



State of New Jersey

PHILIP MURPHY
Governor

DEPARTMENT OF CHILDREN AND FAMILIES

SHEILA Y. OLIVER
Lt. Governor

CHRISTINE NORBUT BEYER, MSW
Commissioner

July 27, 2023

Dear Resource Parent(s):

We hope this letter finds you well. As you may be aware, there is a new law in New Jersey that aims to strengthen the rights of siblings in foster care. We wanted to take this opportunity to inform you about the new law and how it may affect your role as a resource parent.

The new law, known as the Siblings' Bill of Rights, guarantees certain rights to siblings who are in the foster care system. Some of the key provisions of the law include:

- To have access to phone calls and virtual visits with their siblings in addition to in-person visits;
- To be placed in the closest proximity possible to other siblings who are not in out-of-home placement or if placement together is not possible, when it is in the best interests of the child;
- To have the recommendations and wishes of the child and of each sibling who participates in the permanency planning decision documented in the case record and provided to the court;
- To know, or be made aware by DCF, of expectations for continued contact with the child's siblings after an adoption or transfer of custody, subject to the approval of the adoptive parents or caregiver;
- To be promptly informed about changes in sibling placements or permanency planning goals;
- To be actively involved in the lives of the child's siblings, e.g., birthdays, holidays, and other important milestones;
- To not be denied sibling visits as a result of behavioral consequences when residing in a resource family home or congregate care setting; and
- To be provided updated contact information for all siblings at least annually, including a current telephone number, address, and email address, unless not in the best interests of one or more siblings.

As a NJ resource parent, you play a critical role in ensuring that siblings in foster care are able to maintain their relationships with each other. This includes facilitating contact between siblings, advocating for siblings to be placed together whenever possible, and keeping siblings informed about each other's well-being.

DCF expects all resource parents who serve youth in foster care to become familiar with the Siblings' Bill of Rights and to discuss the bill with the children in their care and their biological siblings, as appropriate. Furthermore, we strongly encourage you to work closely with all CP&P staff that support you to ensure that the needs of all siblings in your care are being met.

Thank you for your ongoing commitment to providing a safe and nurturing home for children in need.

Sincerely,

Laura Jamet, Assistant Commissioner
NJ Department of Children and Families

