

CHILD AND FAMILY SERVICES AGENCY (CFSA) 2011 Quick Reference Guide

Maintaining Sibling Connections

CFSA is required to make reasonable efforts to place siblings together when they enter foster care, kinship/guardianship or adoptive placements and to facilitate frequent visitation if siblings are placed separately. Unless it is contrary to the welfare of the child, CFSA staff must make exhaustive efforts to place siblings together in the same home. The following steps should be taken when a child and his or her siblings are removed from the home and enter foster care:

1. Obtain as much information as possible regarding the needs of the sibling group, including if there are any factors that could prevent them from being placed together. The following factors may be included:
 - The safety or wellbeing of the child or youth
 - The special needs of one of the siblings (e.g., specialized placement or school setting)
 - Best interest needs of the child(ren)
 - Court order requiring separation
2. Inquire if there are any other siblings who have been previously placed out of the home¹ or adult relatives and significant non-relatives who could serve as a placement resource for the sibling group. The following steps can facilitate the inquiry:
 - Ask the parents or caregivers if any of their other children have been voluntarily placed, removed or adopted in the past.
 - Conduct a FACES search.
 - Refer to the Quick Reference Guide on [Removal Notification to Relatives](#) for additional guidance.
3. On the Placement Recommendation screen, provide information on the sibling group (and possible resource family) to the Placement Services Administration (PSA). PSA is responsible for the following tasks:
 - Determining if the home where a sibling was previously placed can accept other siblings
 - Contacting placement providers to identify resources that can accommodate all/some of the siblings
4. Ongoing visitation or interaction must be scheduled if siblings cannot be placed together. The following interactions are appropriate for maintaining sibling connections:
 - Contact between siblings within 48 hours of placement if the siblings are placed in separate homes.
 - A plan that details who is responsible for ensuring visits occur and for transporting siblings to visits.
 - At minimum, twice monthly with some or all of the siblings in the most family-like setting possible.
 - Contact through activities such as family visits, sleepover visits, attendance at one another's sporting events, having siblings on the same sports teams, etc.
 - Interactions should also include ongoing phone calls, letters, emails, etc.
 - Document every sibling visit, including the date, location, participants, and content of the visit in FACES within 24 hours of the visit. Documentation also must occur when a visit is cancelled, including the reason for cancellation and what efforts are being made to reschedule.
5. If it is determined to be contrary to the safety and well being of the child(ren) to be placed together with sibling(s) or to interact through visitation, the social worker must complete the following tasks:
 - Ensure this determination has been made in consultation with a supervisor.
 - Document the reasons why it is not in the best interest of the child to be placed with sibling(s).
 - To the extent possible, try to ensure that the determination is documented on a court order.
 - In the case of large sibling groups the explanations need to be individualized.
6. The social worker shall document in FACES Contacts every sibling visit, including the date, location, persons present, purpose and content of the visits.

For additional information, reference Administrative Issuance: CFSA-09-25 [Maintaining Sibling Connections for Children and Youth in Foster Care, Visitation Policy](#) (Procedure D) and the Quick Reference Guide on [Visitation Policy Highlights](#).

¹ The Placement Services Administration (PSA) determines if the resource family is available to accept other sibling(s).

FACES Documentation Tip: On the Placement Episode “Recommendation” screen, the placement SW may utilize the “SW Recommendation” tab to log the extent to which sibling placement best interest discussion occurred and the decision that resulted from it.

FACES Documentation Tip: On the Placement Episode “Entry” screen, the placement SW may utilize the Placement Mandates dropdown field on the “Supporting Info” tab to indicate whether placement with siblings is in the child’s best interest

For additional information, reference Administrative Issuance: CFSA-09-25 [Maintaining Sibling Connections for Children and Youth in Foster Care](#), [Visitation Policy](#) (Procedure D) and the Quick Reference Guide on [Visitation Policy Highlights](#).