



Children's Administration

Targeted Case Review

Outcome 7: Sibling Placement

July 1, 2013 – December 31, 2013

This is a report of the results of a targeted case review of sibling placements. This case review is required under the Braam Revised Settlement and Exit Agreement.

The Agreement states:

***Outcome 7:** Children in out-of-home care will be placed with their siblings who are also in out-of-home care whenever possible.*

I. Background and Purpose

This is the report of results of the fourth targeted case review concerning the placement of siblings. Pursuant to the revised agreement, the case review process will be conducted every six months.

II. Measure Definition

The Department's performance will be determined based on the percent of cases in which siblings were placed together out of those in which siblings were removed together and remained in care at least 30 days, excluding from the numerator and denominator of the measure those not placed together due to appropriate exceptions.

Full Compliance Measure: 75% of children in out-of-home care will be placed with their siblings who are also in out-of-home care whenever possible.

III. Sample Methodology

A. Size

The sample size will consist of 90 cases in which siblings were removed together and remained in care at least 30 days. Exceptions to CA policy requiring siblings be placed together are attached as Appendix A¹ and will be incorporated into the case review. When appropriate exceptions apply, the Department will review additional cases up to a limit of 20% of the original sample size.

B. Sample Definition

Cases to be reviewed were randomly selected from FamLink. The sample included cases which met the following criteria:

Child Information: On date evaluated – all these were true for a child in the case:

1. Placed into care from home during the reporting period.
2. In out-of-home care for at least 30 days.
3. In an open placement episode excluding trial return home.
4. Under the placement care and authority of the Children’s Administration.
5. Age on report date is less than 18.0 years.

Family Information: On date evaluated – all these were true:

1. Family case had more than one child in the family.
2. More than one child was removed at the same time.

IV. Review Process

This targeted case review was led and conducted by Children’s Administration headquarters staff.

This was an electronic case review. Reviewers looked at numerous locations in FamLink to verify that the case met the sample criteria for the review period and determined if children were removed together and whether or not they were subsequently placed together in out-of-home care at the time of initial placement.

¹ Refers to Appendix A of the Revised Settlement and Exit Agreement and are listed in Section VI of this report as Not Applicable cases.

Review for sample criteria:

1. Validated that the identified child and one or more siblings were removed at the same time from their home and placed in out-of-home care for 30 days or longer during the review period.
2. Validated that the identified child’s siblings met the definition of sibling as defined by RCW 13.38.040:

“Sibling means a child's birth brother, birth sister, adoptive brother, adoptive sister, half-brother, or half-sister, or as defined by the law or custom of the Indian child's tribe for an Indian child.”

Review for compliance:

Cases were reviewed to determine if the identified child was placed with all of his or her siblings who were removed at the same time.

Review for quality assurance:

Two headquarters staff conducted a 100% review to ensure reviewers’ answers were consistent statewide.

V. Results

Cases Reviewed and Exceptions by Region				
Outcome 7	State Total	Region 1	Region 2	Region 3
# of Cases Reviewed	105	32	36	37
# of Cases with exceptions that were removed from the sample	15	6	1	8
# of Cases used for final review results	90	26	35	29

The results of this case review were based on 90 cases. During the case review, 15 cases were identified as having an approved exception documented and therefore were replaced.

A. Outcome Compliance by Region

Outcome 7	Child was placed with ALL siblings who were removed at the same time.			
	Statewide	Region 1	Region 2	Region 3
Total Applicable Cases	90	26	35	29
% Full Compliance	86% <i>(77 out of 90)</i>	81% <i>(21 out of 26)</i>	86% <i>(30 out of 35)</i>	90% <i>(26 out of 29)</i>
% Total Non-Compliant	14% <i>(13 out of 90)</i>	19% <i>(5 out of 26)</i>	14% <i>(5 out of 35)</i>	10% <i>(3 out of 29)</i>
Indicators of Progress	85% <i>(11 out of 13)</i>	80% <i>(4 out of 5)</i>	80% <i>(4 out of 5)</i>	100% <i>(3 out of 3)</i>
No Indicators of Progress	15% <i>(2 out of 13)</i>	20% <i>(1 out of 5)</i>	20% <i>(1 out of 5)</i>	0% <i>(0 out of 3)</i>

Summary

- Overall, statewide performance on this measure was 86%. Children’s Administration achieved the full compliance for this measure which is 75% for eighteen consecutive months.
- All three regions showed significant improvement and all met the benchmark individually.
 - Region 1 achieved an 81% compliance rate.
 - Region 2 achieved an 86% compliance rate.
 - Region 3 had the highest rate of compliance at 90%.
- Fourteen percent, or 13 cases reviewed were determined non-compliant.
 - Eleven cases were determined non-compliant with indicators of progress.
 - Ten cases were due to caregiver capacity which is not an approved exception.
 - One case had a supervisor approved exception but did not cover the date of initial placement.
 - Two cases were determined to be non-compliant with no indicators of progress as no approved exception was found in FamLink.

B. Case Review Questions

Question 1: When the child had *only one sibling* and both were removed at the same time, were they placed together?

Question 1	Child Had ONE Sibling			
	Statewide	Region 1	Region 2	Region 3
Total Applicable Cases	54	16	20	18
% Full Compliance	83% <i>(45 out of 54)</i>	75% <i>(12 out of 16)</i>	85% <i>(17 out of 20)</i>	89% <i>(16 out of 18)</i>
% Total Non-Compliant	17% <i>(9 out of 54)</i>	25% <i>(4 out of 16)</i>	15% <i>(3 out of 20)</i>	11% <i>(2 out of 18)</i>
Indicators of Progress	89% <i>(8 out of 9)</i>	100% <i>(4 out of 4)</i>	67% <i>(2 out of 3)</i>	100% <i>(2 out of 2)</i>
No Indicators of Progress	11% <i>(1 out of 9)</i>	0% <i>(0 out of 4)</i>	33% <i>(1 out of 3)</i>	0% <i>(0 out of 2)</i>

Summary

- Out of the 90 cases reviewed, 54 cases were identified as having one sibling with whom they were removed.
- Statewide performance was 83% for children who had *only one sibling* and were removed and placed together at the same time.
 - Region 1 achieved 75%.
 - Region 2 achieved 85%.
 - Region 3 achieved 89%.
- Eight cases were found to be non-compliant with indicators of progress. All cases had a supervisor approved exception due to caregiver capacity, which is not an approved exception under the Revised Settlement and Exit Agreement.
- One case was found to be non-complaint with no indicators of progress because siblings were placed apart without supervisor and area administrator approval.

Question 2: When the child had *more than one sibling* and they were all removed at the same time, were they all placed together?

Question 2	Child Had MORE THAN ONE Sibling			
	Statewide	Region 1	Region 2	Region 3
Total Applicable Cases	36	10	15	11
% Full Compliance	89% <i>(32 out of 36)</i>	90% <i>(9 out of 10)</i>	87% <i>(13 out of 15)</i>	91% <i>(10 out of 11)</i>
% Total Non-Compliant	11% <i>(4 out of 36)</i>	10% <i>(1 out of 10)</i>	13% <i>(2 out of 15)</i>	9% <i>(1 out of 11)</i>
Indicators of Progress	75% <i>(3 out of 4)</i>	0% <i>(0 out of 1)</i>	100% <i>(2 out of 2)</i>	100% <i>(1 out of 1)</i>
No Indicators of Progress	25% <i>(1 out of 4)</i>	100% <i>(1 out of 1)</i>	0% <i>(0 out of 2)</i>	0% <i>(0 out of 1)</i>

Summary

- Thirty-six of the 90 children reviewed had more than one sibling who was removed on the same day.
 - 22 of the children reviewed had a sibling group of 3
 - 11 of the children reviewed had a sibling group of 4
 - 2 of the children reviewed had a sibling group of 5
 - 1 of the children reviewed had a sibling group of 8
- Case reviewers found 32 out of 36 cases fully compliant when a child had two or more siblings removed at the same time and all children were placed together.
- Statewide performance on this question was 89%.
 - Region 1 achieved 90%.
 - Region 2 achieved 87%.
 - Region 3 achieved 91%.
- Eleven percent, or 4 cases, reviewed in this question were determined non-compliant.
 - Three of the non-compliant cases showed indicators of progress.
 - Two cases were rated non-compliant despite supervisor approved exceptions because the siblings were not placed together due to caregiver capacity, which is not an approved exception under the Revised Settlement and Exit Agreement.
 - One case had a supervisor approved exception but did not cover the date of initial placement.

- One case was rated non-compliant with no indicators of progress because the reviewer was unable to find an exception uploaded in FamLink. It was determined that an approved exception would have applied. This case was managed by a new social worker who has since received training.

VI. APPENDIX

Following, is the tool used during the targeted case review to ensure consistency among reviewers.

OUTCOME 7 CASE REVIEW QUESTIONS AND DECISION RULES

Goal

Siblings shall be placed together, unless the health, safety, or welfare of a child is put in jeopardy by the placement.

Outcome Being Reviewed

Outcome 7: Children in out-of-home care will be placed with their siblings who are also in out-of-home care whenever possible.

How often and when will the Case Review Occur?

The first target date for this case review is January 2012 and every six months thereafter until determined otherwise.

Population from Which the Sample Will Be Selected

The sample selected contains the following data elements:
90 randomly selected cases from the reporting period.

Child Information: On date evaluated – all these are true:

- In an open placement episode excluding trial return home.
- Placement care and authority with Children's Administration and placement care and authority is NOT with 'Tribal/Band without IV-E Agreement', 'Private Agency', 'Other State responsible for all legal actions', 'federal', 'Juvenile Rehabilitation Admin.'
- Age on report date is < 18.0.
- Child was in out-of-home care for at least 30 days.
- Placed into care from home during reporting period.
- This sample excludes legally free children.

Family Information:

Family case has more than one child in the family.
Include cases where more than one child was removed at the same time.
Data should include local office, region and statewide.

The Department's performance will be determined based on the percent of cases in which siblings were placed together out of those in which siblings were removed together and remained in care at least 30 days, excluding from the numerator and denominator of the measure those not placed together due to appropriate exceptions.

Sample Size

The sample size will consist of 90 child welfare cases in which siblings were removed together and remained in care at least 30 days. Exceptions to CA policy requiring siblings be placed together are outlined below. When appropriate exceptions apply such that there were no siblings who were required to be placed together, the Department will review additional cases up to a limit of 20% of the original sample size.

Definitions

“**Sibling**” means a child's birth brother, birth sister, adoptive brother, adoptive sister, half-brother, or half-sister, or as defined by the law or custom of the Indian child's tribe for an Indian child as defined in RCW 13.38.040.

Specific Questions and Criteria

1. Does at least one child meet the definition of sibling in out-of-home care?

(If the definition is not met, select “Not Applicable” and remove from sample population. If it is met, go on to Question 2. This case must be replaced with another sample case and does not count toward the 20 percent limit of additional cases where appropriate exceptions apply.)

Does Not Meet Review Sample Criteria:

2. Child has one sibling. Was the child in out-of-home care at least 30 days placed with his or her sibling who is also in out-of-home care whenever possible?

(If a child has two or more siblings, select “Not Applicable” and complete Question 3 below)

Full Compliance:

Siblings were removed together, placed **together** and remained in care at least 30 days.

Reviewer Guidance: Documentation may include Visit Page, Placement Page, ISSP, case notes, home study, and out-of-home safety plan

Non-Compliance:

Siblings were removed together, placed **separately** and remained in care at least 30 days.

No Area Administrator or higher level management approved exception applies.

Reviewer Guidance: Documentation may include Visit Page, Placement Page, ISSP, case notes, home study, and out-of-home safety plan

Not Applicable:

Child has two or more siblings (Question 3 below applies to a child who has two or more siblings), **or**

Siblings were separated and placed apart under one or more of the following documented supervisor and area administrator approved exceptions:

As a result of an admission of a sibling into detention, a psychiatric hospital or a residential treatment setting to meet the unique and individualized needs of one of the siblings; **or**

A sibling becomes a significant threat to the safety of another sibling or cannot be controlled if the siblings are placed together; **or**

A sibling becomes a significant threat to the safety of another person in the placement, and the risk to that person cannot be controlled if the sibling remains. If movement of the entire sibling group is determined not to be in their overall best interest, the sibling presenting the threat will be moved; **or**

A sibling with a physical, emotional or mental condition requires specialized services in order to accomplish specific therapeutic goals. The sibling may be placed apart from other siblings for the length of time necessary to meet the need requiring separate placement; **or**

An abusive relationship between the siblings exists where therapy, with a safety plan in place, is not effective or not the appropriate intervention; **or**

To permit placement with relatives who live near the home of the siblings. Thus, a large sibling group may be placed in two related homes near their family home if necessary to place them in close proximity to their family; **or**

Court order prohibits the Department from placing siblings together; **or**

Other extraordinary circumstances that are documented and approved under these procedures.

Reviewer Guidance: Case reviewers will document the other extraordinary circumstances and document those chosen reference value.

Reviewer Guidance: Documentation may include Visit Page, ISSP, case notes, home study, and out-of-home safety plan.

3. Child has two or more siblings. Was the child in out-of-home care at least 30 days placed with their siblings who are also in out-of-home care whenever possible?

(If a child has one sibling, select "Not Applicable")

Full Compliance:

Siblings were removed together, placed **together** and remained in care at least 30 days.

Reviewer Guidance: Documentation may include Visit Page, Placement Page, ISSP, case notes, home study, and out-of-home safety plan

Other Indications of Progress:

One or more siblings, but not all siblings, were removed together, placed together and remained in care at least 30 days and was documented approved by supervisor and area administrator.

One or more siblings, but not all siblings, were removed together, placed together and remained in care at least 30 days and there was not documented approval by supervisor and area administrator.

Reviewer Guidance: Documentation may include Visit Page, Placement Page, ISSP, case notes, home study, and out-of-home safety plan. Reviewers will document specifics about these situations regarding one or more siblings, but not all siblings were removed together and not all placed together.

Reviewer Guidance: These cases are considered non-compliant with the full compliance measure.

Non-Compliance:

Siblings were removed together, placed separately and remained in care at least 30 days. No Area Administrator or higher level management approved exception applied.

Not Applicable:

Child has one sibling, **or**

Siblings were separated and placed apart under one or more of the following documented supervisor and area administrator approved exceptions:

As a result of an admission of a sibling into detention, a psychiatric hospital or a residential treatment setting to meet the unique and individualized needs of one of the siblings; **or**

A sibling becomes a significant threat to the safety of another sibling or cannot be controlled if the siblings are placed together; **or**

A sibling becomes a significant threat to the safety of another person in the placement, and the risk to that person cannot be controlled if the sibling remains. If movement of the entire sibling group is determined not to be in their overall best interest, the sibling presenting the threat will be moved; **or**

A sibling with a physical, emotional or mental condition requires specialized services in order to accomplish specific therapeutic goals. The sibling may be placed apart from other siblings for the length of time necessary to meet the need requiring separate placement; **or**

An abusive relationship between the siblings exists where therapy, with a safety plan in place, is not effective or not the appropriate intervention; **or**

To permit placement with relatives who live near the home of the siblings. Thus, a large sibling group may be placed in two related homes near their family home if necessary to place them in close proximity to their family; **or**

Court order prohibits the Department from placing siblings together; **or**

Other extraordinary circumstances that are documented and approved under these procedures.

Reviewer Guidance: Case reviewers will describe the other extraordinary circumstances and the number of these circumstances, if more than one.

Reviewer Guidance: Documentation may include Visit Page, ISSP, case notes, home study, and out-of-home safety plan.

Siblings were removed together, some or most siblings placed together and remained in care at least 30 days, one or siblings were placed separately, and the following documented supervisor and area administrator approved exceptions:

As a result of an admission of a sibling into detention, a psychiatric hospital or a residential treatment setting to meet the unique and individualized needs of one of the siblings; **or**

A sibling becomes a significant threat to the safety of another sibling or cannot be controlled if the siblings are placed together; **or**

A sibling becomes a significant threat to the safety of another person in the placement, and the risk to that person cannot be controlled if the sibling remains. If movement of the entire sibling group is determined not to be in their overall best interest, the sibling presenting the threat will be moved; **or**

A sibling with a physical, emotional or mental condition requires specialized services in order to accomplish specific therapeutic goals. The sibling may be placed apart from other siblings for the length of time necessary to meet the need requiring separate placement; **or**

An abusive relationship between the siblings exists where therapy, with a safety plan in place, is not effective or not the appropriate intervention; **or**

To permit placement with relatives who live near the home of the siblings. Thus, a large sibling group may be placed in two related homes near their family home if necessary to place them in close proximity to their family; **or**

Court order prohibits the Department from placing siblings together; **or**

Other extraordinary circumstances that are documented and approved under these procedures.

Reviewer Guidance: Case reviewers will describe the other extraordinary circumstances and the number of these circumstances, if more than one.

Reviewer Guidance: Documentation may include Visit Page, ISSP, case notes, home study, and out-of-home safety plan.

VII. APPENDIX B

Decision Rules

The following additional decision rules were agreed to during a phone call with the Plaintiff's counsel on March 7, 2012, which were applied in making final determinations. These decision rules will be incorporated into a revised tool for the next review period.

Outcome 7 – Siblings Placed Together

#	Decision Rules for Measuring Compliance
7-A	<p>Circumstance: Children are removed together with the intent to place all children together in the same home; however, one child has a temporary stay in a hospital or other temporary setting to address the physical abuse/neglect that caused the removal, and upon release is placed in the same foster home with his/her sibling(s).</p> <p>Decision: Case counted as compliant because the siblings were placed together after a medically necessary temporary period apart.</p>
7-B	<p>Circumstance: Children are removed together and one or more siblings in a sibling group of three or more has an approved exception for not being placed together.</p> <p>Decision: Review the identified child and his/her siblings that do <u>not</u> have an approved exception to determine whether or not the identified child was placed with all other siblings that could be placed together. Case counted as compliant when all siblings to whom an exception did not apply were placed together.</p>
7-C	<p>Circumstance: Applying Exception 6: "Siblings may be separated and placed apart only under the following circumstance: <i>To permit placement with relatives who live near the home of the siblings.</i>"</p> <p>Decision: The case is determined to meet an exception when all siblings are placed with relatives who live close enough to maintain regular contact between the children. "Close enough" refers to relatives who live in the same county or in adjacent counties. "Close enough" can also be determined by reviewers when relatives living in non-adjacent counties facilitate at least twice monthly face-to-face visits between siblings.</p>
7-D	<p>Circumstance: An exception applies and the department <u>cannot</u> impact the placement decision through a supervisor/AA review (E.g. Sibling in detention, court order prohibits placement together.)</p> <p>Decision: Carefully review all documentation to determine whether or not the department can impact the placement decision; when the department <u>cannot</u> impact the decision <u>do not require</u> a supervisor/AA approval in order to consider it an approved exception.</p> <p>Note: This was particularly an issue for this review because the policy in effect during the period of the review did not require AA approval. This may become less of an issue in future reviews.</p>
7-E	<p>Circumstance: An exception applies and the department <u>can/may</u> impact the placement decision through a supervisor/AA review (E.g. A safety plan is not the appropriate intervention for abusive sibling, siblings placed with two different relatives.)</p> <p>Decision: Carefully review all documentation to determine whether or not the department can impact the placement decision; when the department <u>can</u> impact the decision, <u>require</u> a supervisor/AA approval in order to consider it an approved exception.</p>

The following decision rule was agreed to during a phone call with the Plaintiff's counsel on January 8, 2013. At that time, it was agreed we would apply this decision rule to previous case reviews and revise performance.

7-F	<p>Circumstance: Siblings groups of 3 or more were unable to be placed together initially in the same home; however, they were subsequently placed together within 14 calendar days due to the department's ongoing diligent efforts.</p> <p>Decision: When documentation in FamLink shows that the siblings were placed together within 14 days of their initial out-of-home placement, the case will be determined "compliant."</p>
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