

Frequent sibling visitation leads to better mental health, social competence and sense of stability and belonging.

- Family Futures Practice Paper Series, *Assessing Sibling Placements* (2019), <https://www.familyfutures.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2019/06/Practice-Paper-Siblings-June-2019.pdf>

This paper is authored by Family Futures, a non-profit group in the United Kingdom that has worked with adopted and foster care children for over 20 years. While the authors emphasize that the best way to place siblings according to their needs is to perform individualized assessments of each child and that placements should ultimately be driven by individual circumstances, they maintain that “should siblings be separated, maintaining reasonable levels of contact is essential for the future mental health and wellbeing of the child.” *Id.* at 27.

- National Center for Child Welfare Excellence (NCCWE), Practice Component No. 6, *Sibling Visits and Contacts*, <http://www.nccwe.org/toolkits/siblings/component-6.html>

This publication by the National Center for Child Welfare Excellence (NCCWE) examines the importance of sibling relationships and visitation. While the authors acknowledge there may be valid reasons for not placing siblings together in foster care, they stress that when that happens facilitating regular contact between siblings is critical to their wellbeing. “When children are not placed together, visits and other ongoing contacts can help maintain the attachment to family and lessen the trauma of being placed apart. When visits are regular and frequent, and allow opportunity to connect in a meaningful way, they have many of the same benefits of sibling placement together: less trauma and loss, greater feelings of belonging, and shared history.” Additionally, the publication outlines sibling visitation requirements and policies for various U.S. States.

- Rebecca McBride, *Keeping Siblings Connected: A White Paper on Siblings in Foster Care and Adoptive Placements in New York State*, New York State Off. of Child. & Fam. Servs. (2007), <https://affcny.org/wp-content/uploads/2008/12/siblingwhitepaper.pdf>

This paper discusses how sibling bonds are critical to children’s development and emotional well-being because those bonds help shape their identity and sense of belonging in the world. The paper addresses the benefits and challenges of placing siblings together as well as best practices for sibling visitation plans when co-placement is not feasible. When siblings are placed separately in New York, agencies are required to make reasonable efforts to facilitate biweekly in-person contact between siblings, unless it would be harmful to their health or safety or unless precluded by geographic proximity. “When visits are regular and frequent, and allow opportunity to connect in a meaningful way, they have many of the same benefits of sibling placement together: less trauma and loss, feeling of belonging, shared history, opportunity to work through problems.” This paper makes recommendations on how to improve these types of sibling visits. *Id.* at 10-14.

- Sabrina M. Richardson & Tuppert Yates, *Siblings in Foster Care: A Relational Path to Resilience for Emancipated Foster Youth*, 47 *Child. & Youth Svcs. Rev.* 378 (2014), <https://adlab.ucr.edu/wp-content/uploads/2014/12/Richardson-Yates-2014.pdf>

Using data from 170 recently emancipated youth from the California foster care system between the ages of 17 and 21, this study investigates the correlation between sibling co-placements during foster care with subsequent educational and occupational competence, housing quality, relational adjustment, and civic engagement. It analyzes these outcomes in relation to the proportion of time which a child had spent placed with, versus separated from, their siblings. In discussing their findings, the authors stress that efforts should be made “to preserve positive sibling connections for foster youth to facilitate youth’s narrative meaning making, experiential integration, and, by extension, psychosocial adjustment.” *Id.* at 385.

- Mary A. Herrick & Wendy Piccus, *Sibling Connections: The Importance of Nurturing Sibling Bonds in the Foster Care System*, 27 *Child. & Youth Svcs. Rev.* 845 (2005), <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/abs/pii/S0190740904002646>

This paper is authored by two child welfare researchers, who both spent a significant amount of time in foster care in their youth, both together and separated from siblings. From their unique perspective, they examine the positive effect that sibling connections can have on children who enter the system and often experience anxiety, trauma, and loss of identity. In their analysis, the authors note that sibling connections can “provide a way of ensuring that children remain in touch with their past, enhance their sense of belonging, provide them with the framework for developing an identity and increase their sense of self-esteem.” *Id.* at 852 (internal citations omitted).