

Keeping Brothers and Sisters Connected

Supporting Planning and Documenting Brother and Sister Connections

For the best interest of children, caregivers and social workers need to partner together to maintain connections between brothers and sisters separated in out-of-home care. Help us ensure these relationships remain strong by keeping them connected as much as possible.

Here are some reasons brother and sister connections are so important:

- Sibling Relationships are the longest life relationships most of us will have.
- Brothers and sisters share experiences of all kinds that no one else understands.
- Siblings teach each other how to get along and relate with others in the world.
- No one can replace a brother or sister. They are the most like you.
- Strengthening family ties provides a foundation for a child or youth to establish his/her identity.

FACT: More adults who were in foster care as children are searching – not for their parents, but actually for the brothers and sisters they were separated from.

National Resource Center for Foster Care and Permanency, Hunter College School of Social Work, New York City, NY

“ **If I had the choice to spend a year in Hawaii or 45 seconds with my brother, I would choose my brother.** ”

10 year old boy attending Camp To Belong Washington – 2009

Looking for ways to keep brothers and sisters connected? Here are some tips:

- Ensure at least twice-monthly visits/contacts occur.
- Encourage communication – phone calls, e-mail, letters, birthday and holiday cards.
- Get ideas from the kids themselves on how they can keep connected.
- Stay connected with the caregivers of their brothers and sisters.
- Keep contact information handy and encourage them to stay in touch.
- Include brothers and sisters in events that are important in their sibling’s lives.
- Take pictures of the brothers and sisters when they are together and share them.
- Talk to the siblings’ social workers for help if there are barriers to keeping the brothers and sisters connected.
- Arrange for them to attend Camp To Belong Washington (www.camptobelongwa.org).
- Have them join a club together or sign up for lessons or activities like swim lessons or Little League.
- Plan events siblings might like to do together, going to the movies, the park, going out to eat, getting a haircut, plan a brothers or sisters day out.
- When possible, keep the youth connected to extended family members who can support him/her.

Make it a priority to work together to remove barriers to promote sibling connections.

Please use the chart below to track visits and contacts between brothers and sisters which should be happening at least twice monthly.

Brother/Sister Name and Contact Information: _____

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Brother/Sister Name and Contact Information: _____

Date of Visit or Contact: _____

Type of Visit or Contact: _____

Who Attended? _____

Next Visit: _____

Date of Visit or Contact: _____

Type of Visit or Contact: _____

Who Attended? _____

Next Visit: _____

Date of Visit or Contact: _____

Type of Visit or Contact: _____

Who Attended? _____

Next Visit: _____

Date of Visit or Contact: _____

Type of Visit or Contact: _____

Who Attended? _____

Next Visit: _____

Child/Youth Comments: