



Children's Administration

Targeted Case Review

Outcome 8: Sibling Visits and Contacts

January 1, 2012 – June 30, 2012

This is a report of the results of a targeted case review concerning sibling visits and contacts. This case review is required by the Braam Revised Settlement and Exit Agreement.

The Agreement 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 second 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 B¹ 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 between 1/1/2012 to 6/30/2012.
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 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.

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.

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 first and third months were selected. Reviewers reviewed cases for visits during the months of January and March 2012.

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 January 1) or exited care before the end of the last review month (for this review: before June 30).

Review for compliance:

1. 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 January and June 2012.

Review for quality assurance:

A team comprised of four headquarters staff looked at all cases 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	53	15	15	23
# of Cases with exceptions that were removed from the sample	3	0	1	2
Total Cases in Final Review Results	50	15	14	21

Fifty cases were reviewed and an additional three cases were reviewed because approved exceptions were met, with a total of 53 cases reviewed. Therefore, the review results are based on 50 cases.

A. Outcome Compliance by State and 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	50	15	14	21
% Full Compliance	38% <i>(19 out of 50)</i>	33% <i>(5 out of 15)</i>	43% <i>(6 out of 14)</i>	38% <i>(8 out of 21)</i>
% Total Non-Compliant	62% <i>(31 out of 50)</i>	67% <i>(10 out of 15)</i>	57% <i>(8 out of 14)</i>	62% <i>(13 out of 21)</i>
Indicators of Progress	48% <i>(15 out of 31)</i>	70% <i>(7 out of 10)</i>	50% <i>(4 out of 8)</i>	31% <i>(4 out of 13)</i>
No Indicators of Progress	52% <i>(16 out of 31)</i>	30% <i>(3 out of 10)</i>	50% <i>(4 out of 8)</i>	69% <i>(9 out of 13)</i>

Summary

- Nineteen out of 50 cases met full compliance, with statewide performance at 38%, a 12% increase in compliance from the last reporting period.
 - Region 2 achieved the highest compliance rate of 43%, an increase of 26% from the last reporting period.
 - Region 1 achieved the lowest compliance rate of 33%, an increase of 11% from the last reporting period.
 - Region 3 achieved 38% compliance, an increase of 3% from the last reporting period.
- Forty-eight percent of the non-compliant cases reviewed showed indicators of progress. These cases revealed sibling visits and contacts occurred during the review period but not at the level required. In analyzing the cases that were identified as non-compliant with indicators of progress, reviewers found that visits were occurring; however the identified child was visiting or having contact:
 - With some but not all siblings.
 - Several times during the review period with all siblings, but not always two times per month (e.g., 4 times in January and 1 time in March).
 - Most likely two times a month with all siblings during the review period, however reviewers were unable to locate documentation verifying the specific dates and all names of each sibling visiting.
- Case Reviewers did not find any documented examples of texting as a form of contact, so it was not considered in determining compliance during this review.

Contacts between Two Siblings

Question 1: 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	17	6	9	2
% Full Compliance	41% (7 out of 17)	50% (3 out of 6)	44% (4 out of 9)	0% (0 out of 2)
% Total Non-Compliant	59% (10 out of 17)	50% (3 out of 6)	56% (5 out of 9)	100% (2 out of 2)
Indicators of Progress	40% (4 out of 10)	100% (3 out of 3)	20% (1 out of 5)	0% (0 out of 2)
No Indicators of Progress	60% (6 out of 10)	0% (0 out of 3)	80% (4 out of 5)	100% (2 out of 2)

Summary

- Seven out of 17 cases reviewed were rated fully compliant (41%), a 21% increase in compliance from the last reporting period.
 - Region 1 had the best performance at 50% for this question.
 - Region 3 had the lowest performance. In the two case reviews completed, both were found to be non-compliant.
 - Region 2 improved compliance to 44%, an increase from 0% in the last reporting period.
- Fifty-nine percent of cases with one sibling were determined non-compliant, a 28% decrease from the last reporting period. However, as previously stated, reviewers found that 40% of the identified children in non-compliant cases were having some form of contact with their sibling, but not at the level required for this measure. Region 1 showed the highest performance for indicators of progress with 100%.

Question 2: 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	33	9	5	19
% Full Compliance	36% (12 out of 33)	22% (2 out of 9)	40% (2 out of 5)	42% (8 out of 19)
% Total Non-Compliant	64% (21 out of 33)	78% (7 out of 9)	60% (3 out of 5)	58% (11 out of 19)
Indicators of Progress	67% (14 out of 21)	57% (4 out of 7)	100% (3 out of 3)	36% (4 out of 11)
No Indicators of Progress	33% (7 out of 21)	43% (3 out of 7)	0% (0 out of 3)	64% (7 out of 11)

Summary:

- Twelve out of 33 cases reviewed were rated fully compliant (36%), an 8% increase in compliance from the last reporting period.
 - Region 3 had the highest performance at 42%, a 17% increase from the last reporting period.
 - Region 1 had the lowest performance at 22%.
 - Region 2 achieved 40% compliance, a 15% increase in performance from the last reporting period.
- Reviewers found that 67% of the cases with more than one sibling indicated some sibling visits occurred during the review months, but not at the level required for this measure.

VI. APPENDIX A

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
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- 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

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

“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.

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")

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

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:
approved.

Reviewer Guidance: Reviewers will document other extraordinary exceptions that are supervisor