Children's Administration

Targeted Case Review

Outcome 7: Sibling Placement

January 1, 2012 – June 30, 2012
Revised January 24, 2013

This is a revised 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 second 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 A*[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 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 by Children's Administration headquarters staff and conducted by both headquarters and regional staff. Regional staff did not review cases from their own region. Webinars were held with the review team to orient them to the review tool and criteria. Inter-rater reliability phone meetings were conducted with Children's Administration headquarters and regional reviewers.

This was an electronic case review. Reviewers looked at numerous places 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.

[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 of his or her siblings was removed 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:

1. 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:

The initial plan called for 10% of the cases to be reviewed a second time to assure consistent application of the review criteria. Three headquarters staff looked at all cases 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	**90**	**36**	**26**	**28**
# of Cases with exceptions that were removed from the sample	**2**	**2**	**0**	**0**

A. Outcome Compliance by State and 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**	**33**	**26**	**31**
% Full Compliance	**71%** *(64 out of 90)*	**70%** *(23 out of 33)*	**77%** *(20 out of 26)*	**68%** *(21 out of 31)*
% Total Non-Compliant	**29%** *(26 out of 90)*	**30%** *(10 out of 33)*	**23%** *(6 out of 26)*	**32%** *(10 out of 31)*
Indicators of Progress	**35%** *(9 out of 26)*	**30%** *(3 out of 10)*	**67%** *(4 out of 6)*	**20%** *(2 out of 10)*
No Indicators of Progress	**65%** *(17 out of 26)*	**70%** *(7 out of 10)*	**33%** *(2 out of 6)*	**80%** *(8 out of 10)*

Summary

- Overall, statewide performance on this measure was 71%, which is a 2% decrease from the last reporting period. Children's Administration did not meet the full compliance measure, which is 75%.
- Region 2 had the highest rate of performance at 77%, which is a 2% decrease from the last reporting period.
- Region 3 had the lowest rate of performance at 68%, which was a 5% increase in compliance from the last reporting period.
- Region 1 achieved a rate of 70%, which is a decrease in 8% from the last reporting period.
- Nine of the 90 cases showed indicators of progress, where some but not all of the children were placed together. These cases were rated as non-compliant. Following is an example in which some but not all children were placed together:
    - The child and his two siblings were removed at the same time. The siblings were each placed into separate homes initially. Within 28 days the siblings were all placed in the same home.

B. Case Review Questions

<u>Question 1</u>: 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	**46**	**18**	**12**	**16**
% Full Compliance	**83%** (38 out of 46)	**83%** (15 out of 18)	**92%** (11 out of 12)	**88%** (14 out of 16)
% Total Non-Compliant	**17%** (8 out of 46)	**17%** (3 out of 18)	**8%** (1 out of 12)	**12%** (2 out of 16)
Indicators of Progress	**0%** (0 out of 8)	**0%** (0 out of 3)	**0%** (0 out of 1)	**0%** (0 out of 2)
No Indicators of Progress	**100%** (8 out of 8)	**100%** (3 out of 3)	**100%** (1 out of 1)	**100%** (2 out of 2)

Summary

- For the cases reviewed, 40 out of 45 were rated fully compliant for this question.
- Statewide performance was 89% for children who were identified as having one sibling.
    - Region 2 achieved the highest compliance at 92%, a 5% increase from the last reporting period.
    - Region 3 achieved 88% compliance, a 17% increase from the last reporting period.
    - Region 1 achieved 83% compliance, a 10% decrease from the last reporting period.
- Cases were rated non-compliant when siblings were separated without supervisor and area administrator approval, even when the situation appeared to meet the other criteria for an exception identified in the Agreement.

<u>Question 2</u>: 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	**44**	**15**	**14**	**15**
% Full Compliance	**59%** (26 out of 44)	**60%** (9 out of 15)	**64%** (9 out of 14)	**53%** (8 out of 15)
% Total Non-Compliant	**41%** (18 out of 44)	**40%** (6 out of 15)	**36%** (5 out of 14)	**47%** (7 out of 15)
Indicators of Progress	**50%** (9 out of 18)	**50%** (3 out of 6)	**80%** (4 out of 5)	**29%** (2 out of 7)
No Indicators of Progress	**50%** (9 out of 18)	**50%** (3 out of 6)	**20%** (1 out of 5)	**71%** (5 out of 7)

Summary

- Case reviewers found 26 out of 44 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 58% compliance.
    - Region 2 achieved the highest performance of 64%.
    - Region 3 achieved 53% compliance and improved performance by 9% from the last reporting period.
    - Region 1 had the lowest rate of compliance at 60%.
- Forty-one percent of the cases reviewed in this question were determined non-compliant.
    - 50% of the non-compliant cases showed indicators of progress.
    - A number of cases rated as non-compliant with indicators of progress included sibling groups that were placed with relatives. The relatives who lived in close proximity to each other chose to separate the children among more than one family member in order to prevent placement in licensed foster care.
- The sample included 44 identified children with two or more siblings.
    - 29 sibling groups of 3
    - 10 sibling groups of 4
    - 3 sibling groups of 5
    - 1 sibling group of 6
    - 1 sibling group of 7

VI. APPENDIX A

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 a 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 a 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 a 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	**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 their sibling(s). **Decision**: Case counted as compliant because the siblings were placed together after a medically necessary temporary period apart.
7-B	**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. **Decision**: Review the identified child and their siblings that do not 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.
7-C	**Circumstance**: Applying Exception 6: "Siblings may be separated and placed apart only under the following circumstance: *To permit placement with relatives who live near the home of the siblings.*" **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.
7-D	**Circumstance**: An exception applies and the department cannot impact the placement decision through a supervisor/AA review (E.g. Sibling in detention, court order prohibits placement together.) **Decision**: Carefully review all documentation to determine whether or not the department can impact the placement decision; when the department cannot impact the decision do not require a supervisor/AA 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 AA approval. This may become less of an issue in future reviews.
7-E	**Circumstance**: An exception applies and the department can/may 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.) **Decision**: Carefully review all documentation to determine whether or not the department can impact the placement decision; when the department can impact the decision, require a supervisor/AA approval in order to consider it an approved exception.

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	**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. **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."