

CAREGIVERS CAN MAKE A DIFFERENCE IN THE LIVES OF SIBLINGS

Foster and adoptive caregivers face unique challenges when supporting sibling relationships. Children separated from their siblings need to see resiliency, compassion, and steadfastness in their caregivers' dedication to maintaining these relationships. By bridging the obstacles in their path with love and determination, you show children that their connections matter deeply. Even when it's hard, your efforts give children stability, hope, and belonging.

One former foster youth said,

**"Me and my sister went 4 years without talking because I was placed outside of my home.
That made me more depressed, and I would try to harm myself.
I didn't know if my sister loved me anymore because we didn't talk."**

Sibling connections can be vital for children's well-being. They act as a protective factor for mental health, reducing internalizing behaviors like anxiety and depression. Shared experiences create a unique bond, giving siblings a built-in empathetic witness to their lives. Children placed with their siblings or who maintain these connections often perform better academically. Additionally, sibling relationships foster a sense of identity and continuity, helping children feel grounded and emotionally secure.

The path to keeping siblings connected may be straightforward, but the impact is profound. By fostering these relationships, you also help promote resilience and belonging.



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Ideas to Keep Siblings Connected

- 1. Schedule Regular Visits:** Work with case workers and other caregivers to arrange monthly visits. Creating a routine helps children trust they will see their siblings again.
- 2. Utilize Technology:** Tools like FaceTime, video calls, or shared games on Xbox Live help siblings stay connected even when apart.
- 3. Share Photos and Letters:** Encourage children to send drawings, letters, or photos to their siblings to maintain a tangible connection.
- 4. Collaborate With Other Caregivers:** Build respectful relationships with other foster or adoptive families involved with the sibling group to facilitate easier connections.
- 5. Organize Joint Activities:** Plan outings, such as park visits, bowling, or shared meals, to create joyful shared experiences. Attending events like sports games or school performances can also strengthen bonds.
- 6. Seek Out Camps:** Explore opportunities like Belong Wisconsin (formerly Camp To Belong) and Royal Family Kids Camp, which specialize in fostering sibling connections for children in care.
- 7. Post-Visit Support:** Understand that visits might trigger grief or behavioral challenges. Provide gentle conversations to help children express their feelings and build trust.
- 8. Creative Solutions:** Consider setting up a private social media group for siblings to share updates or provide age-appropriate activities to help them bond in unconventional ways.