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Sent: Friday, July 19, 2013 8:53 AM
To: scott@afamilyforeverychild.org
Subject: News from A Family for Every Child-Sibling Separation

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Separation of Siblings

The separating of siblings in foster care is a difficult subject to undertake. The bond between brother and sister can be very strong and can be the only source of comfort in the children's lives. The separation of siblings at a young age is a jolting experience, especially if they went through a traumatic experience together and do not want to leave each other.

There are some reasons for wanting or needing to separate the siblings, such as acts of conflict or special needs, but research has shown that there can be several negative impacts that should be considered before making this decision. A close family unit is important when raising any child, but if one sibling is separated from the other they can learn to not put a high value on family relationships in the future. The same can be said for the child's attitude towards relationships with peers and friends in the future. If they learn at a young age to not trust people then they will not cultivate and develop relationships later on in life.

There is a greater risk of emotional disturbance and school problems as a result of the disconnection. This disconnection from a sibling can leave both children feeling lost and untrusting of authority and their foster parents. Trust is key in order for any relationship to be healthy and by removing a sibling, the foster parents only reinforce the "caregiver" feeling that exists between siblings. After that feeling is lost then there is nothing stopping them from believing that they can be removed at any time. The separation leaves the lasting impression on children to walk away from problems rather than stand up and face them. These are not traits that we want to cultivate in the future, so why would we ingrain them in our generations to come?

If you would like to view more about this topic just search for "INFORMATION PACKET: Siblings in Foster Care".

Suggested Reading material about siblings

[Sibling Bonds and Separations](#)

[Fostering Families Today](#)

[Child Welfare](#)

Snippets of Information

- One of the most critical contributions that child welfare professionals can provide for children who enter care is to preserve their connections with their brothers and sisters. Children who come into foster care or are adopted often are separated from existing or future siblings. Approximately 70 percent of children in foster care in the United States have another sibling also in care (Shlonsky, Elkins, Bellamy, & Ashare, 2005). For a variety of reasons, many of these sibling groups are not placed together. [Child Welfare Information Gateway](#)
- Research has demonstrated that warmth in sibling relationships is associated with less loneliness, fewer behavior problems, and higher self-worth (Stocker, 1994). Marjut Kosonen (1996) studied the emotional support and help that siblings provide and found that when they needed help, children would first seek out their mothers, but then turn to older siblings for support, even before they would go to their fathers. She also found that for isolated children (as is the case for many children placed into foster care), sibling support is especially crucial. For these children, an older sibling was often their only perceived source of help. [Child](#)

[Welfare Information Gateway](#)

- Just as best practice makes clear that siblings should be placed together in foster care whenever possible, it also directs that when siblings cannot be placed together, their relationships should be sustained through regular visiting. Despite this tenet of best practice, children and youth often report that visits with their brothers and sisters are few and far between. Some report that they receive few supports to make these visits a reality - their caseworkers do not ensure that visits are coordinated or that transportation is arranged.

About Us

A Family For Every Child, a nonprofit organization, began with Christy Obie-Barrett and dozens of dedicated, passionate volunteers. Founded in 2006, AFFEC developed into an organization focused on finding permanent and loving adoptive homes for Oregon's waiting children. We intend to develop programs that assist special-needs/challenging-to-place foster children in finding their own Forever Families

A Family For Every Child

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