

# 34<sup>TH</sup> ALASKA STATE LEGISLATURE

## Session

State Capitol, Rm. 118  
Juneau, AK 99801  
(907) 465-4940

## Interim

1500 W. Benson Blvd  
Anchorage, AK 99503  
(907) 269-0120



House Judiciary Committee, Chair

House Military and Veterans'  
Affairs, Committee Co-chair

Joint Armed Services Committee,  
Co-chair

House Health and Social Services  
Committee

Rep.Andrew.Gray@akleg.gov

## REPRESENTATIVE ANDREW GRAY

---

### House Bill 157 (34-LS0458/I) Sponsor Statement February 17<sup>th</sup>, 2026

Sibling relationships are among the most powerful and enduring connections a person can have.

For children in foster care, siblings are often a remaining link to their past, their identity, and their family. These bonds provide emotional stability, comfort, and a sense of belonging during an experience that is often confusing and traumatic.

American Academy of Pediatrics notes that family separation “can cause irreparable harm, disrupting a child’s brain architecture and affecting his or her short- and long-term health”. When siblings are placed apart in foster care, many never receive regular visits or contact with one another. (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 2020)

Siblings who maintain contact experience greater feelings of safety, fewer emotional and behavioral challenges, stronger peer relationships, and better school performance. (NCCWE)

Under current Alaska law, adoption ends the legal relationship between adopted children and their birth family, including siblings. HB 157 preserves legal sibling relationships and encourages adoptive families to maintain these vital connections.

I urge you to support HB 157 and protect all siblings in foster care.

**HOUSE BILL NO. 157**

IN THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF ALASKA

THIRTY-FOURTH LEGISLATURE - SECOND SESSION

BY REPRESENTATIVES GRAY, Frier, Costello

Introduced: 3/26/25

Referred: Health and Social Services, Judiciary

**A BILL**

**FOR AN ACT ENTITLED**

1 **"An Act relating to the effect of a decree of adoption or termination of parental rights**  
2 **on the legal relationship between a person and the person's siblings; and providing for**  
3 **an effective date."**

4 **BE IT ENACTED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF ALASKA:**

5 \* **Section 1.** The uncodified law of the State of Alaska is amended by adding a new section  
6 to read:

7 LEGISLATIVE FINDINGS AND INTENT. (a) The legislature finds that

8 (1) the importance of a child's relationship with the child's siblings is well  
9 recognized in law and science;

10 (2) the bonds between siblings are often irreplaceable;

11 (3) a foster child typically has some degree of contact or visitation with the  
12 child's siblings, even when the child and the child's siblings do not reside together.

13 (b) It is the intent of the legislature

14 (1) that when a court reviews and approves a petition to adopt a child from

1 foster care, the court shall encourage the adoptive parents, birth parents, foster parents,  
 2 kinship caregivers, and the department to consider the long-term benefits to the child adoptee  
 3 and the child's siblings of facilitating post-adoption contact between the siblings that is similar  
 4 in nature and frequency to that which existed before the adoption;

5 (2) to promote a larger focus by the office of children's services and the courts  
 6 in permanency planning and adoption proceedings on the interests of the child and the child's  
 7 siblings separated by adoptive placements; and

8 (3) to encourage courts to include provisions in an adoption decree that  
 9 support ongoing postadoption contact between siblings.

10 \* **Sec. 2.** AS 25.23.125 is amended by adding a new subsection to read:

11 (d) If the person to be adopted is a minor who has been committed to the  
 12 custody of the Department of Family and Community Services under AS 47.10, and  
 13 the minor has siblings as defined in AS 25.23.130(g), the court shall determine  
 14 whether post-adoption visitation with the siblings is in the best interests of the minor  
 15 to be adopted and document the finding on the final decree of adoption.

16 \* **Sec. 3.** AS 25.23.130(a) is amended to read:

17 (a) A final decree of adoption, whether issued by a court of this state or of any  
 18 other state, has the following effect as to matters within the jurisdiction or before a  
 19 court of this state:

20 (1) except with respect to a spouse of the petitioner and relatives of the  
 21 spouse, to relieve the natural parents of the adopted person of all parental rights and  
 22 responsibilities, and, except as provided in (c) of this section, to terminate all legal  
 23 relationships between the adopted person and the natural parents and other relatives of  
 24 the adopted person **who are not siblings of the adopted person**, so that the adopted  
 25 person thereafter is a stranger to **these** [THE] former relatives for all purposes,  
 26 including inheritance, unless the decree of adoption specifically provides for  
 27 continuation of inheritance rights, and the interpretation or construction of documents,  
 28 statutes, and instruments, whether executed before or after the adoption is decreed,  
 29 that do not expressly include the person by name or by some designation not based on  
 30 a parent and child or blood relationship; and

31 (2) to create the relationship of parent and child between **the** petitioner

1 and the adopted person, as if the adopted person were a legitimate blood descendant of  
2 the petitioner, for all purposes, including inheritance and applicability of statutes,  
3 documents, and instruments, whether executed before or after the adoption is decreed,  
4 that do not expressly exclude an adopted person from their operation or effect.

5 \* **Sec. 4.** AS 25.23.130 is amended by adding a new subsection to read:

6 (g) In this section, "sibling" means a person who

7 (1) is related to an individual by blood, adoption, or marriage as a child  
8 of one or both parents; or

9 (2) was raised together with an individual for a period of time in the  
10 same household and in the same manner that children who are related by blood,  
11 adoption, or marriage might be.

12 \* **Sec. 5.** This Act takes effect immediately under AS 01.10.070(c).

# 34<sup>TH</sup> ALASKA STATE LEGISLATURE

## Session

State Capitol, Rm. 118  
Juneau, AK 99801  
(907) 465-4940

## Interim

1500 W. Benson Blvd  
Anchorage, AK 99503  
(907) 269-0123



House Judiciary Committee, Chair

House Military and Veterans'  
Affairs, Committee Co-chair

Joint Armed Services Committee,  
Co-chair

House Health and Social Services  
Committee

Rep.Andrew.Gray@akleg.gov

## REPRESENTATIVE ANDREW GRAY

---

### House Bill 157 (34-LS0458/I) Sectional Analysis February 17<sup>th</sup>, 2026

#### Section 1

*AS 25.23.130(a) – Effect of adoption decree; effect of termination of parental rights*

Amends AS 25.23.130(a) to clarify that the legal relationship between an adopted person and that person's siblings is not terminated as a result of an adoption decree.

#### Section 2

*AS 25.23.125 – Adoption proceedings*

Amends AS 25.23.125 to require the court, in accordance with AS 25.23.130(g), to determine whether post-adoption visitation with a foster child's siblings is in the child's best interests and to document that determination in the final adoption decree.

#### Section 3

*AS 25.23.130(a) – Effect of adoption decree*

Amends AS 25.23.130(a) to clarify that when an adoption decree terminates the legal relationship between an adopted person and the person's biological parents or relatives, the decree does not terminate the legal relationship between the adopted person and the person's siblings.

# 34<sup>TH</sup> ALASKA STATE LEGISLATURE

## Session

State Capitol, Rm. 118  
Juneau, AK 99801  
(907) 465-4940

## Interim

1500 W. Benson Blvd  
Anchorage, AK 99503  
(907) 269-0123



House Judiciary Committee, Chair

House Military and Veterans'  
Affairs, Committee Co-chair

Joint Armed Services Committee,  
Co-chair

House Health and Social Services  
Committee

Rep.Andrew.Gray@akleg.gov

## REPRESENTATIVE ANDREW GRAY

---

### House Bill 157 (34-LS0458/I) Sectional Analysis February 17<sup>th</sup>, 2026

#### Section 4

*AS 25.23.130 – Definition of sibling*

Amends AS 25.23.130 to define sibling as a person who

(1) is related to an individual by blood, adoption, or marriage as a child of one or both parents; or

(2) was raised together with an individual in the same household for a period of time and in the same manner as children related by blood, adoption, or marriage.

#### Section 5

Provides that the Act takes effect immediately under AS 01.10.070(c).

# Fiscal Note

State of Alaska  
2026 Legislative Session

Bill Version: HB 157  
Fiscal Note Number: \_\_\_\_\_  
( ) Publish Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Identifier: HB157-FCS-FLSW-3-27-26  
Title: EFFECT OF ADOPTION DECREE ON SIBLINGS  
Sponsor: GRAY  
Requester: (H) HSS

Department: Department of Family and Community Services  
Appropriation: Children's Services  
Allocation: Front Line Social Workers  
OMB Component Number: 3318

**Expenditures/Revenues**

Note: Amounts do not include inflation unless otherwise noted below. (Thousands of Dollars)

|                               | FY2027                  | Included in               | Out-Year Cost Estimates |         |         |         |         |
|-------------------------------|-------------------------|---------------------------|-------------------------|---------|---------|---------|---------|
|                               | Appropriation Requested | Governor's FY2027 Request | FY 2028                 | FY 2029 | FY 2030 | FY 2031 | FY 2032 |
| <b>OPERATING EXPENDITURES</b> | <b>FY 2027</b>          | <b>FY 2027</b>            |                         |         |         |         |         |
| Personal Services             | ***                     |                           | ***                     | ***     | ***     | ***     | ***     |
| Travel                        |                         |                           |                         |         |         |         |         |
| Services                      |                         |                           |                         |         |         |         |         |
| Commodities                   |                         |                           |                         |         |         |         |         |
| Capital Outlay                |                         |                           |                         |         |         |         |         |
| Grants & Benefits             |                         |                           |                         |         |         |         |         |
| Miscellaneous                 |                         |                           |                         |         |         |         |         |
| <b>Total Operating</b>        | ***                     | <b>0.0</b>                | ***                     | ***     | ***     | ***     | ***     |

**Fund Source (Operating Only)**

|              |     |            |     |     |     |     |     |
|--------------|-----|------------|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|
| None         |     |            |     |     |     |     |     |
| <b>Total</b> | *** | <b>0.0</b> | *** | *** | *** | *** | *** |

**Positions**

|           |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
|-----------|--|--|--|--|--|--|--|
| Full-time |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Part-time |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Temporary |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |

**Change in Revenues**

|              |            |            |            |            |            |            |            |
|--------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|
| None         |            |            |            |            |            |            |            |
| <b>Total</b> | <b>0.0</b> | <b>0.0</b> | <b>0.0</b> | <b>0.0</b> | <b>0.0</b> | <b>0.0</b> | <b>0.0</b> |

**Estimated SUPPLEMENTAL (FY2026) cost:** 0.0 *(separate supplemental appropriation required)*

**Estimated CAPITAL (FY2027) cost:** 0.0 *(separate capital appropriation required)*

**Does the bill create or modify a new fund or account?** No  
*(Supplemental/Capital/New Fund - discuss reasons and fund source(s) in analysis section)*

**ASSOCIATED REGULATIONS**

Does the bill direct, or will the bill result in, regulation changes adopted by your agency? No  
If yes, by what date are the regulations to be adopted, amended or repealed?

**Why this fiscal note differs from previous version/comments:**

|                 |
|-----------------|
| Initial version |
|-----------------|

|  |                                  |
|--|----------------------------------|
| Prepared By: <u>Bruce Downes, Community Relations Manager</u>  | Phone: <u>(907)465-3548</u>      |
| Division: <u>Children's Services</u>                           | Date: <u>03/27/2026 12:00 AM</u> |
| Approved By: <u>Kyle Scherrer, Division Operations Manager</u> | Date: <u>03/27/26</u>            |
| Agency: <u>Department of Family and Community Services</u>     |                                  |

## FISCAL NOTE ANALYSIS

STATE OF ALASKA  
2026 LEGISLATIVE SESSION

BILL NO. HB 157

### Analysis

HB 157 allows siblings adopted into separate families to maintain court-ordered contact when it is determined to be in their best interests. The bill expands the responsibilities of the Office of Children’s Services (OCS) and the Alaska Court System by formally incorporating preservation of sibling relationships into permanency planning and adoption proceedings.

The legislation also defines adoptive parents as “adult family members” under AS 47.14.100(e). As a result, adoptive parents would receive notice when a child enters state custody, be informed of the process for requesting placement, and be entitled to a hearing if a placement request is denied—rights currently afforded to extended relatives.

While these requirements would have minimal operational impact when adoptive parents are relatives, they may increase workload and litigation risk when adoptive parents are not related to the child and contest placement decisions. The bill would also require consideration of qualified experts to assess children’s best interests regarding permanency and ongoing sibling contact.

OCS anticipates the need for additional funding due to potential delays in permanency and increased litigation associated with placement-denial hearings. Recent data shows OCS finalized 257 adoptions and 70 guardianships in FY2024, and 225 adoptions with 75 guardianships in FY2025. More than 50 percent of children in the Department’s custody achieve permanency through relative placements.

Due to the broad definition of “siblings” in this legislation, OCS cannot determine the number of hearings that would result; however, it offers the following figures as potential outcomes.

Contested placement review hearings consist of noticing placements of the right to request placement, preparing discovery if a placement is denied, preparation for the hearing, and participating in the hearing itself. OCS estimates the Department of Law would bill OCS at approximately 8 hours at \$170.53 an hour.

If 10% of non relative placements contest placements this cost would total approximately \$21,827.84 per year (16 cases x 8 hours for representation (\$1,364.24).

If 20% of non relative placements contest placements this cost would total approximately \$43,655.68 per year (32 cases x 8 hours for representation (\$1,364.24).

If 30% of non relative placements contest placements this cost would total approximately \$65,483.52 per year (48 cases x 8 hours for representation (\$1,364.24).

If 40% of non relative placements contest placements this cost would total approximately \$87,311.36 per year (64 cases x 8 hours for representation (\$1,364.24).

The division will continue to monitor the impacts of this bill and determine at what level additional resources will be needed to implement this legislation should it become law.

# Fiscal Note

State of Alaska  
2026 Legislative Session

Bill Version: HB 157  
Fiscal Note Number: \_\_\_\_\_  
( ) Publish Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Identifier: HB157-FCS-FCBR-3-27-26  
Title: EFFECT OF ADOPTION DECREE ON SIBLINGS  
Sponsor: GRAY  
Requester: (H) HSS

Department: Department of Family and Community Services  
Appropriation: Children's Services  
Allocation: Foster Care Base Rate  
OMB Component Number: 3315

**Expenditures/Revenues**

Note: Amounts do not include inflation unless otherwise noted below. (Thousands of Dollars)

|                               | FY2027                  | Included in               | Out-Year Cost Estimates |         |         |         |         |
|-------------------------------|-------------------------|---------------------------|-------------------------|---------|---------|---------|---------|
|                               | Appropriation Requested | Governor's FY2027 Request | FY 2028                 | FY 2029 | FY 2030 | FY 2031 | FY 2032 |
| <b>OPERATING EXPENDITURES</b> | <b>FY 2027</b>          | <b>FY 2027</b>            |                         |         |         |         |         |
| Personal Services             | ***                     |                           | ***                     | ***     | ***     | ***     | ***     |
| Travel                        |                         |                           |                         |         |         |         |         |
| Services                      |                         |                           |                         |         |         |         |         |
| Commodities                   |                         |                           |                         |         |         |         |         |
| Capital Outlay                |                         |                           |                         |         |         |         |         |
| Grants & Benefits             |                         |                           |                         |         |         |         |         |
| Miscellaneous                 |                         |                           |                         |         |         |         |         |
| <b>Total Operating</b>        | ***                     | <b>0.0</b>                | ***                     | ***     | ***     | ***     | ***     |

**Fund Source (Operating Only)**

|              |     |            |     |     |     |     |     |
|--------------|-----|------------|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|
| None         |     |            |     |     |     |     |     |
| <b>Total</b> | *** | <b>0.0</b> | *** | *** | *** | *** | *** |

**Positions**

|           |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
|-----------|--|--|--|--|--|--|--|
| Full-time |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Part-time |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Temporary |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |

**Change in Revenues**

|              |            |            |            |            |            |            |            |
|--------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|
| None         |            |            |            |            |            |            |            |
| <b>Total</b> | <b>0.0</b> | <b>0.0</b> | <b>0.0</b> | <b>0.0</b> | <b>0.0</b> | <b>0.0</b> | <b>0.0</b> |

**Estimated SUPPLEMENTAL (FY2026) cost:** 0.0 *(separate supplemental appropriation required)*

**Estimated CAPITAL (FY2027) cost:** 0.0 *(separate capital appropriation required)*

**Does the bill create or modify a new fund or account?** No  
*(Supplemental/Capital/New Fund - discuss reasons and fund source(s) in analysis section)*

**ASSOCIATED REGULATIONS**

Does the bill direct, or will the bill result in, regulation changes adopted by your agency? No  
If yes, by what date are the regulations to be adopted, amended or repealed?

**Why this fiscal note differs from previous version/comments:**

|                 |
|-----------------|
| Initial version |
|-----------------|

|              |   |        |                     |
|--------------|---|--------|---------------------|
| Prepared By: | Bruce Downes, Community Relations Manager   | Phone: | (907)465-3548       |
| Division:    | Children's Services                         | Date:  | 03/27/2026 12:00 AM |
| Approved By: | Kyle Scherrer, Division Operations Manager  | Date:  | 03/27/26            |
| Agency:      | Department of Family and Community Services |        |                     |

## FISCAL NOTE ANALYSIS

STATE OF ALASKA  
2026 LEGISLATIVE SESSION

BILL NO. HB 157

### Analysis

HB 57 allows siblings adopted into separate families to maintain court-ordered contact when it is determined to be in their best interests. The bill expands the responsibilities of the Office of Children’s Services (OCS) and the Alaska Court System by formally incorporating preservation of sibling relationships into permanency planning and adoption proceedings.

The legislation also defines adoptive parents as “adult family members” under AS 47.14.100(e). As a result, adoptive parents would be entitled to receive notice when a child enters state custody, be informed of how to request placement, and receive a hearing if their placement request is denied—rights that currently apply to extended relatives.

While these provisions would have minimal operational impact when adoptive parents are relatives, they could increase workload and litigation risk in cases where adoptive parents are not related to the child and contest placement decisions. The bill would also require consideration of qualified experts to assess children’s best interests regarding permanency and ongoing sibling contact.

OCS anticipates the need for additional funding due to potential delays in permanency and increased litigation associated with placement-denial hearings. Recent data shows OCS finalized 257 adoptions and 70 guardianships in FY2024, and 225 adoptions with 75 guardianships in FY2025. More than 50 percent of children in the Department’s custody achieve permanency through relative placements.

Due to the broad definition of “sibling,” OCS cannot determine the number of hearings that may result; however, it offers the following figures as potential outcomes.

Contested hearings could delay permanency by an estimated three to six months. During that time, children remaining in OCS custody would continue to accrue foster care maintenance costs. At the average base foster care rate of \$37.79 per day, a six-month delay (180 days) would cost an additional \$6,802 per child.

If 10% of these cases were contested in court this would amount to approximately \$108,835.20 in annual additional costs. (16 children x \$6802)

If 20% of these cases were contested in court this would amount to approximately \$217,670.40 in annual additional costs. (32 children x \$6802)

If 30% of these cases were contested in court this would amount to approximately \$326,505.6 in annual additional costs. (48 children x \$6802)

If 40% of these cases were contested in court this would amount to approximately \$435,340.80 in annual additional costs. (64 children x \$6802)

The division will continue to monitor the impacts of this bill and determine at what level additional resources will be needed to implement this legislation should it become law.

Alaska provisions relating to sibling relationship, placement, contact info, and visitation while in state custody

AS 47.14.100(r)

(r) The department shall make reasonable efforts to place siblings in the same placement if the siblings are residing in the same home when taken into the custody of the department. If siblings are not placed together after reasonable efforts have been made, the case supervisor for the division with responsibility over the custody of children shall document in the file the efforts that were made and the reason separating the siblings for placement purposes is in the best interest of the children. If it is in the best interests of the children to maintain contact, the department shall provide each sibling with contact information for the other sibling and encourage the children's caregivers to provide opportunities for contact between the siblings. In this subsection, "sibling" means two or more persons who are related by blood, adoption, or marriage as a child of one or both parents.

AS 47.10.080(p)

(p) If a child is removed from the parental home, the department shall provide reasonable visitation between the child and the child's parents, guardian, and family. When determining what constitutes reasonable visitation with a family member, the department shall consider the nature and quality of the relationship that existed between the child and the family member before the child was committed to the custody of the department. The court may require the department to file a visitation plan with the court. The department may deny visitation to the parents, guardian, or family members if there is clear and convincing evidence that visits are not in the child's best interests....

(w) The court shall recognize a presumption that maintenance of a sibling relationship, including with a sibling who is related by blood, marriage, or adoption through one parent, is in a child's best interest.

## Other States

This website is a state-by-state compilation of laws relating to post-adoption visitation between siblings:

<https://adoptioncouncil.org/paca-state-review/>

Here is Washington's law:

Washington - Wash. Rev. Code Ann. § 26.33.295; § 26.33.420; § 26.33.430

### Involvement of the Child?

#### Rule Language

The legislature finds that the importance of children's relationships with their siblings is well recognized in law and science. The bonds between siblings are often irreplaceable, leading some experts to believe that sibling relationships can be longer lasting and more influential than any other over a person's lifetime. For children who have been removed from home due to abuse or neglect, these bonds are often much stronger because siblings have learned early the importance of depending on one another and cooperating in order to cope with their common problems. The legislature further finds that when children are in the foster care system they typically have some degree of contact or visitation with their siblings even when they are not living together. The legislature finds, however, that when one or more of the siblings is adopted from foster care, these relationships may be severed completely if an open adoption agreement fails to attend to the needs of the siblings for continuing postadoption contact. The legislature intends to promote a greater focus, in permanency planning and adoption proceedings, on the interests of siblings separated by adoptive placements and to encourage the inclusion in adoption agreements of provisions to support ongoing postadoption contact between siblings. <sup>(1)</sup> Wash. Rev. Code Ann. § 26.33.420

#### Court's Role

(2) The court shall not enter a proposed order unless the terms of such order have been approved in writing by the prospective adoptive parents, any birth parent whose parental rights have not previously been terminated, and, if the child or siblings of the child are in the custody of the department or a licensed child-placing agency, a representative of the

department or child-placing agency. If the child is represented by an attorney or guardian ad litem in a proceeding under this chapter or in any other child-custody proceeding, the terms of the proposed order also must be approved in writing by the child's representative. An agreement under this section need not disclose the identity of the parties to be legally enforceable. The court shall not enter a proposed order unless the court finds that the communication or contact with the child adoptee, as agreed upon and as set forth in the proposed order, would be in the child adoptee's best interests. (4) An agreed order entered pursuant to this section may be enforced by a civil action and the prevailing party in that action may be awarded, as part of the costs of the action, a reasonable amount to be fixed by the court as attorneys' fees. The court shall not modify an agreed order under this section unless it finds that the modification is necessary to serve the best interests of the child adoptee, and that: (a) The modification is agreed to by the adoptive parent and the birth parent or parents; or (b) exceptional circumstances have arisen since the agreed order was entered that justify modification of the order. <sup>(1)</sup>Wash. Rev. Code Ann. § 26.33.295

The court, in reviewing and approving an agreement under RCW 26.33.295 for the adoption of a child from foster care, shall encourage the adoptive parents, birth parents, foster parents, kinship caregivers, and the department or other supervising agency to seriously consider the long-term benefits to the child adoptee and siblings of the child adoptee of providing for and facilitating continuing postadoption contact between siblings. To the extent feasible, and when in the best interests of the child adoptee and siblings of the child adoptee, contact between the siblings should be frequent and of a similar nature as that which existed prior to the adoption. If the child adoptee or known siblings of the child adoptee are represented by an attorney or guardian ad litem in a proceeding under this chapter or in any other child custody proceeding, the court shall inquire of each attorney and guardian ad litem regarding the potential benefits of continuing contact between the siblings and the potential detriments of severing contact. <sup>(1)</sup>Wash. Rev. Code Ann. § 26.33.430

### **Legally Enforceable?**

Yes but; (2) Agreements regarding communication with or contact between child adoptees, adoptive parents, siblings of child adoptees, and a birth parent or parents shall not be legally enforceable unless the terms of the agreement are set forth in a written court order entered in accordance with the provisions of this section. Wash. Rev. Code Ann. § 26.33.295



## Adoption and Sibling Relationships

For additional information please contact Hannah Ditzenberger, Policy Associate, Children and Families, [hannah.ditzenberger@ncsl.org](mailto:hannah.ditzenberger@ncsl.org).

### Background Information

NCSL did not locate legislation or state statutes that explicitly preserve the legal relationship between biological siblings after an adoption has occurred. In many states, courts encourage the adoptive parents to maintain the bond between siblings through communication and visitation and children may have the right to request communication with their siblings.

In some situations, biological and adoptive families enter [contractual agreements](#) to facilitate contact after an adoption occurs. The agreement may require adoptive parents to update the biological parents about the child. In other situations, the agreement may require visits between the birth relatives and child. Many states and the District of Columbia have statutes that allow biological parents to enter into such agreements. Some states also allow biological siblings and other closer relatives to form contractual agreements with adoptive families. The Child Welfare Information Gateway summarizes these statutes through August 2018 in their [Postadoption Contact Agreements Between Birth and Adoptive Families Publication](#).

In addition, many adopted people attempt to find their biological or former foster siblings. Some states manage [adoption reunion registries](#) as a source of information for individuals who are looking to reconnect with their birth relatives.

Access to adoption records and original birth certificates can also help adopted people find their birth relatives. Most states, territories and the District of Columbia have laws addressing access to adoption records following the finalization of an adoption. The Child Welfare Information Gateway summarizes these statutes through December 2019 in their [Access to Adoption Records Publication](#).

### State Statutes: Adoption and Siblings

Below is a chart of state statutes that provide supports for adopted people to reconnect with their siblings or to maintain sibling bonds after an adoption occurs. The chart is not a comprehensive list of all state statutes related to adoption and sibling relationships.

NCSL tracks enacted legislation related to adoption and siblings in the [Child Welfare Enacted Legislation Database](#).

| State    | State Statutes                  |
|----------|---------------------------------|
| Delaware | <a href="#">13 Del.C. § 962</a> |

Compiled by the National Conference of State Legislatures, January 2024

Please note: links to external websites and reports are for informational purposes only and do not indicate NCSL's endorsement of the content on those sites.



## Adoption and Sibling Relationships

|                       |  |
|-----------------------|--|
|                       | <p>(a) An adoptee 21 years of age or older who has obtained a copy of a vital record under § 3110 of Title 16 may request that a licensed adoption agency assist in locating any of the following:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(1) Either or both birth parents;</li> <li>(2) If a birth parent is deceased, siblings (full or half) of the birth parent;</li> <li>(3) Birth siblings (full or half) of the adoptee.</li> </ol> <p>(b) When a licensed adoption agency locates an individual sought by an adoptee 21 years of age or older, the agency will advise the located individual of the right to make a no-contact declaration. If a no-contact declaration is made either verbally to a licensed adoption worker or in a writing filed with the agency, the agency will so advise the adoptee and no further assistance will be provided. If a no-contact declaration is not expressed, the agency shall immediately advise the searching adoptee of the located individual's current name, address, and telephone number.</p> <p>(c) If requested, the agency shall provide counseling or intermediary services, or both, to the searching adoptee or the located individual, or to both.</p>  |
| <p><b>Florida</b></p> | <p><b><u><a href="#">West's F.S.A. § 63.0427</a></u></b><br/> <b>Agreements for continued communication or contact between adopted child and siblings, parents, and other relatives.</b></p> <p>(1) A child whose parents have had their parental rights terminated and whose custody has been awarded to the department pursuant to s. 39.811, and who is the subject of a petition for adoption under this chapter, shall have the right to have the court consider the appropriateness of postadoption communication or contact, including, but not limited to, visits, written correspondence, or telephone calls, with his or her siblings or, upon agreement of the adoptive parents, with the parents who have had their parental rights terminated or other specified biological relatives. The court shall consider the following in making such determination:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(a) Any orders of the court pursuant to s. 39.811(7).</li> <li>(b) Recommendations of the department, the foster parents if other than the adoptive parents, and the guardian ad litem.</li> <li>(c) Statements of the prospective adoptive parents.</li> <li>(d) Any other information deemed relevant and material by the court.</li> </ol> <p>If the court determines that the child's best interests will be served by postadoption communication or contact, the court shall so order, stating the nature and frequency of the communication or contact. This order shall be made a part of the final adoption order, but the continuing validity of the adoption may not be contingent upon such postadoption communication or contact and the ability of the adoptive parents and child to change residence within or outside the State of Florida may not be impaired by such communication or contact.</p> <p>(2) Notwithstanding s. 63.162, the adoptive parent may, at any time, petition for review of a communication or contact order entered pursuant to subsection (1), if the adoptive parent</p> |



## Adoption and Sibling Relationships

|                        |  |
|------------------------|--|
|                        | <p>believes that the best interests of the adopted child are being compromised, and the court may order the communication or contact to be terminated or modified, as the court deems to be in the best interests of the adopted child; however, the court may not increase contact between the adopted child and siblings, birth parents, or other relatives without the consent of the adoptive parent or parents. As part of the review process, the court may order the parties to engage in mediation. The department shall not be required to be a party to such review.</p>   |
| <p><b>Illinois</b></p> | <p><b><a href="#">20 ILCS 505/7.4 (I)</a></b></p> <p>(i) Post Permanency Sibling Contact Agreement. When a child in the Department's care has a permanency goal of adoption or private guardianship, and the Department is preparing to finalize the adoption or guardianship, the Department shall convene a meeting with the pre-adoptive parent or prospective guardian and the case manager for the child being adopted or placed in guardianship and the foster parents and case managers for the child's siblings, and others as applicable. The children should participate as is developmentally appropriate. Others, such as therapists and mentors, may participate as appropriate. At the meeting the Department shall encourage the parties to discuss sibling contact post permanency. The Department may assist the parties in drafting a Post Permanency Sibling Contact Agreement.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(1) Parties to the Post Permanency Sibling Contact Agreement shall include:             <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(A) The adoptive parent or parents or guardian.</li> <li>(B) The child's sibling or siblings, parents or guardians.</li> <li>(C) The child.</li> </ol> </li> <li>(2) Consent of child 14 and over. The written consent of a child age 14 and over to the terms and conditions of the Post Permanency Sibling Contact Agreement and subsequent modifications is required.</li> <li>(3) In developing this Agreement, the Department shall encourage the parties to consider the following factors:             <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(A) the physical and emotional safety and welfare of the child;</li> <li>(B) the child's wishes;</li> <li>(C) the interaction and interrelationship of the child with the child's sibling or siblings who would be visiting or communicating with the child, including:                 <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(i) the quality of the relationship between the child and the sibling or siblings, and</li> <li>(ii) the benefits and potential harms to the child in allowing the relationship or relationships to continue or in ending them;</li> </ol> </li> <li>(D) the child's sense of attachments to the birth sibling or siblings and adoptive family, including:                 <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(i) the child's sense of being valued;</li> <li>(ii) the child's sense of familiarity; and</li> <li>(iii) continuity of affection for the child; and</li> </ol> </li> <li>(E) other factors relevant to the best interest of the child.</li> </ol> </li> <li>(4) In considering the factors in paragraph (3) of this subsection, the Department shall encourage the parties to recognize the importance to a child of developing a</li> </ol> |



## Adoption and Sibling Relationships

|      |   |
|------|---|
|      | <p>relationship with siblings including siblings with whom the child does not yet have a relationship; and the value of preserving family ties between the child and the child's siblings, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(A) the child's need for stability and continuity of relationships with siblings, and</li> <li>(B) the importance of sibling contact in the development of the child's identity.</li> </ul> <p>(5) Modification or termination of Post Permanency Sibling Contact Agreement. The parties to the agreement may modify or terminate the Post Permanency Sibling Contact Agreement. If the parties cannot agree to modification or termination, they may request the assistance of the Department of Children and Family Services or another agency identified and agreed upon by the parties to the Post Permanency Sibling Contact Agreement. Any and all terms may be modified by agreement of the parties. Post Permanency Sibling Contact Agreements may also be modified to include contact with siblings whose whereabouts were unknown or who had not yet been born when the Judgment Order for Adoption or Order for Private Guardianship was entered.</p> <p>(6) Adoptions and private guardianships finalized prior to the effective date of amendatory Act. Nothing in this Section prohibits the parties from entering into a Post Permanency Sibling Contact Agreement if the adoption or private guardianship was finalized prior to the effective date of this Section. If the Agreement is completed and signed by the parties, the Department shall include the Post Permanency Sibling Contact Agreement in the child's Post Adoption or Private Guardianship case record and in the case file of siblings who are parties to the agreement who are in the Department's custody or guardianship.</p> |
| Ohio | <p><b><u><a href="#">R.C. § 3107.48</a></u></b></p> <p>(A) An adopted person age twenty-one or older may submit a request with the department of health for the department to assist the adopted person's birth parent or birth sibling in finding the adopted person's name by adoption pursuant to section 3107.49 of the Revised Code. The adopted person shall submit the request on a form prescribed by the department under section 3107.51 of the Revised Code. If the adopted person provides all the information required by section 3107.51 of the Revised Code on the form, the department shall file it in the adopted person's adoption file and assist the birth parent or birth sibling in finding the adopted person's name by adoption unless the adopted person rescinds the request pursuant to division (B) of this section.</p> <p>(B) An adopted person who has requested under division (A) of this section that the department of health assist the adopted person's birth parent or birth sibling in finding the adopted person's name by adoption pursuant to section 3107.49 of the Revised Code may rescind the request and prohibit the department from assisting the birth parent or birth sibling in finding the adopted person's name by adoption pursuant to section 3107.49 of the Revised Code. The department shall remove the request from the adopted person's</p>   |



## Adoption and Sibling Relationships

|                          |  |
|--------------------------|--|
|                          | <p>adoption file and destroy the request to rescind the request if the adopted person does both of the following:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Makes a written request to the department;</li> <li>2. Provides to the department the adopted person's residence address, notarized signature, and two items of identification of the adopted person.</li> </ol> <p>(C) An adopted person may submit requests under division (A) of this section and rescind requests under division (B) of this section as many times as the adopted person wishes.</p>   |
| <p><b>Washington</b></p> | <p><a href="#"><u>West's RCWA 26.33.420-430</u></a></p> <p>The legislature finds that the importance of children's relationships with their siblings is well recognized in law and science. The bonds between siblings are often irreplaceable, leading some experts to believe that sibling relationships can be longer lasting and more influential than any other over a person's lifetime. For children who have been removed from home due to abuse or neglect, these bonds are often much stronger because siblings have learned early the importance of depending on one another and cooperating in order to cope with their common problems. The legislature further finds that when children are in the foster care system they typically have some degree of contact or visitation with their siblings even when they are not living together. The legislature finds, however, that when one or more of the siblings is adopted from foster care, these relationships may be severed completely if an open adoption agreement fails to attend to the needs of the siblings for continuing postadoption contact. The legislature intends to promote a greater focus, in permanency planning and adoption proceedings, on the interests of siblings separated by adoptive placements and to encourage the inclusion in adoption agreements of provisions to support ongoing postadoption contact between siblings.</p> <p>The court, in reviewing and approving an agreement under RCW 26.33.295 for the adoption of a child from foster care, shall encourage the adoptive parents, birth parents, foster parents, kinship caregivers, and the department or other supervising agency to seriously consider the long-term benefits to the child adoptee and siblings of the child adoptee of providing for and facilitating continuing postadoption contact between siblings. To the extent feasible, and when in the best interests of the child adoptee and siblings of the child adoptee, contact between the siblings should be frequent and of a similar nature as that which existed prior to the adoption. If the child adoptee or known siblings of the child adoptee are represented by an attorney or guardian ad litem in a proceeding under this chapter or in any other child custody proceeding, the court shall inquire of each attorney and guardian ad litem regarding the potential benefits of continuing contact between the siblings and the potential detriments of severing contact.</p> |

### ***What the Research Tells Us: The Impact of Placing Siblings Together and Separating Siblings***

"Practice wisdom and limited research support the basic premise that children experience better outcomes when placed with their siblings. These outcomes include greater stability, fewer emotional and behavioral problems, fewer placements, and fewer days in placement." (Groza, et al., 2003).

Emerging from the research is the clear message that one of the most critical contributions that child welfare professionals can provide for children and youth in care is to preserve their connections with their brothers and sisters. For many children in foster care, being placed with their siblings spares them the experience of yet another loss in their lives and provides with a continuing shared history and being with others who look like them. Studies have shown that when siblings are placed together in foster care, they are:

- More likely to feel safer in the new home
- Less likely to experience emotional and behavioral problems
- More likely to score higher on the Child Behavior Checklist (CBCL)
- More likely to show more positive dealings with peers and function better at school
- More likely to be reunified, adopted or placed in permanent guardian arrangements

(Gass, Jenkins, & Dunn, 2007; Groza, et al., 2003; Hegar, 2005; Hegar & Rosenthal, 2011; Herrick & Pincus, 2005; Leathers, 2005; Shlonsky, et al., 2005; Smith, 1998; Tarren-Sweeney & Hazell, 2005; Webster, et al., 2005).

Studies also indicate that separating siblings when they are in foster care can have negative consequences:

- Separate siblings can experience trauma, anger and an extreme sense of loss that can impact their ability to heal and form attachments.
- Their sense of self esteem may be negatively impacted. When children see positive qualities in their brothers and sisters, they are less likely to see themselves as "a bad kid from a bad family." They are more likely to exhibit problematic behavior than are siblings who are not separated. They may be at greater risk of placement disruption.

(McNamara, 1990, Child Welfare Information Gateway, 2006)



# OHIO LEGISLATIVE SERVICE COMMISSION

Nicholas J. Blaine

---

## Fiscal Note & Local Impact Statement

**Bill:** H.B. 448 of the 132nd G.A.

**Status:** As Introduced

**Sponsor:** Reps. LaTourette and Boyd

**Local Impact Statement Procedure Required:** Yes

**Subject:** Sibling foster and adoption relationships

---

### State & Local Fiscal Highlights

- A juvenile court, public children services agency (PCSA), or private agency that has custody of a child will be required to make a reasonable effort to place siblings together or allow for sibling visitation. While this is similar to current practices, it is unclear if making it a requirement will result in an increase in costs.
- A juvenile court will realize an increase in court costs if a sibling files a motion to enforce the requirement of reasonable efforts for sibling placement and/or to have visitation with a child in custody of a PCSA or court or after a child has been adopted.
- Upon request, a court will be permitted to waive the cost of proceedings involving sibling visitation, which could result in an increase of costs borne by the court.

### Detailed Fiscal Analysis

The bill makes numerous changes to sibling placement by a juvenile court, public children services agency (PCSA), or private agency of fostered and adopted youth. The bill defines a sibling as a person that shares at least one biological or adoptive parent or was raised in the same household as siblings.

#### Sibling placement

The bill requires juvenile courts, PCSAs, and private child placing agencies to make reasonable efforts to place members of a sibling group together or make reasonable efforts to ensure the siblings have contact with one another; continuing law strongly encourages PCSAs to do so, but does not require it. According to the Public Children Services Association of Ohio, when siblings in public custody are separated they are required to have a visitation plan as part of their case plan. This case plan is reviewed semi-annually and can be amended as needed. As a result, the bill in part codifies a current practice of the courts and PCSAs. However, it is unclear if the change from encouraging to requiring reasonable efforts to maintain contact among siblings will result in an increase in court costs.

## **Complaints**

A sibling or parent, guardian, or guardian ad litem on a minor sibling's behalf, may file a complaint requesting sibling visitation rights. For sibling visitation, the court must consider all of the factors listed in the bill, including the relationship among the siblings, the time the siblings have spent without contact, and the mental and physical health of all parties, among others. Additionally, the court may waive the fees associated with filing the request and the cost of subsequent proceedings if a person requesting sibling visitation files such a motion; waiving court costs will pose a cost to the court that will depend on how frequently complaints are filed and how often the fee is waived. Given that these motions will typically be filed by a child or on behalf of a child, it is possible this court cost may be waived frequently.

## **Supervision of sibling visitation**

The bill specifies that a PCSA cannot be required to provide supervision if the court grants sibling visitation rights, with the exception of domestic violence situations. This will limit any increase in costs to PCSAs. However, if the court orders or suggests supervision, it is possible that a court may need to pay these costs.

## **Sibling relationship post-adoption**

Under current law, legal relationships between an adopted child and his or her relatives are terminated upon adoption. The bill will maintain the sibling relationship after a child is adopted, which may allow for continuing court involvement with the child for sibling visitation. There would be court costs associated with this involvement. It is unclear how often the court will be petitioned in these circumstances regarding issues surrounding the sibling relationship.



February 29<sup>th</sup>, 2024

Dear Representative Gray,

I am writing to express our support for House Bill 320 requested by current and former foster youth to maintain legal sibling relationships for youth adopted in Alaska. Sibling relationships are critical to the well-being of all children, especially those who experience complex trauma often compounded by the foster care system.

As of January 2024, there were 2,635 children and youth in foster care throughout the state (Office of Children's Services Statistical information retrieved Feb. 2024). The Office of Children's services and current law prioritize keeping siblings together upon placement in foster care and maintaining contact for those separated. Large siblings' groups, lack of resources and foster families often leads to separation among siblings, especially large sibling groups.

We support this bill because maintaining lifelong legal ties is imperative to their overall well-being, cultural and familial ties for all children and youth in Alaska.

Thanks for your consideration.

*Kevin A. Campbell*

Kevin A. Campbell

CEO

Pale Blue.



9 February 2026

Alaska State Legislature  
Alaska State Capitol  
120 4<sup>th</sup> Street  
Juneau, AK 99801

RE: Support for House Bill 157 –Effect of Adoption Decree on Siblings

Dear Representative Gray & Members of the Alaska Legislature,

The Alaska Children’s Trust (ACT) offers our support for House Bill 157, which would consider legal siblings post adoption. As the statewide lead organization focused on the prevention of child abuse and neglect, ACT fully supports policies that promote strong family relationships. Sibling relationships are critical to the well-being of all children and their future success. This is especially true for those who experience complex trauma often compounded by the child welfare and foster care system.

Despite policies that prioritize keeping siblings together after placement in foster care and maintaining contact for those who are separated, a lack of system resources and limited number of foster families often lead to siblings being separated. This is especially common for large sibling groups or for youth with specialized needs. House Bill 157 ensures that courts explicitly consider and document whether ongoing sibling contact is in a child’s best interest following adoption, preserving legal recognition of sibling relationships. This policy promotes positive family relationships, reduces the impacts of trauma, and lays a foundation for life-long support and connection.

Alaska Children’s Trust fully supports House Bill 157 because maintaining lifelong legal ties to siblings supports the emotional well-being, cultural connection, and familial ties for all children and youth in Alaska. Thank you for sponsoring this bill.

Sincerely,

Trevor J. Storrs  
President & CEO  
Alaska Children’s Trust

Facing Foster Care in Alaska  
PO Box 92644  
Anchorage, AK 99509



**February 16<sup>th</sup>, 2024**

Dear Representative Gray,

Thank you for sponsoring House Bill 320 to consider siblings legal siblings post adoption. Siblings are often the longest relationships and strongest bonds we maintain throughout the course of our lives. As current and former foster youth, we know all too well the heartache of family separation and time away from those we love. While the goal of child welfare is to keep siblings together and maintain these connections, the unfortunate truth is that this does not always happen. Siblings may be separated into different foster homes, shelters, therapeutic programs or other alternate housing leaving them scattered among placements, especially larger sibling groups. What's worse, sibling ties may be permanently severed by adoption. Adoption is meant to be celebrated as a means to an end of a foster youth's time in the system as they have permanent legal bonds to parents.

*"The circumstances that foster children go through are so difficult and siblings lean on each other to get through it. It's hard losing the only person who knows what it was like during the worst of your trauma." Deko Harbi –Foster Youth & FFCA Anchorage Youth Board Representative.*

Our hope is that anyone adopted from foster care in Alaska, continues to maintain their siblings as legal siblings throughout the course of their lives. House Bill 320 allows this. For so many of us who have experienced indescribable grief and loss over the loss of these legal ties, House Bill 320 gives us hope. Foster Youth would no longer need to choose between an adoptive family and connection to their brothers and sisters.

*"When our younger siblings grow up, and come back to be a part of our lives (post adoption), we want them to know we will always be there. Adu Wassillie –Foster Youth & FFCA Western Youth Board Representative."*

## **Facing Foster Care in Alaska**

### **Statewide Youth Leadership Board**

Abigail Redmon, Deko Harbi, Kxlo Stone, Adu Wasillie, Mateo Jaime, Magnus Zeigler

### **Board of Directors**

Monica Hinson-Wilson, Eva Denison, DJ Herman Tristan Thompson, Sean Gaither, Amanda Metivier, Sarah Lewis, Angel Gonzales, Barb Malchick, Rachel Bedsworth