Is there a plan for your brother or sister to be adopted by their carers?

NSW GOVERNMENT

What is open adoption?

When a person is adopted, they legally become part of a new family. The rights of an adopted person are the same as if they had been born into the new family. Their birth certificate is changed to show that they legally belong in that family.

In New South Wales, adoptions are not secret. Adoptive parents help adopted children to know who they are and where they come from, by staying connected to their family and culture. Adoption applications are decided by a judge in the NSW Supreme Court.

REMEMBER

Open adoption is for life and does not end at 18.

Why is open adoption being looked at?

When going home is not the best thing for your brother or sister (also known as your sibling), their caseworker will make a plan to find them a safe, loving and permanent home. A decision is then made about whether your sibling will:

• stay in that home as a person in out-of-home care

• have their carer legally become their guardian; this means your sibling's carers have legal responsibility for your sibling until he/she is 18, and your sibling's birth certificate does not change

• be adopted by their carer.

A plan for open adoption can be made when your sibling asks to be adopted, their carer wants to adopt them, or your siblings' caseworker decides that it could be the best plan.

Open adoption might be the best way to make sure your sibling feels secure, loved and accepted for their whole life, as a member of their adoptive family.

REMEMBER

Open adoption is never the only option. It is a choice about what is best for your sibling.

Who can adopt?

If your sibling's carers want to adopt, they must be assessed. Assessment means checking. The person who does the check must make sure that the carers are suitable people to adopt. Some of the things they check are that the carers can:

• love your sibling and want the best for them

• provide a safe home for your sibling

• help your sibling to feel like they belong

• help your sibling to stay connected to their family, including you

• look after your sibling, now and for the rest of their life.

The person who does the check also considers whether open adoption is the best choice for your sibling.

REMEMBER

Open adoption is not chosen just because your sibling's carers want it.

Will I still see my sibling if they are adopted?

Yes. It's really important that you stay connected to your sibling. If your sibling is adopted, there will be a written plan that talks about the ways you will keep in contact. For example, the plan may say how you will:

• meet in person
• talk on the phone
• share messages and photos.

Your sibling's adoptive parents have to follow the plan so that your sibling always knows their family and is proud of their culture.

If at any time you are unhappy about the contact you are having with your sibling, talk to your parent/carer. They can contact the government's Adoption Information Unit (AIU) to get help.

REMEMBER

People can stay close, even if they aren't living together.

What changes after an adoption order?

Open adoption cannot change the past. You and your sibling will always be connected by:

• some of the ways you look, talk, or behave
• the people that you share
• the stories that you share
• your feelings for one another.

If your sibling is adopted, some important things will change. Your sibling will:

• be a legal member of the adoptive family
• get new birth certificates
• take their adoptive family's last name if they wish
• no longer have a caseworker.

REMEMBER

Your relationship with your brother or sister is important – that will not change.

Do I have a say?

YES...
When the choice of open adoption is being assessed (checked), the person who does the check will meet with you, your parents and other important people in your family to find out what they think.

You will have a chance to share your feelings and opinions and to say what matters the most to you.

What happens next?
After the assessment, it may be decided that open adoption is the best choice for your sibling. If your sibling is 12 or older, they will be asked to consent (agree) to their open adoption. Consenting means agreeing in writing.

If your sibling is under 12, your parents will be asked to consent to their open adoption. They don't have to. If they don't consent, the Court can still decide that open adoption is the best choice for your sibling.

You won't be asked to consent to your sibling's open adoption but your feelings and opinions will be written down so that the Court knows what you think.

REMEMBER

You know more than anybody about your relationship with your sibling.
Tell the assessor what you know and what you think.

I'd like more information

It's important to talk to an adult if you have questions or worries about your sibling. Good people to talk to might include:

- your parent or carer
- your teacher
- a counsellor
- someone else you trust
- your caseworker (if you have one) or your sibling's caseworker.

Here are some organisations that can help answer your questions about open adoption as well as talk about any worries.

Communities and Justice Open Adoption Hotline
Helps carers and families learn about the open adoption process.
Phone: 1800 003 227
Websearch: Open adoption hotline

Communities and Justice Adoption Information Unit (AIU)
Helps adopted children and their families to build connections, communicate with each other and get information.
Phone: 1300 799 023
Email: adoption.information @facs.nsw.gov.au
Websearch: past adoptions nsw

Kids Helpline
Provides 24/7 phone and online counselling for young people aged 5 to 25.
Phone: 1800 55 1800
Websearch: Kids Helpline

CREATE
Supports and connects children and young people in care.
Phone: 1800 655 105
Websearch: Create Foundation

REMEMBER

It's important to talk to an adult if you have questions or worries about your sibling.
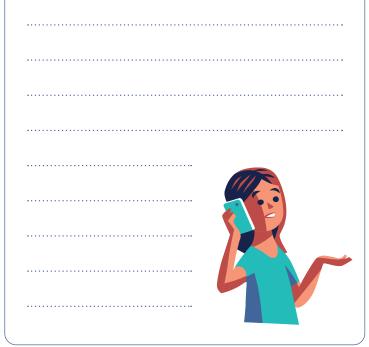
I would like to know more about...

Ways I will stay connected with my sibling

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My feelings and opinions about what's happening

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People I can talk to about this

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Any other questions

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