

# You Don't Have to Do it Alone: Supporting Families After Children Exit Foster Care

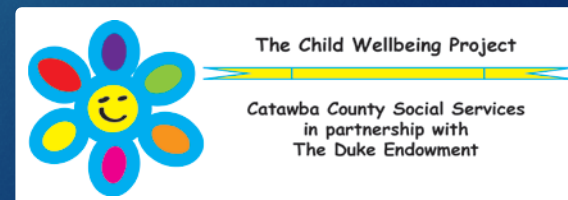


**Janine Szymanski, LPA**  
Program Manager

**Ligia Cushman, MA**  
Post-Care Supervisor

**Kellie Surratt, BA**  
Success Coach

**Catawba County Social Services**  
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# Welcome & Introduction

Ligia Cushman, MA

*Post Care Supervisor*

Kellie Surratt, BA

*Success Coach*



# Agenda

- Overview of QIC-AG
- Brief Overview of Catawba County DSS
- Introduction to Success Coach Services
- Success Coach Service Delivery & Referral
- Impact of Success Coach Services
- Questions and Answers



# Overview of QIC-AG

# QIC-AG GOAL

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QIC-AG will develop evidence-based models of support and intervention that can be replicated or adapted by other child welfare systems across the country to achieve long-term, stable permanency in adoptive and guardianship homes for waiting children as well as for children and families after adoption or guardianship has been finalized.

# QIC-ag Leadership team



QIC-AG is funded through a five year cooperative agreement with Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Children and Families, Children's Bureau.

❖ Spaulding for Children



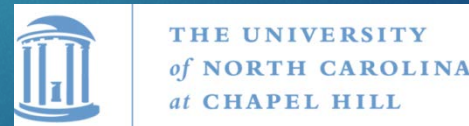
❖ University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee



❖ University of Texas at Austin



❖ University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill



# Partnership

**QIC•AG** Quality Improvement Center for Adoption & Guardianship Support and Preservation

**PARTNER SITES**

- VERMONT
- WISCONSIN
- NEW JERSEY
- ILLINOIS
- CATAWBA COUNTY  
*North Carolina*
- TENNESSEE
- TEXAS
- WINNEBAGO TRIBE OF NEBRASKA

The graphic features silhouettes of a man, a woman, and a child celebrating with their arms raised. To the right is a map of the United States with a red box labeled 'PARTNER SITES'. Dotted lines connect this box to callouts for various partner sites: Vermont, Wisconsin, New Jersey, Illinois, Catawba County (North Carolina), Tennessee, Texas, and the Winnebago Tribe of Nebraska.

# Catawba County Social Services

- ▶ County administered public social services agency (430 employees)
- ▶ Full continuum of child welfare services

## Mandated Services:

- Child Protective Services
- Foster Care
- Adoptions

## Non-Mandated Services:

- Residential Services
- Post Care Services
- Prevention Services
- Mental Health Services
- Early Childhood Services



# Why Post Adoption Services...

► Every family has ups and downs

“ Success Coach Services can help families enjoy the ups and survive the downs”

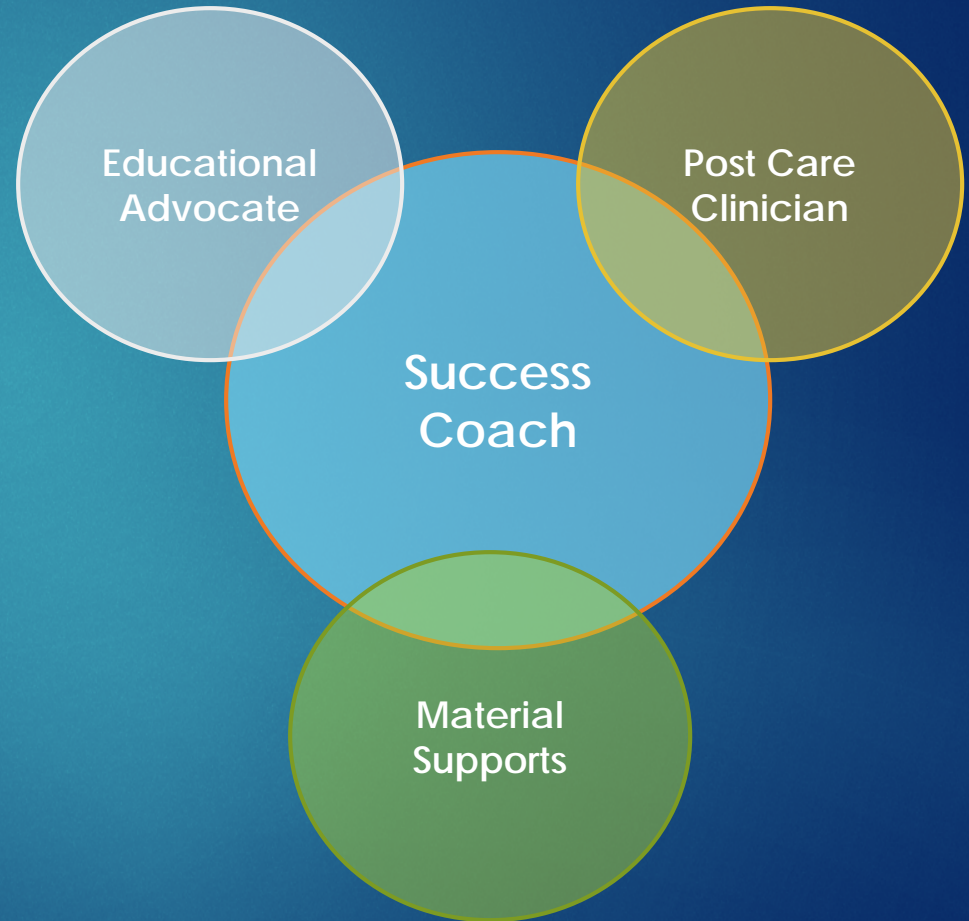


# Success Coach Post Adoption Services

*Success coaches, through support, education, and coordination of services, work with families to strengthen the permanent placement and enhance child well-being for adopted children.*

# Post Care Service Array

- For Reunification and Guardianship Services we serve families of children birth-18 years at exit from foster care
- For Post-Adoption Services we serve families of children birth to 21 with a finalized domestic, international, public, or private adoption





# How do families know about Success Coach Services?

Families can be referred, offered services through outreach efforts, or self-motivated

Outreach efforts include:

- Partnering with public agencies, and Intercountry Adoption agencies
- Presentations or information tables at events
- Fliers and handouts (provided at events to families, professionals and social workers)
- Facebook page
- Mailings sent to each family yearly that receive adoption subsidy

# Who we serve?

- ▶ Any family who has adopted and currently lives in one of the following North Carolina counties:
- ▶ Ashe
- ▶ Alleghany
- ▶ Alexander
- ▶ Burke
- ▶ Caldwell
- ▶ Catawba
- ▶ Watagua
- ▶ Wilkes

<https://www2.ncdhhs.gov/dss/adopt/resources.htm>

# What do Post Adoption Families Need?

- ▶ Information and referral from a single entry point
- ▶ Support groups for adoptive parents, birth parents, and adoptees
- ▶ Support for connections with birth family and former foster families
- ▶ Training on special needs and adoptive parenting

# What do Post Adoption Families Need?

- ▶ Full disclosure of all background information
- ▶ Case management services
- ▶ Other financial assistance when needed
- ▶ Crisis intervention
- ▶ Mental health services, both in-home and residential
- ▶ Educational support and advocacy
- ▶ Respite care

# When do Families Need Post Adoption Support?

## Developmental Transitions

- Starting school- realizing most children are not adopted
- Adolescents exploring their identity
- Questions about birth parents at different developmental stages
- Marriage
- Preparing to parent

## Milestone Events

- Birthdays
- Entering kindergarten
- Anniversaries
- Mother's & Father's Day
- School projects that focus on sharing family information
- Adoptive mother's pregnancy
- Addition of siblings
- Divorce
- Medical events



# Protective Factors of Adoptive Families

- ▶ Stable and healthy relationships with good communication
- ▶ Warm cohesive pattern of family interaction
- ▶ Authoritative, nurturing parenting style
- ▶ Realistic expectations of children
- ▶ Good social supports outside of the family
- ▶ Family involvement in the community
- ▶ Peer acceptance for children
- ▶ Informal and formal supports
- ▶ Child's ability to develop attachments
- ▶ Child's temperament

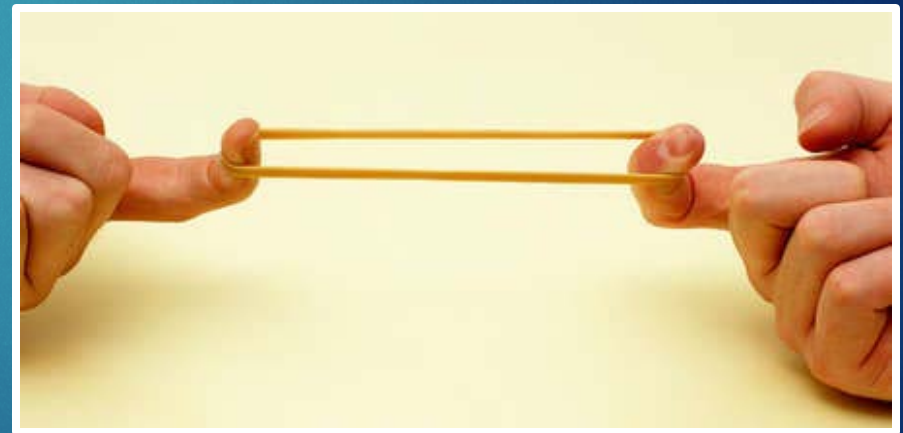
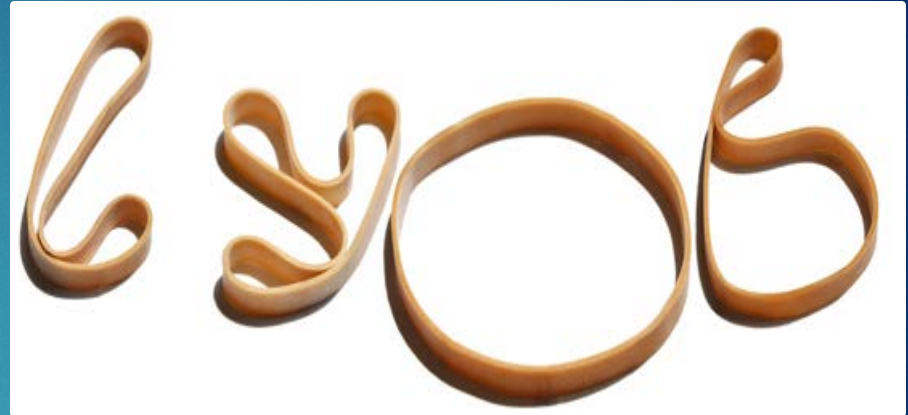
# Risk Factors of Adoptive Families

- ▶ Number of placements child had prior to adoption
- ▶ Child's emotional conflicts related to loss and identity issues
- ▶ Child prior experience of physical, sexual or emotional abuse
- ▶ Child prior experience of deprivation, including institutionalization and serious neglect
- ▶ Age of (child) at adoption
- ▶ Prenatal exposure to toxic substances, malnutrition, and low birth weight
- ▶ Unrealistic expectations about child's abilities by adoptive parents (adoptive mothers with higher education and first time parents are at higher risk of adoption disruption)
- ▶ Children with special cognitive, emotional or behavioral needs

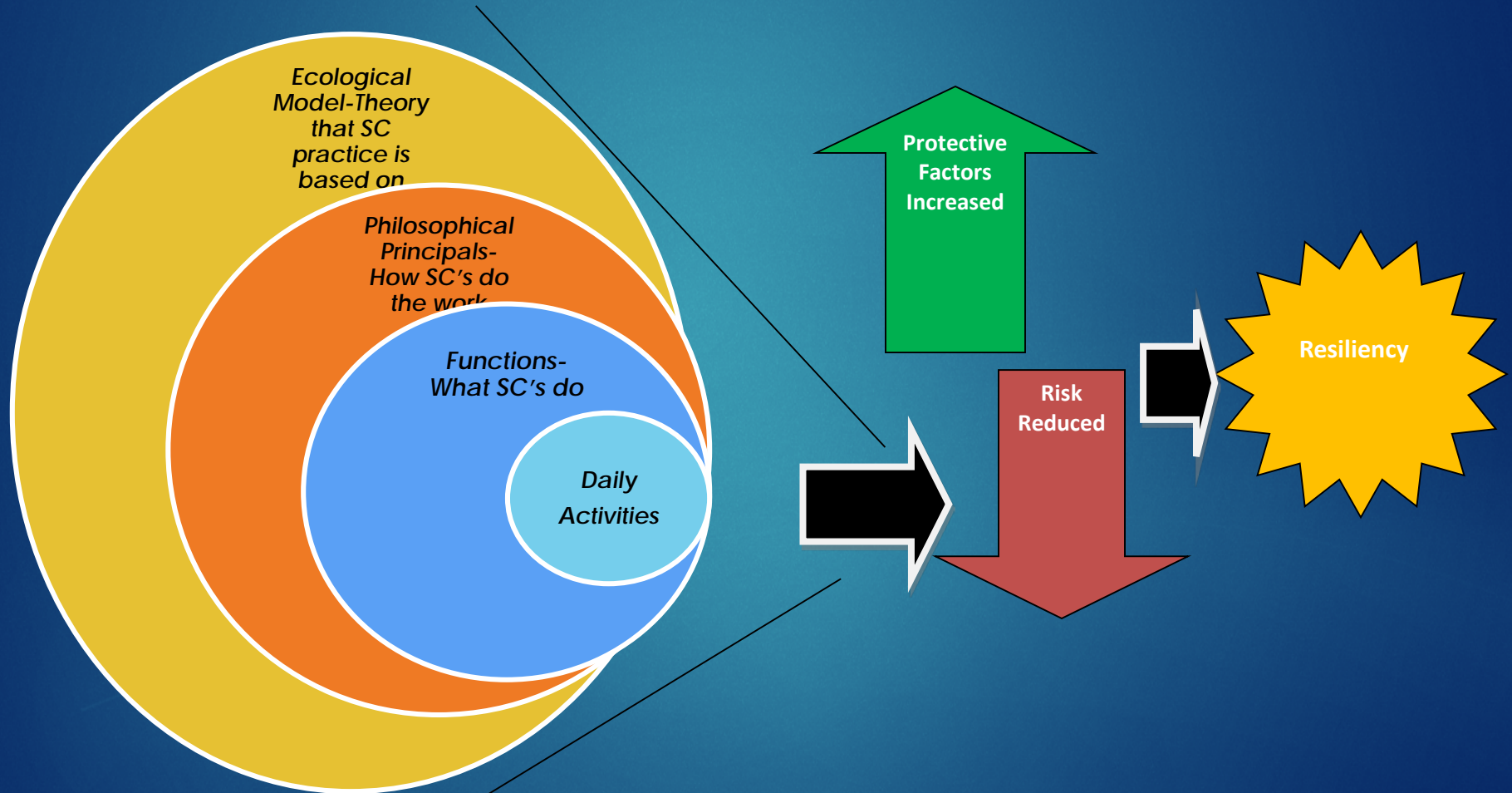
# Resiliency Theory Activity

Describe your rubber band

- The ability to recover from or adjust to misfortune or change
- The ability to bounce back when stretched
- “Overcoming the Odds”



# Success Coach (SC) Frame Work



# Success Coach Post Adoption Model

- ▶ Success Coach: Enhanced case management available 24/7 for support
- ▶ Adoption competent clinical services- family & individual counseling
- ▶ Educational advocacy
- ▶ Material supports
- ▶ Adoption Education through annual Post Adoption Conference
- ▶ 1 Post Adoption family fun event a year

# Program Elements

## Functions of a Success Coach:

- ▶ Engagement
- ▶ Assessment
- ▶ Goal Planning
- ▶ Service Coordination
- ▶ Skill Building and Reinforcement
- ▶ Crisis Intervention, Prevention and Management
- ▶ Advocacy

## Principals that guide the work:

- ▶ Family Centered
- ▶ Strengths Based
- ▶ Wellbeing Focused
- ▶ Empowerment Driven
- ▶ Culturally Sensitive
- ▶ Trauma Informed
- ▶ Team Oriented
- ▶ Ethical

# Examples of Success Coach Activities

- ▶ Advocate with families for Individualized Educational Plans (IEP) to promote school success
- ▶ Coordinate services for children to enter adoption competent mental health services
- ▶ Complete a trauma screening with a teenager exhibiting sexualized behaviors to discover she was a victim of sexual assault
- ▶ Assist family in advocating for and providing crisis intervention for their child when he was hospitalized with mental health concerns
- ▶ Teach families how to build resiliency in parents and children through skill building activities
- ▶ Enroll children in a college preparation summer course

# Training

- ▶ All Success Coaches go through orientation and trainings specific to essential job functions
- ▶ Training is skill-based and includes ongoing coaching to ensure the new skills are implemented in their work with families





# Coaching

Coaching increases the Success Coaches' ability to maintain fidelity to the model in their service delivery

## Includes:

- ▶ Observations of SCs' work with families and written feedback provided (Conceptual Feedback)
- ▶ Documentation Review
- ▶ Case File Reviews



# What Families Say

- ▶ “I thought, you know, I can do this. I’ve already been a parent before. But I was wrong,” “It’s completely different when it’s your own granddaughter. My friends, my family, my church—nobody I knew had gone through what I was going through. But my Success Coach understood.”
- ▶ When asked what is the most important part of the program adoptive parents commented:
  - ▶ “As a parents you don’t see everything clearly; this is someone with an objective view”
  - ▶ “Success Coaches are full of information, and if they don’t know, they find out”
  - ▶ “Good to have an advocate for the parent, someone on your side, a mentor”

# Recognition

In January 2014, the Success Coach Program was 1 of 15 programs in the country named by Center for the Study of Social Policy (CSSP) as an exemplary program achieving outcomes that improve the well-being of vulnerable youth.

The Success Coach Program was also recognized by the North American Council on Adoptable Children as a promising family support program and was invited by AdoptUSKids to participate in a national roundtable conversation in January 2014 on effectively implementing post adoption services.

In 2015 QIC-AG selected Catawba County to participate in their Reach for Success Project which tests the idea that proactive outreach to families can help to identify those families most in need of the Success Coach Service.



## Contact Us!

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**Janine Symanski, LPA**

[jsymans@catawbacountync.gov](mailto:jsymans@catawbacountync.gov)

828-695-6961

**Ligia Cushman, MA**

[lcushman@catawabacountync.gov](mailto:lcushman@catawabacountync.gov)

828-695-5702

**Kellie Surratt, BA**

[ksurratt@catawbacountync.gov](mailto:ksurratt@catawbacountync.gov)

828-695-6534

<http://www.postadoptionsuccesscoach.org/>



The Child Wellbeing Project

Catawba County Social Services  
in partnership with  
The Duke Endowment

# QUESTIONS

Additional Information on the QIC-AG can be found at:

[www.qic-ag.org](http://www.qic-ag.org)



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