

Fostering Sibling Connections

Desired Outcomes

Research demonstrates that maintaining sibling relationships can provide positive support and improved outcomes for children involved in the child welfare system. Siblings should be available to be a source of comfort and stability to children and youth as their relationships with the adults in their lives change. Therefore:

- Children in foster care should be placed with their siblings unless it is determined not to be in their best interest.
- In cases where siblings are separated, cases should be reviewed frequently to assess the appropriateness of continued separation.
- In cases where siblings are separated, diligent efforts should be made to maintain significant contact unless it is documented as not to be in the best interest of the siblings.
- If appropriate, siblings should be included in permanency planning discussions and meetings for siblings and contact with siblings should be encouraged in any adoptive or guardianship placement.

Current Situation

- Best practice, which is supported by Federal and State law, is for siblings to be placed together whenever possible. However, siblings are sometimes separated from each other through their involvement with the child welfare system. Sometimes these separations are inadvertent, such as the lack of availability of a foster home with enough beds at the time of placement.

Proposed Changes to Ohio Law

- Replicate the Foster Youth Sibling Bill of Rights implemented in Colorado [Foster Youth Sibling Bill Of Rights](#) [Colorado General Assembly](#). This Bill of Rights outlines protections that siblings should receive when in the best interests of each sibling, including being placed together, having regular contact, and otherwise having their relationships encouraged while in foster care. It received unanimous support in the Colorado legislature and has had a positive impact since it was signed into law in May 2019. (Other states with a Sibling Bill of Rights include New Jersey, Minnesota, Massachusetts, Pennsylvania, Oregon, Nevada, Connecticut, and Washington.)
- Add review and oversight of the circumstances around sibling separation to the semiannual administrative review, which is monitored and overseen by the court. Sibling separation should be added to the list of items reviewed to look at situations where siblings have been put in separate placements and whether the need or reasoning that led to that separation is still a current need or concern or whether efforts should be made to place the siblings together.



For More Information

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