

Legacy of Care: Keeping Siblings Together in Foster Care

Each month in Oklahoma, there are over 700 siblings in state custody who are separated from one another while in foster care. It is a challenge to find a home that can accept more than 2 children at a time, much less 3, 5 or 7. And yet, children who experience parental loss, neglect and abuse depend upon one another to survive. They turn to each other for support leading to bonds that are stronger than those of siblings from well-adjusted families. Being with siblings in foster care helps to mitigate the impact of separation and loss and offers continuity, support and sense of safety and security.

Circle of Care has developed a plan to address the needs of large sibling groups in the foster care system that will keep them together in safe and healthy settings. We are embarking upon a \$5 million capital campaign to build and endow 8 large new foster homes in various communities throughout the state. Each site will include 2 homes and 1 activity clubhouse to form a foster community and a home base for Circle of Care recruiting, training and support of other foster families in the area.

Data

There are currently nearly 10,000 children in state custody in Oklahoma.

A sibling group of 3 has only a 65% chance of being placed together.

A sibling group of 5 has 0% chance of being placed together.

Of all children that are part of a sibling group, where all siblings in the group are placed in the same foster home, 50% of those children are not placed with all of their siblings.

According to a 2002 National Youth Leadership Advisory Team position paper, foster youth describe the experience of being placed in separate homes as "an extra punishment, a separate loss, and another pain that is not needed.