

Lacking Support for Sibling Connections

Issue Report

August 2025

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Summary

From May of 2024 to May of 2025, the Office of the Foster Youth Ombudsperson (OOFY) has reviewed issues related to sibling relationships for Minnesota foster youth. This Issue Report summarizes the concerns identified, and shares recommendations for agencies, caseworkers, Guardians ad Litem, and the Department of Children, Youth, and Families to better support sibling relationships. This report also includes suggested legislative changes that can help to alleviate the identified issues.

OOFY reviewed records for approximately 200 youth in foster care. Of those, 56 were identified as having sibling(s) they are not currently living with. In review of these cases, OOFY found:

- Zero instances of documented notification to foster youth and their siblings about our state's Sibling Bill of Rights as required by law.
- This was also reflected in conversations with agencies and caseworkers.
- A consistent lack of support for regular, ongoing contact with foster youth's siblings, regardless of whether those siblings were in foster care or not.

Agency Overview

The scope and authority of our office is outlined in MN Statutes [Sec. 260C.82](#). OOFY is tasked with the power to:

- Receive a complaint from any source concerning the health, safety, or welfare of a youth in foster care. The ombudsperson may, at the request of another or on the ombudsperson's own initiative, investigate any action of an agency or a family foster home, custodian, parent, or facility licensed by the state, including a residential treatment facility and secured detention facility. The ombudsperson may exercise powers without regard to the finality of any action.
- Investigate, upon a complaint or upon personal initiative, any action of an agency, including a request from a youth in foster care to examine the physical placement where the child resides.
- Request and be given access to information from an agency that is necessary for performing the ombudsperson's responsibilities.

OOFY is an independent agency, separate from the Department of Human Services, Department of Children, Youth, and Families, and other Minnesota ombuds offices. OOFY maintains a commitment to the United States Ombudsman Association (USOA) Governmental Standards of independence, impartiality, confidentiality, and a credible review process.

The purpose of this Issue Report is to identify areas of improvement regarding policies, procedures, and practices in Minnesota's foster care system. In line with our legislative mandate, we aim to, "promote the highest attainable standards of competence, efficiency, and justice for youth who are in the care of the state."

Issue Background

Minnesota's Sibling Bill of Rights was [passed into law](#) in 2018 through advocacy from the statewide Youth Leadership Councils, comprised of young people with direct lived experience in foster care. This [video](#) highlights the creation of the Sibling Bill of Rights, championed by Fosters¹. Based on their challenging experiences, they advocated for sibling relationships to be better protected and supported for all foster youth.

The Sibling Bill of Rights includes requirements to place siblings together in foster care whenever possible and in the children's best interests. When this is not possible, efforts must be made to place the siblings geographically

close together and to facilitate frequent and meaningful contact with siblings, whether they are in foster care or not. The bill includes further details on how sibling relationships should be supported and limited reasons that allow for restricted contact. The law includes a requirement that foster youth with siblings are given [notification](#) of these rights and that the notification should include information on how to file a complaint with the Office of Ombudsperson for Families (as the Office of the Foster Youth Ombudsperson did not yet exist when the Sibling Bill of Rights law was passed).

"It's already traumatic enough going into foster care, being separated from someone that you love and not being able to see them for years is worse."

- VIV, FOSTER LEADER FOR PASSAGE OF SIBLING BILL OF RIGHTS, 2018

For over seven years, Fosters have shared about the impact of disrupted relationships on their well-being. Fosters experience the trauma of separation from parents or relatives and then continue to not receive support in maintaining the sibling relationships that become even more vital.

"Our parents didn't work out. We just expect to at least have our brothers and sisters by our side going through this." Foster leader for passage of Sibling Bill of Rights, 2018

"I experienced my breaking point at age 13, when they separated me from my little sister. My rock. My only stability through this. We were not able to see each other for two years. I begged to see her, but it

¹ OOFY uses the term "Foster," following the example of those with lived experience, to refer to people who experienced foster care, no matter their current age or whether they reunited with family, were adopted, or aged out of care.

never happened. I felt like I had no one to turn to when this was happening.” Vincent, Foster leader, 2022

Over the course of OOFY’s first year of operation, our staff regularly heard concerns regarding contact with siblings. As issues around sibling contact were so frequent, we began to routinely ask about the Sibling Bill of Rights and sibling contact with the foster youth who were connecting with OOFY.

Findings

No evidence of required disclosure of sibling rights.

Approximately 200 cases that were raised to OOFY’s attention were reviewed considering sibling contact, whether the initial concern regarded sibling connection or not. Of the 56 cases that involve a foster youth with known siblings that live separately, we reviewed records to determine if the required Sibling Bill of Rights [notification](#) was given, as required.

Over one year, OOFY has not seen documentation that this required disclosure (to foster youth, to the known adult siblings of children in foster care, and to foster parents) has occurred, in any of the cases we have reviewed. Additionally, there are zero cases where, upon follow-up with the agency, notification had occurred but had not been documented.

At the conclusion of our investigations into individual cases, OOFY provided recommendations and guidance to many agencies on the importance of providing notification of the Sibling Bill of Rights. Case workers expressed a need for more clarity on providing the notification to young children, to any children who may have difficulty understanding the information, and clarity on situations where disclosure to the child’s foster parent will suffice in lieu of disclosure to the child.

Inconsistent or inappropriate canceling or discontinuation of contact.

While in-person visits may be canceled or temporarily discontinued for documented safety concerns, OOFY found many instances of inconsistent or inappropriate practice. Examples include:

- Sibling visits are canceled as a consequence for foster youth’s behavior (not related to any identified safety issue).
- Foster youth lose contact with siblings who are adopted or have a transfer of permanent legal and physical custody (TPLPC).
- Visits with foster youth who are over the age of 18 and their younger siblings are restricted or canceled when the youth turns 18.
- Sibling visits ended due to identified safety issue, with no further efforts to assess re-starting sibling contact and/or determining what supports are needed to support safe sibling contact. In some cases reviewed, there were years of no contact between siblings without documentation of an ongoing safety

issue. In most cases where in-person sibling contact was restricted due to a safety issue, there were no other documented efforts of supporting sibling connection and no periodic check-ins with the foster youth regarding their readiness to restart or increase contact.

Lack of support for sibling contact and relationships.

In addition to the examples above, OOFY has identified a general lack of support for maintaining sibling contact and relationships. Some examples include:

- Caseworker is aware that a foster child has a younger sibling but has not shared this information with the foster child.
- Lack of effort and advocacy from caseworkers to support connections with siblings who are not in foster care, when the custodial parent of those siblings is reluctant or resistant.
- Resistance from foster parents to support frequent sibling visits and contact.
- If in-person visits are restricted, frequent lack of support for other ways of staying in contact, including letters, photos, video calls, or updates about how siblings are doing or where they are living.
- Adult sibling contacted agency to express interest in sibling contact with younger sibling in foster care and visitation was restricted, despite no identified safety issues.
- Adult sibling contacted agency to express interest in being explored as a foster or adoptive placement, and was not given full or fair consideration.

Existing Resources

Caseworkers routinely raised questions to OOFY regarding the requirements and expectations for their roles, including how to navigate and document the barriers to supporting siblings. OOFY continues to refer to available resources, primarily those created and distributed by DCYF (practice guides, bulletins, and trainings). While OOFY appreciates the guidance that exists, these resources often do not address the questions being asked, and may be incomplete, hard to find, and in some instances, inaccurate. Below are the resources OOFY was able to review. (OOFY only reviewed materials with the specific focus on information regarding supporting sibling connections.)

1. [“Sibling Bill of Rights Commissioner’s Form.”](#) This is a critical document that helps inform foster youth, adult siblings, and foster parents of sibling rights and what to expect in this regard. It includes strong language in line with statute regarding the critical, life-long importance of sibling relationships. Although it includes some helpful detail about the sibling bill of rights, the form is not written in youth-friendly language, is not tailored to foster youth as the primary audience, and is not formatted in a style that is accessible and engaging for youth.
2. [“Policy on sibling placement, separation, visitation, and contact in permanency.”](#) While this resource contains a lot of useful information, an unfortunate limitation of this policy is the focus on supporting sibling connections for foster youth whose primary permanency goal is adoption or transfer of

permanent legal and physical custody, rather than addressing best practice for supporting sibling relationships at all phases in the child protection process.

3. [“Practice Guide for Maintaining Family Connections for Children in Foster Care.”](#) This is an incredibly important resource which describes many aspects of supporting family connections with parents, relatives, and siblings. Helpfully, this practice guide clarifies the recommended minimum frequency of sibling contact to, “be maintained on a regular schedule and occur more than twice a month, but frequency may vary depending on age.” Based on OOFY’s review of policy and practice guidance in [other states](#), this minimum frequency appears to be on par or exceeding the guidance from other states, with the exception of [Montana](#), whose policy expects “face to face contact to occur on a weekly basis in person when demographically permits, or through a virtual platform.”

Unfortunately, the specific section on sibling visitation in the “Practice Guide for Maintaining Family Connections for Children in Foster Care,” is less than a page long and there are many gaps. These are addressed more thoroughly in the section of this report containing recommendations for DCYF and in the Appendix.

4. [“Requirements and Resources for Older Youth in Foster Care.”](#) OOFY recognizes the usefulness of a document like this and recognizes that it is the only written guidance created by DCYF that includes the expectation for caseworkers to provide the Sibling Bill of Rights to foster youth and their adult siblings.

OOFY has concerns about inaccuracies and lack of important content in this document. The document includes a section entitled, “Foster Care Bill of Rights”, although Minnesota does not yet have one. The content in this section is specific to the Sibling Bill of Rights and there is an additional section immediately below it entitled, “Sibling Bill of Rights,” creating confusion. Besides the mention of the requirement to provide notification of the Sibling Bill of Rights and document the notification, it provides no other guidance to caseworkers on what is expected of them for this important topic. It is unclear when this document was created or last updated, and it is not in easily accessible online location for caseworkers to find, such as through EDocs or in the resource section on the Foster Youth Transitions [webpage](#).

5. Help Text for Out-of-Home Placement Plan in AgileApps. OOFY is aware that the Department of Children, Youth, and Families has recently worked extensively to update the Out-of-Home Placement Plan (OHPP) that is completed by agency workers in a new tool called “AgileApps”. The OHPP in AgileApps includes “Help Text” to assist agency workers in addressing each area of the plan. DCYF provided the OHPP Help Text language to OOFY to review; we identified both strengths and gaps.

OOFY appreciates that the Help Text includes a note to provide the Sibling Bill of Rights if the youth has siblings. The Help Text also includes many questions for the agency worker to address related to supporting and nurturing sibling relationships. The Sibling Adoption section importantly notes the agency’s requirement to “establish, support, and maintain sibling relationships, including siblings who are not in placement and adult siblings” and what contact can/should look like if sibling separation

occurs. In addition to these strengths, there are also identified gaps, which are addressed in the section of this report containing recommendations for DCYF.

Discussion

Throughout this review, it was clear that there is a devaluing or dismissal of these critically important relationships for youth who already experience a high degree of isolation. The interruption of sibling relationships does irreversible and unnecessary harm. Even if in-person visitation cannot be supported or cannot be supported with the frequency that may be desired, the easy access to phones, computers, social media, and physical mail makes the lack of contact hard to excuse.

The interruption of sibling relationships does irreversible and unnecessary harm.

OOFY commends the agencies, caseworkers, and GaLs who find creative solutions for supporting sibling relationships and for being receptive to the guidance and individual case recommendations provided by OOFY.

These concerns were identified nearly universally throughout the state, which implies that there is a lack of clarity and information for caseworkers regarding the expectations for supporting sibling relationships and the Sibling Bill of Rights. Agencies and caseworkers throughout Minnesota would benefit from more comprehensive written practice guidance, training, and supervision regarding this topic.

Recommendations

Recommendations to the Department of Children, Youth, and Families (DCYF)

1. Provide more detailed and comprehensive written practice guidance for case workers, which may include expansion of current documents and/or creation of a comprehensive practice guide specific to supporting sibling relationships. Specific recommendations for updating the [Practice Guide for Maintaining Family Connections for Children in Foster Care](#) and other items to address in updated written practice guidance can be found in the Appendix.
2. Create trainings for agency caseworkers that correlate with updated written practice guidance.
3. Update the [Sibling Bill of Rights Commissioner's Form](#):
 - a. To be written in more youth friendly, accessible language and style that has foster youth as the intended audience (i.e. "As a youth in foster care, you have certain special rights to help keep

you connected to your siblings, whether you live with them right now or not. Rights are laws that describe how people should be treated. They ensure you get what you are entitled to. Rights also protect you when needed.”)

- i. [Illinois](#) provides a promising example of a Sibling Rights brochure that not only provides clear and comprehensive information tailored to foster youth, but also to parents and caregivers. It also includes sections with service appeal information and important contact numbers.
 - b. To add reference to OOFY for questions or complaints. We recognize that the [current statute](#) requires information about OBFF, which we intend to address through a legislative fix. In the meanwhile, we ask that DCYF voluntarily include OOFY’s information on the Commissioner’s Form.
 - c. To continue including a signature line for purposes of disclosure verification. The signature line should be inclusive of any recipient of the form, indicative of whether an adult is signing on behalf of a youth, and brief description of the reason for this²
4. Update the “Help Text” for the Out-of-Home Placement plan in Agile Apps:
 - a. Clarify that providing the Sibling Bill of Rights is required by law, and should be provided to not only foster youth with any siblings in or out of care, but also to their adult siblings and to foster parents.
 - b. Include mention of the importance of post-adoption contact agreements
 - c. Include questions to address decisions made which limit or restrict contact between siblings, how/when these limitations will be re-assessed, and how the agency plans to address barriers to sibling contact.

Recommendations to Responsible Social Service Agencies

1. Update current procedures to ensure that notification of the Sibling Bill of Rights is provided as required.
2. Require case workers to review currently available practice guidance regarding support for sibling relationships, and any additional or updated guidance that may be created by DCYF on this topic.
3. Ensure supervisors routinely review for notification of the Sibling Bill of Rights and that active, ongoing support for all sibling relationships is happening in case work.
4. Seek consultation and technical assistance from DCYF as needed when practice questions arise.
5. Provide thorough, regular updates regarding efforts to support the Sibling Bill of Rights, identified barriers, and plans for addressing barriers, in court reports.
6. Require ongoing training for case workers and supervisors related to their role in supporting the Sibling Bill of Rights for foster youth.

² OOFY added recommendation “3c” based on comments received from the Department of Children, Youth, and Families in their written response to this Issue Report.

Recommendations to the Guardian ad Litem Program

OOFY recognizes that our state's Guardian ad Litem program is not included in the definition of [agencies](#) subject to investigation by our agency. However, OOFY values the critical accountability role that Guardians ad Litem play in the lives of foster youth, and accordingly offers these recommendations for the program's consideration:

1. Ensure that all Guardians ad Litem are familiar with the Sibling Bill of Rights notification form, and that they advocate for notification in all applicable cases. Include this item as a part of routine case review.
2. Advocate for active, ongoing support of sibling relationships in line with the Sibling Bill of Rights, including plans for addressing identified barriers.
3. Address recommendations related to supporting sibling relationships as a part of all court reports.
4. Require initial and ongoing training about the Guardian ad Litem role to ensure required notification of the Sibling Bill of Rights, and in actively supporting sibling relationships.

Recommendations to the Legislature

1. Support passage of the proposed Foster Youth Bill of Rights ([SF 3154/ HF1276](#)), which includes increased protections for sibling relationships in Subdivision 7, "Family and Relative Connections," and requires signed acknowledgement that the foster youth has received information about their rights in Subd 17 (3)iii.
2. In the event the Foster Youth Bill of Rights does not pass in the 2026 Legislative session, update the existing Sibling Bill of Rights [statute](#) to:
 - a. Align with the Family and Relative Connections subdivision of the proposed Foster Youth Bill of Rights.
 - b. Further update Subdivision 3 ("Disclosure") of the existing Sibling Bill of Rights statute to require that information about the rights be provided to foster youth, any known adult siblings of a child entering or in foster care, to the parent/guardian of minor siblings who are not in foster care and to the foster care or other placement provider in a format that is youth-friendly, comprehensive, accessible, and includes requirement for the agency to seek signed acknowledgement from the recipient or document reasons why signed acknowledgement was not possible and any efforts to remedy.
 - c. Require that the notification includes information on how to address grievances related to these rights, including contact information and description for the Office of the Foster Youth Ombudsperson.

Appendix

Specific recommendations for updating the [Practice Guide for Maintaining Family Connections for Children in Foster Care](#)

- a. The Sibling Bill of Rights is referenced with statutory link. However, there is no mention of the statutory requirement for child welfare agency staff to notify foster children, their known adult siblings, and the foster care provider a copy of these rights. The guide does not link to the current [Sibling Bill of Rights](#) Commissioner's form.
- b. The guide notes that "current caregivers of siblings not in foster care need to be contacted as part of a relative search and considered for possible placement of the child" and should also specify that adult siblings need to be contacted as part of a relative search and considered for possible placement of the child and/or to participate in care and planning for the child.
- c. The practice guide should include reference to Minnesota's legal definition of [sibling](#): "One of two or more individuals who have one or both parents in common through blood, marriage or adoption, including siblings as defined by a child's tribal code or custom. Sibling also includes an individual who would have been considered a sibling prior to a termination or suspension of parental rights of one or both parents, or another disruption of parental rights such as the death of a parent."
- d. The section "Sibling Visitation" should include further guidance on situations that do and don't warrant restricting visits. For example, visits should not be limited as a form of discipline, and should not be limited due to the unavailability of a supervisor or lack of back-up plan in case of an issue with a caseworker's schedule.
- e. The guide should include reference to additional available guidance on supporting sibling connections - [Policy on sibling placement, separation, visitation, and contact in permanency](#)
- f. The section "Out-of-State Visitation" should include expectations for supporting sibling connection when a child is placed out of state
- g. In the section "Visits with Children in Congregate Care", it is noted "a child in a residential facility has the right to reasonable communication and visitation with **adults** [emphasis added] outside the facility, which may include parent/s, extended family members, siblings, legal guardian/s". Clarify that visits between siblings under 18 should also be supported as part of the visitation and communication plan. Clarify that the minimum expected frequency of contact still applies (and in fact may be more important than ever, given the inherent isolation that happens when a child is placed in a facility whether in or out-of-state).
 - a. A promising example from [Texas](#): "regardless of whether a child is in group care or residential treatment, the family visitation plan needs to account for visitation under all placement types and circumstances. Parents and children have the same rights of communication and visitation even when the placement is congregate or residential treatment care."
- h. In the section "Foster Parents Role in supporting visitation" bullet points #9 and #11 should include siblings

- i. The section “Understanding reactions and supporting visitation with the child, parent/s and foster parent/s” currently includes no discussion of sibling visits and should be updated.
- j. This section “Health and wellness considerations for family visitation” currently includes no mention of sibling visits and should be updated.
- k. Include firmer language on the importance of supporting sibling (and all family) contact.
 - a. Promising example from [Texas](#) in their Guiding Philosophy: “VISITATION AND FAMILY CONTACT SHOULD NEVER BE USED AS A REWARD OR PUNISHMENT, BUT SHOULD ALWAYS BE CONSIDERED A RIGHT OF FAMILIES AND CHILDREN”.
- l. Clarify caseworker expectations for supporting sibling relationships from the time a child or youth enters foster care and throughout their entire time in care, including efforts to support ongoing contact in the event of reunification, adoption, TPLPC, or aging out for one or more siblings while others remain in care
- m. Add guidance on caseworker expectations for providing disclosure/notification of a foster child/youth’s applicable rights regarding sibling relationships, including:
 - i. Expectations and suggestions for how to best provide this notification to young children and any children who may have difficulty understanding the information. Clarify situations where disclosure to the child’s foster parent will suffice in lieu of disclosure to the child.
 - ii. The importance of providing this information to foster children even if they have siblings they have not yet met or had the opportunity to form a relationship with, and how these efforts coordinate with requirements for relative search (i.e. to consider adult siblings as well as caregivers of siblings). If caseworkers learn of a sibling that the foster child is not yet aware of, this information should not be withheld from the foster child unless there is an identified safety issue.
- n. Add guidance on caseworker expectations for supporting sibling connections for children in foster care when a custodial parent does not desire contact between their child and a sibling in foster care. This can include making reasonable efforts to reach out to the custodial parent to share information about sibling rights for children in foster care, and exploring options for other ways to support sibling connections if the custodial parent is not willing to allow contact (sharing information and pictures, etc). If there is absolutely no way to support a sibling relationship with a sibling who is not in foster care, the reason for this should be documented thoroughly.
- o. Clarify caseworker expectations for supporting sibling connections even when there are indicators that in-person contact at a given time is not in the child’s best interests (through sharing of photos and information, consideration of virtual visits, phone calls, letter writing and other contact). Clarify caseworker expectations to continually re-assess when in-person or other forms of sibling contact may be resumed or increased, if there was an identified safety issue that led to restricted contact. For example, in-person contact between a sibling placed in a residential treatment program due to unsafe actions toward another sibling may need to be restricted, but the caseworker can still consider other ways to support the ongoing sibling relationship, such as providing updates to the siblings, exploring whether contact in a

- supervised, therapeutic setting may be appropriate, etc. An agency's decisions or actions that result in indefinite disconnection between siblings, need to be very carefully considered.
- p. Add guidance on caseworker expectations for working with foster parents who are resistant or unwilling to support the sibling connections of a child in their care, including connection to adult siblings.
 - q. Add guidance to clarify caseworker expectations for updating siblings about changes in each other's placements and circumstances
 - r. Add guidance on documentation requirements to show the required disclosure/notification of the Sibling Bill of Rights has been done
 - s. Add guidance on caseworker expectations for providing regular updates to the court regarding their efforts to support relationships with all known siblings, including any decisions made to limit or restrict contact, identified barriers to supporting contact and relationships between siblings, and plans to address barriers

Specific recommendations for updating [Requirements and Resources for Older Youth in Foster Care document tcm1053-486148.pdf](#) (sections related to Sibling Bill of Rights):

- a. Delete reference to Foster Care Bill of Rights. Combine this section with the Section on Sibling Bill of Rights.
- b. Update to include more guidance on the required actions for case workers in supporting the Sibling Bill of Rights.
- c. Add reference to this [video](#) as a resource for caseworkers to understand the importance of why the Sibling Bill of Rights was passed into law.

DCYF Response

In accordance with [Sec. 260C.83 MN Statutes](#), please find the DCYF's response below:

August 5, 2025

Misty Coonce
Minnesota Office of the Foster Youth Ombudsperson
Sent via email

Re: Department of Children, Youth, and Families response to *Lacking Support for Sibling Connections* Issue Report

Dear Ombuds Coonce,

Thank you for the opportunity to respond. We appreciate the focus on this critical aspect of child well-being, and we share your commitment to strengthening sibling relationships for youth in foster care.

We are grateful for the broader work the Office of Ombudsperson for Foster Youth (OOFY) is doing to elevate the experiences and needs of youth in care. The creation of this office has already helped sharpen the statewide focus on improving outcomes for foster youth, and this report is another important contribution to that effort.

We acknowledge several areas identified in the report where practice improvements are needed. Specifically:

- The lack of documented notification to youth and their caregivers regarding the Sibling Bill of Rights is concerning. While current law does not require documentation of notification or signed forms, we recognize the importance of tracking this communication to ensure youth are fully informed.
- We agree that more clarity is needed for caseworkers around when and how to apply the sibling contact provisions, especially in complex situations such as post-permanency or when safety concerns are raised.
- We share your concern about the inconsistency in supporting ongoing sibling contact and know that practice varies widely across jurisdictions.
- We also acknowledge that our current written guidance could be strengthened, and that clearer, more actionable tools and training would support local agency staff in operationalizing sibling connection requirements more effectively.

We appreciate the report's recognition of the guidance and support the department has provided to date and are proud of the collaboration that contributed to the passage of the Sibling Bill of Rights in 2018. Our efforts to develop supporting practice guidance, partner with Minnesota IT Services to integrate technical assistance, and increase social worker awareness have laid an important foundation — and we know more is needed.

We are actively working to enhance our quality assurance systems and strengthen supports for youth transitioning out of care. This includes adding new foster youth transitions team members with lived experience, continuing our work with Foster Advocates and OOFY, and focusing our efforts on making tools like the Empowering Youth Update more youth- and reader-friendly. We are also committed to improving how we communicate our expectations to local agencies and are exploring options for more targeted training specific to older youth and transition planning, including sibling connections.

Specifically, related to the four-report recommendation for the Department of Children, Youth, and Families;

- 1. Provide more detailed and comprehensive written practice guidance for case workers, which may include expansion of current documents and/or creation of a comprehensive practice guide specific to supporting sibling relationships.**

The *Maintaining Connections for Children in Foster Care Practice Guide*, which provides support practice at the local level, is being updated based on the report recommendations. We anticipate a draft will be ready in October 2025 and, it is our intent to share the updates with OOFY. Additionally, as we modernize our child welfare IT system, we will explore options for tracking notice requirements.

- 2. Create trainings for agency caseworkers that correlates with updated written practice guidance.**

The Child Safety and Permanency Administration at the Department of Children, Youth, and Families has begun hosting Community of Practice meetings. The topic for July was the new *Maintaining Connections for Children in Foster Care Practice Guide*. Approximately 150 child welfare staff attended the meetings that occurred on 7/29/25 and 7/31/25. These meetings are designed to be ongoing.

- 3. Update the Sibling Bill of Rights Commissioner's Form.**

This fall DCYF will begin efforts to update the Sibling Bill of Rights Commissioner's Form. We will engage with and obtain feedback from our youth leadership council as well as with OOFY. We will also work to incorporate the recommendations from this report regarding the requested easier to read format. We will provide a link to OOFY in the report. We anticipate this will be completed by January 2026.

- 4. Update the "Help Text" for the Out-of-Home Placement plan in Agile Apps**

The revised Out-of-Home Placement plan on Agile Apps is currently being tested by Social Services Information System users. We anticipate that the revised plan will be available in October 2025. The

Out-of-Home Placement Plan Practice Guide issued in April 2025 includes information about the Sibling Bill of Rights. We are reviewing the Out-of-Home Placement plan help text to address the recommendations from the Issue Report. We anticipate this will be completed in October 2025, and we plan to share the updates with OOFY.

We appreciate the report's neutral and constructive tone, and we acknowledge the importance of transparency and accountability. While the report raised questions about gaps in local practice, we also see this as a recognition of the need for additional resources to support both state and local improvements — including staffing, training, and more robust oversight mechanisms.

Thank you again for your thoughtful work. We look forward to our continued partnership in centering the voices of foster youth and making meaningful progress in the areas outlined.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Rebecca St. George". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large, stylized "S" at the end.

Rebecca St. George

Assistant Commissioner | Child Safety & Permanency