

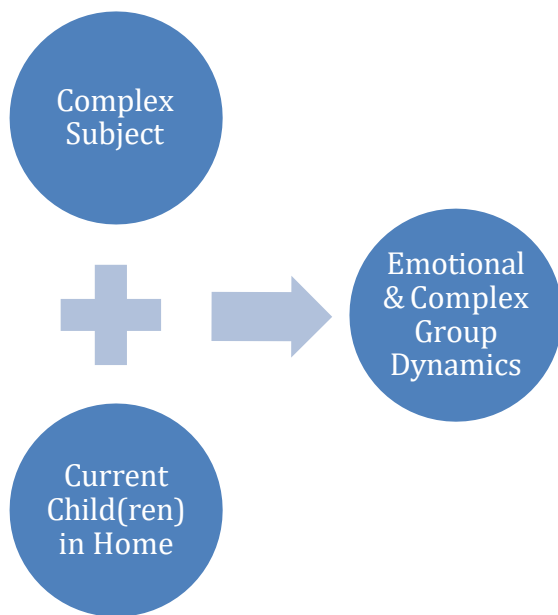
# EVERYTHING YOU NEED TO KNOW BEFORE IMPLEMENTING RPC

*Caring for Children Who Have Experienced Trauma: A Workshop for Resource Parents is often referred to as the Resource Parent Curriculum, or RPC. Developed by over 30 experts at the National Child Traumatic Stress Network, this curriculum is uniquely designed to help therapeutic, foster, adoptive, and kinship parents (referred to as resource parents) improve their parenting skills. RPC does this by using skilled facilitators who share trauma knowledge and experience and provide parents with practical trauma-informed strategies they can immediately use with the children in their home.*

*The Resource Parent Curriculum is more than just an in-service. It addresses our fundamental beliefs about children's behaviors and can be life-changing for even the most experienced caregivers.*

## What Makes RPC So Different?

While many of the trainings that resource parents attend include some information on trauma, none address it as comprehensively as RPC. Additionally, this in-service curriculum sets itself apart from other nationally available trainings for a number of reasons:



### 1.) Trauma is a Complex and Difficult Subject

This workshop extensively addresses the multifaceted aspects of trauma and focuses on the unique challenges of parenting a child who has been exposed to it. The workshop includes complex topics such as brain development and the social-emotional-neurobiological impact of trauma. Traumatic events are explored in depth, which can be difficult for participants to discuss given their emotional nature.

### 2.) Because There is a Child in the Home, Participants Discuss the Complex Issues They Currently Face

This curriculum assumes that the resource parent has completed pre-service training and currently has a child in their home. Children who have experienced trauma often have baffling behavior problems; intense emotions of anxiety, guilt and grief; and struggles with attachment. These issues can be challenging for caregivers. Throughout the workshop, caregivers participate in specific activities to be able to immediately begin applying the knowledge and skills learned with the children in their home. The facilitators discuss the participants' actual experiences each week, and use these real-life examples to reinforce concepts in the curriculum. This process, while it significantly enhances participants' learning, often creates an emotionally charged and complex group dynamic for the facilitators to manage.

## TERMINOLOGY DEFINED

Because of the complex group dynamics, the term 'facilitator' is used rather than 'trainer' because it better reflects the role of those individuals conducting the workshop.

**Staff Facilitator.** Someone who conducts RPC workshops, usually a professional in the human services field, who has the primary responsibility of coordinating all aspects of the workshop

**Parent Facilitator.** A foster, adoptive, or kinship caregiver or adult with childhood experiences in the child welfare system that conducts RPC workshops with a Staff Facilitator



## What Makes RPC So Different? (continued)

### 3.) The Participant's Experience is Often Emotionally Intense

Caregivers tend to have powerful realizations throughout the workshop which frequently result in strong emotional reactions. Common reactions include parents who express guilt over how they have parented in the past; become distressed when they realize how their actions re-traumatized a child; and reflect (perhaps for the first time) on their own traumatic past and its impact on their life and parenting style. Additionally, participants often experience a fundamental change in how they view their child's behavior, which may require modifications to their own parenting approach. Experiencing one or more of these powerful realizations can be overwhelming for the participant and requires a skilled facilitator to manage effectively in the group setting.



NCTSN developed documents that may be helpful to review prior to implementing RPC.

- Facilitator Guidelines
- Tips from Experienced Trainers
- Preparing for the Workshop Section of the RPC Facilitator Guide

These can be found at  
[www.nctsn.org](http://www.nctsn.org)

## What Expertise Do RPC Facilitators Need?

Given the unique nature of this workshop, the selection of the facilitators is critical to successful implementation. The effective delivery of RPC requires at least two individuals: a Staff Facilitator and a Parent Facilitator. Each person brings specific experiences and expertise into the room.

The Staff Facilitator brings his or her professional training and experience in the human service industry, as well as their knowledge of the child welfare system and skills in group facilitation. It is the Staff Facilitator's role to make sure the participants feel supported and are able to share difficult emotions (e.g., guilt, anger, fear) openly. It is especially important that the Staff Facilitator has strong group facilitation skills given the complex subject matter, the real-life experiences discussed, and the intense emotions often experienced by participants.

The second, but equally important, individual leading the workshop is the Parent Facilitator who brings his or her lived experience into the room. This can be a foster, adoptive or kinship parent or an adult with childhood experiences in the child welfare system. It is the Parent facilitator's role to share concrete examples of applying a trauma-informed perspective to their lives. Participants often report the Parent Facilitator's lived experience as having a powerful impact on their learning. The Staff Facilitator and the Parent Facilitator work together over the course of the workshop - planning and actively delivering the content of the curriculum together. Parent Facilitators do not require any formal training, as the Staff Facilitator in charge of guiding the learning experience for the participants.

## What Characteristics Make an Effective RPC Staff Facilitator?

Effective RPC facilitators come from all walks of life and ideally will be members of your own community. To improve the likelihood that parents will have optimal learning, effective facilitators have several key characteristics in common.

- They hold the perspective that those with lived experience (Parent Facilitators) are vital and equal partners.
- They have access to resource parents and have the flexibility to participate in the 9-month training and 8-week curriculum.
- They hold a trauma-informed perspective and understand how traumatic stress symptoms can present in children.
- They are able to respond effectively to the emotional responses of the participants.
- They are able to share timely, applicable, real-life examples to help participants internalize the concepts presented.
- They understand the fundamental concepts of cognitive-behavioral therapy and trauma-informed behavior management.
- They possess a working knowledge of the child welfare system and have experience working with traumatized children.
- They are good communicators who are able to stay on agenda while conducting the workshop.
- They are able to deliver the curriculum with fidelity while adding their own style and professional experience.
- They bring authenticity, flexibility and creativity to the workshop.



## How Many Days Does It Take To Conduct RPC?

This workshop is designed to be delivered over 8 weeks, for a total of 16 hours. By conducting the workshop over 8 weeks, participants are afforded opportunities to utilize trauma-informed strategies with the children in their home. This pacing helps to facilitate optimal learning for all participants - allowing the lessons in the workshop to build on each other week by week with the opportunity for real-life application.

Many well-intended agencies wish to schedule this training over the course of two-days - a weekend, for example - in an effort to be respectful of the resource parents' time. However, given the complexity of trauma and the real-life struggles caregivers may be experiencing, conducting this workshop over the course of two days may inadvertently cause more distress for parents rather than increase their confidence in their parenting skills. Additionally, reviewing the material over the course of two days does not afford the caregiver adequate time to reflect on how the principles learned can be applied to the children in their home.

## How Much Time Will A Staff Facilitator Need To Allocate For RPC?

Depending on the number of weeks spent in consultation, the time spent in virtual training could be as high as 45 hours. However, creating an effective RPC program requires more than training someone to deliver the content of the workshop. There are many logistical tasks that require a significant amount of time as well. These include:

- Locating appropriate training space, if in person, or planning virtual training strategies
- Developing and monitoring a budget for training
- Identification of a Parent Facilitator (someone with lived experience) and the development of that Parent Facilitator's skills
- Contract development and payment for the Parent Facilitator's services
- Recruiting and registering caregivers (including all correspondence and managing attendance records)
- Securing food and child care for training sessions

The workshop is typically delivered during hours convenient to caregivers which are evenings or weekends. The facilitator and their immediate supervisor will need to discuss the impact this will have on the Staff Facilitator's schedule and adjust their schedule and responsibilities accordingly. In addition to the time needed to actually facilitate the workshop, each session will require several hours to prepare effectively (even for experienced RPC facilitators). These include:

- Reviewing the content and activities each week
- Working with Parent Facilitator to determine how they will split up the material
- Discussing with Parent Facilitator the impact that week's material may have on participants and/or the group's dynamics
- Preparing materials needed for that week's module(s)

**SPECIAL NOTE:** Given the time commitment outlined above, many organizations assume the most appropriate person to conduct this workshop is their agency trainer. This may or may not be the case. While these professionals have experience training large groups, such as agency staff or foster/adoptive parents, facilitating RPC is different. Given its complexities, RPC is most effective when those leading the workshop have group facilitation skills, but it is not necessarily required.



## How Do I Get Parents to Attend?

The best recruitment strategy for RPC is word of mouth from prior participants or professionals; many participants across the country report that RPC is the most powerful training they have ever experienced and have taken the workshop multiple times. Participants may not be convinced to attend based on written materials alone (e.g., flyers), but rather by the enthusiasm conveyed to them individually by a trusted professional or personal contact. Therefore, agencies implementing RPC should engage active members from their local foster or adoptive community and child serving agencies, including the social service agency, NCTSN site, private child placing agencies, foster/adoptive support networks, as stakeholders in their RPC program.

Agencies implementing RPC are encouraged to communicate specific benefits of RPC to each of their stakeholders, for example, communicating to child welfare that the workshop could improve placement stability and foster parents' willingness to care for children with severe behavior problems; and communicating to foster/adoptive parent support groups or associations that the workshops are empowering and supportive and provide parents with strategies that help children heal from the effects of trauma.

Typically, after caregivers come to the first session, they see its value and attend the majority of the remaining sessions. Agencies may also enhance the workshop completion rate by offering make-up sessions and providing food and child care. Lastly, skilled facilitators who are welcoming, up-beat, and can connect with the caregivers are likely to enhance the workshop completion rate.

## Can This Be Pre-Service Training?

RPC was developed to be an in-service training because each module includes activities applied to a selected child in the caregiver's home.

## How Do I Find a Parent Facilitator?

Agencies currently working with resource parents should identify someone who is active in their foster care/adoption community and is passionate about trauma-informed parenting.

Upon completion of the initial workshop, recruitment of Parent Facilitators can come from previous attendees, who are excited about sharing it with others. Agencies with an established RPC program may have several Parent Facilitators as partners.

## How Much Does RPC Cost?

The cost to implement RPC will vary significantly depending on available resources and whether the training is virtual or in-person. Some agencies are able to provide child care and meals for example, while others are not. The following should be explored prior to implementing an RPC workshop.

- Technology/Software
- Participant Manuals
- Activity and Training Supplies
- Mileage and Travel Time
- Parent Facilitator Compensation
- Food and Drinks for Participants
- Child Care