



Full Circle CONFERENCE

MEDIA KIT



October 24, 2024, 9:00 AM - 5:00 PM



Nebraska Innovation Campus, 2021
Transformation Dr., Lincoln, NE 68508



About



The Full Circle Conference, organized by Families Forever—a program of NCHS—provides a powerful platform for the voices of families formed through adoption and guardianship. This event aims to deepen the understanding of adoption, guardianship, foster care, and kinship care, and their impact on children now and in the future. The conference is open to the entire adoption constellation, including professionals and families navigating post-adoption or guardianship challenges. Plus, it's FREE for all guardianship and adoptive families to attend!

Event Highlights



Forming Strong Bonds

Learn how to strengthen your family's ties, no matter how it was formed.



Family is First

Hear other families speak about their life-changing experiences.



Lifelong Support

Listen to the professionals who have been there through thick and thin.

Speakers



Opening Keynote: Debbie Riley

CEO and co-founder of The Center for Adoption Support and Education

Debbie B. Riley LCMFT is CEO and co-founder of The Center for Adoption Support and Education, a national leader in mental health services for the foster care kinship and adoption community. A nationally recognized adoption expert, author, and public speaker, Ms. Riley has 40 years of professional experience, including health care management, administration, designing and developing nationally acclaimed adoption-competent training programs, and direct delivery of specialized pre and post-adoption counseling services.

Ms. Riley created a continuum of innovative, culturally responsive evidenced-informed programs to improve the behavioral outcomes of foster and adopted youth and their families which has become a nationally recognized model. For over a decade, she has built and implemented a framework for training an adoption-competent mental health workforce nationally and is the founder of TAC (Training for Adoption Competency Curriculum). Through two federal grant awards to C.A.S.E from the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services through the Administration for Children and Families, Ms. Riley serves as the PI for National Adoption Competency Mental Health Training Initiative (NTI) and the National Center for Child Welfare Competent Mental Health Services to improve mental health outcomes for children and families experiencing child welfare systems.

She is co-author of the book *Beneath the Mask: Understanding Adopted Teens* (Riley and Meeks, 2006) and *Adoption Specific Therapy, A Guide to Helping Adopted Children and Their Families Thrive* (Waterman, Langley, Miranda, and Riley, 2018). Is a contributing author to *The Need for Adoption Competent Mental Health Professionals in Transracial and Intercountry Adoptions, Cultural Guidance for Professionals* (Fong and McRoy, 2016); *Training for Adoption Competency Curriculum in The Routledge Handbook Of Adoption* (Wrober, Helder, and Marr, 2020); *Adoption as a Diversity Issue in Professional Preparation: Perceptions of Preservice Education Professionals, Adoptions Quarterly* (Taymans, Marotta, Lynch, Riley, Ortiz, Schutt, Mallery, Embich, 2008); *Adoption Competent Clinical Practice; Defining Its Meaning and Development, Adoption Quarterly* (Atkinson, Freundlich, Gonet, Riley, 2013); and *Training for Adoption Competency: Building a Community of Adoption-Competent Clinicians, Families in Society: The Journal of Contemporary Social Services* (Atkinson and Riley, 2017).

Speakers



Isaac Etter

Keynote Speaker & Founder, Identity

Isaac Etter is an adoptee and social entrepreneur who was transracially adopted at the age of two. He founded Identity, a startup focused on helping adoptive and foster families thrive. At Identity, Isaac is working on re-imagining post-placement support for these families. He uses his story and deep passion for adoption and foster care education to bring relevant, quality, and diverse resources to adoptive and foster parents.

Isaac utilizes his experience of being adopted to curate deep conversations about race, identity, and adoption. With his unique insight, Isaac facilitates impactful discussions about adoption's impact on children and how parents can support their children in navigating identity and racial identity development. He specializes in helping child welfare professionals and parents understand the unique challenges and joys involved in transracial adoption and fostering.

Speakers



Shannon Bingham

Closing Keynote Speaker

A local Omaha business owner for 20 years, an award-winning philanthropist, vice chair of a DHHS board, published cosmetologist and photographer, international traveling educator, wife, mom, and the current reigning Mrs. Midwest International 2024, Shannon Bingham is a strong voice for organizations across the metro and the Midwest. She has helped to raise awareness for various organizations that have positively impacted her family. She is an adoptive mother and has become an advocate for adoptive and foster families in the community, helping fight or encourage legislation on these topics and others. Recently, she had the opportunity to speak alongside the governor of Nebraska as he signed the document proclaiming November as adoption awareness month. Empowering women and business-minded individuals is a passion of hers and she will continue to always seek ways to inspire.

Speakers



Nichole Hersh

DHHS Permanency Administrator

Nichole Hersh has 19 years of experience working in child welfare, dedicating her career to serving Nebraskans. She holds a Bachelor of Science in Criminal Justice from the University of Nebraska-Kearney. She began her career as a Child and Family Services Specialist in early 2006 till she became a Resource Developer Supervisor in late 2012. Over the next 5 years, she oversaw the initial rollout of Results Based Accountability in the Central Service Area and then began supervising foster care licensing. In 2018 she stepped into the Child and Family Services Specialist Supervisor position as the first permanency unit supervisor for Central Services Area and continued this work until February 2024, when she began as the Department's Permanency Administrator. She oversees programming for foster care, adoption/guardianship, missing youth, human trafficking, and a few other programs for the Nebraska Department of Health and Human Services. Nichole has served 3 years on the Buffalo County Community Partners Board, currently serving as Vice Chairman. She has a passion for community work and empowering the next generation.

Speakers



Jenn Smith-Miller, M.A.

Executive Director, PTI Nebraska

Jenn is the Executive Director of the Parent Training and Information (PTI) Center, a statewide non-profit organization dedicated to helping families across Nebraska who have children and young adults with disabilities and special health care needs navigate the special education process. Jenn has been employed at PTI Nebraska since 2011. She worked with families as a Parent Outreach Coordinator, where she focused on individualized education programs, positive behavior supports, and strengthening home-school partnerships before becoming the Executive Director. She is grateful to be part of such a wonderful team that is passionate about empowering families to advocate for their children's needs in school and teaching families how to navigate different systems and services.

Jenn serves on several statewide committees and local boards that focus on improving outcomes for people with disabilities. She has a Master's in Human Resource Development and received her Bachelor's in English with Minors in Speech and Mass Communications and an emphasis on Public Speaking from Doane University. She has three wonderful children, her oldest son has a rare genetic disorder that has led to global developmental delays in all areas and multiple disabilities, including Intellectual Disability, Epilepsy, and Autism. Jenn enjoys spending time and going on adventures with her children (even when that adventure is going to Scooters or Target), hanging out with her family and friends, laughing, playing volleyball, drinking coffee, and eating ice cream.

Speakers



Cydney Volker

Adoption/Permanency Program Specialist, DHHS, Division of Children and Family Services

Prior to her role as a Permanency Program Specialist, Cydney was a Children and Families Services Specialist on the specialized Permanency team in the SESA for 7 years. In this role, Cydney guided adoptive families through the final stages of permanency for their child(ren).

Before joining DHHS, Cydney was an ongoing case manager for private agencies contracted by DHHS to provide ongoing case management.

Cydney earned her BS in Social Work from Nebraska Wesleyan University. Originally from Nebraska, Cydney grew up in Humboldt, NE.

Key Facts About Families Forever



Mission:

Families Forever, a program of NCHS, is dedicated to supporting families formed through adoption and guardianship. We believe that every family is unique, and it's these differences that make them special.

Support Services:

- Post-adoption and guardianship guidance
- One-on-one peer support
- Connections to mental health services
- Educational resources

Unique Aspects of Adoptive and Guardianship Families:

- Diverse family structures
- Unique challenges and triumphs
- The importance of post-placement support
- Navigating identity and racial identity development in transracial adoptions



Adoption and Post-Adoption Identity Stats



Key Statistics

Families Forever, a program of NCHS, is dedicated to supporting families formed through adoption and guardianship. We believe that every family is unique, and it's these differences that make them special.

14% of adoptive parents in Nebraska report feeling unprepared for post-adoption challenges ([Source](#))

33% of adopted children in Nebraska struggle with identity issues related to their adoption ([Source](#))

38% of adopted children in Nebraska pursue therapy to address identity issues ([Source](#))

15% of adoptive parents in Nebraska attend support groups for post-adoption issues ([Source](#))

22% of adoptive families in Nebraska report experiencing post-adoption depression ([Source](#))

Social Media

For the latest news and updates on the conference, please subscribe to our mailing list or follow us on our official social media channels [@NEChildrensHome](#) or [NCHS](#).

Press and Media Inquiries

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