

# Adoption Connection

DCFS Quarterly Newsletter for Adoptive Families



January 2025

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## Let's Talk About Adoption

### Using TBRI® as a Tool for Healing

from [kidsfirstinc.net](http://kidsfirstinc.net)

A popular parenting approach among adoptive and foster parents who are raising kids who have had traumatic experiences, is Trust-Based Relational Intervention (TBRI®). These principles are found in the book *The Connected Child* by David R. Cross, Karyn B. Purvis, and Wendy Lyons Sunshine. The three basic parenting principles of TBRI® are Empower, Connect, and Correct.

- **Empowering** focuses on the child's physical needs such as hunger, thirst or other imbalances that will affect how they respond to the parent and their behavior.
- **Connecting** centers on understanding and meeting attachment needs. Really seeing them, and not just their behavior, is important to the child.
- **Correcting** with techniques used for disarming fear-based behavior.

According to TBRI®, connected relationships are the key to healing.

Children communicate by their behavior. Underlying the behavior are all sorts of possible issues including stress, fear, anxiety, emotions, hunger, sleep, sadness, and many more. It's up to the parent to try to figure out what the need is that's causing the behavior.

### How to put TBRI® principles into practice

Some parents have indicated that they have a difficult time putting the TBRI® concepts into action. Here are a few pointers to help in applying the principles.

#### Compromise

If you tell your child he needs to take a shower at 7:15 and he's on the computer, he could possibly have a meltdown. But by teaching the concept of compromise, children discover that their thoughts and opinions matter. So, after telling him he needs to shower at 7:15, he can come back with a compromise and ask for an extra 15 minutes. This way gives your child a voice and builds a culture of cooperation.

#### Give choices

Offer your child a choice when possible, such as, "Would you like to have brown bread sandwiches, or white bread?" This strengthens the idea that they are heard and given a voice. Just remember that choices should not be used as a threat or consequence (e.g. "Shower or no TV").

#### Respect

TBRI® principles are all about respect. A child needs to learn to respect the parent and, in the same way, a parent needs to respect the child.

Continue reading this article [here](#).

## Resources for Adoptive Families

- [DCFS's Adoption Page](#)
- [Center for Adoption Support and Education](#)
- [Louisiana 211](#)
- [National Training and Development Curriculum \(NTDC\) for foster and adoptive parents](#)

## How to Maintain an Adopted Child's Cultural Identity

from [Child Welfare Information Gateway](#)

Connections to culture give children and youth a sense of belonging and help them better understand their identity. Through their culture, children learn core values and rituals, and culture influences how a young person views their role in their family, in society, and in their interactions with others.

Having a strong cultural identity contributes to overall well-being and is linked to resilience, higher levels of social well-being, and improved coping skills, among other benefits. When children or youth enter foster care

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or are adopted, they may lose connections to their cultural identity that could act as a protective factor to help them handle adverse experiences and challenging transitions. Separation from their family of origin and community can disrupt cultural traditions and customs, and adapting to new homes with different cultural backgrounds can be challenging, resulting in a sense of disconnection.

There are several ways adoption professionals, adoptive parents, and others can help preserve children's cultural identity — from asking about their needs to sharing a familiar meal. Every decision and action should be made with the best interests of the child in mind.

Those working with children and youth should utilize child-centered, culturally responsive approaches to reaffirm and promote connections to cultural identity. Creating an environment that embraces diversity and inclusivity reinforces the importance of cultural identity. Many cultural responsiveness tools and trainings are available for adoption, child welfare, and related professionals. Training can equip you with the know-

-ledge you need to understand and respect the cultural identities of children and youth from all families.

Adoption and foster care professionals can also help families understand the importance of culture and discuss the following ways to help their child maintain those connections:

- Acknowledge, respect, and value their child's culture and actively support their connection to their heritage.
- Ask children questions about their culture and listen to and learn from their answers.
- Incorporate their child's cultural practices and traditions into the family's established practices and traditions (these may involve food, holidays and celebrations, music, clothing, books, movies, and more).
- Maintain connections with their child's family of origin, relatives, or others in the community who share their cultural background.

### DCFS News Corner

#### DCFS Names New Adoptions Manager

We wish Cheryl Tirado the best as she begins her retirement in 2025! Congratulations to Fikisha Thomas, who is the new Adoptions Manager in the Child Welfare Division! Fikisha is excited to take the reins after being a Consultant in Adoptions for six years and working at DCFS for 17 years.

If you need anything from the Adoptions Program State Office staff, please email [DCFS.adoptions@la.gov](mailto:DCFS.adoptions@la.gov).

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#### State Office Closures:

January 20 - Martin Luther King, Jr. Day  
March 4 - Mardi Gras

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## DCFS Adoption Highlight

Jordan is an outgoing teenager with a lot of personality. He enjoys school and is a good student. He has a love for music and is a member of the school band.

Just like most teenage boys, Jordan enjoys playing basketball, video games, and spending time with friends and family. He is fun and energetic with a lot of love to give. Jordan is open to adoption and is excited to find his forever family.



## TBRI® in-depth, virtual training available this month

Parenting is challenging, particularly when you are parenting a child from a hard place. Trust-Based Relational Intervention (TBRI®) Empowering Principles will provide an in-depth look at ways to empower your children by meeting their unique physical needs and creating an environment in which they can succeed. Included is information on sensory processing and practical tools and skills to help children regulate their emotions and behaviors.

This multi-disciplinary training is designed to give caregivers, volunteers, and professionals who serve children and families the knowledge and practical skills they need to bring hope and healing. The training is live and online with four video-conferencing modules, giving participants the opportunity learn in an interactive environment.

- Module 1: Introduction to Empowering Principles & Physiological Strategies
- Module 2: Physiological Strategies: Sensory Processing

- Module 3: Ecological Strategies
  - Module 4: Empowering Principles in Action
- Participants must attend TBRI Introduction and Overview prior to attending this training.

Training is presented by Crossroads NOLA staff and begins Monday, Jan. 20. The last session will be Wednesday, Jan. 29.

Registration is now open to all DCFS Child Welfare staff and you must self-enroll to sign up for this course in Moodle at

<https://moodle.lcwtla.org/course/view.php?id=161>

Watch [this video](#) if you need a quick guide on how to register for a virtual session in Moodle.

This training is free for DCFS foster and adoptive parents, and only \$25 for all other attendees.

## 988 helpline provides free emotional emergency support

The 988 helpline provides free, confidential emotional support to anyone in Louisiana at any time. Launched by the Louisiana Department of Health, the line is meant to help connect residents to support and local resources quickly. The number has replaced the previous 10-digit National Suicide Prevention Lifeline.



Louisiana residents can call, text or chat online with 988, and there is a Spanish speaking option available.

You can download this [Fact Sheet](#) to share within your community, or learn more at <https://louisiana988.org/>.

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## Annual Adoption Celebration Held in December

DCFS hosted its 26th annual Adoption Celebration on December 12, honoring the 471 families who adopted 608 children and youth from foster care in 2024. The festivities included refreshments, games and a visit from Santa.

"Every child deserves a loving, permanent home," said DCFS Secretary David Matlock. "These adoptions represent more than just numbers—they are stories of hope, resilience, and the incredible commitment of Louisiana families."

### Adoption Highlights

The 608 children finding permanency this year include:

- Three adoptions from the Extended Foster Care program for young adults ages 18-21
- 36 adoptions (6% of total) involving youth ages 13-17
- 288 siblings adopted together by 164 families

### Adoption Awards

This year's Adoption Award winners, announced during Thursday afternoon's celebration, include:

**DCFS Adoptive Parent of the Year: Dale Landan, Alexandria Region**

After completing his foster care certification, Dale received his first placement in 2021. Since that time, he had three adopted sons with whom he enjoys camping, fishing, and ATV riding. For Dale, getting into foster care and adopting is about helping children through difficult times and giving them a place to belong.



**Community Partner of the Year: First West Church, Monroe Region**

First West Church in West Monroe, led by Senior Pastor Michael Wood has a Foster Care Ministry that provides

meeting space for foster caregiver orientation trainings, support groups, and DCFS staff trainings. This year the church became the community partner and host of the Monroe Foster Care Community Collaborative, which brings together community partners, foster caregivers and DCFS staff to learn about the needs of the local fostering community and how organizations in the region can support them.

**Adoption Specialist of the Year: Brienne Zagar Thibodeaux, Lafayette Region**

Brienne Zagar Thibodeaux has been with DCFS for 17 years and has served as an adoption specialist for the past 10 years. Her diligent efforts to provide permanency for children in foster care have led to more than 200 adoptions throughout the years, including 38 this past year. Brienne works tirelessly to ensure siblings remain together and maintain meaningful connections after adoptions. She has made a lasting impression on the families she's worked with through her empathy, kindness, integrity, and professionalism.



**Adoption Region of the Year: Lafayette Region**

The Lafayette Region's five full-time adoption specialists finalized 117 adoptions this past year, an average of 23 adoptions per specialist. Of those, more than 60 percent were finalized in less than 24 months, meeting the national standard.