

Finding Homes for Sibling Groups

What are your current challenges in this area?

1. Community perception – can focus on the negative
2. Need framework to support more mentors supports, visit hosts
3. Trying to implement good policy too fast without considering problems
4. Minimal flexibility now as moving toward ideal state of placing sibling groups together
5. Two steps forward and one back (or give up altogether)
6. Ask people doing the work (caseworkers etc.) – information not trickling up when considering challenges
7. Not appreciating staff size/other duties
8. Constant fiscal challenges – cuts
9. Need to make sure missing pieces of puzzle are there. Everyone on board with plan. These families are more at risk of CPS calls – though often unfounded
10. Silos within agency/system/No communication
11. Few will take more than 3
12. Larger groups
13. Those who will take larger sibling groups, already have them so are full
14. Ages – large age range
15. Some have high needs and/or one child may have more needs
16. Foster parents have own large families
17. Transporting large numbers – van
18. Foster parent may be interested, but maybe can't handle
19. One child disrupts whole family placement
20. Foster parent may have had a bad experience
21. Gender mix of family
22. Home layout
23. Move siblings more creates problem
24. Scrutinize homes more? – Already a challenge. We don't have a crystal ball – don't know until they have a placement. Want the first placement to work.
25. Respect what foster parent says they can do – don't pressure to take more
26. Foster parents have idea they want one child
27. Line staff aren't being respected when they report on what families can take what kids - repeatedly call same families
28. Dwindling resource pool
29. Adoptions – fills the home and then can't get another. Sometimes those are the strongest homes.
30. Kin certification – are more flexible with scrutiny – regulations aren't consistent

What is working?

1. One family per home (Lewis) - recruit specifically
2. Family placement – (Cortland, Orange, Saratoga)
3. Visitation and/or respite support (Niagara)
4. Those successful with large sibling groups, e.g. good rapport with birth family, information on family culture, two parent household – retired couple, stay at home
5. Cortland – Elmcrest – able to increase visits can speed reunification – 90 day program, foster parent has extra support of Elmcrest staff
6. Contract therapeutic agency (Berkshire) if one child has need, will only charge higher rate for one child
7. Kins as visit hosts

What is not working?

1. Relatives not willing to take siblings
2. Relatives – difficult for difficult children
3. ICPS
4. No extended support for foster parent
5. Courts – put restrictions on agency
 - Blanket keep kids together without understanding issues
 - Order child stay in same district
6. Oneida – voluntary agency therapeutic support for kids, foster parents
7. Contacting people who have half siblings parent/relative may take other children
8. Birth mom having more kids

Best Practices

1. Keep kids on same street, school districts when can't place in same home – siblings sometimes compare/compete
2. Go through vacancy list every week
3. Keeping foster parents engaged while home is empty
 - Could use for respite
 - Could do day care for other foster parents
 - Could help transport other kids
 - Mentorship opportunities

If money and permission were not a factor, what would you do differently to address this issue?

1. FFNY teams for all
2. Build house/bigger house, more bathrooms
3. Van to transport larger families
4. Jobs that make more money
5. Overlook bedroom regulations
6. A way for a foster parent to wait and leave beds open for sibling group
7. Keep kids in home. Social worker goes to them to minimize transportation issues
8. Stop bogging down caseworkers with paperwork – let them do real casework
9. Community funding to get the parents a larger place
10. Unlimited support
11. Resources in community

Do you have any lingering thoughts or questions about finding homes for sibling groups?