

(e) (1) In developing a permanency plan for a child in an out-of-home placement, the local department of social services shall give primary consideration to the best interests of the child. The local department shall consider the following factors in determining the permanency plan that is in the best interests of the child:

- (i) the child's ability to be safe and healthy in the home of the child's parent;
- (ii) the child's attachment and emotional ties to the child's natural parents and siblings;
- (iii) the child's emotional attachment to the child's current caregiver and the caregiver's family;
- (iv) the length of time the child has resided with the current caregiver;
- (v) the potential emotional, developmental, and educational harm to the child if moved from the child's current placement; and
- (vi) the potential harm to the child by remaining in State custody for an excessive period of time.

5-525.2.

(A) (1) A LOCAL DEPARTMENT SHALL PLACE TOGETHER SIBLINGS WHO ARE IN AN OUT-OF-HOME PLACEMENT UNDER § 5-525 OF THIS SUBTITLE IF:

(I) IT IS IN THE BEST INTERESTS OF THE SIBLINGS TO BE PLACED TOGETHER; AND

(II) PLACEMENT OF THE SIBLINGS TOGETHER DOES NOT CONFLICT WITH A SPECIFIC HEALTH OR SAFETY REGULATION.

(2) IF PLACEMENT OF THE SIBLINGS TOGETHER CONFLICTS WITH A SPECIFIC HEALTH OR SAFETY REGULATION, THE LOCAL DEPARTMENT MAY PLACE THE SIBLINGS TOGETHER IF THE LOCAL DEPARTMENT MAKES A WRITTEN FINDING DESCRIBING HOW PLACEMENT OF THE SIBLINGS TOGETHER SERVES THE BEST INTERESTS OF THE SIBLINGS.

[(a)](B) (1) Any siblings who are separated due to a foster care or adoptive placement may petition a court, including a juvenile court with jurisdiction over one or more of the siblings, for reasonable sibling visitation rights.

[(b)](2) If a petitioner under this [section] SUBSECTION petitions a court to issue a visitation decree or to amend an order, the court:

[(1)](I) may hold a hearing to determine whether visitation is in the best interest of the children;

[(2)](II) shall weigh the relative interests of each child and base its decision on the best interests of the children promoting the greatest welfare and least harm to the children; and