



Assessing caregiver usability of the National Training and Development Curriculum for Foster and Adoptive Parents



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ABSTRACT

Most foster and adoptive caregiver training curricula show limited effectiveness in improving the preparation of caregivers to care for foster and adoptive children and youth. In 2017, in response to the need for evidence-based and comprehensive training for foster and adoptive parents, the United States Children's Bureau initiated a cooperative agreement to fund the development of the National Training and Development Curriculum for Foster and Adoptive Parents (NTDC). As part of the curriculum development process, caregiver usability tests were conducted to assess caregiver perceptions of the structure of the three primary training components: (a) the caregiver self-assessment, (b) the classroom-based training curriculum, and (c) Right Time training curriculum. Participants were generally satisfied with the training components. Findings included the identification of a variety of content- and delivery-related strengths, as well as many recommended areas of improvement. This study summarizes findings from these caregiver usability tests, and provides a wide variety of caregiver-generated suggestions for improving foster and adoptive caregiver training curricula that are applicable to all caregiver training efforts.

1. Introduction

1.1. Background

Stability and predictability are fundamental to a child's growth and development (Urban Institute, 2013). They are especially needed for children involved in the foster care system. Foster care is intended to help children achieve permanency and stability in their relationships and living situations. This stability may be attained through adoption, reunification with birth parents, or legal guardianship. However, research demonstrates that many youth in care face challenges in achieving placement stability (Rubin, O'Reilly, Luan, & Localio, 2007). Placement instability requires children to constantly adapt to new

caregivers, parenting styles, schools, and neighborhoods. These constant transitions may make it difficult for them to maintain relationships and have the sense of predictability that is vital for their healthy development. Placement instability negatively impacts children in foster care and their long-term outcomes in a number of domains. For example, placement instability is associated with an increased risk of incarceration (Ryan & Testa, 2005), homelessness (Shah et al., 2017), mental health challenges (McGuire et al., 2018), substance abuse (Long et al., 2017; Stott, 2012), and unemployment (Dworsky & Gitlow, 2017).

Achieving placement stability for children in foster care proves difficult for numerous reasons. Many foster and adoptive parents are caring for children who experience developmental delays, medical

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issues, and behavioral problems resulting from past traumatic events (Greeson et al., 2011; Griffin et al., 2011; Pecora, Jensen, Romanelli, Jackson, & Ortiz, 2009; Salazar, Keller, Gowen, & Courtney, 2013). While many foster and adoptive parents want to provide a nurturing and healthy environment for the children in their care, mastering the most appropriate parenting strategies for these challenging circumstances may be especially difficult. Many parents state they felt unprepared for the variety of challenges they experienced and cited a lack of preparedness as a reason for terminating a placement early (Benesh & Cui, 2017; Lanigan & Burlleson, 2017).

1.2. Current Foster/adoptive parent training methods and limitations

The most common approach to preparing foster and adoptive parents for fostering or adopting is through providing comprehensive pre-service training (for prospective caregivers) and ongoing in-service training (for current caregivers). A wide variety of training programs exist that are used by state and local child welfare system and adoption service providers; some of the most common are the Model Approach to Partnerships in Parenting Group Preparation and Selection of Foster and/or Adoptive Families (MAPP/GPS, or MAPP), Foster Parent Resources for Information, Development, and Education (PRIDE), and Keeping Foster Parents Supported Through Training (KEEP). MAPP involves ten sessions that primarily focus on psychoeducation, understanding the foster care system, and self-assessment (Benesh & Cui, 2017). The PRIDE curriculum provides similar training content as MAPP and takes place over eleven sessions (CWLA, n.d.). These programs focus on helping both child welfare agencies and trainees determine whether the participants would be effective foster parents. However, they do not focus on teaching parenting techniques and they do not target kinship caregivers or adoptive families (Dorsey et al., 2008; Benesh & Cui, 2017). In addition, they were not developed to be trauma-informed, they lack content on how to work with biological parents, and they were not developed for use in tribal communities. Furthermore, no evidence exists for their effectiveness as their format makes them difficult to evaluate. The California Evidence-Based Clearinghouse for Child Welfare (CEBC), an organization that assesses the effectiveness of child welfare interventions including foster parent trainings, describes both MAPP and PRIDE as “Not Able to Be Rated” (CEBC, 2018).

Some states also offer KEEP primarily as an in-service caregiver training (Dorsey et al., 2008). KEEP trainings take place over 16 weeks and use interactive teaching and learning strategies to emphasize research-based parenting techniques (CEBC, 2018). KEEP focuses on those parenting children ages four through twelve. Research so far indicates that individuals who participate in KEEP experience reduced parent stress and decreased behavioral issues for the children in their care (Roberts, Glynn, & Waterman, 2016). One study also found that participating in KEEP correlated with higher rates of positive exits (i.e., reunification) for children (Price et al., 2008). However, drawbacks of this approach include not addressing caring for older youth and not allowing for ongoing access to resources after training completion.

A recent meta-analysis of foster parent trainings found mixed results for the effectiveness of caregiver trainings in increasing parenting skills and knowledge, and small effects on children’s behavior (Solomon, Niec, & Schoonover, 2017). Other studies have similarly found that current trainings do not adequately prepare foster and adoptive parents for their roles as caregivers (e.g., Cuddeback & Orme, 2002; MacGregor, Rodger, Cummings, & Leschied, 2006). In fact, due to the limitations of the currently available caregiver trainings, many states across the country are taking it upon themselves to develop their own training curricula to better prepare foster and adoptive parents in their jurisdictions. A 2018 state survey internal to this project found that of the 30 states that responded, almost half implement training curricula developed by the state itself (National Training and Development Curriculum for Foster and Adoptive Parents, 2018). In summary, there

is a lack of research showing what types of caregiver trainings are effective at improving the preparation of foster and adoptive parents to care for children and youth.

1.3. National training and development curriculum for foster and adoptive parents (NTDC)

In 2017, in response to the need for evidence-based and comprehensive training for foster and adoptive parents, the United States’ Children’s Bureau began funding the development of the National Training and Development Curriculum for Foster and Adoptive Parents (NTDC). The goal of is to develop and evaluate a state-of-the-art training program to prepare foster and adoptive parents to effectively parent children exposed to trauma and to provide these families with ongoing skill development needed to understand and promote healthy child development. NTDC’s theory of change is that it first aims to enable potential foster and adoptive parents to determine their capacity to parent. It then seeks to increase their knowledge and skills so they can appropriately respond to the needs of children in their care across the developmental spectrum. Through achieving these goals, families should be more likely to provide stable and nurturing placements. Families will also have increased capacity to meet the current needs of children and the capacity to continue to develop to meet the changing needs of the children.

The NTDC curriculum includes three components: a self-assessment, a comprehensive 28-h classroom-based training (includes 2 h on-line), and a series of 15 Right Time trainings that each take about 1 h to complete. The curriculum is designed to be appropriate for a wide variety of caregiver types, including non-relative foster caregivers, kinship caregivers, American Indian/Alaska Native foster and adoptive parents, adoptive parents who adopt from the public child welfare system, and those who adopt via the intercountry or private domestic process.

1.3.1. Curriculum development process

Curriculum development began with a multistep process of identifying the themes and corresponding competencies to be covered in the curriculum; this process included reviews of the scientific literature (Vanderwill et al., in press), reviews of existing trainings, stakeholder interviews and focus groups (Day et al., 2018), and a review and prioritization of potential themes and competencies by various research and practice professionals through a Delphi process (Patterson, Day, & Wright, 2019). This process resulted in a final list of 19 classroom-based themes seen as essential for prospective foster and adoptive parents along with an additional 4 optional themes with content specific to one of four target populations (American Indian/Alaska Native, kinship, private domestic adoptive, or intercountry adoptive parents). Additionally, 15 Right Time themes were developed that could be accessed by parents when needed.

Self-Assessment. The first component of the NTDC is the caregiver self-assessment. The self-assessment is a self-report survey that gives parents the opportunity to receive feedback that will allow them to hone-in on specific areas of needed competency building related to caring for children through foster care or adoption. The self-assessment is designed to be a growth tool that gives parents who want to foster or adopt the opportunity to reflect on and evaluate motivation, preparedness, characteristics, parenting attitudes, current knowledge base, and their strengths/weaknesses. Parents should then be able to develop plans to leverage their key strengths and fill gaps to best meet the needs of children who will be placed with them. The self-assessment takes place both prior to and 90 days after a caregiver’s completion of the classroom-based portion of the training. It is completed online and takes approximately 50 min each time it is completed. Classroom facilitators will also receive an aggregate summary of the self-assessment responses, allowing facilitators to adjust classroom teaching to emphasize the needed learning areas of the class.

Classroom-based training. The classroom-based themes and competencies were developed using processes that facilitated consensus-building to identify themes that were viewed as essential for prospective foster and adoptive parents to successfully parent children with histories of separation, loss, and trauma. To assist in the development of themes and competencies, a Content Committee was created with professional and lived experience experts from across the country representing states, tribes, territories, and the target audiences for the curriculum. Content Committee members included those with experience in fostering and adopting from child welfare, private/domestic and intercountry adoptions, and kinship caregiving. Once themes and competencies were identified, content writers with expertise in the identified themes (and including both professional curriculum developers and experienced foster and adoptive parents) were engaged to develop theme outlines, and after outline approval, to develop theme content that will be used by facilitators to train prospective foster, kinship, and adoptive parents. Outlines and developed content went through a multistep review process that included reviews by various NTDC partners, an assigned member of the Content Committee, and the Federal Officer at the Children's Bureau. Each theme was also reviewed by an expert in private/domestic and intercountry adoptions, kinship families, and American Indian/Alaska Native families to determine if additional content would be needed to meet the needs of these different target populations. The classroom curriculum development resulted in the 19 foundational themes being created plus four additional themes that meet the needs of different target populations. One theme, Attachment, was chosen for evaluation in the current study.

Right Time training. The third NTDC component is the Right Time Training, an online as-needed training resource for caregivers who wish to reinforce their knowledge and skills after the classroom-based training has been completed. The Right Time training themes provide timely access to information on topics that stakeholders identified as emergent areas of need for caregivers after children are placed in their care. Accessible via a mobile application or website, each Right Time training includes multiple learning segments, including "My Story" podcasts, a video, discussion questions, frequently asked questions and answers, and additional and resources references for parents who want additional information on the topic area. "My Story" podcasts are 5- to 10-minute segments that showcase a former foster youth, adopted youth, or kinship youth and describes from their perspective the topic for that Right Time theme. Videos showcase two to three professionals who have expertise on the topic along with a foster or adoptive parent who can provide real life examples and advice on the topic being covered. Discussion questions provide opportunities for parents who are fostering or adopting to think through, discuss, and process training content. Each Right Time theme takes approximately 60 min to complete, and they are designed for parents to complete on their own online, as well as in support group settings or in partnership with parenting partners or caseworkers.

1.3.2. Usability testing of new curricula

In order to ensure the new NTDC curriculum being developed meets the learning needs of caregivers, it was important to conduct usability testing of the curriculum components with members of the target population. Usability testing involves assessing whether people are in fact able to work effectively with a product or service as intended in order to meet their needs (Dumas & Redish, 1999).

The form of usability testing used in this study is called theater testing. Theater testing is a technique commonly used in market research to evaluate how well new materials and messages work for a target audience. The current study's approach to theater testing involves recruiting participants who are members of the target population to role-play participation in the intervention, and then give the interventionists feedback on its content, delivery, and utility, as well as recommendations for improving it. Feedback is collected in both survey and group discussion form, to garner rich and diverse feedback. Other

examples of this theater testing approach can be found in Salazar et al. (in press) and Salazar, Haggerty, and Roe (2016).

1.4. Current study

The purpose of the current study is to share the results of two theater tests that examined the usability of the three training components of the NTDC training curriculum for foster and adoptive parents. While it was not feasible to assess the usability of the full training curriculum in the theater test setting, elements representing each training component were assessed, with the intent to glean feedback and recommendations applicable for improving the full curriculum. In addition to providing insight into how to strengthen the NTDC training curriculum, these findings provide caregiver training improvement recommendations that would be applicable to all foster and adoptive caregiver trainings used by child welfare agencies and similar organizations that train caregivers.

2. Method

This study's theater test process involved having current and prospective foster and adoptive parents role-play participation in components of the curriculum and then give feedback on their content, delivery, and utility. Two theater tests took place as part of this study – one to assess the usability of a classroom-based training curriculum theme, and one to assess both a portion of the Self-Assessment and a Right Time online training curriculum theme. Both theater tests took place at the executive office of the North American Council on Adoptable Children, a non-profit foster and adoptive parent membership organization located in Minneapolis-St. Paul, Minnesota. Participants were provided an information sheet about the project and consented via an oral consent process. They had the option to refuse to answer any question at any time without penalty. Participants received a \$50 gift card for their participation. This study was determined exempt from IRB review as part of a larger program evaluation being conducted by the research team.

2.1. Theater test 1: classroom training theme

The first theater test assessed the usability of the "Attachment" curriculum theme of the classroom training. This theme aimed to educate caregivers on the importance of attachment between children and caregivers, common attachment-related challenges for children who have been separated from birth families, how to help children develop trust and belonging, and supporting children's attachment to their birth families, among others.

2.1.1. Activity sets

This theme's activities were broken up into three separate activity sets to test them in the theater test. These are described below. An overview of each activity set's content is provided in Table 1.

Activity set 1: Outside prework. The outside prework consists of approximately 30 min of content related to the theme that prospective foster/adoptive parents complete prior to coming to the classroom. The prework material introduces and prepares participants for the classroom component, and consists of a podcast interview with a professional or lived experience expert related to the theme topic, and either an article or video clip, addressing some of the theme's competencies. A list of questions is provided to participants to assist in the learning process by allowing them to connect the content to their own lives. For the attachment theme, the prework consisted of a 4-minute internet-accessible video on secure attachment, a 12-minute podcast on the importance of understanding attachment, and several questions for caregivers to consider after they complete the video and podcast. When caregivers arrived in the classroom, the class "bridge" involved the facilitators introducing the theme, followed by a review of the prework

Table 1
Theater Test Activity Set Content Overview.

Activity Set	Content
Theater Test 1: Classroom-Based Training	
Activity Set 1: Prework	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Theme content that caregivers complete prior to coming to class. 4-minute video on secure attachment, 12-minute podcast on the importance of understanding attachment, and several reflection questions ● Classroom review of prework content: eliciting what participants recalled from the prework, summarizing and reviewing key takeaway points
Activity Set 2: Traditional Lecture	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Viewed video clips with a discussion on attachment styles in children ● Brief lecture and handout on styles of attachment in adults ● Video clips from a documentary on attachment styles of children and adults, with group identifying attachment styles being depicted ● Group conversation about how parents' history has impact on their parenting ● Reflection/Relevance activity for caregivers to individually reflect on their own attachment style and how it could impact their parenting.
Activity Set 3: Interactive Learning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Handout on the "4's" (Seen/Safe/Soothed/Secure) and large group interactive activity where participants identified attachment-promoting experiences and a discussion of why and how each could apply ● Lecture on attachment-based discipline, J.A.R. components of discipline (Joining, Amends Making and Re-Do's), ● Enhancing Your Toolbox (skills building) partner activity to practice J.A.R. techniques in response to a vignette ● Wrap Up to summarize main points ● Brief summary of content and referral to resources
Theater Test 2: Right Time and Self-Assessment	
Activity Set 1: Right Time Introduction and Video	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Introduction to the NTDC portal (the Right Time training website) ● First portion of the Right Time Family Dynamics theme: Family Dynamics pre-test survey, 15-minute video on how fostering and adopting can impact the caregiver's existing family dynamics
Activity Set 2: Discussion	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Remainder of the Family Dynamics theme: multiple group discussion questions based on the video content to help participants process and practice content; facilitator reviewed a family dynamics-focused "Frequently Asked Questions and Answers" document; post-test survey to assess family dynamics knowledge and skill gain
Activity Set 3: Self-Assessment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Completed the attachment theme of the self-assessment. ● Shown the self-assessment scoring procedure and the feedback caregivers would receive based on their score

activities. This involved eliciting what participants recalled from the prework and summarizing and reviewing the key takeaway points. A core component of the prework for this class included a video-based description of the cycle of attachment, explanation that attachment forms the foundation of all parent-child relationships, and clarification that attachment is a learned skill that is experience-dependent. The focus was then placed on what happens when a healthy cycle is disrupted. The goal was for participants who would be fostering or adopting to understand how pivotal their role is in strengthening this previously disrupted cycle.

Activity Set 2. Activity set 2 contained the first portion of the "Content/Layered Learning" component of the curriculum theme, which includes content such as lectures, small and large group activities, videos with discussion, references to resources and handouts, and occasional quizzes. In the theater test, the primary section of the Content/ Layered Learning involved viewing video clips with a discussion on attachment styles in children. It was followed by a brief lecture and handout on styles of attachment in adults to illustrate the importance and understanding of the intersection between the two. Then, video clips from a documentary that displayed attachment styles of children and adults were played, and the group identified attachment styles in the children and adults. This intentionally led to a key conversation about how parents' history will have an impact on their parenting. In each class, there is a Reflection/ Relevance component, which typically consists of thought-provoking question prompts that ask participants to think about and write down their responses. These are included in their Participant Resource Manual so that they can reflect on their responses later. In the theater test, activity set 2 concluded with a Reflection/Relevance activity that invited participants to individually reflect further on their own adult style of attachment and how it could impact their parenting.

Activity Set 3. Activity set 3 contained the remainder of the "Content/Layered Learning" component of the curriculum theme, which moved the class from conceptual knowledge about attachment to practice on enhancing attachment. In the theater test, this began with a handout on the "4's" (Seen/Safe/Soothed/Secure) (lecture intentionally cut short for theater class time purposes) with the bulk of time spent in a large group interactive activity where participants identified

attachment-promoting experiences and a discussion of why and how each could apply. It was followed by a lecture on attachment-based discipline, where the J.A.R. components of discipline (Joining, Amends Making and Re-Do's) were explained and coupled with an Enhancing Your Toolbox (skills building) partner activity, that consisted of practicing J.A.R. techniques in response to a vignette. Every class ends with a Wrap Up to summarize main points. This activity set ended with a very brief summary and referral to resources.

2.1.2. Sample

The classroom-based curriculum theater test had 11 participants who were current or prospective foster and adoptive parents. Participants were recruited through emails to local adoption and foster care agencies, posting on Facebook groups for foster and adoptive parents, and word of mouth from parents to each other. Table 2 includes participant demographics from both theater tests.

2.2. Theater test 2: self-assessment and right time training

The second theater test assessed the usability of both the "Attachment" portion of the Self-Assessment and the "Family Dynamics" Right Time training. The Family Dynamics theme provides an overview of the impact of kinship care, fostering, and adoption on the existing family and the child entering the family who has experienced trauma, loss, or separation. The theme intends to increase the parent's understanding of how their family will need to adjust, as well as strategies to support a healthy family dynamic.

2.2.1. Activity sets

This theater test involved three separate activity sets: one self-assessment activity and three activities that together represented the Family Dynamics Right Time training. Given the group-like setting of the theater test, the Right Time training activities were conducted as a support group rather than participants completing the content individually online. The activity sets are described below.

Activity set 1: Right Time Family Dynamics: Introduction and Video portion of the theme. Activity set 1 started with an introduction to the NTDC portal (the website where Right Time trainings are to be

Table 2
Theater test participant demographics.

	Test 1: Classroom curriculum (N = 11)		Test 2: Right Time training(N = 10)	
	N	%	N	%
Caregiver Type				
Non-relative foster caregiver	3	27.3%	1	10.0%
Kinship caregiver	1	9.1%	2	20.0%
Foster/relative-to-adopt caregiver	1	9.1%	2	20.0%
Adoptive parent	3	27.3%	0	0.0%
Foster/relative + adoptive caregiver	3	27.3%	4	40.0%
Respite provider	0	0.0%	1	10.0%
Gender				
Female	9	81.8%	7	70.0%
Male	2	18.2%	3	30.0%
Race/Ethnicity				
African American	4	36.4%	4	40.0%
Hispanic/Latinx	1	9.1%	0	0.0%
American Indian	1	9.1%	0	0.0%
Caucasian	4	36.4%	3	30.0%
Multiple Races/Ethnicities	1	9.1%	3	30.0%
Sexual Orientation				
Heterosexual	9	81.8%	10	100.0%
Lesbian	1	9.1%	0	0.0%
Gay	0	0.0%	0	0.0%
Bisexual	1	9.1%	0	0.0%

accessed). The portal introduction included how to log-in and navigate the portal dashboard to access the Right Time materials (i.e., video, podcast, and discussion questions). Next, participants completed the first portion of the Right Time Family Dynamics theme. Participants completed the Family Dynamics pre-test survey that assessed their knowledge and skills about family dynamics, and then they watched a 15-minute video on how parenting children through fostering and adopting can impact the caregiver's existing family dynamics.

Activity set 2: Right Time Family Dynamics: Discussion Questions portion of the theme. For this activity set, participants completed the remainder of the Family Dynamics theme, which aimed to help participants process and practice the content learned in the video component. First, as an interactive group activity, multiple discussion questions were introduced based on the video content to inspire group dialogue. Next, the facilitator reviewed a family dynamics-focused "Questions and Answers" document with the group. The facilitator then explained that each Right Time theme would include a list of additional resources related to that theme's topic. Following the content, participants took a post-test survey to assess their knowledge and skill gain regarding family dynamics.

Activity set 3: Attachment theme of Self-Assessment. This activity set included the self-assessment survey questions for the "Attachment" curriculum theme. Participants were told about the self-assessment and its intended function as a tool to help caregivers assess and guide their own growth. They then completed the attachment section of the self-assessment. Participants were then shown the self-assessment scoring procedure and the different types of feedback that caregivers would receive based on how they scored, as well as additional information about why this theme is important for being a caregiver.

2.2.2. Sample

The second theater test had 10 participants who were current foster and adoptive parents. Participants were recruited using the same techniques as the first theater test. Three participants who participated in the first theater test also participated in the second theater test. Table 2 includes participant demographics from both theater tests.

2.3. Theater test procedure

Both theater tests followed a similar procedure, during which (a) an activity set was administered with participants, (b) participants completed a brief survey regarding that activity set's content, and (c) participants participated in a group discussion of that activity set's content. This procedure was repeated for each activity set. Following the completion of all activity sets, a group discussion was convened to discuss the overall curriculum theme, how well the approach worked for participants, and recommendations for improvement.

Activity set administration. The classroom-based theme activities were administered by a pair of trainers (one professional trainer, one adoptive parent who is also a professional trainer) as they would be implemented in an actual caregiver training setting. The trainers met by phone and in person before the theater test to divide up training responsibilities for the theme, with each taking the lead on particular sections and activities. The Self-Assessment and Right Time training activities were administered by two members of the NTDC evaluation team. The Right Time training was administered as if it was being conducted in a support group setting.

Brief surveys. Following the completion of each activity set, participants completed a 7-item survey developed by the researchers for this study that assessed their perceptions of the usability of the activity set. Example questions included "How useful was this activity to you?" and "How helpful was this activity in increasing your confidence in approaching this topic?" Questions had a combination of open-ended and Likert scale answer formats.

Group discussions. Next, participants took part in a guided group discussion about the activity set they had just completed. Example group discussion questions included, "Did you feel this activity was engaging?", "Was it valuable to practice this skill?", and "Given your experience being caregiver, did you feel this captured what you would've needed to know if you were still at the beginning of the foster parenting journey?" Each discussion session lasted approximately 15 min.

2.4. Data analyses

Data analyses of the close-ended brief survey items included calculating the mean and standard deviation of responses. Analyses of open-ended survey items and discussions involved reviewing survey responses, transcripts of discussions, and notes taken on discussions to identify feedback regarding (a) strengths and (b) recommendations for improvement. When a large amount of feedback was given for a particular activity set, the feedback was grouped into types of strengths/recommendations (e.g., content-related, delivery-related) to organize the information and increase its utility. Participant quotes were included to illustrate participants' perceptions of the training components. Two researchers (independent evaluators of the training curriculum) worked together to group and theme the findings, but since these groupings and themes were straightforward and not particularly interpretive, comparing researcher coding solutions to ensure agreement was not deemed necessary. Data for Theater Test 1 Activities 2 and 3 were analyzed together since these activities were two halves of one complete classroom-based curriculum theme. The findings were reviewed by both a subset of focus group participants as well as the trainers to ensure accuracy. In order to maximize the utility of this study's findings for other trainings, the findings reported here include general participant-reported strengths and recommendations that could apply to all curriculum themes or a training approach overall/in general, not just to the content and delivery of the specific themes tested here.

Table 3
Brief Survey Responses to Theater Test Activity Sets.

	I understood what I was supposed to do.	The material was interesting.	How helpful was this activity in increasing your confidence in approaching this topic?
Theater Test 1: Classroom-Based Training	Mean (SD)	Mean (SD)	Mean (SD)
Activity Set 1: Prework	6.5 (0.9)	5.9 (1.0)	6.0 (1.2)
Activity Set 2: Traditional Lecture	6.5 (0.8)	6.4 (0.8)	6.2 (0.9)
Activity Set 3: Interactive Learning	6.3 (0.8)	6.1 (1.1)	6.1 (1.1)
Theater Test 2: Right Time and Self-Assessment	Mean (SD)	Mean (SD)	Mean (SD)
Activity Set 1: Right Time Introduction and Video	6.4 (0.5)	6.4 (0.7)	6.4 (0.7)
Activity Set 2: Discussion	6.1 (1.2)	6.2 (1.0)	6.0 (0.9)
Activity Set 3: Self-Assessment	6.1 (0.9)	6.2 (1.0)	6.3 (0.9)

Note: Possible survey responses ranged from 1 (Not at all) to 7 (Very much).

3. Results

3.1. Theater test #1: classroom-based training

3.1.1. Activity set 1: Prework

Participants' mean responses to the close-ended brief survey items can be found in Table 3. Responses to questions about how understandable, interesting, and helpful the theme's content were all relatively high, all with means of 5.9 or higher on a scale from 1 to 7. Participants described elements of this activity that they liked and had

recommendations for improvement for in both the brief surveys and group discussions; these responses are summarized in Table 4.

Strengths. Participants reported several strengths about the prework. Participants felt the information was useful and the correct type of information that caregivers would need to prepare for their role. One participant explained that the content helped them realize that their past experiences alone were likely not sufficient for preparing them for potential challenges that may arise while being a foster/ adoptive caregiver: "I always tell my wife I had such a normal childhood, that I, need to prepare myself [for new challenges], so it was good."

Table 4
Key Strengths and Recommendations for Classroom-Based Training.

	Strengths	Recommendations for Improvement or To Do More Of
Prework	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 30 min of prework is reasonable, necessary, and important, but longer would be unrealistic • Enjoyed variety of ways content could be accessed (e.g., listening to podcasts in the car) • Liked in-class summary of content where experiences of other trainees was shared 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide opportunity for trainees to submit questions to trainer that come up for them during the prework so they are not forgotten by the time they get to class • Make sure people who do not have direct access to technology have alternate ways to complete prework
Classroom-Based Content	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Handouts • Reflection activities for caregivers (e.g., journaling) • Interactive • Opportunities to practice the skills being taught • Using clickers to answer questions anonymously and see aggregated responses • Trainers were excited/passionate about topics 	<p>Content-Related Recommendations</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Parent panel to illustrate training content • Provide opportunities to practice scenarios and skills • Tips on how to practice skills outside of training, prior to children being placed with them <p>Delivery-Related Recommendations</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Trainer should have experience with foster care and/or adoption • Ensure trainers have engaging delivery style • More time for activities and discussions • Shorter trainings over longer period of time
Applicable to Both Pre- and Classroom-Based Components	<p>Content-Related Strengths</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Opportunities to think of topics from a child's perspective • Realistic content, not "sugar-coated", reflects experiences of actual foster/adoptive caregivers • Real-world examples of content from foster families <p>Delivery-Related Strengths</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Multiple modes of information – e.g., podcast, videos, learning from other trainees during Q&A and group discussions • Incorporating technology to enhance learning • Learning content followed by discussing it 	<p>Content-Related Recommendations</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Explain how content differs for children in various age ranges/ developmental stages • Additional trauma-informed material • Info about how trainees can share skills with the next family a child will transition to • More content focusing on older youth in care • Continue to acknowledge that this is challenging work, especially in the beginning • More specificity regarding the consequences of not doing certain parenting tasks well <p>Recommendations Regarding Additional Examples and Resources</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • More examples from children's perspectives • Provide a list of additional optional websites/resources for more information • More tips and examples of how the material learned can be applied to real-life situations • Information on supports caregivers have access to after they start fostering/ adopting <p>Delivery-Related Recommendations</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Incorporate reflection questions at end of each training activity • Incorporate technology flexibly for people with various skill/comfort levels • Host an accessible place (e.g., website) for sharing resources • Be sure to include people of different races, genders, religions, etc in content, and be culturally responsive to all cultures (e.g., race, LGBTQ+, native youth)

Caregivers also appreciated the multiple modes of information available in the prework, such as the podcast, videos, and hearing from other trainees during the debriefing Q&A. One participant said it was "... helpful to have different ways of learning, also having it ahead allowed us to watch or listen more than once." Another participant explained that being able to hear from other participants in the debrief made them "Enjoy knowing I am not alone." Participants also like the ability to access the content in multiple ways, such as being able to listen to the podcast in the car rather than having to sit down and watch or read it.

In terms of the time commitment for the prework, participants felt that 30 min of prework outside of the classroom was manageable, needed, and important to include, but also felt that it could be unrealistic to make it longer than that. One participant explained, "That 30-minute block is doable, but any longer than that I won't be able to do that."

Recommendations for improvement. In addition to reporting several strengths about the prework, participants also had several recommendations for improvement. Some recommendations were content-related. For example, some participants recommended more trauma-informed material, while others recommended including additional examples of how the material being covered can be applied to real-life situations. Other recommendations had to do with providing additional resources for caregivers, such as lists of additional optional websites or resources where caregivers can go for more information. Participants also recommended providing information on community supports that caregivers can access once they start fostering/adopting. One participant explained it would be helpful to provide guidance on "...how to get permanent resources, or support groups so, other parents who are going through the same thing..." can provide support for each other.

Finally, participants made several recommendations regarding the delivery of the prework content and the in-class review of the prework. Participants recommended a more engaging delivery approach of some material by the trainers to ensure participants are not bored by the material. In addition, participants recommended providing an opportunity for trainees to submit questions to the trainer that come up for them during the pre work so the questions are not forgotten by the time they get to class. As one participant explained, "Would it be more beneficial for the trainers if they had the, the question like to the podcast, where you could answer questions online and submit 'em. Then you know what we need to discuss." Finally, participants noted the importance of making sure participants who do not have internet access at home still have a feasible means by which to complete the pre work. One participant offered one possible alternative: "...having an option where they could maybe come to the library and listen to [podcasts] the day before the training started if they wanted" for those with limited access or technology skills.

3.1.2. Activity sets 2 and 3: content/layered learning

Again, participants' mean responses to the closed-ended survey items are in Table 3. Mean responses to activity set 2 were the highest out of all activity sets, in particular in relation to the content being interesting (Mean = 6.4, SD = 0.8). Participants' mean responses to activity set 3 were also high, ranging from 6.1 to 6.3. Again, participants described elements of this activity that they liked and did not like; these responses are summarized in Table 4.

Strengths. Participants again pointed out several strengths of the theme. They appreciated the real-world foster family examples provided in the content and, as one participant stated, "Looking from the outside in at what could've been done in the future to help a child." This included an appreciation of content that allowed them to think of circumstances from the child's perspective. Participants appreciated that the content seemed realistic, on-point, and did not shy away from the real challenges that foster and adoptive parents may face in their role. One participant explained how they appreciated that "...[the training content] was all on point, and I think that, that's excellent for people

who are becoming, um, new foster parents or adoptive parents, that this is reality. I, I think it was not sugarcoated. It was real."

Participants also appreciated the opportunities for group discussion of newly learned material included throughout the curriculum. In particular, they appreciated being able to hear the perspectives of other trainees. One participant explained, for example, that the "Video of [an] actual family was powerful, [and] more group talking provided [a] range of context" for processing the new information. In addition to group discussions, participants appreciated having experiential activities that helped them reflect on their own abilities to parent and practice the new content being learned. As one participant explained, they appreciated when content was "Fun, interactive, and on topic at the same time." Finally, participants like the incorporation of various content delivery modes (e.g., videos, handouts) in addition to other technologies to increase engagement, such as clickers that allow the group to anonymously answer questions and have the aggregated responses show up on the class display. One participant said that "using clicker was fun and [I] liked seeing results immediately."

Recommendations for improvement. Many recommendations for improvement simply involved adding more of certain curriculum elements that were already included. Many participants recommended providing additional illustrative examples of the topics presented in training – for example, more examples of children who represent various circumstances that are being taught about (e.g., in the Attachment theme, providing illustrative examples of children with each type of attachment). Participants also suggested including additional tips of specific actions caregivers can take in various situations. As one participant explained in discussing how to support children with attachment challenges, "And then maybe just giving some more examples if you have a child, that is in one of these areas, here's some things that you can do to help form that attachment." Participants also expressed value in providing additional content examples from children's perspectives: "seeing [content] from a, you know, an actual child perspective."

In addition to more examples, participants also advocated for more time for activities and discussion, as well as additional time for practicing the skills they are learning in the training. They also expressed the value in giving people instruction on how to practice the skills outside of training and prior to having children placed in their home. As one participant suggested, "Maybe [practicing skills] can be used with your partner, with your, you know, your- your best friend. It- something comes up where you have to have a conversation, like using that, and breaking it down that way allows it for folks that don't have access to kids right now to still practice it."

Participants made additional content recommendations including things like further coverage of how training topics are experienced by various ages and developmental states of children, and in particular older youth in care. One participant pointed out the common pattern of focusing trainings on younger children: "Honestly I think, um, there should be some discussion of older kids.... It feels a lot more hopeful when you've got a three year-old and then you work through a lot of these cycles... but I think that that reality needs to be presented because otherwise I can't imagine people really looking at older kids..." Educating parents on the consequences of *not* parenting well was also suggested, as was always acknowledging the reality that foster/ adoptive caregiving is challenging work, and that it can be especially hard at the beginning.

3.1.3. Overall classroom-based training feedback

The final group discussion gave participants an opportunity to reflect on the theme as a whole. Overall, participants appreciated that the trainers were excited and passionate about the topics. One participant explained that "the [caregiver] training that I originally [received] was just like, another training for them... having speakers that are passionate about the topic, I think it really, really makes a difference."

Recommendations for the overall classroom training also emerged. Participants advocated for having culturally responsive and relevant

content in all facets of culture (e.g., race/ethnicity, sexual orientation, gender identities, religions, etc.). One participant explained the importance of this by saying, "...inclusion needs to be, and equity, diversity, it all needs to be infused in every topic of foster care, because... it's very unlikely that you're going to get [a child] who, uh, is in all the same diversity that you are." Participants also reiterated the important role that technology can play, and discussed the importance of incorporating technology in a way that promotes learning but that also is flexible for people with various skill and comfort levels. Participants also recommended having a place for sharing resources that are mentioned in class or that otherwise might be helpful: "[it] would be great if there was like a, a website or a hub that you could go to and you could share those or text them to your phone or email or them, or you know, just kind of centralized."

Participants also said it would be helpful to learn more about how temporary parents (i.e., foster and adoptive caregivers) can transfer the gains they have made with a child to the next family a child lives with, whether it be the birth family, adoptive family, or another foster family. One participant said they wanted more information on "...how you terminate appropriately... I have to help this child "heal" from their unhealthy, insecure attachment. How do I pass that back onto [their] own family, kin, whoever they're going with, and how do I that appropriately?"

Other recommendations included incorporating reflection questions at the end of each training activity to provide "...closure to each section," having experienced caregivers participate in the trainings to share their experience and answer trainee questions, and ensuring the trainer has experience in foster care and adoption. Finally, in terms of a full foster/adoptive caregiver training, participants advocated for several shorter trainings over longer periods of time rather than conducting day-long sessions. As one participant explained, "when I did my [original caregiver] training, it was two eight hour days, so regardless, in hour four or five, I stopped retaining information."

3.2. Theater test #2: right time training and self-assessment

3.2.1. Activity sets 1 and 2: right time family dynamics theme

Mean responses from the close-ended brief survey items for each activity set can be found in Table 3. Participants' ratings of how understandable, interesting, and helpful the theme's content were all relatively high across both activity sets, with mean responses to activity set 1 (Introduction and Video portions) being slightly higher than activity set 2 (Discussion Questions portion). A summary of open-ended

participant feedback on the Right Time training from the brief surveys and group discussions are summarized in Table 5. The following summary of strengths and recommendations are for the Right Time theme overall rather than specific activity sets, unless otherwise stated.

Strengths. Repeated throughout the feedback for both activities was how useful and helpful the theme was. In activity 1, participants noted that it was helpful to be able to watch real-life examples that demonstrated parenting techniques, how to approach different scenarios during placement, and ideas for dealing with changes in family dynamics. One participant stated, "I thought the real-life examples [and] stories in the video were helpful. I also thought the topic of birth-order dynamics was good as it was a topic I had not considered." Another participant added, "I liked everything about it...It instantly made me think about my family." Additionally, participants also liked that the information was easy to access. In activity 2, participants found it useful and engaging to have the space to discuss the training material as a group. Participants also noted appreciation for having the opportunity for self-reflection through group discussion of covered topics and journaling about observations of relationship conflicts and challenges among family members. Feedback from one participant mentioned these activities as being helpful in their experience of "learning [how] to be a good parent." Participants stated it helped them gain insight on how to apply what they had learned to their own families and to better support children in their care.

Recommendations for improvement. Content-related recommendations for activity set 1 centered around wanting more and a wider variety of what was already provided: "more options," "more parent interviews," and "different scenarios." Participants expressed the need to have different perspectives represented in training materials by including various caregiver types (e.g. kinship/relative) and families of different cultural backgrounds and household types (e.g. single-parent) featured in video vignettes. For example, in discussing kinship caregiver-specific scenarios, one participant stated "I'd like to see more of like, how to deal with those situations where... you have to cut [the biological parents] off for the child's sake" to which another participant added, "Yeah, because the dynamic of [that situation] is way different [than for non-relative foster caregivers]."

Feedback about both activity sets indicated that participants wanted more content options and suggested organizing information in a way that allows trainees to choose different training scenarios based on what is applicable to them, whether it is by topic or stage in the placement process. One example of a topic that trainees could benefit from having multiple scenarios available was discipline. Participants felt it

Table 5
Key Strengths and Recommendations for Right Time Training.

Strengths	Recommendations for Improvement or To Do More of
<p>Content-Related Strengths</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Helpful real-life examples and stories • Clarifying different parenting techniques and approaches • Accurate information about what to expect during the placement process • Insight into how family dynamics change and how to deal with the change • Having opportunity for self-reflection • Learning how to adjust to children's needs <p>Delivery-Related Strengths</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Easy to access and navigate • Opportunities for group discussions • Engaging 	<p>Content-Related Recommendations</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Incentivize caregiver participation (e.g., have training time count toward training requirements) • Provide examples of conversations trainees can have with their families related to training content • Provide examples of techniques for dealing with extended family members (e.g. teaching acceptance, establishing boundaries) • Include more parent interviews • Provide references to other helpful trainings, books, resources • Feature cultures of all types in content • More emphasis on kinship caregiver-specific situations • Add vignettes that provide a variety of perspectives and scenarios (e.g. single-parent, kinship, etc.) • Provide examples of developmentally-specific positive discipline strategies • Create a trainee comment section in the themes where parents can add input for other trainees to see • Create a "connect to support" button that helps caregivers know who to contact for help • Have additional optional theme material that can be applied to more unique caregiver needs <p>Delivery-Related Recommendations</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Accurately estimate the full amount of time it will take caregivers to complete theme content • Have experienced caregivers provide training • Include insights from adults who were in foster care as children in curriculum content • Highlight successful adults who were foster youth themselves in curriculum content, as examples of positive youth outcomes

would be helpful to include various discipline strategies and examples based on what is developmentally appropriate for the child in someone's care; as one participant stated, "You can't discipline a five year-old the same way you'd discipline a 15 year-old." Another idea included having access to multiple examples of conversations that demonstrate effective communication techniques for establishing boundaries and teaching acceptance. Participants also discussed building in ways for participants to learn from the experiences and feedback of other participants. For example, one participant suggested adding "a comment section to the videos, where they can have more parents add in input.... I think it's realistic that all of our conversations are going to be different with our kids, but I think it would be helpful to hear from some real parents who are like, "This is how I said it, and that really worked. This is how I said it. It went horribly." This comment illustrates how the video can be used as an avenue for caregivers to discuss similar and contrasting parenting styles as well as promote continued engagement and learning from all caregivers.

Delivery-related recommendations by participants included featuring adults and professionals who were foster youth themselves in the real-life examples in the training materials. One participant emphasized the significance of receiving information "from people who are going through it, been through it, lived through it...To me, you get the best learning lessons from those...I'm gonna grasp more from someone who's lived it through them self, are doing it now, have been doing it for 20 something years...Those are people that I'm gonna relate to." In highlighting professionals who were former foster youth, one participant added, "they show that you can succeed... coming up in foster care, being adopted...when they're professors and doctors, and stuff like that, that's good..." Another delivery-related recommendation discussed by participants was involving experienced caregivers in training implementation. As one participant stated, "...the best place and the best people to get your information, like you guys are doing right now...is us. Training. Accept us into training. Let us talk to...the parents. Let us be straight up with them. Let us tell them about the kids that have the issues and the concern." Lastly, participants reported that the 30-minute timeframe for completing a Right time theme was "not realistic" and recommended adding a disclaimer indicating that reflecting on discussion questions after being exposed to the content would take additional time. One participant stated, "Yeah the discussion questions are what pushes it over the edge. I think you could probably go through the [theme content] in 30 min but [reflecting on/ responding to] the discussion questions might double that." Another participant commented on how having too large of expectations around participants reflecting on discussion questions may take away from their willingness to attend to the rest of the content: "it could take me three hours to complete the discussion questions. And then I am not going to be quite as motivated... to sit down and watch a 15-minute video." One participant suggested letting participation on the Right Time training themes count towards caregivers' training hours and suggested that this could serve as an incentive: "Will [the licensing agency] accept it, you know, as some kind of training because that's gonna motivate me."

3.2.2. Activity set 3: attachment section of self-assessment

Means from the close-ended brief survey responses to activity set 3 can be found in [Table 3](#). Similar to the two previous activity sets, participants' ratings on the theme's content were all relatively high, ranging from 6.1 to 6.3 on a scale from 1 to 7. Participant open-ended responses on the strengths and recommendations for improvement for activity 3 are summarized in [Table 6](#).

Strengths. Feedback from participants indicated that they found the Self-Assessment to be "useful," "helpful", "simple," and "straightforward." Participants also appreciated the Self-Assessment serving to provide an opportunity to have their questions and concerns answered in the classroom. Accessibility and having multiple ways to access information was also listed as a strength. Another positive experience for participants was having time for self-reflection. As one participant

noted, "I liked that [the Self-Assessment] provides an opportunity to reflect on my level of knowledge and comfort with a topic. I love that it comes with tailored resources."

Recommendations for improvement. Participants expressed little need for improvement and found the Self-Assessment to be useful and helpful as-is. Minimal feedback from participants on ways to improve the self-assessment included ensuring that trainees do not feel pressured in any way when responding and providing participants plenty of time to complete the assessment.

4. Discussion

4.1. Summary of findings

The findings from this study provide caregiver insight into how to structure the NTDC foster and adoptive caregiver training curriculum in a way that will best meet caregiver needs. These findings are also applicable for other curriculum developers who are developing trainings that are targeted to this population. Specifically, there were certain teaching modalities that were tested in NTDC that could be adopted into other caregiver trainings. For example, there were several characteristics of the NTDC caregiver training approach that participants liked; (i.e. offering content in multiple modes, providing a lot of illustrative examples of content from various perspectives, providing opportunities for discussion and learning from other trainees, and incorporating technology in a way that works for all ability levels). In addition, participants provided recommendations for making trainings stronger, often by providing "more" – more examples of how content can be applied, more opportunities to practice new knowledge and skills, and more resources and information about ongoing supports. Participants also recommended including as wide a variety of perspectives as possible – through being inclusive of all cultures and identities in depictions of content, through showing different perspectives and scenarios specific to various caregiver types and child developmental stages, and through including people in training roles that have caregiving and/or foster care experience. Incorporating caregiver-generated suggestions into the development of trainings is one step curriculum developers can take to ensure caregivers are being satisfactorily prepared for their parenting roles and responsibilities – something that does not often happen with current training curricula ([Benesh & Cui, 2017](#); [Lanigan & Burleson, 2017](#)). This is especially important as caregivers who feel prepared and supported are more likely to be retained over a longer period of time ([MacGregor et al., 2006](#)).

4.2. Adaptations to NTDC curriculum based on theater test findings

4.2.1. Self-assessment

In response to the feedback on the self-assessment regarding participants potentially feeling judged by trainers for their responses or pressured to respond in a certain way, and to keep the focus on the self-assessment being used for self-growth, a process was put in place to ensure caseworkers and trainers will not have access to individual self-assessment results. Only aggregated results of the self-assessment will be provided to trainers and training adaptations will be made on a group score basis. Sites will also be encouraged to ensure that caregivers have a reasonable amount of time to complete this online training component. Parents will be able to log into the self-assessment and stop and start as their schedule allows. Although, families will be required to complete the self-assessment before attending any classroom sessions, they will have ample time to complete it, as they will be provided the survey link between 1 and 2 weeks prior to their first face-to-face classroom training session.

4.2.2. Classroom-based curriculum

Several changes were also made to the classroom-based NTDC

Table 6
Key Strengths and Recommendations for Self-Assessment.

Strengths	Recommendations for Improvement or To Do More Of
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Allowed time for trainee questions and concerns • Liked having multiple ways to access the assessment • Feedback is individualized and provides tailored resources • Provides opportunity to reflect on one's own level of knowledge and comfort with a topic • Simple and straightforward 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Make sure caregivers feel safe to respond accurately to the self-assessment • Provide ample time for trainees to complete the self-assessment

curriculum in response to the theater test findings. For example, additional topical information was added, additional parent resources were created for ongoing reference, content for some of the activities was adapted to address a wider diversity of caregiving experiences, child profiles were added into content to give additional examples of children's experiences, and adaptations were made to make the training more interactive.

4.2.3. Right time trainings

Finally, in response to the theater test findings, the frequently asked questions and answers were updated and uploaded to the Right Time training themes to provide viewers with additional solutions to various issues covered in that theme. In addition, many of the sites implementing the NTDC training agreed to provide foster parents training credits for completing Right Time.

4.3. Implication of findings for trainers, child welfare practitioners and policymakers

This paper's findings provide a wide variety of suggestions that can be used to strengthen foster and adoptive caregiver trainings, which up to this point have been found do have mixed and/or limited effects at preparing caregivers to meet the needs of children placed in their care (e.g., Cuddeback & Orme, 2002; MacGregor et al., 2006; Solomon et al., 2017). Many suggestions were made in regard to both content and delivery. However, some suggestions run counter to standard caregiver training practices. For example, in the first theater test of the classroom-based curriculum, some participants recommended multiple shorter training sessions over longer periods of time to help facilitate trainees' absorption of the content (while acknowledging the reality of life obligations that may make longer training periods more difficult). However, child welfare systems often do just the opposite, which is to move people through trainings as quickly as possible to decrease the perceived burden of training time on caregivers. Similarly, participants appreciated and advocated for realistic content that lets caregivers know how challenging the caregiving role can be (e.g., not "sugarcoating" it); however, child welfare systems often feel a need to balance the reality of foster/ adoptive caregiving with not scaring away potential caregivers.

Participants also advocated for several "more's" – more examples, more discussion, more perspectives – all toward the goal of better preparing caregivers. However, incorporating "more" also results in longer overall training times, which is something else child welfare systems have to take closely into account. Thus, the implications of these findings for improving training curricula are that they must continue to find ways to incorporate much-needed improved training practices while at the same time maintaining, or ideally increasing, caregiver usability. One potential solution to this challenge is offering a balance of in-person and online training. This approach allows for the benefits of face to face group learning (e.g., discussions, learning from the experiences of fellow classmates – strengths referenced by many theater test participants), while also providing opportunities for additional learning that can be more flexible and adaptable for busy schedules. Additional considerations for ensuring meaningful engagement in online content could be participation in online discussion boards. This would help ensure parents continue to build strong relationships

with their cohort members, even when not in the classroom. Furthermore, being required to participate in discussion boards ensures that families are taking the time to process the content rather than quickly clicking through themes to complete the requirements as quickly as possible.

4.4. Next steps for the NTDC training

The theater testing described here is one step in the NTDC development process. Following the development process, the curriculum will be pilot tested in eight sites across the country to assess whether it is effective at improving caregiver preparation, and in turn improving placement stability and permanence, for children and youth in foster care and adoption placements. If found to be effective, the curriculum will be an invaluable asset to states struggling to adequately prepare caregivers for their work with foster and adoptive children and youth.

4.5. Limitations

There are several limitations to this study that must be considered when interpreting findings. First, each component was tested in only one theater test, in one location, with a convenience sample of a small number of participants. Since the participants volunteered to participate rather than being randomly selected, their perspectives could be biased. Additional theater tests and participants may have resulted in different and/or more nuanced findings. Second, only one theme of each curriculum component was theater tested, with the assumption being that findings would apply to other themes. However, it is possible that testing other themes may have resulted in different and/or additional recommendations for improvement for that curriculum component. Finally, while the Right Time themes were designed for either individual or group facilitated use, this study only allowed for usability assessment in a small group setting, so it remains unclear how usability may differ for those using it individually.

4.6. Conclusion

Foster and adoptive caregiver trainings play a crucial role in preparing these caregivers to fulfill key roles in caring for and supporting some of society's most vulnerable youth. Promoting caregiver competencies via improved caregiver training may lead to greater placement stability by increasing the ability of families to successfully nurture the children placed in their care. Well-designed and implemented caregiver training that is administered in group structures, whether online or face to face, can promote the development of supportive caregiver networks to enhance child-rearing abilities. This study provides a variety of caregiver-generated suggestions for developing trainings for prospective and current foster and adoptive parents.

CRediT authorship contribution statement

Amy M. Salazar: Conceptualization, Methodology, Formal analysis, Investigation, Writing - original draft, Writing - review & editing. **Angelique Day:** Conceptualization, Formal analysis, Investigation, Data curation, Writing - original draft, Writing - review & editing, Supervision, Project administration, Funding acquisition. **Alanna**

Feltner: Writing - original draft. **Jacqueline M. Lopez:** Formal analysis, Writing - original draft, Writing - review & editing. **Katherine V. Garcia-Rosales:** Writing - original draft. **Lori A. Vanderwill:** Investigation, Writing - original draft. **Mary Boo:** Resources, Writing - original draft. **Laura A. Ornelas:** Resources, Writing - original draft, Resources, Writing - original draft. **Leslie B. Wright:** Resources, Writing - original draft. **Kevin P. Haggerty:** Conceptualization, Investigation.

Declaration of Competing Interest

The authors declare that they have no known competing financial interests or personal relationships that could have appeared to influence the work reported in this paper.

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Appendix A. Supplementary material

Supplementary data to this article can be found online at <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.childyouth.2020.105031>.

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