

RESUME: MARIS H. BLECHNER, M ED, LCSW

Maris Blechner is an adoptive and birth parent, a licensed clinical social worker and educator, and an internationally respected trainer, consultant, and speaker who has spent the last thirty-eight years working for the improvement of adoption and the child welfare system. One of the founders of the parent-led multi-service adoption agency that she directed for twenty-six years, Maris relates proudly that she comes from the citizen-activist child-advocacy community and brings that neighborhood and personal family experience to her professional work. As a trainer and motivational speaker, she is known for her humorous and down-to-earth style, and her ability to reach all types of audiences. As a strong administrator with hands-on abilities, she has supervised staff in multiple programs, handled budgets and governmental reporting, and established and maintained meaningful Board relationships. As a social worker, she developed a sensitive, meaningful birth family counseling program, including appropriate conditional surrenders and the potential for open adoptions. Her range of experience includes assisting in international adoptions, both administratively and case-specific, which she states is her belief in the social work role. In her latest role, as International Program Manager, she assists her primary provider agency with the critically important six steps toward Dominican Republic adoptions by agency families. She also particularly enjoys counseling families and writing family assessments, which she had done for all of her career.

Education/Credentials: Master's Degree in Education, 1973, Queens College, NY City University; Master's Degree in Social Work, 1985, Hunter College School of Social Work, NYC; NYS Certification in Social Work, 1985; NYS Licensed Clinical Social Work Certification, 2008.

Employment History: International Program Manager for Dominican Republic adoptions, Family Focus Adoption Services (2017); Adjunct Professor, Silberman School of Social Work at Hunter College (2014 to date); Executive Director and founding president Family Focus Adoption Services (1987-2013); Adjunct Professor, Sociology Department, City College of New York, 1986; Director, Outreach Adoptions Program, Lutheran Community Services, NYC, 1980-1985

Some Recent Major Adoption/Child Welfare Presentations:

Downstate Trainer (2016) - Continuing Education Credits - Fostering Change for Children
Keynote Speaker/Presenter (2016) - N. Michigan Post Adoption Resource Center Conf.
Keynote Speaker/Presenter (2016) - Georgia Post-Adoption Family Conference
Presenter (2016) - Alabama Pre/Post Adoption Connections Permanency Conference
Keynote Speaker and Presenter (2015, 2012) - Nebraska State Adoption Conference
Keynote Speaker and Presenter (2015) - Michigan State Adoption Conference
Keynote Speaker (2014) & presenter - NJ "Let's Talk Adoption" Conference at Rutgers U.
Keynote Speaker (2014, 2004) & annual presenter - North American Council on Adoptable Children Adoption Conference
Guest Speaker (2014) Hunter College School of Social Work Policy Class
Keynote Speaker (2014, 1994, '90, '86) & annual presenter - NY State Adoptive Parents Committee Conferences
Trainer (2012, 2013) Foster Care/Adoptive Families and Staff, N. Carolina DSS; S. Carolina DSS
Trainer (2010, 2011, 2012, 2013) NASW/DSS of Louisiana Post-Graduate Course in Adoption Competence
Trainer (2011) Advanced Clinical Permanency Training for Mass. DCF Supervisors
Trainer (2010) Wendy's Wonderful Kids Nat'l Webinar- Successful Transition to Adoption
Trainer (2009) Hillside Children's Center, Rochester, NY, Course in Adoption Competence
Trainer (2008, 2009) Louisiana State U. Post-Graduate Course in Adoption Competence
Trainer (2008) Institute for Advanced Psychotherapy and Education, Baltimore, MD
Trainer (2007, 2008) Hunter College School of Social Work Post-Graduate Course in Adoption Competence
Keynote Speaker and Trainer (2007, 2008) Adoptive Families Assn. of British Columbia
Presenter (2007) first statewide Adoption Conference, CT Dept. of Children and Families
Keynote Speaker (2007) Hawaii Foster Parents Assn; Minnesota Post-Adoption Svcs. Conf.
Trainer (2007) Utah Adoption Conference; New Jersey Div. of Youth and Family Services
Presenter (2007; 2004; 2002) Child Welfare League "Excellence in Adoption" Conf.
Trainer (2005) Wisconsin, Maine, and Texas Adoption Conferences; Virginia One Church, One Child Conference

Current Member: Board of Governors Emerita, NYS Adoptive Parents Committee (since 1976).

Prior Member: NYS Adoption Action Network (1987-2013); Human Rights Campaign All Children-All Families National Advisory Council; NYS-OCFS Adoption Improvement Strategies Workgroup; Board of Directors, North American Council on Adoptable Children (2000-2007); NYC Longest Waiting Child Advisory Committee; NYS AdoptUSKids Rapid Response Team Advisory Committee; NYC Mayor Dinkins' Foster Care Commission/Chair of Adoption Committee; NYS Adoption Options Task Force; NYC Comptroller's Foster Care Advisory Committee.

Organizer: FAMILY FOCUS ADOPTION SERVICES Conference 1998 - "Perspectives and Adoption" - in conjunction with the National Resource Center for Permanency Planning at the Hunter College School of Social Work.

Awards: NACAC Adoption Activist '88; Adoptive Parents Comm. Humanitarian Award '95

Publications: Co-author, with Kay Donley, "Helping Troubled Families," in *Mental Health Adoption Resources*, 1985; Chapter in *It's Not About You: Understanding Adoptee Search, Reunion & Open Adoption*, 2016.

Other Media: Live presentation, radio broadcast, and podcast on The Moth, 2015-2016. Radio interview on WGBB-LI on adoption. Moth link: <https://beta.prx.org/stories/167147>

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Most popular training topics* (for two hour, three hour, or full day training, or keynotes):

The Invisible Realities of Successful Adoption

Straight Talk for Kids; Tackling the Tough Topics

Adoption in the World of Foster Care; Preparing Good Foster Parents to be Good Adoptive Parents

Ages and Stages; A Look at the Specialized Development of Foster Children (often given for new adoptive parents - but very well received by foster parents as well)

Dealing with the Issue of Wavering Foster Parents

Eliminating Foster Care "Drift" into Adoption

The Art and Science of the Successful Birthparent Surrender

Consumer Mentality; an Enemy of Adoption

Successful Adoption of the Adolescent

Managing Stress; Reaching the End of the Day But Not The End of Your Rope (Also titled: *Taking Care of Yourself While You Are Busy Taking Care of Everybody Else!*)

Always Have A Plan B; Some Day You Are Going to Need It

It's Not Who You Are, But Who They Think You Are; Helping Parents and Parent Group Leaders Negotiate Systems and Be Taken More Seriously

*Other topics can also be provided, to meet the needs of a specific audience

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