

	INDIANA DEPARTMENT OF CHILD SERVICES CHILD WELFARE MANUAL	
	Chapter 10: Adoption/Permanency	Effective Date: August 1, 2008
	Section 5: Sibling Placements	Version: 1

POLICY	OLD POLICY: 710.4
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The Indiana Department of Child Services (DCS) will to the extent possible attempt to place a sibling group in the same adoptive home, including:

1. Any additional sibling or siblings taken into care at a later date; or
2. A sibling or siblings of a child in a previously finalized adoption becomes free.

Except Where:

1. There are documented reasons from a qualified mental health provider (QMP), therapist or counselor why placement together would not be in the best interest of one or more of the children, and why it cannot be rectified by intensive family services;
2. A court orders separation of the siblings; or
3. One of the siblings is in a residential placement, hospitalized, or in a juvenile detention center.

DCS will assure that children who are not initially placed together have face to face contact within five (5) days of removal, unless one of the children is in a:

1. Residential placement,
2. Hospital, or
3. Juvenile detention center.

See separate policy, [8.12 Developing the Visitation Plan](#).

DCS will not accept the following reasons as justification for not attempting to place siblings together in the same adoptive home:

1. The children are placed in separate resource homes;
2. One or more of the children is too young to have developed a sibling bond;
3. Sibling rivalry and/or dislike;
4. A lack of homes willing/able to accommodate a large sibling group; and
5. One or more of the children has perpetrated on a sibling “and no treatment has been sought”.

When it is not possible or appropriate to place siblings together in the same adoptive home, DCS will make every effort to place a child with adoptive parents who are:

1. Committed to helping the child maintains his/her sibling connections through regular visitation and phone contact.

Code References

N/A

PROCEDURE

The Family Case Manager (FCM) will:

1. Determine if all siblings are legally free for adoption;
2. Interview each sibling if appropriate based on the child's age and developmental level, and discuss:
 - a. Any concerns the child may have; and
 - b. The child's feelings about maintaining the sibling relationship, through visitation and phone contact.
3. Interview the resource parent(s), therapists and other service providers to gain insight on each child's sibling relationships;
4. Engage the Child and Family Team (CFT) and assess the needs of the child. See separate policy, [5.7 Child and Family Team Meetings](#).
5. Forward the recommendation of the Child and Family Team (CFT) to his/her supervisor if applicable; and
6. In the event that the team cannot reach consensus, submit a list of pros and cons to the supervisor.

The Supervisor will:

1. Review any recommendations; and
2. Assure that a case conference or staffing with the regional Special Needs Adoption Program (SNAP) team is scheduled if applicable. See separate policy, [10.8 SNAP Team Meetings](#).

PRACTICE GUIDANCE

Siblings should be placed together, but if they are not placed together, a visitation plan should be implemented to ensure that the siblings are having face to face contact on a regular basis. If face to face contact is not possible, phone contact between siblings is acceptable.

FORMS AND TOOLS

N/A

RELATED INFORMATION

The Importance of Placing Siblings Together

The bond between siblings is often the longest lasting relationship most people have, and these bonds help children develop their own unique personal identity throughout their life. Biological siblings share the same genetic makeup; this becomes very important as children move into foster and adoptive families where they differ in appearance, medical predisposition, talents and intellectual capabilities. When siblings are placed together, they are less likely to feel isolated, and they are able to share experiences and familiar family history. The complex bonds linking brothers and sisters are universal and among the most important in life. These relationships form the blueprint for later relationships with peers, friends, marriage partners and their own

children. A sibling is the only person who knows how things were in the family of origin and the subsequent history of foster care placement. Children need to integrate their past with their future in order to have continuity, as well as an understanding of their own identity.