

# **SIBLINGS' BILL OF RIGHTS**

## **INFORMATIONAL GUIDE FOR LITIGATION**

### **QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER**

#### ***SUPPORTING THE APPLICATION OF THE SIBLINGS' BILL OF RIGHTS IN DCP&P CASES***

***Note: Not all questions will be applicable to every case.***

#### **PLACEMENT DECISIONS**

- Were efforts made to place the child with their siblings in the same setting?
- If the children were not placed in the same setting, were the reasons valid (i.e., psychiatric evaluation/placement, no available beds)?
- Are siblings placed in close enough proximity to visit and remain connected, regularly?

#### **SIBLING VISITATION AND CONNECTIONS**

- Who does the child identify as their siblings?
- Has the child been provided with contact information for all identified siblings? If not, why not?
- How often are in-person visits with siblings being facilitated?
- What type and what frequency of phone/virtual contact is the child having with their siblings between in-person visits?
- Do any of the identified siblings have reservations about sibling visitation? What supports would help them overcome those reservations?
- Are there any concerns for the well-being of any of the involved siblings as a result of the sibling visits?
- Have there been any instances when sibling visits were denied as a behavioral consequence?
- How is the child involved in their siblings' milestones and celebrations?
- If the child has siblings that are not in placement through DCP&P, is this child involved in the lives of those siblings?
- What suggestions or feedback does the child have for better upholding their sibling relationships?

#### **PERMANENCY PLANNING AND CHANGES IN LIVING SITUATION**

- Has the child been promptly informed of any recent changes in placement or permanency for each sibling?
- How are the siblings involved in each other's permanency planning decisions? If they are not, what are the reasons?
- Has DCP&P provided the child's and all siblings' recommendations and wishes regarding permanency planning to the Court?

#### **CONTINUED CONTACT FOLLOWING ACHIEVEMENT OF PERMANENCY**

- Are the adoptive parents/permanent caregivers willing and able to facilitate sibling visitations/contact once DCP&P is no longer involved?
- Is the child regularly and consistently being informed of and involved in planning for post permanency sibling contact?
- **To be asked immediately prior to finalization of permanency:** has the child been informed of any agreed-upon plans for post-permanency sibling contact?



# SIBLINGS' BILL OF RIGHTS

The "Siblings' Bill of Rights," was signed into law by Governor Murphy in January 2023. This bill was developed by the NJ DCF Youth Council, which recognized the importance of siblings and young people remaining involved in each others' lives when in foster care. The law provides that:



- Siblings should be placed together in resource homes & congregate (group) care setting, if safe and appropriate.



- If placement together is not possible, siblings should be placed in the closest proximity possible.



- Siblings should be actively involved in planning and attending birthdays, holidays, graduations, and celebrations, and other meaningful milestones.



- Siblings have access to a phone or computer for virtual visits.
- Phone calls and virtual visits will not be denied for behavioral consequences.
- Siblings' contact info provided at least annually.



- Children/Youth participate in their siblings' permanency plans and have their wishes documented in the case record and provided to the court.



- Children/Youth are promptly informed about a siblings' placement change or permanency plan goals.
- Siblings will know expectations for contact after adoption or transfer of permanent custody.



[Click here or scan the QR code below to read the full act establishing the NJ Siblings' Bill of Rights](#)

