

Placing siblings together reduces trauma caused by removal from parents.

- Hon. Leonard Edwards (ret.), *Connecting with Siblings*, Judges' Page Newsl. Archive, Nat'l CASA Ass'n (2011)

In this article, Judge Leonard Edwards, former Judge-in-Residence at the Center for Families, Children & the Courts, a division of the California Administrative Office of the Courts, discusses the passage of the Fostering Connections to Success and Increasing Adoptions Act of 2008, and how the law prefers siblings to remain together when removed from parental care and to stay connected when separation occurs. Judge Edwards stresses that “positive results flow from keeping siblings together,” including that “the trauma related to parental removal is reduced [and] siblings can provide emotional support for one another.” *Id.* at 2. He concludes that because the “law now prefers siblings to remain together when removed from parental care . . . , [t]he burden now shifts to us, the professionals working in the foster care system, to ensure that siblings are placed together—or at least that they maintain contact with one another after removal from parental care.” *Id.*

- Adam McCormick, *Siblings in Foster Care: An Overview of Research, Policy, and Practice*, 4 J. of Pub. Child Welfare 198 (2010), <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/15548731003799662?scroll=top&needAccess=true>

This article reviews empirical data on siblings in foster care and provides an overview of the policies and practices related to sibling placements in the child welfare system. With respect to how placing siblings together can mitigate the trauma caused by being removed from their parents, the author notes that “siblings can play a critical role in repairing and minimizing the psychological damage of instability, separation, and trauma.” *Id.* at 207.

- Sigrid James, et al., *Maintaining Sibling Relationships for Children in Foster and Adoptive Placements*, 30 Child. & Youth Svcs. Rev. 90 (2008), <https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/19122749/>

This study examines data from caregivers of 14 foster and adopted children in efforts to better understand the implications of maintaining sibling relationships for child welfare policy and practice. The authors note that children in the welfare system “are considered a population at high risk for adverse outcomes across all domains of functioning . . . [with] rates of emotional and behavioral problems . . . [ranging] from 30 to 80 percent . . . [and] attributed to histories of abuse and neglect, backgrounds of general family dysfunction, parental substance abuse and poverty as well as the potential trauma associated with removal from home.” *Id.* at 1 (internal citations omitted). This study includes discussion of the caregivers’ decisions in determining whether to keep siblings together. In the majority of joint-placement cases, siblings were viewed as having a positive effect on one another. “One caregiver, who dealt with a difficult and at times violent older sibling, explained that she chose to keep the child in her home to avoid the trauma his removal would cause for the younger siblings, stating: ‘*He’s part of their family; he’s what they have left of their family.*’” *Id.* at 9.