Meeting section, and incorporate an icebreaker that was not used during the earlier meetings.

Step 2: Restate the Ground Rules (1 minute)

Review the ground rules previously brainstormed, and ask if any new rules need to be added.

Step 3: Start Discussion (45 minutes)

During Supplemental Module Meeting 2, discuss the following questions as a group.

Session Four: Types of Adoption

International Adoptions: Advantages and Disadvantages: Interaction and Discussion (3 minutes)

 **Review this section of the module with the participants by offering the following information:**

- The module described the advantages of completing an international adoption, such as the ability to choose a child based on your preferences and knowing expected costs associated with the adoption.
- The module also described the disadvantages of completing an international adoption, such as the potential for limited prenatal care of the birth mother and the unknown medical history of the child.

 **Generate discussion among participants using the following question:**

_____ How much influence do these advantages and disadvantages have on your decision about whether to pursue an international adoption?



Requirements for Completing International Adoptions: Interaction and Discussion *(3 minutes)*



Review this section of the module with the participants by offering the following information:

- To complete an international adoption and bring a child into the United States, adoptive parents must fulfill the requirements of state, federal, and foreign governmental authorities.
- The Hague Convention is an international agreement/treaty between participating countries to protect the children involved in international adoptions. The Hague Convention aims to protect children's best interests and prevent the abduction, exploitation, sale, and trafficking of children.



Generate discussion among participants using the following question:

_____ Each state has its own guidelines, requirements, and laws regarding adoption. What have you learned about your state's prerequisites and constraints?

Domestic Adoption: Interaction and Discussion *(3 minutes)*



Review this section of the module with the participants by offering the following information:

- Domestic adoption is defined as when both of the parents and the child reside in the same country.
- There are four specific types of domestic adoption that adoptive parents in the United States can consider:
 - Domestic infant
 - Foster care
 - Kinship
 - Native American
- Domestic infant is one of the most popular types of adoptions.



? Generate discussion among participants using the following questions:

_____ Why might you consider pursuing a domestic adoption?

_____ What reasons do you have for not pursuing a domestic adoption?

Foster Care; Becoming a Foster Parent: Interaction and Discussion

(4 minutes)

★ Review this section of the module with the participants by offering the following information:

- Foster care is a temporary arrangement in which adults provide care for a child(ren) whose birth parents are unable to do so due to a variety of circumstances, such as abuse, neglect, abandonment, or parental incarceration or substance misuse.
- Foster care is arranged through the court or a social service agency, and the primary goal is to reunite children with their birth parents.
- Reunification involves the process of returning children to the custody of their biological parents. If reunification is not possible, the goal is changed to adoption.
- There are many different types of foster care living arrangements, which include emergency, respite, relative/kinship, non-relative kin, traditional foster care, foster-to-adopt care, and transitional living homes.
- There is a high demand for foster parents in the United States.

? Generate discussion among participants using the following questions:

In the reflection, you were encouraged to consider your thoughts about assuming the role of a foster parent.

_____ Are you interested in becoming a foster parent?

_____ What concerns do you have about becoming a foster parent?



Adopting a Child of a Different Race: Interaction and Discussion

(3 minutes)

Review this section of the module with the participants by offering the following information:

- Adopting a child of a different race can occur through various forms of domestic adoption, such as foster care, private adoptions, and stepchildren adoption in interracial marriages and through international adoptions in which children are adopted from another country.
- The module highlighted challenges related to adopting a child of a different race, such as the potential loss of connection to the child's cultural or racial heritage and the likelihood that the family may attract attention from others. While some families welcome the visibility and differences this brings, others may feel uncomfortable or intimidated.
- Adoptive parents must develop cultural competence, which is defined as attitudes, knowledge, and skills that support their child's racial and cultural identity development.
- Adoptive parents may encounter stereotypes or negative assumptions about their child's race or background and must stay focused on meeting their child's needs and affirming their child's identity with love and acceptance.

Generate discussion among participants using the following question:

In the reflection, you were encouraged to answer a list of questions to help you begin to examine your thoughts and ideas about parenting a child whose background is different from yours.

_____ What insights or new information did answering these questions provide for you?

Adoptions of Children with Special Needs: Interaction and Discussion (3 minutes)

Review this section of the module with the participants by offering the following information:

- Children with special needs have a condition or history that can make placing them with a family who does not have some type of adoption assistance/subsidy difficult.



- Adoption assistance/subsidies may be available to help offset the costs of adopting U.S. children with special needs by providing state-specific benefits such as monthly payments, medical coverage, and support services through federally authorized programs.
- Support services may be available for families who adopt children with special needs, such as overnight care, day programs, personal care assistance, and counseling.



Facilitator Tip

- Guidelines for classifying a child as having special needs will vary by state and may include the following:
 - Children who have physical, medical, mental, learning, and emotional disabilities
 - Children of color—often due to not having enough families recruited to adopt waiting children
 - Children over 5 years old
 - Sibling groups of three or more children
 - Children who are currently healthy but are at risk for developing learning, emotional, behavioral, or physical disabilities
 - Children who were exposed to drugs, abuse, or neglect as infants and those with genetic pre-dispositions to mental illness and physical disabilities



Generate discussion among participants using the following question:

_____ Have you considered completing a special needs adoption? Why or why not?

Military Families and Adoption: Interaction and Discussion

(3 minutes)



Review this section of the module with the participants by offering the following information:

- Military families face unique challenges when navigating the adoption process, such as the potential for frequent moves and deployments.
- Working with adoption agencies that understand military life, culture, and families is essential for families, so they can navigate the process smoothly.
- The module described a variety of adoption-related benefits and resources available to military families.



Facilitator Tip

If participants are part of a military family, continue with the question below. If participants are not part of a military family, move to the next discussion section.



Generate discussion among participants using the following question:

_____ What benefits or resources that are available to military families have you explored?



Facilitator Tip

Encourage military-connected participants to download and reference the *Adoptions in Military Families: Resources and Considerations* resource in the parent toolkit.

Session Five: Welcoming the Adoptee into the Home

Prepare to Welcome Your Child Home: Interaction and Discussion

(3 minutes)



Review this section of the module with the participants by offering the following information:

- Depending on the type of adoption you will be completing, you will need to fulfill specific requirements and accommodations prior to bringing your child home.
- Prior to your child's arrival, you can complete the following tasks:
 - o Prepare your home by ensuring it is childproof for your child's age and gathering age-specific items and supplies for your child, such as clothing, diapers, bottles or sippy cups, and toiletries.
 - o Arrange for medical needs and treatment.
 - o Make plans for child care and/or education.
 - o Discuss expectations with members of your household and extended family, and inform them about when they can meet the child—particularly if you plan to spend time alone with the child upon bring the child home.
- The module also included a helpful resource, *Strategies to Help You Cope with Adoption Wait Times*, for you to reference while you wait for your child.



Facilitator Tip

If needed, restate the strategies provided in the resource, *Strategies to Help You Cope with Adoption Wait Times*, to help encourage discussion among participants. These strategies include the following:

- Manage your expectations by educating yourself about realistic timelines and maintaining open communication with your adoption agency or attorney.
- Grow your knowledge and community by participating in pre-adoption education, support groups, and events that are designed for waiting families. Parents can also learn about—or brush up on—parenting strategies, child development, and the specific challenges and joys of adoptive parenting.
- Plan for life with your child by researching and budgeting for the essentials your child may need based on his or her age, such as clothing, furniture, safety gear, feeding supplies, and toys.
- Practice self-care by prioritizing activities that support your mental and physical health, such as writing in a journal, practicing yoga, hiking, reading, or unplugging from screens. Parents who are struggling with emotions may want to talk with a counselor or therapist who is experienced in adoption.
- Live your life (with some modifications) by continuing to participate in the activities and engage in the events that bring you joy, like pursuing hobbies and spending time with friends and family. As a waiting parent, you may also choose to invest in yourself before the child arrives by taking a trip, achieving a personal aspiration, or accomplishing a professional goal.



Generate discussion among participants using the following questions:

_____ What steps, if any, have you taken to prepare for your child's arrival?

_____ What strategies have you used, or do you plan to use, to help you cope with adoption wait times?

Homecoming Day and the Post-Placement Period: Interaction and Discussion (3 minutes)



Review this section of the module with the participants by offering the following information:



- The day you bring your child home is often called “Gotcha Day.” Many adoptive families commemorate this important day with videos and photographs and continue to recognize the day each year.
- The days, weeks, and months that follow involve the child’s transition from their former environment to a new culture, home, and family. This period can be difficult and even traumatic, even if it begins with a brief “honeymoon period.”
- Before your child’s adoption is legalized, your family will have to complete a series of post-placement visits that intend to confirm the safety and well-being of the adopted child and the adoptive parents.



Generate discussion among participants using the following question:

_____ How would you like to commemorate your child’s arrival to your home?

Strategies to Ease the Transition for your Child and Family:

Interaction and Discussion (3 minutes)



Review this section of the module with the participants by offering the following information:

- Depending on your child’s age, adoption circumstances, and past transitions, your child and family may need time to adjust to living together.
- The module shared multiple strategies to help build your relationship with your child and establish a safe, comforting environment.



Facilitator Tip

If needed, restate the strategies shared in the module to encourage participant discussion. These strategies include the following:

- Create consistent routines with mealtimes and bedtimes.
- Encourage eye contact.
- Include gentle physical contact.
- Spend one-on-one time daily.
- Start with small gatherings and keep outings and social events low-key.
- Display a family photo that includes your child.



- Incorporate familiar elements into your home, such as foods, music, language, and cultural items from your child's birth country or previous home.
- Let your child help by giving your child small responsibilities around the home, and praise your child's efforts.
- Involve your child in family plans.
- Seek rest and support when needed.

 **Generate discussion among participants using the following question:**

_____ What transition strategies do you plan to incorporate into your family?

Talking about Adoption with your Child: Interaction and Discussion (4 minutes)

 **Review this section of the module with the participants by offering the following information:**

- Adoption should never be a secret. Every child deserves an honest, age-appropriate understanding of his or her origin.
- Parents can create an environment where adoption can be discussed freely, openly, and honestly.
- The module listed a variety of ways that parents can help their child learn about and develop his or her adoption story. You also had the opportunity to listen to an adoptee, Katie, share about how her family talked about adoption while she was growing up.

 **Facilitator Tip**

If needed, restate the strategies for talking to children about adoption that were shared in the module to encourage participant discussion. These strategies include the following:

- Initiate conversations about your child's life story.
- Show your child photos of the day you brought him or her home, and share the feelings you had leading up to that day.
- Talk about what you learned about your child from the adoption agency or caseworker.
- Read books with characters who are adopted.
- Discuss adoption on birthdays and holidays like Mother's/Father's Day.
- Recognize the day your child came home with Gotcha Day celebrations.



- Explain to your child that your child has the right to share his or her adoption story on his or her own terms. You can help your child create a short, simple version of the story—a narrative your child feels comfortable sharing with teachers, friends, or neighbors.
- Encourage your child to feel proud to be who he or she is and continue to remind your child that he or she is loved and is a valued member of the family.



Generate discussion among participants using the following questions:

The module encouraged you to reflect on how you plan to talk about adoption with your child.

- _____ How can you make sure your child always knows that he or she was adopted without the explanation being a single “big reveal”?
- _____ How will you keep the conversation open, so your child feels safe asking questions?
- _____ How might you respond if your child has big emotions or difficult questions about his or her adoption?

Navigating Medical, Developmental, and Behavioral Challenges: Interaction and Discussion (3 minutes)



Review this section of the module with the participants by offering the following information:

- Adopted children may encounter a range of medical, developmental, behavioral, and emotional challenges as they navigate their unique journey into a new family environment.
- Adoptive parents must approach these challenges with patience, empathy, and understanding and seek professional guidance and support when needed to help their child navigate and overcome these obstacles on their path toward healing and adjustment.
- The module described some of the most common health issues of internationally adopted children, such as hepatitis, Human Immunodeficiency Virus (HIV), behavioral problems, and developmental delays.



? Generate discussion among participants using the following question:

_____ What strategies, resources, and/or services might you use to help your child adjust to being a member of your family?

Culture Keeping: Interaction and Discussion (3 minutes)

★ Review this section of the module with the participants by offering the following information:

- Adoptive parents must prioritize maintaining their child's cultural identity, which may involve incorporating traditions, language, and customs from the child's birth culture into the family's daily lives.
- Culture keeping is when adoptive parents attempt to create ethnic connections for their internationally adopted children or for a child whose race is different from theirs.
- Adoptive parents can help their children connect with their cultural heritage in meaningful ways, such as enrolling the child in language or dance classes, sending the child to culture camps tailored to different countries, and reading traditional folktales together.

? Generate discussion among participants using the following question:

In the module, you were encouraged to reflect on how you could maintain your child's connection to his or her birth country or culture.

_____ If you are considering an international adoption, how could you incorporate culture keeping into your family's life?

Session Six: Conclusion

The Key Steps to Completing an Adoption: Interaction and Discussion (3 minutes)

★ Review this section of the module with the participants by offering the following information:



- The module lists the key steps to completing an adoption in addition to tips for military families.
- The parent toolkit includes resources to help prospective adoptive families assess their readiness and plan for the adoption journey. It also provides a book list and adoption resource guide parents can use to help them learn about and discuss adoption with their child.



Generate discussion among participants using the following questions:

- _____ What resources from the parent toolkit have you used or do you plan to use to help you as you navigate adoption?
- _____ For those who have already used some of the information shared in the resources, what has been most helpful so far?

Wrap-Up (1 minute)



Review this section of the module with the participants by offering the following information:

- You are commended for completing the supplemental module and participating in these group meetings. Your participation reflects your commitment to learning and being the best parent and caregiver you can be! Navigating this responsibility can be overwhelming. There may be many hurdles along the way, but you can overcome these obstacles as you learn about the adoption process and the resources and strategies that you and others in your child's life can use to help your child thrive.

Wrap-Up Module Discussion: Summary Questions (3 minutes)



Indicate to participants that you are wrapping up, and generate discussion among participants using all, or some, of the following questions:

- _____ Which topic discussed in the supplemental module was the most beneficial to you as a (prospective) parent? Why?



- _____ What strategies or skills did you learn in the supplemental module that you can use to help you achieve the goals you have for yourself and/or your family?

- _____ What has changed with your interactions with your family since before completing the supplemental module?

Step 4: Direct to Additional Resources and/or Register for Additional Thrive Initiative Programming (2 minutes)

Provide support and encouragement to your participants to explore other Thrive Initiative programming. Share and/or register participants for any additional hybrid implementation options that you plan to offer. Thrive Initiative programming may include any of the following:

Universal Programs

- **Take Root** is available for parents and caregivers of children who are between 0 and 3 years old.
- **Sprout** is available for parents and caregivers of children who are between 3 and 5 years old.
- **Grow** is available for parents and caregivers of children who are between 5 and 10 years old.
- **Branch Out** is available for parents and caregivers of children who are between the ages of 10 and 18 years old.

Supplemental Modules

Additional supplemental modules are available on a variety of topics and can be accessed online at <https://thrive.psu.edu/modules/supplemental/>.

Encourage participants to continue to visit the Thrive website, <https://thrive.psu.edu>, as their child develops and grows. They can access additional resources and materials like mini-booster modules, blog postings, parenting handouts, guides, and newsletters.

Step 5: Thank and Adjourn (1 minute)

Thank the participants for their involvement in the hybrid implementation group program.

Delivery Type 2: Supplemental Stand Alone



This encompasses the formation of a new group of families that consists of individuals who have participated in a Thrive Initiative core, universal parenting program, or who are considering adoption.

Intake and Introduction



Delivery Type 2: Supplemental Stand Alone

The following instructions are only relevant to the Supplemental Stand Alone hybrid implementation of the supplemental module. Because you are forming a new group, the participants will meet for three sessions, which begin with an Intake and Introduction Meeting. This meeting time will allow for rapport-building activities at the beginning of implementation, such as engaging in participant introductions and setting ground rules. Two overarching goals of implementing Thrive programming in a hybrid format are setting a positive tone and warmly engaging participants in the process.

Intake and Introduction (60 minutes) **Homework**

Overview: Introduction Meeting (60 minute session)

Step 1: Welcome

Step 2: Provide Overview of the Supplemental Module

Step 3: Complete Introductions and /or Ice Breaker(s)

Step 4: Set or Remind Participants of the Ground Rules

Step 5: Review Syllabus

Step 6: Share Expectations

Step 7: Offer Registration and Check for Online Content Access

Step 8: Assign Homework



Step 1: Welcome your Families (10 minutes)

Face-to-Face Meetings

- Welcome family members or families as they walk in the door. Smile, be friendly, and take a genuine interest in participants and their comfort level.
- Consider preparing reusable name tags so you can call each person by name. You can collect the name tags at the end of the meeting for use at the second meeting or ask the participants to bring them back to the second meeting.
- Help each person get settled and comfortable in the space. Be certain to prepare in advance. For example, have ample tables/desks and chairs, and set them up in an arrangement that will promote eye contact and ease of conversation.
- Track attendance if needed.

Virtual Meetings

If you (acting as a delivery facilitator) choose to complete group meetings virtually, you should partner with a coordinating facilitator or a co-host. Your partner can help you with technological issues and serve as an additional point-of-contact for your families in case they have any technological issues when joining or participating in the virtual meeting. This assistance will allow you to fully focus on interacting with your families during the meetings, and it will ensure adequate support is available for those families who may need extra help with technology.

Open the virtual meeting space early so participants can test their computer technology (i.e., video and audio) before the start of the meeting. Consider using music and a simple message via screen share as a digital waiting room so families can troubleshoot their audio as they enter the virtual space. A screen share example can be found in *Appendix D*.

Welcome your families as they join the virtual platform. Encourage participants to have their camera on and to enter their preferred name in the platform so you can call each individual by name. You might also have a Chat box prompt available to encourage friendly interaction (e.g., ask participants to share the name and age of their child).

If you are tracking attendance, let your coordinating facilitator help you with this task.



Step 2: Provide an Overview of the Supplemental Module

(10 minutes)

Take time to discuss the following topics with your participants:

_____ **Adoption: Creating your Family** is an online supplemental module for parents and caregivers who are considering expanding their family through adoption.

_____ This module is designed to provide information parents and caregivers can use to prepare for, understand, and engage in the adoption process.

_____ During the online supplemental module sessions and throughout the hybrid implementation meetings, information and parenting strategies that parents can use and adapt, as necessary, to fit their individual circumstances and family needs will be disseminated. The supplemental module content is designed to help parents and caregivers build on their existing skills and strategies, so they can effectively make decisions about and navigate the adoption process.

_____ Some of the content that is read and practiced in the supplemental module and discussed in the hybrid implementation meetings may be familiar to the parents, and they may already know about and use the disseminated information. Therefore, they may use the meeting time as an opportunity to realize, appreciate, and share what already works for them and their family.

_____ **Adoption: Creating your Family** includes six sessions.

After participating in the online supplemental module sessions and the hybrid implementation meetings, parents and caregivers should be able to do the following:

- Understand key adoption terms and legal requirements.
- Outline the seven steps of the adoption process in international and domestic adoptions.
- Consider key decisions before beginning the adoption journey, such as the type of adoption to pursue and whether prospective parent(s) want/have to work with an adoption agency or a law office.
- Recognize how identity, grief and loss, guilt and shame, and rejection affect birth parents, adoptees, and adoptive parents.



- Consider the different types of adoptions, and compare the advantages and disadvantages of international and domestic adoptions.
- Understand the unique needs of children in the foster care system and the foster care adoption process.
- Define special needs adoption, and explore the resources that may be available to families who choose this adoption path.
- Identify potential medical, developmental, and behavioral conditions of internationally adopted children and the resources available to support the child and family.
- Explore what cultural competence means and how to interact with people from different cultures, and learn how to integrate a child's culture and traditions, especially in international adoptions, into family life.
- Understand adoption considerations for military families and available resources.

Step 3: Complete Introductions and Icebreakers (10 minutes)

Start with a brief and modest introduction of yourself. Share any expertise you have regarding child development and include any other relevant characteristics about yourself that can help you relate to your participants (e.g., community member, organization, military affiliation). Then, engage the group in a strengths-based icebreaker to build relationships. Have the participants introduce themselves and answer an icebreaker question.



Examples of introduction and icebreaker questions follow:

- _____ Tell me your name, your coparent's name(s), your child's name, your child's age, and (pick one of the following):
 - _____ what you enjoy or look forward to most about parenting,
 - _____ what is one strength you bring to your parenting journey,
 - _____ what value or quality is most important to you in building a family or supporting children,
 - _____ a skill you use effectively in your parenting or when interacting with children, or
 - _____ an activity you enjoy doing with your child or other children.



Facilitator Tip

The families who are participating in the meeting may or may not have other children. Adjust the ice breaker questions to be mindful of each family's parenting experience. You can also start future meetings with an icebreaker if you find the families you are working with are reserved or quiet or would benefit from rapport building. Use your judgment, and avoid controversial topics. Note, for future meetings, consider using new or unused icebreakers from the list above.

Step 4: Set Ground Rules (5 minutes)

Stating some ground rules and, then, brainstorming a few together as a group may help families feel safe and supported as they share their parenting journey. You can start the brainstorming by offering a few sample ground rules, such as the following:

- You will always start on time.
- You will always end on time.
- You will turn your cell phone on vibrate and would like everyone else to do the same.
- If a group members must take a call, let them know they may quietly excuse themselves from the room (mute themselves if in a virtual meeting).

Other rules you may come up with, as a group, include the following:

- Adopt an open and supportive stance. Avoid judgment about other participants' parenting. We are all learning new parenting strategies and gaining new knowledge!
- One person speaks at a time.
- Assume positive intent.
- Use a respectful tone.
- Celebrate small wins when practicing new parenting skills!



This is also a good time to discuss with your participants your organization's confidentiality clauses. Briefly explain how mandated reporting requirements apply to statements made by participants related to child abuse or neglect.



Information to Cover:

Empty rectangular box for notes.

Ground Rules Set at Meeting:

Empty rectangular box for notes.



Step 5: Review Syllabus (5 minutes)

Provide copies or screen share a copy of the *Parent Workbook and Syllabus* for the **Adoption: Creating your Family** supplemental module. Review the Summary of Training, and highlight the section where the participants can find pertinent information.

Step 6: Set Expectations (5 minutes)

Set realistic expectations with your participants. Let them know they will be asked to independently complete the online supplemental module and come to meetings ready for discussion. Because the participants will be independently completing the module sessions, you must ensure your participants complete the supplemental module in its entirety. By completing the module, participants will gain valuable knowledge from the content and interaction activities.



In the two following meetings, you will use content, covered in the supplemental module, to facilitate interaction that provides participants with opportunities for community building, reflection, and discussion with you and other participants who are considering or currently involved in the adoption process.

Step 7: [If needed] Registration and Check for Online Content Access (10 minutes)

Complete any registration requirements for your organization. Then, explain how participants can access the supplemental module online. Offer support to help with any technological questions. All participants will have previously set up a Thrive Initiative account, but you need to ensure they can log in and find the information they need to get started or progress in the supplemental module.



Step 8: Assign Homework (1 minute)

Ask participants to complete the following module sessions from the **Adoption: Creating your Family** supplemental module content in advance of the second meeting:

- Session One: Welcome
- Session Two: The Adoption Process, Key Decisions, Language
- Session Three: The Triad & 5 Core Issues

If possible, show the pages in the of the Parent Workbook and Syllabus for the **Adoption: Creating your Family** supplemental module. Encourage your participants to complete all of the exercises and discussion questions for the assignments **prior to each of the meetings.**

Supplemental Module Meeting 1 should be scheduled **at least 1 week after the Intake/Introduction Meeting has occurred.** This timing allows your participants 1 week to complete the supplemental module content for *Session One (Welcome)*, *Session Two (The Adoption Process, Key Decisions, Language)*, and *Session Three (The Triad & 5 Core Issues)*, and gives them time to practice some of the strategies they have learned.

Meeting 1



Discussion Sessions 1, 2, and 3

Meeting (60 minutes)
Homework

Overview of Meeting 1

Step 1: Provide Reintroduction

Step 2: Restate the Ground Rules

Step 3: Start Discussion

Step 4: Assign Homework

Step 5: Adjourn



Step 1: Allow Families an Opportunity to Reintroduce Themselves (3 minutes)

Lead a quick, fun, or positive icebreaker for additional community building. Revisit the list from the Intake/Introduction Meeting section, and incorporate an icebreaker that was not used during that meeting.

Step 2: Restate the Ground Rules (2 minutes)

Review the ground rules previously brainstormed, and ask if any new rules need to be added.

Step 3: Start Discussion (50 minutes)

During Supplemental Module Meeting 1, discuss the following questions as a group.

Session One: Welcome (10 minutes)

Provide an overview of the supplemental module using the following points that are taught in the supplemental module:

- Creating a family through adoption can be exciting, nerve-wracking, overwhelming, stressful, and wonderful.
- Adoption is a topic you may have only heard about, or you may know people who have gone through the process. You may know you want to adopt, but you may also want to be sure you have all of the information necessary as you start the process.
- By participating in this module, you will be able to consider your readiness for adoption and find answers to questions you may have to help you make informed decisions for your family.

After completing this learning module, you will be able to do the following:

- Understand key adoption terms and legal requirements.
- Outline the seven steps of the adoption process in international and domestic adoptions.



- Consider key decisions before beginning the adoption journey, such as the type of adoption you want to pursue and whether you want/have to work with an adoption agency or a law office.
- Recognize how identity, grief and loss, guilt and shame, and rejection affect birth parents, adoptees, and adoptive parents.
- Consider the different types of adoptions, and compare the advantages and disadvantages of international and domestic adoptions.
- Understand the unique needs of children in the foster care system and the foster care adoption process.
- Define special needs adoption, and explore the resources that may be available to families who choose this adoption path.
- Identify potential medical, developmental, and behavioral conditions of internationally adopted children and the resources available to support your child and family.
- Explore what cultural competence means and how to interact with people from different cultures, and learn how to integrate a child's culture and traditions, especially in international adoptions, into your family life.
- Understand adoption considerations for military families and available resources.



Ask the participants the following questions to generate discussion:

_____ You were encouraged to think about and reflect on a variety of questions related to adoption, such as your motivation for pursuing adoption and the type of adoption you wish to consider. What motivations do you have for pursuing adoption?

_____ You were also asked to consider whom you could talk to about all of the decisions you will have to make during the adoption process. Who are the family members or friends in your support system, and how can they help you as you navigate this journey?



Ask the following question, and solicit answers from a few participants to generate discussion:

_____ What is one goal you hope to achieve by completing this supplemental module?



Session Two: The Adoption Process, Key Decisions, Language **Step 1: Research and Select Adoption Type; Step 2: Choose an** **Adoption Professional; Step 3: Complete Paperwork: Interaction and** **Discussion** (5 minutes)

Review this section of the module with the participants by offering the following information:

- Regardless of the type of adoption you decide to enter into, you will need to complete seven steps in order to adopt a child and bring that child into your home.
- Prospective adoptive parents need to consider the following factors when researching and selecting the type of adoption they wish to pursue:
 - o Domestic or International
 - o Open or Closed
 - o Infant or Older Child
 - o Same Race or Different Race
 - o Adopt or Foster to Adopt
- Prospective adoptive parents need to decide how much professional support they want and what type of help they would like to receive. Options include working with an adoption agency or obtaining assistance from an attorney or law firm to complete the adoption process.
- Depending on the type of adoption you choose, you will need to complete paperwork, such as an agency's application form and an adoptive parent profile. If pursuing a domestic adoption, you may be asked to write a "Dear Birth Mother" letter. If you decide to pursue an international adoption, you will be asked to complete a Dossier, which includes documents, such as financial statements and reference letters.

Generate discussion among participants using the following questions:

- _____ What kind of professional support would you like to have as you proceed with the adoption process, and why did you choose that option? If undecided, what questions do you still have?
- _____ Have you crafted a "Dear Birth Mother" letter or video to share with an agency? If so, what did you include in the letter/video?



Step 4: Complete a Home Study: Interaction and Discussion

(5 minutes)

Review this section of the module with the participants by offering the following information:

- Step 4 of the adoption process includes completing a home study. During a home study, a social worker will work with your family to learn about all family members and will discuss with you why you want to adopt a child. The social worker will also visit your home to make sure it is safe and suitable for a child.
- In the session, you had the opportunity to listen to the Taylor family's experience with Steps 2-4 of the adoption process.

Generate discussion among participants using the following question:

_____ Consider the Taylor family's experience with choosing an adoption professional, completing paperwork, and participating in a home study. What part of their experience resonated with you or raised questions for you? Feel free to share your perspective with the group.

Step 5: Search for Child; Step 6: Bring Child Home; Step 7: Finalize Adoption: Interaction and Discussion (5 minutes)

Review this section of the module with the participants by offering the following information:

- If you are working with an adoption agency, they will match the needs and strengths of your adoptive family with those of a child. If you are searching for a child on your own, you might use social media platforms or hire an advertising agency to create an adoptive parent profile that can be circulated online and in community settings.
- After you are matched with a child, you will need to complete paperwork, and the type of paperwork you must fill out will depend on where the child lives. You will also have to travel, often on short notice, to pick up your child.
- Adoptive families must also complete post-placement visits to assess adjustment and connect parents to resources.
- Approximately 6 months after the child is placed in the home, you, as adoptive parents, will go to court to finalize the adoption process. After the court hearing, your new family has the same rights and responsibilities as a biological family.



Generate discussion among participants using the following questions:

The Taylor family's experience with Steps 5-7 of the adoption process is highlighted in the module.

_____ What is one idea, reaction, or feeling you had while listening to the Taylor family share about their experience in searching for their child, traveling to pick up their child, and finalizing their child's adoption?

Key Decisions in the Adoption Process; The Language of Adoption: Interaction and Discussion (5 minutes)

Review this section of the module with the participants by offering the following information:

- Prospective adoptive parents begin their adoption journey by making several key decisions. These key decisions include answering the following questions:
 1. Should we pursue a domestic or international adoption?
 2. Do we want an open or closed adoption?
 3. Will we need to work with an adoption agency, or can we adopt independently using a private attorney?
- In addition, the session provided a list of glossary terms you can reference to help you understand the concepts discussed in the module. You can download the glossary and use it as you complete the module.

Generate discussion among participants using the following question:

_____ Do you have questions about any of the concepts and terms discussed, thus far, in this module?

Facilitator Tip

If needed to aid discussion, download and have the glossary of terms accessible to you during the group discussion.



Session 3: The Triad & 5 Core Issues

Triad Group Member: Birth Parents (Identity, Grief, Loss, Guilt and Shame, and Rejection): Interaction and Discussion (6 minutes)



Review this section of the module with the participants by offering the following information:

- Adoption is a lifelong experience that unites and links three groups of people—birth families, adoptees, and adoptive families—into a triad forever. Each member of the triad will experience and be impacted by the following five core issues:
 - Identity
 - Grief
 - Loss
 - Guilt and Shame
 - Rejection
- Birth parents are the least studied, least understood, and least served members of the adoption triad and are often considered the invisible members of the adoption triad.
- The isolation and invisibility experienced by some birth parents may be a personal choice or could be a result of the adoption system and its legal requirements of full relinquishment, secrecy, and anonymity.
- The module discussed how birth parents can experience the five core issues and how you can support birth parents during and after the adoption process. You also had the opportunity to hear about how Colette, a birth parent, experienced some of the core issues.



Facilitator Tip

If needed to aid discussion, you can share some of the ways in which birth parents can experience the five core issues.

- **Identity:** Birth parents may feel incomplete because they are parents, but a child is not physically present in their lives. In addition, their status as parents is generally not acknowledged among family and friends.
- **Grief:** After the birth and placement of the child, birth mothers' grief may manifest as sorrow or depression as the loss becomes more real.



- **Loss:** Birth parents may also experience loss due to the absence of recognized grieving processes or rituals—such as openly acknowledging the adoption, which is often hindered by stigma—and from unanswered questions, which result from the confidentiality of closed adoptions, they may have about the child.
- **Guilt and Shame:** Birth parents may experience deep shame and guilt that stems from unplanned pregnancy, societal stigma, secrecy, and the belief that placing their child for adoption reflects personal failure. These feelings can be intensified by a lack of open acknowledgment, supportive dialogue, and opportunities to process their emotions.
- **Rejection:** Birth parents (especially birth mothers) may struggle with feelings of irresponsibility; fear of judgment; and real and anticipated rejection from society, loved ones, and even their child. These feelings can lead them to avoid social situations and expect rejection in many areas of their lives.

Generate discussion among participants using the following questions:

In the session, you had the opportunity to consider how gaining insight into the birth parents' experiences could guide your family's approach to the three key decisions in the adoption process.

- _____ What are your thoughts about pursuing a domestic or international adoption?
- _____ What are your thoughts about completing an open or closed adoption?
- _____ What are your thoughts about using an adoption agency or adopting independently using a private attorney?

Triad Group Member: Adoptees: (Identity, Grief and Loss, Guilt and Shame, and Rejection): Interaction and Discussion (7 minutes)

Review this section of the module with the participants by offering the following information:

- Adoptees, like all triad members, will experience the five core issues at different points throughout their lives.
- Due to circumstances beyond their control, adoptees often have incomplete knowledge about why they were relinquished, and many may wonder if they were simply a "mistake" or an "accident."



- The module discussed how adoptees can experience the five core issues and how you can support adoptees during and after the adoption process. You also had the opportunity to hear about how Emily, an adoptee, experienced some of the core issues.
- The module also described how using positive adoption language can help promote a healthy self-image for adoptees.



Facilitator Tip

If needed to aid discussion, you can share some of the ways in which adoptees can experience the five core issues.

- **Identity:** Adoptees may struggle to form a stable sense of identity due to limited knowledge of their past, which can lead to complex emotions such as anger, rejection, or confusion toward birth and adoptive parents. They may also experience feelings of rootlessness and self-hatred. Adolescent adoptees may fantasize about who and what their birth parents are like.
- **Grief and Loss:** Infants sense and grieve the loss of the birth mother's familiar voice, smell, and pattern of movement. For adoptees who were part of closed and/or international adoptions, they lose their birth parents and, possibly, extended family members. Adoptees may also lose their medical history and background, which could impact most aspects of their lives.
- **Guilt and Shame:** Adoptees may believe they are to blame for their adoption, and they may feel guilt and shame for being and/or looking "different" from their adoptive family. They might struggle with guilt because they want to learn about or meet their birth parents and fear this desire will hurt their adoptive family. Some also feel guilty for having a better life than their birth family, especially if their birth family faces hardship (e.g., poverty, limited opportunities).
- **Rejection:** Adoptees, as children and/or as adults, may wonder why they were placed for adoption or what was "wrong" with them that caused their birth parents to "give them up" and reject them.



Generate discussion among participants using the following questions:

_____ How can you use positive adoption language when discussing adoption and the adoption triad with others?

_____ After participating in this discussion and in relation to supporting adoptees with the five core issues, what is one strategy or idea you would like to try in your own family?



_____ Which one of the three key decisions in the adoption process has been most influenced by what you learned about how adoptees experience the five core issues? How so?

Triad Group Member: Adoptive Parents (Identity, Grief, Loss, Guilt and Shame, and Rejection): Interaction and Discussion (7 minutes)

 **Review this section of the module with the participants by offering the following information:**

- Adults and families who choose to create or grow their family through adoption are unique, but many share some common characteristics, such as experiencing infidelity or wanting to care for a child in need.
- Adoptive parents also encounter the five core issues as they navigate parenthood through adoption. The issues may be heightened for first-time parents, who are stepping into their roles without prior caregiving experience, compared to those who have already parented biological children.
- The module discusses how adoptive parents can experience the five core issues and how you can support adoptive parents, such as yourselves, during and after the adoption process. You also had the opportunity to hear about how Matt, an adoptive father, experienced some of the core issues.

Facilitator Tip

If needed to aid discussion, you can share some of the ways in which adoptive parents can experience the five core issues.

- **Identity:** For many adoptive parents, becoming “mom” or “dad” fulfills a long-held dream, but some struggle to fully embrace this new identity. New and experienced parents may find it difficult to feel like a “real” parent because they did not have the child biologically. Families that have adopted through foster care may need time to develop and settle into their new identities. Parents who adopt internationally may work to build a family identity that honors and includes their child’s culture, race, and ethnicity.
- **Grief:** Adoptive parents, who cannot physically have a child, must grieve the fact that fertility treatments are not an option or did not work.



- **Loss:** Adoptive parents who have struggled to have a biological child and who want to create their family through adoption have likely experienced much loss. Whether due to infertility, failed pregnancy, stillbirth, or the death of a child, these adoptive parents have suffered tragedy and, perhaps, hardship. They may have lost the child they had dreamed of having and/or their combined genetic creation.
- **Guilt and Shame:** Some adoptive parents may struggle with guilt or shame related to infertility, question their bodies' abilities, or feel they have let their partners or families down. They may also feel conflicted about adopting a child from difficult circumstances, especially when they have the financial means that the child's birth family did not.
- **Rejection:** Adoptive parents may feel rejected by their own bodies, or even by God, and may worry that their partner or a child's birth parents won't see them as "good enough." These feelings can resurface after adoption, particularly if bonding is slow or when their child later explores his or her identity during adolescence.



Generate discussion among participants using the following questions:

- _____ How might adjusting your expectations about the adoption journey help you better support yourself and your child as your relationship grows over time?
- _____ In what ways can seeking support from others help you process your own emotions and create a more open, supportive environment for your child?

Step 4: Assign Homework (3 minutes)

Ask your participants to complete the following supplemental module sessions before your next meeting:

- Session 4: Types of Adoptions
- Session 5: Welcoming the Adoptee into the Home
- Session 6: Wrap-Up



Step 5: Adjourn (2 minutes)

Thank the participants for their involvement in Meeting 1 and reiterate the date and time of Meeting 2.

Supplemental Module Meeting 2 should be scheduled **at least 1 week after Supplemental Module Meeting 1 has occurred**. This timing allows your participants 1 week to complete the supplemental module content for *Session Four (Types of Adoptions)*, *Session Five (Welcoming the Adoptee into the Home)*, and *Session Six (Wrap-Up)*.

The *Wrap-Up* section provides time for participants to practice some of the strategies they have learned and reflect on their progress in achieving their parenting goals. In addition, during this meeting, the supplemental module content is wrapped up, and additional resources are provided.

Meeting 2



**Discussion of Sessions 4, 5, 6, and
the Wrap-Up and Resource Sharing**

Meeting (60 minutes)

Homework (none)

Overview of Meeting 2

Step 1: Provide an Icebreaker

Step 2: Restate the Ground Rules

Step 3: Start Discussion

**Step 4: Direct to Additional Resources/Register
for Additional Thrive Initiative
Programming**

Step 5: Thank and Adjourn



Step 1: Engage Families in an Icebreaker Activity (4 minutes)

Lead a quick, fun, or positive icebreaker for additional community building. Revisit the list from the Intake Meeting section, and incorporate an icebreaker that was not used during the earlier meetings.

Step 2: Restate the Ground Rules (1 minute)

Review the ground rules previously brainstormed, and ask if any new rules need to be added.

Step 3: Start Discussion (45 minutes)

During Supplemental Module Meeting 2, discuss the following questions as a group.

Session Four: Types of Adoption

International Adoptions: Advantages and Disadvantages:

Interaction and Discussion (3 minutes)



Review this section of the module with the participants by offering the following information:

- The module described the advantages of completing an international adoption, such as the ability to choose a child based on your preferences and knowing expected costs associated with the adoption.
- The module also described the disadvantages of completing an international adoption, such as the potential for limited prenatal care of the birth mother and the unknown medical history of the child.



Generate discussion among participants using the following question:

_____ How much influence do these advantages and disadvantages have on your decision about whether to pursue an international adoption?



Requirements for Completing International Adoptions: Interaction and Discussion (3 minutes)

Review this section of the module with the participants by offering the following information:

- To complete an international adoption and bring a child into the United States, adoptive parents must fulfill the requirements of state, federal, and foreign governmental authorities.
- The Hague Convention is an international agreement/treaty between participating countries to protect the children involved in international adoptions. The Hague Convention aims to protect children's best interests and prevent the abduction, exploitation, sale, and trafficking of children.

Generate discussion among participants using the following question:

_____ Each state has its own guidelines, requirements, and laws regarding adoption. What have you learned about your state's prerequisites and constraints?

Domestic Adoption: Interaction and Discussion (3 minutes)

Review this section of the module with the participants by offering the following information:

- Domestic adoption is defined as when both of the parents and the child reside in the same country.
- There are four specific types of domestic adoption that adoptive parents in the United States can consider:
 - Domestic infant
 - Foster care
 - Kinship
 - Native American
- Domestic infant is one of the most popular types of adoptions.



? Generate discussion among participants using the following questions:

_____ Why might you consider pursuing a domestic adoption?

_____ What reasons do you have for not pursuing a domestic adoption?

Foster Care; Becoming a Foster Parent: Interaction and Discussion (4 minutes)

★ Review this section of the module with the participants by offering the following information:

- Foster care is a temporary arrangement in which adults provide care for a child(ren) whose birth parents are unable to do so due to a variety of circumstances, such as abuse, neglect, abandonment, or parental incarceration or substance misuse.
- Foster care is arranged through the court or a social service agency, and the primary goal is to reunite children with their birth parents.
- Reunification involves the process of returning children to the custody of their biological parents. If reunification is not possible, the goal is changed to adoption.
- There are many different types of foster care living arrangements, which include emergency, respite, relative/kinship, non-relative kin, traditional foster care, foster-to-adopt care, and transitional living homes.
- There is a high demand for foster parents in the United States.

? Generate discussion among participants using the following questions:

In the reflection, you were encouraged to consider your thoughts about assuming the role of a foster parent.

_____ Are you interested in becoming a foster parent?

_____ What concerns do you have about becoming a foster parent?



Adopting a Child of a Different Race: Interaction and Discussion

(3 minutes)

Review this section of the module with the participants by offering the following information:

- Adopting a child of a different race can occur through various forms of domestic adoption, such as foster care, private adoptions, and stepchildren adoption in interracial marriages and through international adoptions in which children are adopted from another country.
- The module highlighted challenges related to adopting a child of a different race, such as the potential loss of connection to the child's cultural or racial heritage and the likelihood that the family may attract attention from others. While some families welcome the visibility and differences this brings, others may feel uncomfortable or intimidated.
- Adoptive parents must develop cultural competence, which is defined as attitudes, knowledge, and skills that support their child's racial and cultural identity development.
- Adoptive parents may encounter stereotypes or negative assumptions about their child's race or background and must stay focused on meeting their child's needs and affirming their child's identity with love and acceptance.

Generate discussion among participants using the following question:

In the reflection, you were encouraged to answer a list of questions to help you begin to examine your thoughts and ideas about parenting a child whose background is different from yours.

_____ What insights or new information did answering these questions provide for you?

Adoptions of Children with Special Needs: Interaction and Discussion (3 minutes)

Review this section of the module with the participants by offering the following information:

- Children with special needs have a condition or history that can make placing them with a family who does not have some type of adoption assistance/subsidy difficult.
- Adoption assistance/subsidies may be available to help offset the costs of adopting



U.S. children with special needs by providing state-specific benefits such as monthly payments, medical coverage, and support services through federally authorized programs.

- Support services may be available for families who adopt children with special needs, such as overnight care, day programs, personal care assistance, and counseling.



Facilitator Tip

- Guidelines for classifying a child as having special needs will vary by state and may include the following:
 - Children who have physical, medical, mental, learning, and emotional disabilities
 - Children of color—often due to not having enough families recruited to adopt waiting children
 - Children over 5 years old
 - Sibling groups of three or more children
 - Children who are currently healthy but are at risk for developing learning, emotional, behavioral, or physical disabilities
 - Children who were exposed to drugs, abuse, or neglect as infants and those with genetic pre-dispositions to mental illness and physical disabilities



Generate discussion among participants using the following question:

_____ Have you considered completing a special needs adoption? Why or why not?

Military Families and Adoption: Interaction and Discussion

(3 minutes)



Review this section of the module with the participants by offering the following information:

- Military families face unique challenges when navigating the adoption process, such as the potential for frequent moves and deployments.
- Working with adoption agencies that understand military life, culture, and families is essential for families, so they can navigate the process smoothly.
- The module described a variety of adoption-related benefits and resources available to military families.



Facilitator Tip

If participants are part of a military family, continue with the question below. If participants are not part of a military family, move to the next discussion section.



Generate discussion among participants using the following question:

_____ What benefits or resources that are available to military families have you explored?



Facilitator Tip

Encourage military-connected participants to download and reference the *Adoptions in Military Families: Resources and Considerations* resource in the parent toolkit.

Session Five: Welcoming the Adoptee into the Home

Prepare to Welcome Your Child Home: Interaction and Discussion

(3 minutes)



Review this section of the module with the participants by offering the following information:

- Depending on the type of adoption you will be completing, you will need to fulfill specific requirements and accommodations prior to bringing your child home.
- Prior to your child's arrival, you can complete the following tasks:
 - o Prepare your home by ensuring it is childproof for your child's age and gathering age-specific items and supplies for your child, such as clothing, diapers, bottles or sippy cups, and toiletries.
 - o Arrange for medical needs and treatment.
 - o Make plans for child care and/or education.
 - o Discuss expectations with members of your household and extended family, and inform them about when they can meet the child—particularly if you plan to spend time alone with the child upon bring the child home.
- The module also included a helpful resource, *Strategies to Help You Cope with Adoption Wait Times*, for you to reference while you wait for your child.



Facilitator Tip

If needed, restate the strategies provided in the resource, *Strategies to Help You Cope with Adoption Wait Times*, to help encourage discussion among participants. These strategies include the following:

- Manage your expectations by educating yourself about realistic timelines and maintaining open communication with your adoption agency or attorney.
- Grow your knowledge and community by participating in pre-adoption education, support groups, and events that are designed for waiting families. Parents can also learn about—or brush up on—parenting strategies, child development, and the specific challenges and joys of adoptive parenting.
- Plan for life with your child by researching and budgeting for the essentials your child may need based on his or her age, such as clothing, furniture, safety gear, feeding supplies, and toys.
- Practice self-care by prioritizing activities that support your mental and physical health, such as writing in a journal, practicing yoga, hiking, reading, or unplugging from screens. Parents who are struggling with emotions may want to talk with a counselor or therapist who is experienced in adoption.
- Live your life (with some modifications) by continuing to participate in the activities and engage in the events that bring you joy, like pursuing hobbies and spending time with friends and family. As a waiting parent, you may also choose to invest in yourself before the child arrives by taking a trip, achieving a personal aspiration, or accomplishing a professional goal.



Generate discussion among participants using the following questions:

_____ What steps, if any, have you taken to prepare for your child's arrival?

_____ What strategies have you used, or do you plan to use, to help you cope with adoption wait times?

Homecoming Day and the Post-Placement Period: Interaction and Discussion (3 minutes)



Review this section of the module with the participants by offering the following information:



- The day you bring your child home is often called “Gotcha Day.” Many adoptive families commemorate this important day with videos and photographs and continue to recognize the day each year.
- The days, weeks, and months that follow involve the child’s transition from their former environment to a new culture, home, and family. This period can be difficult and even traumatic, even if it begins with a brief “honeymoon period.”
- Before your child’s adoption is legalized, your family will have to complete a series of post-placement visits that intend to confirm the safety and well-being of the adopted child and the adoptive parents



Generate discussion among participants using the following question:

_____ How would you like to commemorate your child’s arrival to your home?

Strategies to Ease the Transition for your Child and Family:

Interaction and Discussion (3 minutes)



Review this section of the module with the participants by offering the following information:

- Depending on your child’s age, adoption circumstances, and past transitions, your child and family may need time to adjust to living together.
- The module shared multiple strategies to help build your relationship with your child and establish a safe, comforting environment.



Facilitator Tip

If needed, restate the strategies shared in the module to encourage participant discussion. These strategies include the following:

- Create consistent routines with mealtimes and bedtimes.
- Encourage eye contact.
- Include gentle physical contact.
- Spend one-on-one time daily.
- Start with small gatherings and keep outings and social events low-key.
- Display a family photo that includes your child.



- Incorporate familiar elements into your home, such as foods, music, language, and cultural items from your child's birth country or previous home.
- Let your child help by giving your child small responsibilities around the home, and praise your child's efforts.
- Involve your child in family plans.
- Seek rest and support when needed.

 **Generate discussion among participants using the following question:**

_____ What transition strategies do you plan to incorporate into your family?

Talking about Adoption with your Child: Interaction and Discussion (4 minutes)

 **Review this section of the module with the participants by offering the following information:**

- Adoption should never be a secret. Every child deserves an honest, age-appropriate understanding of his or her origin.
- Parents can create an environment where adoption can be discussed freely, openly, and honestly.
- The module listed a variety of ways that parents can help their child learn about and develop his or her adoption story. You also had the opportunity to listen to an adoptee, Katie, share about how her family talked about adoption while she was growing up.

Facilitator Tip

If needed, restate the strategies for talking to children about adoption that were shared in the module to encourage participant discussion. These strategies include the following:

- Initiate conversations about your child's life story.
- Show your child photos of the day you brought him or her home, and share the feelings you had leading up to that day.
- Talk about what you learned about your child from the adoption agency or caseworker.
- Read books with characters who are adopted.
- Discuss adoption on birthdays and holidays like Mother's/Father's Day.
- Recognize the day your child came home with Gotcha Day celebrations.



- Explain to your child that your child has the right to share his or her adoption story on his or her own terms. You can help your child create a short, simple version of the story—a narrative your child feels comfortable sharing with teachers, friends, or neighbors.
- Encourage your child to feel proud to be who he or she is and continue to remind your child that he or she is loved and is a valued member of the family.

Generate discussion among participants using the following questions:

The module encouraged you to reflect on how you plan to talk about adoption with your child.

- _____ How can you make sure your child always knows that he or she was adopted without the explanation being a single “big reveal”?
- _____ How will you keep the conversation open, so your child feels safe asking questions?
- _____ How might you respond if your child has big emotions or difficult questions about his or her adoption?

Navigating Medical, Developmental, and Behavioral Challenges: Interaction and Discussion (3 minutes)

Review this section of the module with the participants by offering the following information:

- Adopted children may encounter a range of medical, developmental, behavioral, and emotional challenges as they navigate their unique journey into a new family environment.
- Adoptive parents must approach these challenges with patience, empathy, and understanding and seek professional guidance and support when needed to help their child navigate and overcome these obstacles on their path toward healing and adjustment.
- The module described some of the most common health issues of internationally adopted children, such as hepatitis, Human Immunodeficiency Virus (HIV), behavioral problems, and developmental delays.



? Generate discussion among participants using the following question:

_____ What strategies, resources, and/or services might you use to help your child adjust to being a member of your family?

Culture Keeping: Interaction and Discussion (3 minutes)

★ Review this section of the module with the participants by offering the following information:

- Adoptive parents must prioritize maintaining their child's cultural identity, which may involve incorporating traditions, language, and customs from the child's birth culture into the family's daily lives.
- Culture keeping is when adoptive parents attempt to create ethnic connections for their internationally adopted children or for a child whose race is different from theirs.
- Adoptive parents can help their children connect with their cultural heritage in meaningful ways, such as enrolling the child in language or dance classes, sending the child to culture camps tailored to different countries, and reading traditional folktales together.

? Generate discussion among participants using the following question:

In the module, you were encouraged to reflect on how you could maintain your child's connection to his or her birth country or culture.

_____ If you are considering an international adoption, how could you incorporate culture keeping into your family's life?

Session Six: Conclusion

The Key Steps to Completing an Adoption: Interaction and Discussion (3 minutes)

★ Review this section of the module with the participants by offering the following information:



- The module lists the key steps to completing an adoption in addition to tips for military families.
- The parent toolkit includes resources to help prospective adoptive families assess their readiness and plan for the adoption journey. It also provides a book list and adoption resource guide parents can use to help them learn about and discuss adoption with their child.

? Generate discussion among participants using the following questions:

_____ What resources from the parent toolkit have you used or do you plan to use to help you as you navigate adoption?

_____ For those who have already used some of the information shared in the resources, what has been most helpful so far?

Wrap-Up (1 minute)

★ Review this section of the module with the participants by offering the following information:

- You are commended for completing the supplemental module and participating in these group meetings. Your participation reflects your commitment to learning and being the best parent and caregiver you can be! Navigating this responsibility can be overwhelming. There may be many hurdles along the way, but you and your child can overcome these obstacles as you learn about the adoption process and the resources and strategies that you and others in your child's life can use to help your child thrive.

Wrap-Up Module Discussion: Summary Questions (3 minutes)

? Indicate to participants that you are wrapping up, and generate discussion among participants using all, or some, of the following questions:

_____ Which topic discussed in the supplemental module was the most beneficial to you as a (prospective) parent? Why?



- _____ What strategies or skills did you learn in the supplemental module that you can use to help you achieve the goals you have for yourself and/or your family?

- _____ What has changed with your interactions with your family since before completing the supplemental module?

Step 4: Direct to Additional Resources and/or Register for Additional Thrive Initiative Programming (2 minutes)

Provide support and encouragement to your participants to explore other Thrive Initiative programming. Offer information about and/or register participants for any additional hybrid implementation options that you plan to provide. Thrive Initiative programming may include any of the following:

Universal Programs

- **Take Root** is available for parents and caregivers of children who are between 0 and 3 years old.
- **Sprout** is available for parents and caregivers of children who are between 3 and 5 years old.
- **Grow** is available for parents and caregivers of children who are between 5 and 10 years old.
- **Branch Out** is available for parents and caregivers of children who are between the ages of 10 and 18 years old.

Supplemental Modules

Additional supplemental modules are available on a variety of topics and can be accessed online at <https://thrive.psu.edu/modules/supplemental/>.

Encourage participants to continue to visit the Thrive website, <https://thrive.psu.edu>, as their child develops and grows. They can access additional resources and materials like mini-booster modules, blog postings, parenting handouts, guides, and newsletters.

Step 5: Thank and Adjourn (1 minute)

Thank the participants for their involvement in the hybrid implementation group program.

Appendices



Appendix A



Adoption Recruitment Poster



adoption

Creating your Family

A supplemental parent-education module that is designed to provide support for parents who are considering expanding their family through adoption.

Gain knowledge, skills, and strategies in the following areas:

- positive parenting practices,
- stress management, and
- child physical-health promotion.

Learn more about *Adoption: Creating your Family* and other Thrive programs at: <https://thrive.psu.edu/>

Meet with us!

Appendix B



Adoption Participant Recruitment and Tracking Sheet

Instructions for Completing the *Adoption: Creating your Family* Participant Recruitment and Tracking Sheet

The goal of this tracking sheet is to track individuals who would like more information about the hybrid implementation of *Adoption: Creating your Family* and to provide information about the dates and times for meetings.

Download the Participant Recruitment and Tracking Sheet

Ensure you are following your organization's privacy protocols with all of the information that is collected and stored. You can complete this form on a computer or print it to handwrite your responses. You may also choose to move the data to a spreadsheet.

Complete Columns 1-4

- Enter the potential participant's name, email address, child's date of birth, and today's date.
- If the potential participant has multiple children, enter the date of birth for the focal child (i.e., the child who the participant is focusing on with *Adoption: Creating your Family*).

Complete Columns 5 [Optional]

- To calculate the age, you can use an online age calculator.
- If the age is close to a cut-off, you may need to check in with the participant after they have registered for a Thrive account and have reviewed the introduction video to confirm that *Adoption: Creating your Family* is the correct program for their family.

Complete Columns 6-8

- Send the *Adoption: Creating your Family Parent Welcome Letter* to the email address provided, and enter the date the *Adoption: Creating your Family Parent Welcome Letter* is sent.
 - By sending the *Adoption: Creating your Family Parent Welcome Letter*, you are providing the potential participant the information the participant needs to make a decision about attending the hybrid implementation, such as the date, time, and location of meetings. It also provides information about how to create an account on the Thrive website.
- Encourage participants to create a Thrive account and enroll in *Adoption: Creating your Family* supplemental module.
- Follow up with the potential participant to see if the participant would like to register and attend the hybrid implementation of *Adoption: Creating your Family*.

Complete Column 9

Send the *Adoption: Creating your Family Parent Workbook and Syllabus*.

Appendix C



Adoption Parent Welcome Letter



Welcome to Adoption: Creating your Family

Overview of Thrive Initiative

Thrive is a group of parenting programs that are designed to help you, a parent or caregiver, as you care for your child—from pregnancy until your child reaches 18 years of age. There are four online parenting programs that are part of the Thrive Initiative. The intent of the supplemental modules is to build on information and strategies discussed in the four universal Thrive parenting programs — Take Root, Sprout, Grow, Branch Out. Therefore, by participating in the age-appropriate Thrive parenting program before engaging with any of the supplemental modules, you will reap the most benefits.

Thrive Initiative Program Areas			
Universal Parenting Programs			
Take Root	Sprout	Grow	Branch Out
Infants (0 to 6 months)	Preschool (3 to 5 years)	Grades K–5 (5 to 10 years)	Grades 6–12 (10 to 18 years)
Infants (6 to 12 months)			
Infants & Toddlers (1 to 3 years)			

All Thrive programs share knowledge, skills, and strategies within three areas:

- positive parenting practices,
- stress management, and
- child physical-health promotion.

Adoption: Creating your Family Online

Adoption: Creating your Family is an online supplemental module for parents and caregivers who are considering expanding their family through adoption. Since *Adoption: Creating your Family* is online, you can complete it at your own pace.

Hybrid Implementation of Adoption: Creating your Family

The hybrid implementation of *Adoption: Creating your Family* means you will complete the program based on a schedule. After you complete the assigned sessions, you will meet with a facilitator and, possibly, other families to discuss the information from the sessions.

There are 2 – 3 meetings with a facilitator. Each meeting will range from 45 – 60 minutes.

Adoption - Date/Time/Location Hybrid Implementation

Expectations

You will be asked to independently participate in online sessions of **Adoption: Creating your Family** and come to meetings ready for discussion. By completing the sessions and activities and answering provided questions, you will be prepared to engage in discussion regarding the content, ask additional questions, and learn from other parents and caregivers and their experiences.

How to Create a Thrive Account

- Visit <https://thrive.psu.edu/> → Navigate to "For Parents" → Go to "Register for THRIVE online" → Click "Sign Up."
- Enter your name, create a username and password, and share your military affiliation (Yes/No).
- Log In → Choose **Adoption: Creating your Family** by selecting **Adoption: Creating your Family Overview** and then selecting "Start Course."

Still have Questions? Contact your Facilitator!

Adoption Facilitator's Name

Phone Number/Email

Assistant Secretary of Defense for Military Community and Family Policy (DoD MC&FP) and the Clearinghouse for Military Family Readiness at Penn State (Clearinghouse).

All programs are available free of charge.

Appendix D



Adoption Screen Share Text Example



Thank you for joining our meeting for



The meeting will start at

 *You should hear soft music playing.*

Take this opportunity to test your microphone, video, and other settings.

If you need technical assistance:

Email

or

Call

at



Appendix E



Best Practices for Online Learning



Best Practices for Online Learning

You can enhance your experience during this training by doing the following:



Joining the meeting early to test settings.



Testing your technology with a friend or family member prior to your meeting.



Finding a quiet place to complete the meetings.



Using a headset or headphones for voice clarity.



Knowing who to contact, and how, if you cannot connect or are having technical difficulties.



Having a backup plan if your computer won't connect to the meeting. Perhaps there is a call-in number you could use so you can hear the meeting.

