

Children desire more contact with siblings after separation.

- Christine M. Helfrich, Lenore McWey & Armeda Stevenson Wojciak, *Sibling Relationships and Internalizing Symptoms of Youth in Foster Care*, 35 Child. & Youth Svcs. Rev. 1071 (2013), <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/abs/pii/S0190740913001448>

This study uses data from a nationally representative sample of 152 adolescents in foster care to investigate how sibling relationships can help mediate the relationship between trauma and expression of internalizing symptoms. “[O]f adolescents studied, 73.7% were currently separated from their sibling. Of those who were not living with their sibling, 72.4% saw their sibling monthly or less frequently with 29.5% reporting never having any contact with their sibling. However, 75.0% of the youth reported wanting more contact than they currently have with their sibling.” *Id.* at 1073.

- Armeda Wojciak, et al., *Sibling Relationship in Foster Care: Foster Parent Perspective*. 39(9) J. of Family Issues 2590 (2018), <https://doi.org/10.1177/0192513X18758345>

This qualitative study involves 15 foster parents and examines their views on the importance of the sibling relationship. Overwhelmingly participants felt that siblings should be placed together and they noted negative behaviors when siblings were separated, including increased anxiety. Participants also noted the importance of sibling visitation if siblings are separated but noted that visits should be unsupervised and kid-led, and that visitation should never be cancelled as a punishment. Participants understood the unique role of siblings and felt that foster parents should “facilitate as many opportunities as possible and build as many informal connections for opportunities or abilities for them to connect.” Overall foster parents in this study felt that sibling relationships “should be protected and should be a higher priority in the system” and they offered ideas for promoting sibling relationships including foster parent collaboration, educating foster parents on the history of a sibling relationship, and larger systemic changes.

- Susan Smith & Jeanne Howard, *Promoting Successful Adoptions*, 4 Practice with Troubled Families (Sage Pub. 1999), https://books.google.mg/books?id=2Bs5DQAAQBAJ&printsec=copyright&source=gbs_pub_info_r#v=onepage&q&f=false

This book focuses on adoptive families after the legal finalization of the adoption has taken place and contains many case examples, practice strategies, and resources. The authors incorporate findings from their own research with existing empirical research. One of the chapters focuses in particular on sibling connections and how they are impacted by adoption processes. The authors stress that often the “strongest, most positive attachments that children coming through the child welfare system have experienced are to siblings” with whom they can “form strong bonds of dependence and loyalty.” *Id.* at 103. As such, “[e]ven many years after adoption, children may sustain feelings of responsibility or longing for siblings.” *Id.* As examples, the authors describe children who “yearned for visits with siblings whom they may not have seen for 8 years or longer” and one child who “ran away trying to locate siblings from whom she had been separated.” *Id.* The authors therefore stress the importance of facilitating sibling relationships after adoption.

- William Patton & Sara Latz, *Severing Hansel from Gretel: An Analysis of Siblings' Association Rights*, 48 U. Miami L. Rev. 744 (1994), <https://repository.law.miami.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1837&context=umlr>

This article emphasizes the need to provide protections to siblings who enter the foster care system or adoptive homes. As part of their analysis, the authors discuss the importance of sibling bonds as well as issues with judicially ordered separate sibling placements. Regarding the power of sibling relationships, the authors note that “siblings provide a family subsystem which lasts a lifetime, often for 60 to 80 years, and grieving over a lost sibling may be lifelong. . . . A sibling relationship can be an independent emotionally supportive factor for children in ways quite distinctive from other relationships, and there are benefits and experiences that a child reaps from a relationship with his or her brother(s) or sister(s) which truly cannot be derived from any other. It is quite telling that more siblings separated from their natural families search for their biological siblings than search for their biological parents. One of the most frequent reasons children run away from foster homes is to visit siblings.” *Id.* at 780 (internal citations omitted). The authors conclude by stressing that siblings should not be separated without adequate due processing hearings and without a showing of necessity.

- Randi Mandelbaum, *Delicate Balances: Assessing the Needs and Rights of Siblings in Foster Care to Maintain Their Relationships Post-Adoption*, 41 N.M. L. Rev. 1 (2011), <https://digitalrepository.unm.edu/nmlr/vol41/iss1/3/>

This article discusses the tension between balancing the importance of permanency for children in the child welfare system (*i.e.*, finding them a new and permanent family) with enabling them to maintain sibling relationships. It outlines: federal and state statutes relating to post-adoption sibling contact; how courts have addressed some of these issues; social science research relating to the issues; and potential reforms for child welfare and adoption laws and policies. In discussing these issues, the author stresses that the importance of sibling relationships do not evaporate after a child is adopted and “psychologists opine that separation without contact leads to curiosity, concern, and longing.” *Id.* at 8 (internal citations omitted).