

Section 3. Sibling adoption planning

This procedure describes case planning responsibility to maintain and support lifelong sibling relationships for a child in the legal custody of the department whose permanency plan is adoption. The first priorities for placement of a child in the legal custody of the department are placement with current caretakers and relatives, and placing siblings together. “Sibling” means one of two or more children or young adults who are related, or would be related but for a termination or other disruption of parental rights, in one of the following ways:

- By blood or adoption through a common parent;
- Through the marriage of the children’s or young adults’ legal or biological parents; or
- Through a legal or biological parent who is the registered domestic partner of the legal or biological parent of the children or young adults.

The designated or finalized adoptive family of a child’s sibling is, by definition, a relative family even if the sibling’s adoptive family does not otherwise meet the relative criteria. This definition is found in OAR 413-070-0063 (b) and may be found at this [link](#). This type of relative is within the first order of preference for adoption. Additional information about adoption preference is in I-G.1.2 Identification and Consideration of Potential Adoptive Resources at this [link](#).

When siblings are separated in foster care

Procedure

When siblings have been separated in foster care, the caseworker creates a plan to unite them in foster care or adoptive placement as soon as possible and when it is best to do so. The worker takes the following steps:

- Staff with the supervisor to determine if it is in the children’s best interest to be united in their temporary and/or permanent families.
- If appropriate for the child and case plan, allow a child to join a sibling placed in an adoptive home for foster care at the time of the child’s placement in foster care. Make sure the family understands the differences between a foster placement and an adoptive placement.
- Ensure the children have the opportunity to initiate and continue contact if the children cannot be immediately placed together.
- Discuss with the foster parents that sibling separation is temporary when siblings are separated in care. Inform the foster parents that the department will work to reunite separated siblings when it is in the best interests of the children. The caseworker must document the visitation plan for separated siblings in the electronic case file.

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- Discuss with the child’s attorney, CASA, tribal representative and Refugee Child Welfare Advisory Committee (RCWAC) member that sibling separation is temporary when siblings are separated in care.

Enhancing sibling relationships

When adoption is the plan for a child or siblings, and they have one or more siblings for whom adoption is not the primary plan, the caseworker for each child will initiate and maintain sibling relationships when it is in the children’s best interest to do so. Siblings who are simultaneously on the adoption track and who do not have a selected adoptive family may also benefit from activities, including therapy, therapeutic supervised visits and coordination of foster parents, to enhance their relationships and prevent future separation in adoptive placement.

Consideration of adoptive families of siblings as resources

Procedure

- When a caseworker is planning adoption for a child and learns the child has a sibling in a designated or finalized adoptive family, the worker determines whether the sibling’s adoptive family is interested in being considered as a resource for the child. The worker must follow [OAR 413-120-0700 to 0760](#), Identification and Consideration of Potential Adoptive Resources, to determine which families to consider. If there are multiple families interested in being considered, the worker follows the OAR to determine which prospective resource or families to refer for adoption home studies.
- • Refer to the procedure manual “Chapter V, Section 5, Subsection B, Relative families,” for more information about how to proceed with a sibling’s adoptive family.

Placing siblings together and requesting permission to separate siblings for adoption

- Children’s separation from siblings in foster care is considered temporary. It is generally in their best interests to be placed together in a family for adoption.
- Sibling placement for children who are simultaneously available for adoption and for whom no adoption selection decision has been made are placed together, except when the worker obtains permission to separate siblings through the Permanency Committee process. The caseworker must have compelling reasons to request permission to separate siblings who are simultaneously in need of an adoptive family.

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Procedure

When the caseworker considers it is in the children's best interests to separate siblings to live in different adoptive families, the worker must discuss this with the supervisor and:

- Consider the relevant information for each child to determine whether it is in their best interest to be separated from his or her siblings. Information may include:
 1. Significant family data including ethnic and cultural background;
 2. Progress on the diligent relative search;
 3. Attachment figures and nature of attachments;
 4. Medical conditions;
 5. Psychological and developmental evaluations;
 6. Treatment needs;
 7. Behavior;
 8. Age;
 9. Relationships of the siblings with each other;
 10. Input from any person with significant information about each child. For example, therapist, attorney, tribal representative, CASA, representative of the RCWAC and substitute caregiver; and
 11. The results of any previous recruitment efforts for general-applicant families interested in adopting the siblings together.
- Note in OR-Kids the discussion of the caseworker and supervisor about sibling planning.
- A Permanency Committee process and decision by the Child Welfare program manager (CWPM) or designee is required if the caseworker and supervisor concur that separation of one or more siblings for adoption is in the best interests of the children. Follow the local office protocol to request a Permanency Committee. The Permanency Committee process is discussed in greater length in "Chapter V, Section 5, Subsection D, Considering a general applicant adoptive family alone due to the child's relationship with the potential resource." This section highlights the issues relevant to sibling separation and does not address all steps caseworkers take to attend a Permanency Committee.
- If a sibling group is to be placed in an adoptive family together, but they are in different foster homes and one or more child's nonrelative foster parent meets the criteria as a current caretaker, the current caretaker meets the criteria for the entire sibling group.

Decision-making bodies and sibling planning

- The Permanency Committee consists of field management staff, permanency and adoption staff, and community partners. A committee hears the information and makes recommendations and

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the Child Welfare program manager or designee makes some permanency decisions, including sibling planning for adoption.

- The Permanency Committee process considers the following for sibling decisions for each child under consideration:
 1. The existence of each child's significant emotional ties to each other;
 2. The current and lifelong needs of each child for:
 - a. Physical and emotional safety;
 - b. Ability to develop and maintain current and lifelong connections with the child's family;
 - c. Continuity and familiarity;
 - d. Appropriate educational, developmental, emotional and physical support;
 - e. Stability and permanency; and
 - f. Maintaining his or her identity, cultural, ethnic, religious and spiritual heritage.

Caseworker responsibilities to request a sibling planning consideration through a Permanency Committee

These steps may be somewhat different in each office based on different local and district office resources.

Procedure

- Contact the local or district office staff member assigned to schedule Permanency Committees. Request a committee for a sibling planning decision related to adoptive placement. Include in the request the children's names and dates of birth. Include background information about the case and briefly state the reasons for the request that the siblings be separated.
- Provide copies of the pertinent information to the local or district office person assigned to distribute the materials to those who receive Permanency Committee information packets. Ask the local or district contact person when the material should be provided for distribution. Provide the following documentation for the Permanency Committee packets as applicable:
 1. Brief explanation of request;
 2. Psychological and therapy reports on the children being considered;
 3. Sibling interaction reports on the children;
 4. Attachment assessment reports on the child or siblings and the referral letter to the assessing professional;
 5. Pertinent medical and educational information about the children's needs;

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6. Child summary, if completed; and
 7. Other staffing reports or documents that have a bearing on the Permanency Committee process.
- Invite the CASA, child's attorney, tribal representative and member of RCWAC to the meeting, as applicable. These individuals may:
 1. Present information about the children for whom they are responsible;
 2. Stay through the entire committee as members or observers at their own discretion; or
 3. Choose not to participate.
 - Invite foster parents, relatives with relevant information and other appropriate community partners, such as therapists and teachers. Notify these guests of:
 1. The meeting date, time and place;
 2. Purpose and process of the meeting. They are invited to provide relevant information about the children and their special needs, enabling the committee members to make informed recommendations and the CWPM or designee to make an informed decision about separation of the siblings for adoption; and
 3. Need to be excused after the child presentation portion of the meeting.
 - Invite previous caseworkers if they are able to provide relevant information on complex cases.
 - Notify the facilitator who will be attending the committee meeting.

Caseworker responsibilities at the Permanency Committee when presenting a family for sibling planning

Procedure

- Be prepared to provide a 15–30 minute presentation at the beginning of the committee meeting to summarize what is being requested of the committee, updates regarding the children, and the caseworker's professional perspective.
- Be knowledgeable about the case. Prepare to discuss the information described in the subsection above called "Placing siblings together and requesting permission to separate siblings for adoption."
- Notify involved parties of the committee decision.

Documentation of the Permanency Committee

The Permanency Committee form 270 is used for documentation when considering sibling planning. The form is filled out by the committee facilitator and the CWPM or designee. The facilitator will ensure the decision, along with who was on the committee and others in attendance, will be included in the information.

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No appeal process with a Permanency Committee process sibling planning decision

- When a Permanency Committee process is held for sibling planning and the CWPM or designee has reached a decision, there is no review process for reconsideration of the agency's decision.
- A person with a complaint about the outcome may follow the local Child Welfare field office chain of command, starting with the child's caseworker's supervisor, then CWPM, then district manager or designee. See Complaint Review, I-A.5.1 for more information about standards and procedures for reviewing and resolving complaints about Child Welfare at this [link](#).

Cases when a Permanency Committee for sibling planning is not required

A caseworker is not required to request a Permanency Committee for sibling planning when:

- The worker and supervisor think that it is not in the children's best interests to be separated for adoption.
- An adoptive placement decision has already been made for one or more siblings, and the agency is planning to have the remaining siblings adopted by the same family.
- One or more siblings have a plan for adoption together in the same family and the remaining one or more siblings have a permanency plan other than adoption.

Recruitment and ongoing contact when siblings are separated

Procedure

When a Permanency Committee process results in a decision to place siblings in separate adoptive families and recruitment for general applicant families is needed, the caseworker must:

- Recruit and search for adoptive families who can maintain authentic contact and sense of connection between the siblings, if contact is in their best interest.
- When recruiting general applicant families for a child who has one or more siblings who may need an adoptive placement in the future, the child's caseworker recruits families who will consider adoption of future siblings.
- Make recruitment materials clearly state the need for ongoing sibling contact when in the children's best interests. Talk with the adoption workers of interested families about the need for sibling contact and the families' abilities to maintain contact.
- Request, as needed, suggestions from the Permanency Committee regarding sibling contact when siblings are separated for adoptive placement. Recommendations can include, but are not limited to, safety issues, types of contact and characteristics of families to be resources for the children.
- Include sibling information in the child's Life Story Book if the children are separated from siblings.

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The supervisor's role

- Help the caseworkers understand the importance of sibling relationships. Encourage thoughtful case planning to promote siblings being united in foster care and adoption.
- Direct the caseworker to obtain appropriate assessments if there is a history of concerning behavior not previously assessed when there are questions about the nature of the children's relationships with each other.
- Review the sibling plan if siblings are separated in substitute care.
- Direct the caseworker to the Permanency Committee for sibling planning when the supervisor and child's caseworker agree that separation should be considered based on the children's best interests.
- Direct the caseworker to invite to the Permanency Committee meeting the CASA, child's attorney, tribal representative and RCWAC member according to the policy: I.E.3.6 Legal Permanency, Concurrent Planning, and Use of Permanency Committee at this [link](#).
- Direct the caseworker to invite foster parents, therapist, mentor and other relevant community partners who can discuss the child's special needs.
- Help the caseworker determine what relevant information should be provided to the Permanency Committee verbally and in writing.
- As needed, attend the committee meeting, especially when cases are highly controversial, or when the caseworker is not experienced.
- Encourage the caseworker to include sibling information in the child's Life Story Book if the child is separated from siblings.

Forms and references

Forms

- Permanency Committee Form 270 at this [link](#)

Legal references

- Adoption and Safe Families Act of 1997, P.L. 105-89
- PL 110-351, Fostering Connections to Success and Increasing Adoptions Act of 2008 Child Welfare Policy

Child Welfare policies

- Monthly Contact and Monitoring Child and Young Adult Safety, [OAR 413-080-0040 to 0067](#)
- Sibling Adoption Placement Planning, [OAR 413-110-0100 to 0150](#)

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- Foster Parent Request for Consideration as a Current Caretaker, [OAR 413-120-0500 to 0595](#)
- Search for and Engagement of Relatives, [OAR 413-070-0000 to 0974](#)
- Placement of Indian Children, [OAR 413-070-0000 to 0974](#)

Supplemental reading:

“Sibling Issues in Foster Care and Adoption,” 2013, was used as a reference for this procedure and is available at Child Welfare Information Gateway: www.childwelfare.gov/pubs/siblingissues/

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