

Building Bonds: The Significance of Keeping Siblings Together in Foster Care

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When children enter foster care, adjusting to a new environment can be challenging. However, if they have their siblings with them, it becomes easier to adapt to the situation and surroundings. Foster children have endured significant stress and hardships, making the bond they share with their siblings a vital source of security, safety, and support. Separating children from their siblings leads to additional loss and heightened feelings of anxiety and isolation as they face challenges alone. Sibling relationships are enduring and pivotal, which is why it is imperative to prioritize keeping siblings together in foster care. By doing so, we empower them to cope better as they navigate these experiences collectively and find solace in comforting one another during this difficult time. Research has shown that foster children tend to settle and adjust well when they are placed with their siblings, especially those with a close emotional bond. Being together allows them to support and experience life together, helping them navigate the challenges and cope with the trauma caused by their biological families. Caring for multiple children can be demanding for foster families.

Fostering sibling groups can be a profoundly rewarding experience, as you'll be there for every moment and shared experience, creating a sense of family. It's important to note that a significant percentage of children and teenagers in the foster care system belong to sibling groups, and they should ideally remain together. Unfortunately, they often face separation, whether temporarily or permanently, due to various factors. Younger children, in particular, struggle with adjusting to new environments, foster parents, schools, and schedules. Since they have already been separated from their biological families, maintaining their sibling connection becomes crucial. The fear of being separated from their siblings can trigger feelings of anxiety, depression, insecurity, and loneliness, which foster children often struggle to express openly. By having their siblings by their side, establishing trust and communication with the foster family becomes easier and more effective. Sibling relationships are the longest-lasting connections a child can have, especially for those in foster care who have experienced disruptions in their biological families. Siblings provide a sense of identity and belonging, playing a fundamental role in shaping who we are. Preserving these relationships is crucial, as young children and teenagers in foster care face significant emotional challenges, making the support of their siblings crucial.

Well-Being

Children and teenagers entering the foster care system often carry anxiety and trauma from their past experiences. They may have endured abuse in their birth homes, harbor guilt and regret for not being able to fix their family, and struggle with their identity due to separation from their

biological relatives. By staying together with their siblings, they can address some of these issues collaboratively. Having siblings who share their experiences and understand their situation provides valuable support for coping.

Easier Adjustment

When foster children have their brothers and sisters by their side, it facilitates their adaptation to the new environment and the presence of foster parents. Research indicates that siblings who remain together in foster care develop confidence in forming positive relationships within their foster homes.

Together in Foster Care: Positive Outcomes

Studies within the foster care system have highlighted the positive impact of keeping siblings together. Foster children placed with their siblings exhibit improved behavior with peers, experience fewer behavioral and emotional issues, perform better academically, and develop a protective bond towards one another. These outcomes underscore the importance of sibling placement in fostering positive development.

Permanency

Maintaining sibling groups together in foster care significantly enhances the permanency and stability of placements. This approach greatly facilitates the potential for reunification with biological families or adoption by the foster family. When foster children and teenagers have the opportunity to remain with their siblings in foster care, it strengthens their sense of belonging and continuity, increasing the likelihood of achieving lasting and secure family connections.

What Challenges Do Sibling Groups Face Together in Foster Care?

Sibling groups are often not kept together due to various challenges. For instance, a sibling group may consist of multiple children, and the available foster families may not have sufficient space, time, and resources to accommodate them all. Foster placements typically aim to keep 2 or 3 siblings together, as placing a larger number is usually not feasible. Furthermore, these sibling groups often span different age ranges, posing an additional challenge for foster carers who may also have their own biological children at home. Meeting the diverse needs of several children at different stages can be demanding. Additionally, siblings may require different types of care. To address this situation, facilitating meetings between siblings to promote contact and communication becomes crucial, even when they are separated by the foster care system.

Between Families Newsletter
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Please complete the following questionnaire
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True or False:

1. Keeping siblings together in foster care can help them adapt more easily to new environments.
 - a. True
 - b. False
2. Separating siblings in foster care has no significant impact on their emotional well-being.
 - a. True
 - b. False
3. Sibling relationships are often the longest-lasting connections in a child's life, especially in foster care.
 - a. True False

Multiple Choice:

4. What is one benefit mentioned in the article of keeping siblings together in foster care?
 - a. It reduces the workload for foster parents.
 - b. It provides a sense of security and support for the children.
 - c. It simplifies the administrative process for agencies.
 - d. It ensures faster reunification with biological parents.
5. According to the article, children placed with their siblings are more likely to:
 - a. Experience behavioral and emotional issues.
 - b. Perform better academically.
 - c. Feel isolated and anxious.
 - d. Face challenges alone.

Answer Key

Answer key for the questions:

True or False:

1. True – Keeping siblings together can help them adapt more easily.
2. False – Separating siblings can have a significant negative impact on their emotional well-being.
3. True – Sibling relationships are often the longest-lasting connections in a child's life.

Multiple Choice:

4. B – It provides a sense of security and support for the children.
5. B – Children placed with their siblings are more likely to perform better academically.