

# A Family For Every Child Matching Assistance



*"We should not be asking who this child belongs to,  
but who belongs to this child."*

## Keeping Siblings Together

### The importance of sibling relationships

The bond between siblings is one of the strongest relationships out there. These bonds can often become stronger when children are placed in stressful situations, like being separated from the only family they have ever known. Being placed separately from a sibling during this time can be really hard on a child. It is estimated that between 60 and 73% of children in foster care are living in separate placements from their siblings. While there may be some valid reasons for separating siblings, for a majority of children it can have a negative impact, especially if they relied on their sibling to make it through chaos and uncertainty. More needs to be done to keep children together. If you can, consider adopting a sibling group. Consider adopting an older child who is part of a sibling group, so they can remain with their brothers and/or sisters, and have a better chance at adoption. Be open to sibling contact, and helping maintain sibling connections if a child is being recruited for separately. If possible, reach out to your child's sibling's caregiver, and find out how you can work together to keep their relationship strong and healthy.

Siblings should not be separated because the size of the group is "too big"; the children have behavior problems; more subsidy money will have to be given to families; or because they have different workers and cannot coordinate a placement. More needs to be done in those types of situations. Below are links to stories of children in foster care who sought to maintain contact with their brothers and sisters, and what it felt like for them to be separated. Take some time to check out the additional information provided at the end of the newsletter to educate yourself more on sibling's rights, their bonds, and why they are placed separately.



### Sibling Stories

[In Focus: Struggling for Sibling Connections](#) is the story of Deanna and Alyssa, two girls from New Jersey who were found in a cardboard box when they were just 3 years and 7-months old. They were placed in the foster care system, just like their brothers and sisters before them. But they don't know who their siblings are, despite attempts to connect with them.

[Advocating for a Relationship](#) is the story of a little girl named Sunny, whose birth mother had

a little boy after Sunny was adopted. Sunny's adoptive mother advocated to adopt this little boy too, and when he was placed with a relative, she tried to help the children maintain contact, but to no avail.

## The Sibling Talk

One issue parents struggle with is how to tell their child that he/she has siblings that they are not living with. Whether your child was separated from his/her siblings at birth, or their biological mother/father has a child after they are adopted, or perhaps a sibling is still living with their biological parents, adoptive parents often wonder how they will talk about this sensitive issue with their children. They fear that their child may be hurt to find out that they have siblings living with their biological family, and it may bring up feelings of not being wanted. Or parents have concerns over the idea of their child being in contact with their biological family. Either way, the best approach an adoptive parent can take is to be honest and keep the information age-appropriate. Answer your child's questions about their siblings honestly. It is best if the conversations start prior to adolescence, otherwise they should be had before a child leaves home. But what if you don't know anything about your child's siblings? It can be hard to answer your child's questions with an "I don't know". That answer is not satisfying to you or your child. In those cases, try and get as much information as possible about your child's siblings. Even if you come up with nothing, the act of trying is better than simply doing nothing.

A while back my parents told me that I had two older half-brothers who were in their mid-twenties when I was born. The last my parents knew, my half-brothers were living with their mother in Scotland. I don't know much else about them-what their names are, where they're currently living, what they look like-and that was hard at first. I had a lot of questions, and my parents just couldn't answer them. So instead I created my own idea of who they are, what they do for a living, where they are at in life now, etc. That really helped me come to terms with the fact that I may never meet them or even know more about them, and it gave me a weird sense of closure. If that is the case with your child, let them share their fantasies and feelings about their siblings, and make sure to validate them. This will help your child cope with their feelings of loss and separation they may feel towards the siblings they have never known.

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## Additional Information

For additional information on sibling separation, please refer to the following pages:

[C.A.S.E: Sibling Bonds and Separations](#) by Ellen Singer, LCSW- gives reasons why siblings are separated, and what parents can do to help their children maintain connections or mourn the loss of their siblings.

[Fostering Families Today: Siblings in Foster Care-What Rights Do They Have?](#) by Madelyn Freundlich- covers the legal rights that siblings have.

[Child Welfare Information Gateway: Sibling Issues in Foster Care and Adoption](#)- covers the benefits, the barriers, practices to keep siblings in the same home, what should be done if siblings are separated, and more.

[Adopt Us Kids: Ten Myths and Realities of Sibling Adoption](#)- outlines 10 common myths and gives the realities of sibling adoptions.

[Adoption.com: The Sibling Bond: Its Importance in Foster Care and Adoptive Placement-](#) outlines how strong a sibling bond is; why children are separated; research on the topic of sibling relationships; and more.

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