

## LCCS POLICY 701 Sibling Group Foster/Adoptive Placements

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<b>See new Policy #:</b>	

<b>Scope:</b>	All Service Delivery Personnel and Foster Parents
<b>Responsibility:</b>	Managers/ Assistant Managers
<b>Purpose:</b>	The purpose of this policy is to provide criteria and procedures to be used when making decisions regarding sibling placements.
<b>Legal Cite:</b>	O.R.C. § 5103.03, 5153.16, O.A.C. 5101:2-48-16, 5101:2-42-05, 5101:2-39-01

### **POLICY STATEMENT**

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Lucas County Children Services is committed to the goal of placing children in adoptive/foster homes with their siblings.

**Note:** In exceptional circumstances this may not be possible or in the best interest of the children.

### **PROCEDURE**

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The procedures which follow are an effort to provide staff with both criteria and procedures to be used when it is necessary to make an exception to placing siblings together.

#### Phase I

##### **Foster Placement**

In order to match siblings with an appropriate foster family the **placement workers** will complete the following tasks:

- Attend Family Case Conference and gain all pertinent information on children in need of placement.
- Utilize the Homes with Openings List to identify all appropriate placement resources in the LCCS network.

- The Out-of-Home Care Supervisor will consult with the Manager of the Placement Department to determine whether or not LCCS will utilize another foster care network in order to make a sibling group placement.
- If the Placement Department Manager determines that another foster care network will not be utilized, a search will be made by the Placement Department worker(s) for homes that can accommodate more than one of the siblings in the same geographic area in order to accommodate a minimum of weekly visits.
- If the children have had to be separated from their siblings, the foster families will be informed that the agency will continue to search for a family able to accommodate the entire sibling group.
- The Foster Care Caseworker will update the Foster Care Supervisor of the progress through monthly case conferences.

**Exceptional circumstances/criteria** -it may be in the child's best interest to make an initial decision to place the child separate from his/her siblings. Such circumstances may include but are not limited to the following:

- Exceptional medical needs of a group are such that each child needs individualized attention making it extremely difficult for one provider to meet the needs of all the children as individuals.
- A recommendation from mental health provider to separate siblings due to extreme behaviors.
- A child born with siblings already in foster care and the foster home cannot accommodate the additional child. In this case the foster families must arrange extensive contact for the siblings.
- A child returning to placement with an attachment already established with a former foster family and the family cannot accommodate the entire group.
- A child who has significantly physically or sexually abused a sibling.

If any of the above exceptional circumstances exist, the following steps will be taken:

- The initial discussion regarding the exceptional circumstances should take place at the Family Case Conference.
- If information becomes available regarding exceptional circumstances subsequent to the staffing, the decision regarding separation of siblings will take place through consultation between the family caseworker and Supervisor, Out-of-Home Care Supervisor, and the Placement worker.
- This decision will be subject to approval by the Placement Department Manager.

## Phase II

### **Adoptive Placements** (Matching and Planning)

When the decision of a Permanency Planning Conference is to seek permanent custody of a sibling group and the siblings are in different substitute care settings and the recommendation is not to place the sibs together, the following will occur:

- **Case Review Department** will send a copy of the adoption service referral form to the Adoption Supervisor immediately following a PPC when the decision is to file for permanent custody.
- **The Adoption Supervisor** will review all referrals and assign the case to an adoption worker. The Adoption supervisor will schedule a meeting within 60 calendar days. Those individuals invited to the meeting will include: DFS caseworker and Supervisor, DFS Manager & Assistant Manager, Adoption caseworker & Supervisor, Placement Manager, Foster Care caseworker & Supervisor and Case Review Facilitator or Manager. Sibling split meetings should be held prior to the Permanent Custody trial. If the circumstances change (i.e., behavior problems have placed any of the children at risk or recruitment efforts for locating an adoptive home have not been successful) a sibling split meeting will be held.
- The Worker-of-Record will either complete the pre-report or present the information from the report for those attending the meeting according to the guidelines outlined on the report. The pre-report format is as follows:  
 The children's names, d.o.b., date of initial placement, date of current placement, date of PC trial, and date of PC Journal Entry, if available.  
 Caregiver's names  
 Circumstances which resulted in PC  
 Characteristics of each child (past and present):
  - Behavior
  - School attendance
  - School performance (grades)
  - Academic potential
  - Relationship with others
  - Medical needs
  - Disabilities
  - Personality
 Interaction and attachment to sibs  
 Attachment to caregiver  
 Recommendations of:
  - Therapist (if not in therapy, why?)
  - Caregivers
  - GAL
  - Others
 Any other information necessary to make a thoughtful decision

**The Adoption Supervisor** will complete the Sibling Split Decision Making Form (LCCS 9030). This form will be contained in the case record and sent to Data Management.

The **Data Management Operations Manager** will use this form with the rationale provided as approval to break away the case as needed. The (completed) form is also needed once the agency receives permanent custody. **Prior to completing the PC breakaway, the Data Management Operations Manager will confirm with the DFS Supervisor that the breakaway is still needed.**

**Note:** When the decision of a Permanency Planning Conference is to seek permanent custody of a child whose sibling/siblings have been adopted, the adoptive family of the sibling will be given consideration for placement whenever possible and when it is in the best interest of the child. If the decision is not to place with the adoptive family, the above procedures need to occur.

## **CASE PRACTICE GUIDES**

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The selection of a foster/adoptive home needs to be determined by what is in the child's best interest and documented in the case record.

## **RELATED POLICIES and FORMS**

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[Sibling Split Decision Making Form \(LCCS # 9030\)](#)