

Maintaining Sibling Relationships

Background Notes

Children who are placed in substitute care experience a great deal of loss. There are rare situations in which siblings have to be placed separately due to safety issues. DHS specifies in policy that any sibling separation in foster care is considered temporary and working to reunite siblings is expected if in the best interest of the children. Separating siblings should be viewed as a decision; which is at least as serious as the decision to separate children from their parents. At the adoption stage, rule provides guidance regarding sibling relationships, Sibling Placement Planning in Adoption: http://www.dhs.state.or.us/policy/childwelfare/manual_1/division_110.pdf. The decision about sibling separation for the purposes of adoption is addressed through a permanency committee. The permanency committee will make a recommendation to the Child Welfare Program Manager who ultimately makes the placement decision.

Tasks / Assignments:

- Talk with a coworker who has a large group of siblings in a case. Ask them how they promote the relationship between the siblings. What efforts have been made to maintain the children in the same home? How has this been a benefit to the children? If the worker has siblings who are separated how does the worker structure time for the siblings to be together which is special and promotes the sibling relationship? How does a worker know which siblings are more important to place together? Ask the worker what special resources exist to help maintain sibling relationships.
- Ask for an opportunity to speak with siblings and ask how they feel about being placed together.
- Review the Sibling Placement Planning in Adoption rule above and note the factors to consider when recommending sibling separation for adoption.
- Attend a permanency committee in which sibling separation is discussed.

Discoveries:

- *What have I learned?*
- *What tips/techniques do I want to remember when I have sibling groups on my caseload?*
- *What are the benefits and challenges of placing and maintaining a placement with groups of siblings?*
- *What do the siblings say about being placed together?*
- *Did you learn about Camp to Belong? If not find out about this special camp for siblings.*