

Maintaining sibling relationships requires regular contact when they are not placed together.

- Child Welfare Information Gateway, *Sibling Issues in Foster Care and Adoption* (2019), Washington, DC: U.S. Dep't of Health & Human Services, Admin. for Child. & Fam., Children's Bureau, <https://www.childwelfare.gov/pubpdfs/siblingissues.pdf>

This publication discusses how child welfare professionals can positively affect the wellbeing of children in foster care by maintaining their connections with their siblings. The publication discusses the Fostering Connections to Success and Increasing Adoptions Act of 2008 (Fostering Connections Act), which mandates that States make reasonable efforts to maintain sibling connections. This either means placing siblings in the same home or, when that is not possible, providing frequent visitation and ongoing contact. It also notes that, while the Children's Bureau Guidance on the Fostering Connections Act (available at <http://www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/cb/resource/pi1011>) "allows agencies to set standards for the frequency of visits," it "designates that these should be at least monthly." *Id* at 6. As such, the majority of States have statutes governing requirements for frequency of visits or other communication between separated siblings. The publication also provides examples of practices to help maintain relationships between separated siblings, including: placing them in the same neighborhood or school district; arranging for other forms of contact such as emails, social media, and phone calls; and planning joint summer or weekend activities.

- Mass. Dep't of Child. & Fam., *Sibling Bill of Rights* (2012), <https://archives.lib.state.ma.us/bitstream/handle/2452/680688/ocn983206271.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y>

The Massachusetts Department of Children and Families' "Sibling Bill of Rights" recognizes the importance of sibling relationships and is intended to guide practitioners in the foster care system. In particular, it states that: "sibling relationships provide needed continuity and stability during a child's placement"; "sibling separation is a significant and distinct loss that must be repaired by frequent and regular contact"; and "every foster child deserves the right to know and be actively involved in his/her siblings' lives absent extraordinary circumstances."