

# Maintaining Sibling Relationships

## Background Notes

Children who are placed in substitute care experience a great deal of loss. A study in Britain (2001) found that approximately 85% of children placed have at least one sibling; but less than 50% were placed with all of the siblings in the same home. There are rare times 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 DHS has written a special policy regarding sibling relationships, [I-F.6 Sibling Placement Planning in Adoption](#). 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.
- Review the policy, I-F.6 [Sibling Placement Planning in Adoption](#) 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?*

