



# Oregon

Kate Brown, Governor

**Department of Human Services**

*Office of Child Welfare Programs*

500 Summer St. NE

Salem, Or. 97301

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Senator Sara Gelser  
Senator Alan Olsen  
Senate Committee On Human Services



## **Value of Siblings Connections**

### **H.B. 2216**

**“A Sibling relationship is most likely the longest relationship you will ever have”**

**“Siblings have a bond. They can either embrace it or ignore it,”**

**“Siblings: The Longest Relationship You Never Asked For”**

There is much literature surrounding the importance of Siblings and their interconnectedness. Literature that speaks to the positives for childhood safety, health and well-being and reaches well into the positive effects on adulthood and even into later stages in life when reduced rates of depression and loneliness for those with positive sibling connections.

### **Children in Oregon Foster Care**

As of the last day of FFY 2016, there were 4,006 children in out-of-home foster care who were part of a sibling group. Of these children, 3,321 (82.9 percent) were placed with the same family as one or more of their siblings.

Federal Fiscal Year 2016	82.9%
Federal Fiscal Year 2015	84.3%
Federal Fiscal Year 2014	82.2 %
Federal Fiscal Year 2013	82.8 %
Federal Fiscal Year 2012	82.7 %

*“Safety, health and independence for all Oregonians”*  
An Equal Opportunity Employer

The Federal Child and Family Service Review (CFSR) reported findings in the Oregon Review 2016,

- Placement with Siblings
  - 89% Strength – Target Goal is 95%
- Visiting with parents and siblings in foster care
  - 82% Strength – Target Goal 95%

## **Preserving Sibling Connections**

*Camp To Belong* is an international non-profit organization dedicated to reuniting brothers and sisters placed in separate foster homes or other out-of-home care for events of fun, emotional empowerment and sibling connection.

Since 2001 Camp-to-Belong Northwest started with the leadership of Oregon residences Karyn & Charlie Schimmels. Together they develop the Camp-to-Belong model to serve Oregon, Washington and Idaho children. This has since grown to three separate summer camps with one in Washington and two in Oregon in 2017. Approximately 120 children will participate in the Oregon camps in 2017.

Camp-to-Belong in Oregon has also added a Foster Family Camp to bring the whole fostering family together and often providing siblings in other foster homes additional opportunities to play and interact.

DHS has added funding to the Oregon Foster Parent Association grant agreement to assist children in foster care opportunities for continued connection. The funds pay for activities such as organized outings or events, pay for skype for visits, etc.

The department actively participated in the Portland State University – Regional Research Institute; *Siblings in Foster Care project from 2009- 2014* project which provided several opportunities for children for special sibling events and intentional interaction opportunities.

## **Oregon forward thinking**

Through the efforts at addressing Placement Stability one area that has been identified is the importance of sibling placement even though one sibling may be experiencing some trying times in their life. Instead of the sibling needing to move away from their sibling to receive a higher level of skilled care there has been some initial exploration of creating a model where the higher level of care services such as Behavioral Rehabilitation Services moves to the child in their current setting. Thereby preserving placement stability and sibling connections. A model that would be “in-home” services and supports.

There is active discussion with Oregon Camp-to-Belong leadership about extending opportunities to enhance sibling connections throughout the year.

Thank you for considering the importance of Sibling connections for children in foster care and within the communities of Oregon.

Please feel free to contact Kevin George, Foster Care and Youth Transition Program Manager if more information is needed. 503-945-5987.

