

DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL SERVICES

CHILDREN'S DIVISION

P. O. BOX 88

JEFFERSON CITY, MISSOURI

M E M O R A N D U M

TO: CHILDREN'S DIVISION AND CONTRACTED STAFF  
FROM: REGINALD E. MCELHANNON, INTERIM DIRECTOR  
SUBJECT: UPDATE ON PLACEMENT HIEARCHY AND DILIGENT SEARCHES

DISCUSSION:

The purpose of this memorandum is to inform staff of changes to the placement hierarchy and diligent search requirements. These changes come in response to [HB 397](#), which became law on August 28, 2019. This change will enhance the safety network of children and provide more opportunities for them to stay connected to family members.

This bill made into law the mandate that the Children's Division make diligent efforts to locate adult siblings and parents of siblings of children who enter foster care.

This law also establishes that adult siblings and parents of siblings are next in priority, after the non-offending parents and grandparents, for placement of a child in foster care.

Finally, the law establishes that the definition of sibling as: *one of two or more individuals who have one or both parents in common through blood, marriage, or adoption, including siblings as defined by the child's tribal code or custom.*

The Placement Hierarchy document has been updated on e-forms to reflect these changes (link below). In addition, updates and clarifications to the Child Welfare Manual have been made to the sections indicated below.

**NECESSARY ACTION**

1. Review this memorandum with all Children's Division staff.
2. Review revised Child Welfare Manual chapters as indicated below.
3. All questions should be cleared through normal supervisory channels and directed to:

<b>PDS CONTACT</b> Jason Kearbey <a href="mailto:Jason.L.Kearbey@dss.mo.gov">Jason.L.Kearbey@dss.mo.gov</a>	<b>MANAGER CONTACT</b> Ivy Doxley <a href="mailto:Ivy.C.Doxley@dss.mo.gov">Ivy.C.Doxley@dss.mo.gov</a>
<b>CHILD WELFARE MANUAL REVISIONS</b> <a href="#">Section 4 (Alternative Care), Chapter 2 (Placement), Subsection 1 (Common Placement Types)</a> <a href="#">Section 4 (Alternative Care), Chapter 10 (Case Management Activities), Subsection 2 (Diligent Searches)</a>	
<b>FORMS AND INSTRUCTIONS</b> N/A	
<b>REFERENCE DOCUMENTS AND RESOURCES</b> <a href="#">Placement Hierarchy</a>	
<b>RELATED STATUTE</b> <a href="#">HB 397</a>	