

Placing siblings together decreases the likelihood of placement disruptions.

- Becci A. Akin, *Predictors of Foster Care Exits to Permanency: A Competing Risks Analysis of Reunification, Guardianship, and Adoption* (2011) (Dissertation, School of Social Welfare, The University of Kansas), https://kuscholarworks.ku.edu/bitstream/handle/1808/6271/Akin_ku_0099D_10908_DATA_1.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y

This paper discusses a longitudinal study of children in Kansas who were observed for a period of 30 to 42 months, as well as a general overview of the history of foster care and of existing literature. This study was designed to identify which child and placement characteristics were significant predictors of foster care exit to three types of permanency: reunification, guardianship, and adoption. Importantly, the author found that, “sibling placements were beneficial to permanency when all siblings in placement were kept together consistently and continuously throughout an entire placement episode.” *Id.* at 103. The data showed that “the lowest reunification rate occurred for children who had siblings in placement but were completely separated (46.5%). Those who had partially intact sibling placements had a slightly higher reunification rate (48.5%). Children without siblings in placement experienced the next highest reunification rate (50.0%), while children who had siblings in placement and who experienced a completely intact placement with their siblings had the highest rate of reunification (60.4%).” *Id.* at 67. Similarly, “[c]hildren that experienced completely intact sibling placements were the most likely to exit to adoption (19.0%), followed by children that experienced partially intact placements (12.9%), and then children who did not have siblings in placement (i.e., no concurrent foster care episode) (12.3%). The lowest rate of adoption occurred for children who were completely separated from their siblings with concurrent foster care episodes (8.1%).” *Id.* at 72-73. In light of these findings, the author suggests that “[o]rganizational procedures should aim to place children with kin and siblings whenever possible. Efforts to identify relative placement options could be ramped up by implementing intensive search for relatives and kin during a child’s first 72 hours in foster care.” *Id.* at 103.

- Kierra M.P. Sattler, et al., *Age-Specific Risk Factors Associated with Placement Instability Among Foster Children*, 84 *Child Abuse & Neglect* 157 (2018), <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/abs/pii/S0145213418303004?via%3Dihub>

This paper examines the relationship between certain child attributes and case histories with placement disruptions using data relating to approximately 23,700 children in foster care in Texas. Placement disruptions is used to refer to placements that end for reasons associated with the suitability of an existing placement, rather than the desire to place a child in a more policy-preferred setting. The study found that “[p]lacements that have all siblings together had a lower risk of placement mismatch or child-initiated disruption.” *Id.* at 13.

- Nancy Rolock & Kevin White, *Post-Permanency Discontinuity: A Longitudinal Examination of Outcomes for Foster Youth After Adoption or Guardianship*, 70 *Child. & Youth Svcs. Rev.* 419 (2016), <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/abs/pii/S0190740916303486>

This study analyzes child welfare administrative data relating to 51,567 children in Illinois who exited the foster care system through adoption or guardianship. The analysis showed that children placed with siblings were less likely to leave their legally permanent (adoptive or guardianship) homes prior to becoming adults. The study uses the term “post-permanency discontinuity” to describe children who, after adoption or guardianship, reenter the foster care system or otherwise have their guardianship vacated. Of particular note, the study found that “[c]hildren placed with at least one sibling at the time of legal permanence had about 15% lower hazard of experiencing discontinuity as compared to those not placed with at least one sibling.” *Id.* at 425. The authors stated that this “is consistent with extant research on the importance of maintaining sibling bonds. Sibling relationships have been found to be a significant source of support throughout the life cycle and associated with increased stability for children in foster care.” *Id.* (internal citations omitted)

- Sarah A. Font & Hyunn Woo Kim, *Sibling Separation and Placement Instability for Children in Foster Care*, 27(4) *Child Maltreatment* 583 (April 2021), [Sibling Separation and Placement Instability for Children in Foster Care - PubMed \(nih.gov\)](#)

Based on analysis of data on 2,297 children over a multi-year period, this study found that sibling separation is positively associated with placement instability. The authors noted this is largely consistent with the work of prior scholars, who have argued sibling separation may compound other relational losses in foster care. “Siblings exert a significant influence on children’s functioning: children may look to older siblings as role models, and—in the case of neglectful or abusive family environments—siblings may be primary attachment relationships.” *Id.* at 583. The study focused on whether and to what extent sibling placement reduces what the authors refer to as a “non-progress move”—a move “attributed to an underlying problem with the original foster care placement, such as maltreatment in the placement, a child or caregiver requesting that the placement be changed, or a child requiring a more restrictive setting.” *Id.* at 584. The analysis showed that “partial separation (placement with some but not all siblings) is not associated with a non-progress move” and therefore may be helpful to consider when it is not possible to place all members of a sibling group together. *Id.* at 591. The study ultimately concludes that sibling separation is associated with increased risk of placement moves for children in foster care, including non-progress moves (which may indicate problems with children’s functioning or connection to caregivers) . . . [and] that separation is especially negative for children who have only one known sibling, and that for larger sibling groups, placement with at least one sibling produces similar benefits as placement with all siblings.” *Id.* at 593.