



KEEPING SIBLINGS CONNECTED

How to Build and Maintain Sibling Connections When Placed Separately

- Arrange for face-to-face visits at least two times a month.
- Foster parents, adoptive parents, and social workers should help the children initiate contact. Do not wait for the children to do it.
- Families can put pictures up of siblings in their home.
- Include information about siblings (known and unknown) in children's lifebooks
- Have the children see the same therapist on the same day. They can visit in the waiting room and have lunch or dinner together after. The therapist can make recommendations based on information on all the children.
- When visiting the birth parents, add extra time after visiting time so the children can play and process the visit together.
- Have foster/adoptive parents provide respite for siblings of the children they foster or have adopted.
- Play games and use other techniques that encourage siblings interaction during visits.
- Invite siblings to share birthday's, ball games, dance recitals and more.
- Go on vacations together.
- Gather all the siblings for a family portrait.
- Use email and letters. Parents and workers should provide pre-addressed and stamped envelopes, if necessary.
- If possible, place siblings in the same community. Even if the children are not able to live together, they will be able to visit each other easily. Also, be sure to send pictures at least yearly, so the child understands that their siblings are growing up too.
- For the siblings that the children cannot visit or do not know, make a "Sibling Box". Let the child put cards, pictures, drawings, and small gifts in a pretty box to give to the sibling if and when they do have contact.
- Add missing siblings to the holidays. For example, have a ornament on the Christmas tree for the missing sibling, have a cake on their birthday or light a candle on a special day. Create rituals.

SOURCE: Adapting the Hurt Child: Hope for Families with Special Needs Kids (Written By: Gregory Keck & Regina Kupecky)