



## Policy: Keeping Siblings Placed Together

**ChildNet Number: CN 003.032**

**Original Approved Date: June 18, 2003**

**Policy Revised Date(s) December 28, 2009, July 9, 2014**

**Policy Sunset Date:**

**COA Standard(s): FKC 6.02, FKC 6.03, FKC 6.05, FKC 6.06, FKC 6.07, FKC 7.01**

### Statement of Policy:

ChildNet recognizes the importance of maintaining sibling bonds and minimizing the effects of separation and loss by placing siblings together. Sibling relationships are the longest lasting relationships and are often times crucial to the siblings' well-being. It is ChildNet's policy to both nurture and preserve sibling relationships in the event that separation of sibling for placement purposes is deemed appropriate.

Board Chair's Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

07-29-14



## **Procedure: Keeping Siblings Placed Together**

**ChildNet Number: CN 003.032**

**Original Approved Date: June 18, 2003**

**Procedure Revised Date(s): April 22, 2014, December 28, 2009, July 9, 2014, April 25, 2018, August 10, 2022, May 13, 2026**

**Procedure Sunset Date:**

**COA Standard(s): FKC 6.02, FKC 6.03, FKC 6.05, FKC 6.06, FKC 6.07, FKC 7.01**

**Definitions (If any):**

**Statement of Procedure:**

In order to ensure that siblings are only separated when appropriate; when separation of siblings occurs, sibling's bonds are maintained; and efforts to reassess separation of siblings are on-going, the following procedures are performed consistent with, but not limited to the application of the provisions of Florida Administrative Code and Florida Statute.

### **A. Initial Placement**

It is the priority of Intake and Placement Unit to place siblings together from the time of initial placement.

1. Consistent with placement procedures located in CN 003.038, Matching Child to Proper Placement and Minimizing Disruptions, the Intake and Placement Specialist assesses the siblings individually and as a group to identify their respective needs.
2. If the Intake and Placement Specialist determines that one or more of the siblings has a need or circumstances exists such that separation of the siblings is in the best interest of one or more of the concerned children, he or she obtains approval from the Director of Intake and Placement or designee. In these situations, the Director of Intake and Placement or designee make a best interest determination based on factors that include, but are not limited to, those set forth in Section B(2) of this procedure.
3. If the Intake and Placement Specialist determines that none of the children have individual needs that may pose an obstacle to placement as a group, he or she initiates contact with network providers or other available placement resources to identify an appropriate placement. The Intake and Placement Specialist documents all contacts in the Comprehensive Child Welfare Information System (CCWIS) within 48 hours.



4. If the Intake and Placement Specialist exhausts all administrative options and an appropriate placement has not been identified for the sibling group, the Intake and Placement Advocate notifies the Director of Intake and Placement or designee for further review.
5. The Director of Intake and Placement's or designee approval is required prior to any separation of sibling due to current unavailability of beds.

## **B. Re-placement**

When circumstances warrant a change of placement, efforts are taken to replace siblings together unless contrary to court order or there has been a determination that such placement would not be in the best interest of one or more of the concerned children.

1. In order to consider the separation of siblings in those situations where separation may be appropriate, the Dependency Case Manager consults with his or her supervisor and requests approval. The Dependency Case Manager obtains approval in writing and documents in the case chronological section of CCWIS within 48 hours.
2. The Dependency Case Manager and Child Dependency Case Manager Supervisor consider various factors when determining the appropriateness of sibling separation. These factors include but are not limited to the following:
  - a. Mental health, emotional, physical needs of each sibling
  - b. The emotional ties existing between and among the siblings and the degree of harm which each child is likely to experience as a result of the separation.
  - c. Feedback from the Guardian ad Litem (GAL), if assigned.
3. The Dependency Case Manager and Dependency Case Manager Supervisor consider the positive and negative aspects of keeping the children together and separation. The alternatives are thoroughly explored on a case-by-case basis in an effort to make a best interest determination.
4. The Dependency Case Manager and Dependency Case Manager Supervisor take into consideration any feedback from the case participants and any providers that may be providing services to the children.
5. If the Dependency Case Manager Supervisor agrees that separation of the sibling group is appropriate based on the best interest of one or more of the siblings, the overall needs of the sibling group and/or other applicable factors, the Dependency Case Manager must request that the Multi-Disciplinary Staffing held to discuss the placement move also addresses the separation of siblings.



### C. Contact and Visitation

In situations where the Multi-Disciplinary Staffing concludes that the siblings will be separated, their contact and visitation will be discussed and documented in the staffing document.

### D. Ongoing Efforts to Reunite Separated Siblings

The Case Manager and the assigned Intake and Placement Specialist maintain ongoing efforts to reunite siblings who have been separated unless contrary to court order or not in the best interest of one or more of the concerned children.

1. The Dependency Case Manager and assigned Intake and Placement Specialist document all efforts to reunite separated siblings in the case chronological section of CCWIS within 48 hours.
2. The Dependency Case Manager and Dependency Case Manager Supervisor review the status of any siblings that have been separated during supervisory reviews. The Dependency Case Manager Supervisor documents the review on the Supervisory Review form and CCWIS consistent with Supervisory Review documentation procedures located in CN 003.069.

President Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

05-18-24