



bringing cutting edge education
to all members of the adoption &
foster constellation year after year

CALIFORNIA ADOPTION CONFERENCE

Room Workshops Session I: 10:30am - 11:45am

Gym Complex = GC; St. Paul's House = SPH

GC Follow Up: Exploring Feelings about Adoption with Children

Jeanette Yoffe

Spend more time with Jeanette to get answers to your questions about adopted children's "inner life" and personal narrative. This session will be more intimate and interactive.

SPH Attachment: What Is It? Why Is It Important?

Jill Dzik

Healthy attachment is an essential cornerstone for children to grow into caring, functional adults. This workshop will explain what healthy attachment looks like, why it is essential and how to build a healthy attachment with your child. For professionals and parents, Jill will provide information about how to identify attachment styles as well as strategies to help parents ensure they are creating positive attachments with their children. This workshop is appropriate for both infant and older child placements.

SPH Ripped From the Headlines: How Transracial Adoptive and Foster Families Can Talk About Complex Race Issues

Angela Gee & Beth Hall

Hear from two experienced triad members who are also recognized experts on race, adoption, and transracial family life as they discuss the impact of race on foster/adopted children and teens of color. Pulling from recent headlines: high-profile cases ranging from the ongoing effect of Michael Brown's shooting death in Ferguson, MO, unpacking the intent of "Black Lives Matter," the misappropriation of Rachel Dolezal identity as "trans-racial", the presenters will model how parents can learn to confront racism and talk about it with their children in empowering ways that will build trust and closeness between parent and child.

GC Birth/First Panel and Discussion

Susan Leksander & Jenny Sindel

The audience will view a short film (5 min) that describes the experience of three first/birth parents. Immediately following, a panel of first/birth parents will speak about their experiences, including factors that lead to the adoption, what their life has been like since placement and their hopes for the future. Hear recommendations from the panel about how adoptive parents can play a crucial role in the health and well-being of birth/first parents. Learn about how healthy birth parents positively impact the adopted child. Audience members are invited to ask questions.

SPH Navigating Open Adoption For Domestic and International Adoptive Families

Lynne Silver & Kim Medina

Hear from two adoptive parents who are also adoption professionals who have both lived and worked with open adoptions for over thirty years! Lynne and Kim will address not only reasons why openness in adoption (both international and domestic) has a positive impact on adopted children's well-being but also discuss the joys and challenges of openness in adoption and suggestions for how to traverse them in your family. If you are new to open adoption, this workshop will ease fears and give you skills to be supportive of your child throughout the process while feeling secure in the ever changing relationships within your family constellation.

SPH Adoption Mythology: Understanding our Implicit and Explicit Assumptions about Adoption

Elayne Chou & Juli Fraga

Adoption has complex lifelong emotional impact on humans, yet society has failed to address adoption issues in all its complexity. This workshop increases conscious awareness of adoption mythology and its impact on our work with adoptees and adoptive families. We will use a film clip, case studies, and guided discussions to help surface society's and our own assumptions and myths about adoption. We will then explore applications of workshop learnings toward more informed and competent adoption practices. There will be time at the end for Q&A and expressions of appreciation. Using insights from this workshop, adoption professionals can develop their capacity as leaders and trailblazers to help society grow beyond the need for adoption myths.

SPH For Adoption Professionals: We Can Do Better

Celeste Liversidge & Rachel Herndon

The adoption industry has an ugly dark side, which is largely fueled by money. Social workers, attorneys and counselors are in a unique position to create change in many facets of the adoption process that need improvement. The discussion will include the importance of setting expectations from the initial meeting with pre-adopters, why having separate legal representation for birthparents helps everyone, peer support and equipping the parties with resources necessary to navigate relationships before, during and after placement.



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Room Workshops Session II: 12:45pm - 2:00pm

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GC
Gym

Cultivating Healthy Identity Development and Resilience to Racism in Transracial Families

Holly Sparks & Louise Derman-Sparks

For transracially adopted children and youth of color, a profound intersection occurs between adoption identity and racial/cultural identity. Transracial adoptees grapple with the questions like, “Who am I,” “Who do I want to be?”, and, “Who does society tell me I can be?”. We will explore current theory and strategies for supporting the development of a resilient, knowledgeable, and authentic identity in children youth raised in transracial families. Participants will consider ways to implement anti-bias/anti-racism strategies to support children and youth’s developmental journey.

SPH
Room 6
3rd Floor

Supporting Birth Parents, Strengthening Families

Jenny Sindel & Anne Brodzinsky

Recent studies indicate that birth parents benefit from having a supportive community of peers as well as ongoing support from adoption competent professionals. Our experience shows that healthy birth parents develop and maintain stronger relationships with adoptive families. Workshop participants will hear more about the study as well as the concrete ways local organizations are working to engage and empower birth parents. Panelists and participants will work together to identify additional strategies to support and further these efforts.

SPH
Room 4
2nd
Floor

Search: Opening Closed Adoptions

Michelle Nobriga

Get insight on the search process and how to get started. Understand how significant an adoptee’s “why” piece is to putting together the puzzle of a closed adoption. Adoptive parents will learn ways to best support their child throughout the searching process and be given simple mindset techniques to hopefully avoid unrealistic expectations or rigid perceptions about the past. Hear a few humorous stories about the coincidental ways past secrets eventually revealed themselves, and understand the important role a Confidential Intermediary plays in bringing about a successful and positive reunion for birth and adoptive family members.

SPH
Room 1
1st Floor

Families Building an Affirming Community for Children

Tara Leiker & Chawn Howard

This workshop is designed for parents of same race or transracial adopted black children. However, many of the insights, tools, and way of life may be beneficial to other races as well. Participants will learn about building supportive and affirming community for their children. Parenting black children in today’s world provides challenging obstacles. Children are inundated with messages about who they are in their communities, schools, and the media. Adoptive parents face the extra weight of dealing with their children’s additional insecurities and feelings of fear, isolation, and insignificance.

SPH
Room 5
3rd
Floor

Empowering Professionals to Make an Impact

Jill Mattinson-Cruz & Robyn Shultz

This interactive workshop is for professionals who are looking for ways to make a positive difference in the lives of clients. Many adoptive families do not have friends or family who understand the complexities of adoption, so they end up feeling alone. Adoption specific support groups and mentor programs provide a safe space for families to connect with others who understand. During this workshop, attendees will learn how to design, implement and sustain these services. They will gain firsthand knowledge on how to develop support group curriculum, as well as effectively recruit, train and support mentors. The models that will be discussed have been proven successful through ten years of practice in Los Angeles County.

SPH
Room 2
1st Floor

Adoptees Speak: The Voices of Lived Experience

Facilitator: Theresa Reynolds

Hear from the children who have grown up as they speak to what they needed (and currently need) from parents (birth and adoptive), professionals and the adoption community. The discussion will include suggestions regarding best practices and insights into the experiences of adopted adults whose lived experience, coupled with their professional feedback, will provide concrete ideas to apply to practice.

GC
Library

Deciding to Adopt: What Pre-Adoptive Parents Need to Know

Pact, Family Builders, Adopt International, Adoption Connection

Learn the basics about domestic (both private and foster) adoption and international adoption as well as infant vs. older child placement, special needs parenting and other options including gender and/or race selection and open adoption. This workshop will guide you finding the right placement path for your family if you are considering adoption including questions like: How to choose an agency and what questions to ask; What goes into a home study and what (if anything) you need to be nervous about; How to choose a country to adopt from and what questions to ask; How to choose which adoption professional(s) to work with.



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Room Workshops Session III: 2:15pm - 3:30pm
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GC
Library

Lets Give 'em Something to Talk About: Adoption in the Context of Race, Class and Gender

Jill Jacobs, Samantha Allen, Judith Lefler & Nancy Lefler-Panela

This workshop will feature two mother-daughter pairs, Jill Jacobs, a white lesbian mom, and her Black daughter Samantha Allen and Judith Lefler, another white mom and her Vietnamese daughter, Nancy Lefler-Panela. The workshop will include elements of successfully transracial adoption, lessons learned and words of wisdom, told through storytelling. Topics will include: community and home environment, preparing children of color for the world around them, birth family and sibling issues.

SPH
Room 1
1st Floor

Family Dynamics and Emotional & Mental Health Affecting Children, Parents, and Families

Ronald Mah

Fostered and adopted youth and their families can present issues and potential problems that love by itself cannot support or resolve. There are four fundamental family systems theories presented in this training that can help parents and professionals anticipate and identify potential, existing, and developing complications to family cohesion. The theories direct four sets of interventions, discipline, communication, and interactions to mitigate and heal problems, and to empower healthy adult leadership. Issues such as attachment styles, trauma, stress, family modeling, cross-cultural dynamics, and problematic bio-family experiences are addressed to offer guidance to parents and families.

SPH
Room 4
2nd
Floor

Why Do So Many Adopted Teens End Up In Residential Treatment and What Can We Do About It?

Micky Duxbury

The teen years can be especially challenging for some adopted youth. If the challenges of learning disabilities, identity issues, transracial issues, and complex family dynamics arise as well, which can result in an even more explosive time of risky behaviors: extreme hostility, self-harm, drug use, promiscuity, truancy, or attempts at suicide. The workshop will explore the early warning signs for high-risk behaviors, the potential outcomes, treatment interventions, with a focus on parent and professional advocacy and education. She will be joined in her by Andrea Versteegen, an adoptee who spent time in residential treatment.

SPH
Room 2
1st Floor

The Dilemma of Genetic Confusion

Nancy Verrier

The primary trauma for adopted people is separation trauma. Adopted children also have to deal with in their adoptive families every day, is the lack of genetic reflection or mirroring. This is a constant source of anxiety for them, and they are constantly trying to figure out HOW TO BE in their adoptive families. DNA counts, and many times the characteristics of the adoptee are very different from those of the adoptive parents. Nancy will offer important tools to deal with this dilemma so that the adoptees can feel as if they fit in the family built by adoption.

SPH
Room 7
4th
Floor

For First/Birth Parents Only: Recognizing and Reinforcing Strengths

Grace Flannery

This workshop will focus first/birth parents to recognize and to build upon their own personal strengths. We will explore ways in which these strengths can be further developed and applied to individual goals. The goal of the workshop is for first/birth parents to leave with a new or renewed clarity of their positive attributes and how they can use them to positively impact their personal relationships.

SPH
Room 3
1st Floor

First/Birthmothers: What Research Tells Us

Anne Brodzinsky

This workshop will be user friendly and a brief review of recent research addressing factors that appear to influence outcomes for first/birth mothers. Emerging from research we always hope for new levels of reason and of course, ethical practice. Dr. Brodzinsky will discuss five factors that may explain research findings and lead us to an increased sense of reason and dedication to ethical practice.

SPH
Room 6
3rd
Floor

Talking to/with Children about Adoption

Malaika Parker

Explore how to manage questions and curiosities about adoption through the developmental stages. Sometimes parents are uncertain how to jumpstart conversations about adoption or assess what their children understand. Malaika will share the "adoption facts" to use with young children and lead a discussion about how parents can teach and encourage conversations with their preschool and school-aged children about adoption. She will give very practical examples and suggestions for language as well as approach to open the door to adoption conversations.

SPH
Room 5
3rd
Floor

How to Have Openness in Adoption in Child Welfare: Getting to Best Practices

Christina Grattan & Debbie White

This workshop will offer suggestions about how to grapple with expanding child welfare adoption practice to include the birth parent in permanency planning for the best interest and well being of children adopted from foster care (especially older children). The workshop will offer suggestions for how to support foster/adoptive parents in figuring out what is best for their adopted child, including continued engagement with birth parents post termination, while embracing the messiness of expanded families and shared love of adopted children.