

### **Sibling Bill of Rights Commissioner's Form**

Sibling relationships are empowering and critically important for them over the course of a lifetime. These relationships are bonds and most often are the longest meaningful connections in life. For those who enter foster care, being supported by their siblings can promote safety, well-being and a sense of security. Sibling separation can cause long-term trauma that would likely interfere with future relationships that they try to build. For the welfare of children, where one sibling is removed from the home, or all are removed but in separate placements, their legal right is to remain connected and should not be limited. See [Minnesota Statutes 260.012](#) e (4); [260C.212](#), subdivision 2(d); and 260C.008.

#### **Siblings have a right to:**

- Be placed with each other when possible to remain a family. Give adult siblings a chance to be a foster parent, adoptive parent, or gain custody over younger siblings to keep families together.
- Be placed in homes close by each other, if they cannot be placed together, to facilitate frequent and meaningful contact, including phone, internet, social media, FaceTime, skype, etc. Siblings will be provided with a phone number, email, and/or address, and access to updated photos by email or mail.
- Be actively involved in each other's lives if they choose. Share celebrations including birthdays; holidays; graduations and other school events; extracurricular activities; cultural customs, including speaking their native language; and other meaningful milestones.
- Be informed about changes in each other's placements, including being notified of discharge from placements, new placements, as well as discharge from foster care. Siblings will be allowed to maintain contact with other siblings who remain in care. Every effort should be made to ensure contact among siblings in care and those not in care.
- Predictable and regular visits that shall not be withheld as a behavioral consequence. Unless verifiable safety concerns exist, siblings should not be kept from each other. Visits can be monitored, but should not be supervised unless there is a safety risk. Youth, caregivers, caseworkers, and parents are all responsible for ensuring that siblings have contact. All parties will coordinate dates and times, transportation, and other accommodations to ensure contact occurs. This should be outlined in their service plan. Due to the normalcy provision, caseworkers do not need to give permission for visits or possible sleep overs, but foster parents should still communicate with and inform caseworkers that these activities are occurring. The judge should also be updated on sibling connections at every hearing.
- Be included in permanency planning decisions relative to siblings. They should know what expectations are for continued contact when a sibling is adopted or custody is transferred to a relative.

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**Child/Youth**

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**Foster Parent**

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**Social Worker**

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**Date**

For questions or complaints, contact the Office of Ombudsperson for Families by mail, phone, or email.  
Provide the following information:

- Name, address and telephone number
- A description of the situation
- Names and dates of birth of children involved in the case
- Tribal affiliation of children, if applicable, and
- Names and contact information of caseworkers and other agency or service providers.

Office of Ombudsperson for Families

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