

STATE OF NEW YORK

7553

2017-2018 Regular Sessions

IN ASSEMBLY

May 2, 2017

Introduced by M. of A. BUCHWALD, JAFFEE -- (at request of the Office of Court Administration) -- read once and referred to the Committee on Children and Families

AN ACT to amend the family court act and the social services law, in relation to contact by siblings in foster care, surrender, destitute child and permanency proceedings

The People of the State of New York, represented in Senate and Assembly, do enact as follows:

1 Section 1. Paragraph (b) of subdivision 2 of section 1081 of the fami-
2 ly court act, as added by chapter 242 of the laws of 2016, is amended to
3 read as follows:

4 (b) A child remanded or placed in the care of a social services offi-
5 cial pursuant to this article or article ten-A or ten-C of this act
6 shall have the right to move for visitation and contact with his or her
7 siblings. The siblings of a child remanded or placed in the care of a
8 social services official pursuant to this article or article ten-A or
9 ten-C of this act shall have a right to petition the court for visita-
10 tion and contact with such child. For purposes of this section,
11 "siblings" shall include half-siblings and those who would be deemed
12 siblings or half-siblings but for the termination of parental rights or
13 death of a parent.

14 § 2. Paragraph (c) of subdivision 3 of section 1081 of the family
15 court act, as added by chapter 242 of the laws of 2016, is amended to
16 read as follows:

17 (c) A motion by a child remanded or placed in the care of a social
18 services official pursuant to this article or article ten-A or ten-C of
19 this act or a petition by a sibling of such child shall allege that
20 visitation and contact would be in the best interests of both the child
21 who has been remanded or placed and the child's sibling.

EXPLANATION--Matter in italics (underscored) is new; matter in brackets
[-] is old law to be omitted.

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1 § 3. Paragraph (b) of subdivision 4 of section 1081 of the family
2 court act, as added by chapter 242 of the laws of 2016, is amended to
3 read as follows:

4 (b) A petition or motion filed under paragraph [~~(a)~~] (b) of subdivi-
5 sion [~~three~~] two of this section shall be served upon: (i) the respond-
6 ent in the proceeding under this article or article ten-A or ten-C of
7 this act; (ii) the local social services official having the care of the
8 child; (iii) other persons having care, custody and control of the
9 child, if any; (iv) the parents or other persons having care, custody
10 and control of the sibling to be visited or with whom contact is sought;
11 (v) any non-respondent parent in the proceeding under this article or
12 article ten-A or ten-C of this act; (vi) such sibling himself or herself
13 if ten years of age or older; and (vii) such sibling's attorney, if any.
14 The petition or motion shall be served in such manner as the court may
15 direct.

16 § 4. Paragraphs (a) and (b) of subdivision 5 of section 1081 of the
17 family court act, paragraph (a) as amended and paragraph (b) as added by
18 chapter 242 of the laws of 2016, are amended to read as follows:

19 (a) Upon receipt of a petition filed under paragraphs (a) or (b) of
20 subdivision [~~three~~] two of this section, the court shall, subject to the
21 provisions of section one thousand eighty-two of this part, require that
22 any order of a family court or order or judgment of the supreme court,
23 or any agreement between the parents as described in subdivision one of
24 this section, granting visitation rights to the non-custodial parent,
25 grandparent or grandparents, be incorporated in any preliminary order or
26 order of placement made under this article to the extent that such
27 order, judgment or agreement confers visitation rights. In any case
28 where a dispositional hearing has not been held or will not be held
29 within thirty days of the filing of such petition the court shall order
30 the person, official, agency or institution caring for the child pursu-
31 ant to this article to comply with such part of the order, judgment or
32 agreement granting visitation rights.

33 (b) Upon receipt of a petition or motion filed under paragraph (c) of
34 subdivision three of this section, the court shall determine, after
35 giving notice and an opportunity to be heard to persons served under
36 subdivision four of this section, whether visitation and contact would
37 be in the best interests of the child and his or her sibling. The
38 court's determination may be included in the dispositional order issued
39 pursuant to section one thousand fifty-two or one thousand ninety-five
40 of this [~~article~~] chapter or in a permanency hearing order issued pursu-
41 ant to section one thousand eighty-nine of this chapter.

42 § 5. Clause (F) of subparagraph (viii) of paragraph 2 of subdivision
43 (d) of section 1089 of the family court act, as amended by chapter 242
44 of the laws of 2016, is amended and a new clause (I) is added to read as
45 follows:

46 (F) The court may make an order directing a local social services
47 district or agency to undertake diligent efforts to encourage and
48 strengthen the parental relationship when it finds such efforts will not
49 be detrimental to the best interests of the child and there has been no
50 prior court finding that such efforts are not required. Such efforts
51 shall include encouraging and facilitating visitation with the child by
52 the parent or other person legally responsible for the child's care.
53 Such order may include a specific plan of action for the local social
54 services district or agency including, but not limited to, requirements
55 that such agency assist the parent or other person legally responsible
56 for the child's care in obtaining adequate housing, employment, coun-

1 seling, medical care or psychiatric treatment. Such order shall also
2 include encouraging and facilitating visitation with the child by the
3 noncustodial parent and grandparents who have the right to visitation
4 pursuant to section one thousand eighty-one of this act. Such order may
5 also include encouraging and facilitating regular visitation and commu-
6 nication with the child by the child's siblings and may incorporate an
7 order, if any, issued pursuant to this section or section one thousand
8 twenty-seven-a or one thousand eighty-one of this act, or pursuant to
9 section three hundred fifty-eight-a of the social services law or
10 section seventy-one of the domestic relations law. For purposes of this
11 section, "siblings" shall include half-siblings and those who would be
12 deemed siblings or half-siblings but for the surrender, termination of
13 parental rights or death of a parent. Nothing in this subdivision shall
14 be deemed to limit the authority of the court to make an order pursuant
15 to section two hundred fifty-five of this act.

16 (I) If the court determines that the subject child has not been placed
17 with his or her minor siblings or half-siblings who are in care, or that
18 regular visitation and other forms of regular communication between the
19 subject child and his or her minor siblings or half-siblings has not
20 been provided or arranged for, the court may direct such official to
21 provide or arrange for such placement or regular visitation and communi-
22 cation where the court finds that such placement or visitation and
23 communication is in the child's and his or her siblings' or half-si-
24 blings' best interests. Placement or regular visitation and communi-
25 cation with siblings or half-siblings shall be presumptively in the
26 child's and his or her siblings' or half-siblings' best interests unless
27 such placement or visitation and communication would be contrary to the
28 child's or his or her siblings' or half-siblings' health, safety or
29 welfare, or the lack of geographic proximity precludes or prevents visi-
30 tation. If a child placed in foster care pursuant to this section is not
31 placed together or afforded regular communication with his or her
32 siblings, the child, through his or her attorney or through a parent on
33 his or her behalf, may move for an order regarding placement or communi-
34 cation. The motion shall be served upon: the parent or parents in the
35 proceeding under this section; the local social services official having
36 the care of the child; other persons having care, custody and control of
37 the child, if any; the parents or other persons having care, custody and
38 control of the siblings to be visited or with whom contact is sought;
39 such sibling himself or herself if ten years of age or older; and such
40 siblings' attorney, if any. Upon receipt of a motion filed under this
41 paragraph the court shall determine, after giving notice and an opportu-
42 nity to be heard to the persons served, whether visitation and contact
43 would be in the best interests of the child and his or her siblings. The
44 court may order that the child be placed together with or have regular
45 communication with his or her siblings if the court determines it to be
46 in the best interests of the child and his or her siblings. For purposes
47 of this section, "siblings" shall include half-siblings and those who
48 would be deemed siblings or half-siblings but for the surrender, termi-
49 nation of parental rights or death of a parent.

50 § 6. Paragraph 3 of subdivision (e) of section 1095 of the family
51 court act, as amended by chapter 3 of the laws of 2012, is amended to
52 read as follows:

53 (3) a direction that the child be placed together with or, at minimum,
54 to visit and have regular communication with, his or her siblings, if
55 any, unless contrary to the best interests of the child and/or the
56 siblings and may incorporate an order issued pursuant to part eight of

1 article ten of this chapter in accordance with subdivision (f) of this
2 section;

3 § 7. Paragraph (b) of subdivision 11 of section 358-a of the social
4 services law, as added by chapter 854 of the laws of 1990, is amended
5 and two new paragraphs (c) and (d) are added to read as follows:

6 (b) If the court determines that the subject child has not been placed
7 with his or her minor siblings or half-siblings who are in care, or that
8 regular visitation and other forms of regular communication between the
9 subject child and his or her minor siblings or half-siblings has not
10 been provided or arranged for, the court may direct such official to
11 provide or arrange for such placement or regular visitation and communi-
12 cation where the court finds that such placement or visitation and
13 communication is in the child's and his or her siblings' or half-si-
14 blings' best interests. Placement or regular visitation and communi-
15 cation with siblings or half-siblings shall be presumptively in the
16 child's and his or her siblings' or half-siblings' best interests unless
17 such placement or visitation and communication would be contrary to the
18 child's or his or her siblings' or half-siblings' health, safety or
19 welfare, or the lack of geographic proximity precludes or prevents visi-
20 tation.

21 (c) If a child placed in foster care pursuant to this section is not
22 placed together or afforded regular communication with his or her
23 siblings, the child, through his or her attorney or through a parent on
24 his or her behalf, may move for an order regarding placement or communi-
25 cation. The motion shall be served upon: (i) the parent or parents in
26 the proceeding under this section; (ii) the local social services offi-
27 cial having the care of the child; (iii) other persons having care,
28 custody and control of the child, if any; (iv) the parents or other
29 persons having care, custody and control of the siblings to be visited
30 or with whom contact is sought; (v) such sibling himself or herself if
31 ten years of age or older; and (vi) such sibling's attorney, if any.
32 Upon receipt of a motion filed under this paragraph the court shall
33 determine, after giving notice and an opportunity to be heard to the
34 persons served, whether visitation and contact would be in the best
35 interests of the child and his or her siblings. The court may order that
36 the child be placed together with or have regular communication with his
37 or her siblings if the court determines it to be in the best interests
38 of the child and his or her siblings.

39 (d) For purposes of this section, "siblings" shall include half-si-
40 blings and those who would be deemed siblings or half-siblings but for
41 the surrender, termination of parental rights or death of a parent.

42 § 8. Section 383-c of the social services law is amended by adding a
43 new subdivision 11 to read as follows:

44 11. Acceptance of surrender. Acceptance of a judicial surrender or
45 approval of an extra-judicial surrender pursuant to this section shall
46 not be construed to terminate any rights of the child to contact his or
47 her siblings. For purposes of this section, "siblings" shall include
48 half-siblings and those who would be deemed siblings or half-siblings
49 but for the surrender, termination of parental rights or death of a
50 parent.

51 § 9. Section 384 of the social services law is amended by adding a new
52 subdivision 9 to read as follows:

53 9. Acceptance of a judicial surrender or approval of an extra-judicial
54 surrender pursuant to this section shall not be construed to terminate
55 any rights of the child to contact his or her siblings. For purposes of
56 this section, "siblings" shall include half-siblings and those who would

1 be deemed siblings or half siblings but for the surrender, termination
2 of parental rights or death of a parent.
3 § 10. This act shall take effect on the ninetieth day after it shall
4 have become a law.