

Understanding the Sibling Bill of Rights

The **Minnesota Sibling Bill of Rights** passed in 2018 is a series of legal provisions designed to preserve and maintain sibling family relationships for youth in foster care. The Bill provides specific permanency planning recommendations which include **prioritizing sibling co-placement** whenever possible and preserving the sibling relationship when foster care separation does occur. When separation occurs, regular sibling contact should be facilitated and documented with a visitation and communication plan. The **visitation plan** should provide a schedule for face to face visits, sleepovers, and opportunities to

co-participate in extra-curricular activities and services. The **communication plan** should detail siblings' opportunities for contact via telephone, email, and social media between face-to-face visits. All siblings in foster care have **a right to celebrate one another's developmental milestones** (holidays, birthdays, graduation), cultural customs (language, religious observances), **know the whereabouts of their siblings**, and **be considered and included in permanency planning decisions**.



Tips to support siblings in foster care

- 1** Remember that siblings are a source of relational permanence for youth in care.
- 2** Co-place siblings in the same home whenever safe and reasonable to do so.
- 3** Create a visitation and communication plan for each separated sibling.
- 4** Provide sibling groups with regular opportunities to celebrate cultural customs and developmental milestones.
- 5** Use routine everyday activities to help the sibling group learn communication, cooperation, and problem-solving skills.
- 6** Foster a warm sibling relationship by role modeling healthy and supportive communication. Warm sibling relationships are characterized by affection, companionship, and mutual understanding and are highly protective for youth in care.
- 7** Know that some degree of sibling conflict and competition is normal.
- 8** Concerning sibling interactions may indicate a need for further assessment but are not a reason to disrupt or stop contact.
- 9** A cooperative, team-based approach helps ensure a successful and sustainable implementation of the Minnesota Sibling Bill of Rights.

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MNDHS Bulletin #18-68-15 "Foster Care Sibling Bill of Rights." Minnesota Statutes sections 260.012e(4); 260C.212, subdivision 2(d); and 260C.208