Children's Administration

Targeted Case Review

Outcome 8: Sibling Visits and Contacts

July 1, 2014 – December 31, 2014

This is a report of the results of a targeted case review concerning sibling visits and contacts. This case review was established by the Braam Revised Settlement and Exit Agreement which states:

> ***Outcome 8:*** *Children placed apart from their siblings will have two or more monthly visits or contacts (not including staffing meetings or court events), with their siblings unless the case meets an exception agreed to by the parties.*

I. Background and Purpose

This is the report of results for the sixth targeted case review concerning sibling visits and contacts. 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 children placed apart had two or more monthly visits or contacts out of those in which siblings were placed apart, excluding from the numerator and denominator of the measure those cases in which sibling visits or contacts did not occur due to appropriate exceptions. When appropriate

exceptions apply, the Department will review additional cases up to a limit of 20% of the original sample size.

Full Compliance Measure: 90% of children placed apart from their siblings will have two or more monthly visits or contacts (not including staffing meetings or court events) with their siblings. Full compliance for this outcome does not require consideration of regional variation due to the relatively small number of cases that will be reviewed in the reporting period.

III. Sample Methodology

A. Size

The sample size will consist *of 50 cases of children who have been separated from at least one sibling as a result of the child's placement in out-of-home care. Exceptions to CA policy requiring sibling visits are attached as Appendix B*[1] *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 that 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 reporting period.
2. In out-of-home care for at least 30 days.
3. Under the placement care and authority of the Children's Administration.
4. Age on report date is less than 18.0 years.

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

1. Case was open 7/1/2014 through 12/31/2014.
2. Family case had more than one child in the family.
3. At least one sibling was separated from the others at placement.

IV. Review Process

This targeted case review was led and conducted by Children's Administration headquarters staff. Prior to the cases being assigned for review, two non-consecutive months were randomly selected from the first four months of the reporting period. For this case review, the second and fourth months were selected. Reviewers reviewed cases for visits during the months of August and October 2014.

[1] *See* Appendix B of the Revised Settlement and Exit Agreement. These exceptions are described in Section VI of this report as cases that are Not Applicable.

This was an electronic case review. Reviewers looked at numerous places in FamLink to verify that the case met the sample criteria and then determined whether or not two visits or contacts occurred during the review months.

Review for sample criteria:

1. Validated that the identified child was living with his or her siblings at the time of removal.

   Sibling placed apart from his or her sibling is defined as *children who have been separated from at least one sibling as a result of the child's placement in out-of-home care*. This was operationalized as a child placed in out-of-home care whose siblings were also placed in out-of-home care, siblings who remain in their home with their parent/guardian, or a combination of the two. This included siblings who were living part-time in the home at the time of the child's removal. This excluded siblings who were not living in the home at the time of the child's removal.

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."

3. Validated that the identified child was placed apart from at least one sibling during every day for each review month.

   Cases were excluded if the identified child was placed together with all of his or her siblings for one or more days during the review period. If the child was not placed with all siblings, compliance was reviewed for the other siblings.

4. Validated that the identified child was placed in out-of-home care during the months being reviewed.

   Cases were excluded if the identified child entered care after the beginning of the first review month (for this review: after July 1 or exited care before the end of the last review month (for this review: before October 31).

Review for compliance:

The identified child's case was reviewed to determine if he/she had two or more visits or contacts with the siblings they were placed apart from during the review period.

Review for quality assurance:

A team comprised of two headquarters staff conducted a review to ensure reviewer's answers were consistent statewide.

V. Results

Cases Reviewed and Exceptions by Region				
Outcome 8	**State Total**	**Region 1**	**Region 2**	**Region 3**
# of Cases Reviewed	**60**	**21**	**16**	**23**
# of Cases with exceptions that were removed from the sample	**16**	**9**	**4**	**3**
Total Cases in Final Review Results	**44**	**12**	**12**	**20**

The results of this case review were based on 44 cases. During the case review, a total of 60 cases were reviewed; however, 16 of those cases had an approved exception documented in FamLink and therefore were excluded from the sample.

A. Outcome Compliance by Region

Outcome 8	Children placed apart from their siblings had two or more monthly visits or contacts with their siblings.			
	Statewide	**Region 1**	**Region 2**	**Region 3**
Total Applicable Cases	**44**	**12**	**12**	**20**
% Full Compliance	**93%** *(41 out of 44)*	**92%** *(11 out of 12)*	**100%** *(12 out of 12)*	**90%** *(18 out of 20)*
% Total Non-Compliant	**7%** *(3 out of 44)*	**8%** *(1 out of 12)*	**0%** *(0 out of 12)*	**10%** *(2 out of 20)*
Indicators of Progress	**100%** *(3 out of 3)*	**100%** *(1 out of 1)*	**0%** *(0 out of 0)*	**100%** *(2 out of 2)*
No Indicators of Progress	**0%** *(0 out of 3)*	**0%** *(0 out of 1)*	**0%** *(0 out of 0)*	**0%** *(0 out of 2)*

Summary

- Forty-one out of 44 cases met full compliance, with statewide performance at 93%; the full compliance measure is 90%.
  - Region 1 achieved 92% compliance.
  - Region 2 achieved 100% compliance.
  - Region 3 achieved 90% compliance.
- Three out of the 44 cases reviewed (7%) were determined non-compliant.
  - The three non-compliant cases reviewed all showed indicators of progress. These cases revealed sibling visits or contacts occurred during the review period but not at the level required. (e.g., one visit in August and one visit in October).

B. Visits/Contacts Between Siblings

<u>Question 1</u>: Did the child placed apart from his or her sibling (ONE sibling) have two or more monthly visits or contacts with his or her sibling for each month reviewed?

Question 1	Child Had ONE Sibling			
	Statewide	**Region 1**	**Region 2**	**Region 3**
Total Applicable Cases	**23**	**5**	**8**	**10**
% Full Compliance	**91%** *(21 out of 23)*	**100%** *(5 out of 5)*	**100%** *(8 out of 8)*	**80%** *(8 out of 10)*
% Total Non-Compliant	**9%** *(2 out of 23)*	**0%** *(0 out of 5)*	**0%** *(0 out of 8)*	**20%** *(2 out of 10)*
Indicators of Progress	**100%** *(2 out of 2)*	**100%** *(0 out of 0)*	**0%** *(0 out of 0)*	**100%** *(2 out of 2)*
No Indicators of Progress	**0%** *(0 out of 2)*	**0%** *(0 out of 0)*	**0%** *(0 out of 0)*	**0%** *(0 out of 2)*

Summary

- Twenty-one out of 23 cases with one sibling reviewed were rated fully compliant (91%).
- Two cases with one sibling were determined non-compliant with indicators of progress.
    - Reviewers found that the siblings visited once in August and October; an exception was documented in FamLink, however it was not an approved exception. In reviewing the case it was determined an exception would not have applied. Since the review, one of the siblings has been adopted.
    - Reviewers found that the siblings were placed together in August and visited once in October. In reviewing the case it was determined that an exception would not have applied for the missed visit in October.

<u>Question 2:</u> Did the child placed apart from his or her siblings (more than one sibling) have two or more monthly visits or contacts with all identified siblings for each month reviewed?

Question 2	Child Had MORE THAN ONE Sibling			
	Statewide	**Region 1**	**Region 2**	**Region 3**
Total Applicable Cases	**21**	**7**	**4**	**10**
% Full Compliance	**95%** *(20 out of 21)*	**86%** *(6 out of 7)*	**100%** *(4 out of 4)*	**100%** *(10 out of 10)*
% Total Non-Compliant	**5%** *(1 out of 21)*	**14%** *(1 out of 7)*	**0%** *(0 out of 4)*	**0%** *(0 out of 10)*
Indicators of Progress	**100%** *(1 out of 1)*	**100%** *(1 out of 1)*	**0%** *(0 out of 0)*	**0%** *(0 out of 0)*
No Indicators of Progress	**0%** *(0 out of 1)*	**0%** *(0 out of 1)*	**0%** *(0 out of 0)*	**0%** *(0 out of 0)*

Summary:

- Twenty out of 21 cases with multiple siblings reviewed were rated fully compliant (95%).
- One case reviewed was determined to be non-compliant with indicators of progress.
    - Reviewers did not find any documentation that the review child visited with all required siblings in October. In reviewing the case no exception was found for the missed visits in October and an exception would not have applied.

VI. APPENDIX

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

OUTCOME 8
CASE REVIEW DESIGN

Goal
Siblings in foster care who are not placed together and those who remain at home shall have frequent and meaningful contact, unless such visitation is not in the best interest of the children.

Outcome Being Reviewed
Outcome 8: Children placed apart from their siblings will have two or more monthly visits or contacts (not including staffing meetings or court events), with their siblings unless the case meets an exception agreed to by the parties.

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:
50 randomly selected cases from two non-consecutive randomly selected months from the first four months of 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 is with Children's Administration (Those children under placement care and authority with 'Tribal/Band without IV-E Agreement', 'Private Agency', 'Other State responsible for all legal actions', 'federal', 'Juvenile Rehabilitation Admin' are excluded from this sample).
- Age on report date is < 18.0
- Child was in out-of-home care for at least 30 days
- This sample includes legally free children

Family Information:
Family case has more than one child in the family.
Exclude cases where all children have been placed together.
Data should include local office, region and statewide.
Full compliance for this outcome does not require consideration of regional variation due to the relatively small number of cases that will be reviewed in the reporting period.

Sample Size
The sample size will consist of 50 cases of children who have been separated from at least one sibling as a result of the child's placement in out-of-home care. Exceptions to CA policy requiring sibling visits are outlined below. When appropriate exceptions apply such that there were no siblings who were required to have visits or contacts, the Department will review additional cases up to a limit of 20% of the original sample size. The Department's performance will be determined based on the percent of cases in which siblings placed apart had two or more monthly visits or contacts out of those in which siblings were placed apart, excluding from the numerator and denominator of the measure those cases in which sibling visits or contacts did not occur due to appropriate exceptions.

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.

A **"sibling placed apart from his or her sibling"** is a child placed in out-of-home care who has siblings who are in out-of-home placements, siblings who remain in their home with their parent/guardian, or a combination of the two.

A "**contact**" may include: telephone contact (phone or texting conversation), electronic messaging (e.g., email and internet messages such as those available on Facebook and other social networking sites), and letters, etc.

Reviewer Guidance: "Contact" may also include internet phone calls or video calls (e.g., Skype), or other types of communication not currently listed above. This information will be documented by the reviewer to assist with the development of the working definition and future policy guidance for Children's Administration.

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. Did the child placed apart from his or her sibling have two or more monthly visits or contacts (not including staffing meetings or court events) with his or her sibling?** (If a child has two or more siblings, select "Not Applicable" and complete Question 3 below)

Full Compliance: ☐

The child had two or more monthly visits or contacts (not including staffing meetings or court events) with his or her sibling each month reviewed.

☐ Two or more visits occurred each month reviewed; there were no contacts made.

☐ Two or more contacts were made each month reviewed; there were no visits that occurred

Reviewer Guidance: Reviewer will indicate type of contact and frequency.

☐ A combination of visits and contacts occurred each month reviewed.

Reviewer Guidance: Reviewer will indicate type of contact and frequency.

Reviewer Guidance: Documentation may include information gathered and documented in the Visit Plan update, uploaded visit reports, ISSP, GAL/CASA reports, provider report, shared planning meeting document, case notes (such as sibling visit, sibling contact, parent child visit, supervised visit, unsupervised visit, Health and Safety Visits with child, Health and Safety visits with caregiver, monthly supervisor review). Reports from the child or their caregivers regarding the type and frequency of contact must be documented by the social worker. This includes if a child shows the social worker email, social networking or text conversations.

Other Indications of Progress: ☐

☐ The child had one monthly visit or contact (not including staffing meetings or court events) with his or her sibling. No supervisor approved exception applied.

☐ The child had one monthly visit or contact (not including staffing meetings or court events) with his or her sibling. Documentation can be located that a supervisor exception applied and was granted.

☐ One visit, or
☐ One contact

☐ The child had one monthly visit or contact (not including staffing meetings or court events) with his or her sibling. Supervisor approval exception applied, but there's no documentation of supervisor approval.

Items in *Italics* are pursuant to the *Braam v. State of Washington* Revised Settlement and Exit Agreement.

☐ One visit, or
☐ One contact
Reviewer Guidance: Reviewers will document circumstances around the above situation(s).
Reviewer Guidance: Documentation may include information gathered and documented in the Visit Plan update, uploaded visit reports, ISSP, GAL/CASA reports, provider report, shared planning meeting document, case notes (such as sibling visit, sibling contact, parent child visit, supervised visit, unsupervised visit, Health and Safety Visits with child, Health and Safety visits with caregiver, monthly supervisor review). Reports from the child or their caregivers regarding the type and frequency of contact must be documented by the social worker. This includes if a child shows the social worker email, social networking or text conversations.
Reviewer Guidance: These cases are considered non-compliant with the full compliance measure.

Non-Compliance: ☐
The child did not have any monthly visits or contacts with his or her sibling. No supervisor approved exception applied.

Not Applicable: ☐
☐ Child has two or more siblings (Question 3 below applies to a child who has two or more siblings), **or**
☐ Siblings did not visit or have contact due to one of the following documented supervisor approved exceptions:
- ☐ A court order prevents or limits visits or contacts; **or**
  - ☐ The Children's Administration determined visits or contacts:
    - ☐ Were contrary to the child's health, safety or welfare; **or**
    - ☐ Would hinder reunification efforts; **or**
  - ☐ The child's file documents that:
    - ☐ The child and/or sibling were developmentally able to determine his/her needs for sibling contact and requested that contact occur less than two times per month (or not at all); **or**
    - ☐ The parent of a non-dependent sibling objected to visits/contacts with the dependent sibling; **or**
    - ☐ The parent of a non-dependent sibling wished to limit visits/contacts with the dependent sibling; **or**
    - ☐ The facility where the child/sibling resides prohibits or limits visits/contacts with siblings (i.e., during the intake period at in-patient facilities); **or**
    - ☐ The child is on the run from his/her placement for a majority of the calendar month during which compliance is being measured; **or**
      Reviewer Guidance: If this exception applies, describe efforts made by the social worker to locate the child during the review period to fulfill this requirement. The majority of the calendar month is considered more than half of the days in the calendar month.
    - ☐ The child is not complying with visitation arrangements.
      Reviewer Guidance: If this exception applies, describe efforts made by the social worker to have the child participate in visitation (e.g., scheduling visit, scheduling transportation, conversations with child supporting visitation when developmentally appropriate, etc.)

☐ Other: **Reviewer Guidance:** Reviewers will document other extraordinary exceptions that are supervisor approved.

3. **Child has two or more siblings. Did the child placed apart from his or her siblings have two or more monthly visits or contacts (not including staffing meetings or court events) with their siblings?** (If a child only has one sibling, select "Not Applicable")

Full Compliance: ☐
The child had two or more monthly visits or contacts (not including staffing meetings or court events) with all of his or her siblings each month reviewed. No supervisor approved exception applies.

☐ Two or more visits occurred each month reviewed; there were no contacts made

☐ Two or more contacts were made each month reviewed; there were no visits that occurred
Reviewer Guidance: Reviewer will indicate type of contact and frequency.

☐ A combination of visits and contacts occurred each month reviewed
Reviewer Guidance: Reviewer will indicate type of contact and frequency.
Reviewer Guidance: Documentation may include information gathered and documented in the Visit Plan update, uploaded visit reports, ISSP, GAL/CASA reports, provider report, shared planning meeting document, case notes (such as sibling visit, sibling contact, parent child visit, supervised visit, unsupervised visit, Health and Safety Visits with child, Health and Safety visits with caregiver, monthly supervisor review).

Other Indications of Progress: ☐
☐ The child had one monthly visit or contact (not including staffing meetings or court events) with each sibling. No supervisor approved exception applies.

☐ The child had two or more monthly visits or contacts (not including staffing meetings or court events) with one or more of his or her siblings, but not with all siblings. No supervisor approved exception applies.
Reviewer Guidance: Documentation may include information gathered and documented in the Visit Plan update, uploaded visit reports, ISSP, GAL/CASA reports, provider report, shared planning meeting document, case notes (such as sibling visit, sibling contact, parent child visit, supervised visit, unsupervised visit, Health and Safety Visits with child, Health and Safety visits with caregiver, monthly supervisor review).
Reviewer Guidance: These cases are considered non-compliant with the full compliance measure.

Non-Compliance: ☐
The child did not have any monthly visits or contacts with any of his or her siblings. No supervisor approved exception applies.

Not Applicable: ☐
☐ Child has one sibling, **or**
☐ Siblings did not visit or have contact due to one of the following documented supervisor approved exceptions:
- ☐ A court order prevents or limits visits or contacts; **or**
  - ☐ The Children's Administration determined visits or contacts:
    - ☐ Were contrary to the child's health, safety or welfare; **or**
    - ☐ Would hinder reunification efforts; **or**
  - ☐ The child's file documents that:
    - ☐ The child and/or sibling were developmentally able to determine his/her needs for sibling contact and requested that contact occur less than two times per month (or not at all); **or**
    - ☐ The parent of a non-dependent sibling objected to visits/contacts with the dependent sibling; **or**

☐ The parent of a non-dependent sibling wished to limit visits/contacts with the dependent sibling; **or**

☐ The facility where the child/sibling resides prohibits or limits visits/contacts with siblings (i.e., during the intake period at in-patient facilities); **or**
Reviewer Guidance: If this exception applies, state the name of the facility (e.g., Child Study and Treatment Center) and describe the limitations or prohibitions.

☐ The child is on the run from his/her placement for a majority of the calendar month during which compliance is being measured; **or**
Reviewer Guidance: If this exception applies, describe efforts made by the social worker to locate the child during the review period to fulfill this requirement. The majority of the calendar month is considered more than half of the days in the calendar month.

☐ The child is not complying with visitation arrangements.
Reviewer Guidance: If this exception applies, describe efforts made by the social worker to have the child participate in visitation (e.g., scheduling visit, scheduling transportation, conversations with child supporting visitation when developmentally appropriate, etc.)

☐ Other: **Reviewer Guidance:** Reviewers will document other extraordinary exceptions that are supervisor approved.

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 8 – Sibling Visits

#	Decision Rules for Determining Case is Appropriate for Sample
8-A	**Sample Criteria Confirmed:** Random selection of two non-consecutive review months requires that all children in the sample be reviewed for the same two calendar months. **Result:** If children entered care after the beginning of the first review month (for this review: after July 1) or exited care before the end of the last review month (for this review: before September 30), they will be excluded from the review as not meeting the sample criteria.
8-B	**Sample Criteria Confirmed:** "Sibling placed apart from his or her sibling" are "*children who have been separated from at least one sibling as a result of the child's placement in out-of-home care.*" This was operationalized as a child placed in out-of-home care who has siblings who were also placed in out-of-home care, siblings who remain in their home with their parent/guardian, or a combination of the two. **Result:** This includes siblings who were living part-time in the home at the time of the child's removal, and they will be reviewed. "Living part-time" refers to a sibling who sleeps overnight in the home on a regular ongoing basis, at a minimum average of twice weekly. This excludes siblings who were not living in the home at the time of the child's removal, and they will not be reviewed.
8-C	**Sample Criteria Confirmed:** Child being reviewed must be placed apart from at least one sibling during every day of each of the review months. **Result:** Exclude the case from the sample if the identified child was placed together with all of their siblings for one or more days during the review period.
8-D	**Sample Criteria Confirmed:** Children meet the definition of sibling(s) placed apart and the child's birth sibling was adopted prior to the review period. **Result**: If sibling was adopted during the review period, review for visit/contact. Exclude adopted sibling(s) from the review when the adoption was finalized prior to review period and review for compliance of visit/contact with other sibling(s).
8-E	**Circumstance**: Children visit with their siblings for consecutive days. **Decision:** Each day of a multi-day visit when children are able to spend time together will be counted as one visit/contact.

#	Decision Rules for Determining Case is Appropriate for Sample
8-F	**Circumstance**: An exception applies and the department cannot impact the visitation decision through a supervisor review (E.g. Court order prohibits contact, child on the run more the majority of the month, youth is a registered sex offender and is prohibited from having contact with a sibling, adult siblings choose to visit less than 2 times per month.) **Decision**: Carefully review all documentation to determine whether or not the department can impact the decision; when the department cannot impact the decision do not require a supervisor approval in order to consider it an approved exception. Note: This was particularly an issue for this review because the policy in effect during the period of the review did not require supervisor approval. This may become less of an issue in future reviews.
8-G	**Circumstance**: An exception applies and the department can/may impact the visitation decision through a supervisor review (E.g. Sibling contact is contrary to child's welfare.) **Decision**: Carefully review all documentation to determine whether or not the department can impact the decision; when the department can impact the decision, require a supervisor approval in order to consider it an approved exception.
8-H	**Circumstance:** Children meet the definition of sibling(s) placed apart and one or more sibling(s) in the group has an approved exception for not visiting. **Decision**: Review the identified child and the siblings without an exception to determine if the child had contacts/visits with all other siblings.
8-I	**Circumstance:** The review team concluded from the overall review of the case that the standard was likely met; however, documentation for specific visit dates between specific children could not be found. **Decision**: Case was marked "non-compliant – other progress".