

Intervention Name: Camp To Belong International

1. Brief Description of the Program/Intervention:

Camp To Belong International, a non-profit 501 (c) (3) organization, actively reunites children and youth separated from their siblings in separate foster, adoptive, guardianship, or kinship homes. Implemented by Member Camps in eleven locations in the US and internationally, the Camp To Belong (CTB) summer camp model and year round reunion events incorporate intentional and targeted programming to strengthen the sibling bond. This programming serves as a powerful intervention to improve outcomes across the children and youths' lives, including increased resiliency, bolstered self-efficacy, and improved positive relationships. CTB has been associated with child welfare system improvements as each Member Camp works in collaboration with their local public child welfare agencies, resulting in child welfare staff volunteering for the camp, agency policies and practices being reviewed and revised, child welfare staff training incorporating discussion of siblings and foster care youth leadership initiatives being involved in advocating for the rights of siblings. Since 1995, Camp To Belong has reunited over 9,000 youth and children with their siblings. Currently, over 700 brothers and sisters are reunited every summer through CTB's network of Member Camps.

Current research reflects that strong sibling bonds significantly predict scores of increased individual resilience of youth in foster care. Unfortunately, for a variety of reasons, child welfare practice is often ineffective in maintaining the sibling relationships of children in foster care. Camp To Belong is a powerful vehicle through which this critical gap in services is filled. In addition, CTB programming and events educate and empower the youth to advocate for their rights, contribute to a sense of normalcy for children in out-of-home placements, and provide an opportunity to build relationships with positive adults outside the child welfare system.

Camp To Belong International is a membership organization, which currently includes eleven (11) CTB Member Camps (CO, GA, MA, ME, NV, NY, Orange County CA, OR, WA, WI, and Australia). CTB International:

- Provides capacity building to new and existing Member Camps through standardization tools that enable implementation of the CTB program model, technical assistance, training, and support (e.g., camp resources, support services, etc.);
- Implements camp standards and provides oversight and support through Member Camp site visits as part of risk management and quality improvement activities;
- Designs and delivers outcome evaluations (both camp specific and aggregate results);
- Seeks and disseminates among Member Camps in kind donations and grant funding for Signature Events;
- Secures national media exposure and provides personalized press kits and marketing materials to Member Camps; and
- Advocates and educates on sibling relationships of youth in foster care and guardian/adoptive homes, as well as garners national funding and exposure.

With the organization's 20 year history, proven transfer of model, and positive intervention outcomes, CTB International is well positioned to expand this network of Member Camps and serve as a convener of stakeholders and programs invested in the well-being and improved outcomes for siblings who are separated in the child welfare system.

2. **Please select the primary categories that relate to the intervention:** (Please highlight applicable categories)

- Academic performance/functioning and achievement
- Adult behavior problems (violence/aggression)
- Adult mental health
- Alcohol and drug use
- Assessment and Measurement Instruments for Target Populations
- Attachment Interventions
- Basic Needs
- Behavioral Management and Treatment
- Child Mental Health – externalizing
- Child Mental Health - internalizing
- Child Mentoring Programs
- Child Supports and community connections
- Child Welfare Practice and Service Models
- Crisis Intervention
- Delinquency and Criminal Behavior
- Educational Support Interventions
- Family Functioning (communication, bonding, interactions and relationships)
- Family Support and Placement Stabilization Programs
- Independent living and career readiness
- Marriage and Relationship Support
- Parental Mentoring Programs
- Parent Engagement
- Parental Supports and community connections
- Parenting Skills - Training and Enhancement
- Peer associations/relationships
- Resource Parent Training Programs
- Sexual Behavior Problems in Adolescents and Children
- Social/emotional functioning (social competence/prosocial behaviors, conflict management, problem solving, coping-stress management, decision making and self -esteem)
- Trauma Treatment

3. Describe the intervention's current use with one or both of the QIC-AG's target population:

The Camp To Belong intervention is used with both of the target populations and is supported by promising evidence for interventions that target relationships, beliefs, and behaviors of children and youth separated from their siblings in foster care, adoptive homes, or kinship care. The placement status of these children varies from awaiting adoptive/guardianship placement to permanent placements in adoptive/guardian families. Children and youth qualify for services if they are separated from at least one sibling in their respective placements.

The intentional programming is delivered through Signature Events replicated across the Member Camps. The CTB Signature Events are designed and facilitated to support the mental, emotional, and relational health of the children and youth, as well as promote positive behavior. The Signature Events include:

- *Birthday Party*: Siblings choose gifts for one another from a “shop” of donated gifts and create birthday cards. One evening is dedicated to a camp-wide birthday party where sibling groups celebrate with birthday cakes and gift exchanges. The party serves as an opportunity to make up for missed opportunities to celebrate important life occasions together and strengthen the sibling bond.
- *Life Seminar*: Participants ages 14 and over attend the Life Seminar program which seeks to empower older youth to advocate for their rights and provides education on the options and resources available for college and career readiness.
- *Sibling Pillow*: Pillows with personal messages are exchanged between siblings to create a space for articulation of feelings and provide a take-home keepsake. The messages serve to strengthen the sibling relationship and create a physical reminder once they return to their respective placements.
- *Inspiration Night*: This activity is designed as an evening of sharing to reduce isolation, empower youth, and provide positive role models. From inspirational guest speakers to sibling sharing, Inspiration Night contributes to the youths' ability to respond to conflict and improve self-esteem and self-efficacy.
- *Scrapbooks*: Siblings are provided scrapbooks, materials, and printed photos of their week at camp. They create a visual representation of their experiences and memories and use the book as a place to write messages to one another, including peers and adults, and personal reflections on the week. This also serves as a take-home keepsake. In addition to strengthening the sibling bond, the scrapbook promotes positive peer relationships and connections with positive adult role models.

Throughout the week, the campers also participate in traditional camp activities, such as boating, horseback riding, swimming, and challenge courses that support positive outcomes and strengthen the sibling bond. In the spirit of traditional camps, some Member Camps also facilitate a counselor-in-training program for older, veteran campers. In this capacity, the youth have a unique opportunity to give back to the CTB community, learn leadership skills, act as a model for younger campers, and strengthen their positive relationships within the Member Camp family. The entire Camp To Belong

experience begins with an opening campfire and concludes with a closing campfire. This traditional camp activity serves as a purposeful and powerful forum for the campers to express their experiences and emotions about the week with their siblings. The campfires act as a bridge between the traditional camp experience and the intentional programming at CTB, aligning with and reinforcing the week of Signature Events.

In total, participants at a Member Camp experience over 100 hours of sibling visitation time in a safe, fun, and supportive environment. For many sibling groups who have limited visitation schedules, it would take five years of monthly visitation to equal the amount of time that siblings spend with one another during their week at Camp To Belong. It could be argued that the quality of visitation children and youth experience at Camp To Belong is far greater than monthly supervised visitations that they may experience outside of camp. We discuss the camper outcomes from their camp experience in the evaluation section of this questionnaire.

In addition to the summer camp experience, siblings at some Member Camps participate in reunion events throughout the year, strengthening the impact on the children and youth who are engaged. This year round intervention is an excellent model for Member Camp replication. As a membership organization with a community of knowledge and experience, CTB International is well positioned to support the implementation of year round programming at all of the Member Camps in the future.

4. If currently not being used with one or both of the QIC-AG's target population, describe how the intervention could be adapted to respond to the needs of the QIC-AG's target population:

While the Camp To Belong intervention is currently responding to the needs of both the QIC-AG's target populations, CTB utilizes the program evaluation and Member Camp network to identify ways to improve the intervention and respond to the needs of this population.

5. Intervention goals/outcomes:

The primary goals of Camp To Belong International are to:

- Build the capacity of existing CTB Member Camps to reunify siblings separated by foster care (or other out of home placement), support sibling connection, and promote emotional empowerment;
- Provide evaluation and quality assurance of the CTB program among new and existing Member Camps;
- Engage and support new organizations to develop the CTB program in their jurisdiction in collaboration with the local government child welfare system;
- Promote education and awareness of the experiences of siblings in foster care (and other out of home care);
- Advocate for policies and programs which reduce sibling separation, increase sibling reunification and provide for meaningful connection between siblings who are separated; and
- Secure financial, in kind and human resources to support CTB efforts to reunify siblings, increase program availability in response to identified need, and expand understanding and awareness.

The outcomes of Camp To Belong International include:

- Over 700 children and youth reunite with their siblings annually in CTB programs;

- Existing Member Camps successfully implement the CTB program annually;
- Member Camps meet CTB Quality Standards;
- Member Camps participate in CTB evaluation activities, resulting in measureable outcomes for programs and participants;
- Increase the numbers of CTB Member Camps;
- Increase the number of children and youth served by CTB Member Camps;
- Earn national, regional and local media exposure about the experience of siblings in care and the success of the CTB program;
- Increase legislation, policy, program goals and bills of rights that incorporate strategies, standards and/or requirements to reduce sibling separation, increase sibling reunification when siblings are separated and promote meaningful and frequent contact when siblings remain separated; and
- Increase grant funding and donors, secure in-kind donations (e.g., scrapbooking materials, photography equipment or development, birthday gifts, etc.) and engage community volunteers to support the work of Member Camps.

The primary goals of Camp To Belong Member Camps are to:

- Reunify siblings separated by foster care (or other out of home placement), support sibling connection and promote emotional empowerment;
- Restore sibling relationships as a reliable family bond, which can be maintained and nurtured for a lifetime;
- Support children in foster care (or other out of home placement) by reducing the isolation and shame associated with being part of the foster care system;
- Educate and support foster children in understanding their rights to maintain family bonds; and
- Establish a collaborative partnership with the child welfare agency of their jurisdiction for the purpose of camp planning, camper referral and improved outcomes for siblings served by the agency and CTB.

The outcomes of Camp To Belong Member Camps are that youth participants experience:

- Increased self-esteem, self-efficacy and resilience;
- Strengthened family/sibling relationships;
- Increased capacity to respond to conflict;
- Formation of positive peer relationships;
- Connections with positive adult role models; and
- Education and empowerment to advocate for sibling and family contact.

6. Please name the sites and contact information where the intervention has been replicated/implemented:

See attached

7. Describe the evaluation or research that has been collected on this intervention:

In an effort to better understand the impact of CTB programs on youth well-being, CTB International has developed and launched a camper survey for use in all Member Camps. This survey helps ensure the quality of the program, the impact of the camp experience on the youth, provides an opportunity for youth to provide feedback about the camp experience, its impact on the sibling relationship, as well as

provides data to member camps for continuous program improvement and grant writing and reporting. The surveys are administered to the youth prior to and following each summer camp, and member camps provides the CTB International Evaluation Committee with the survey data which is then analyzed and reported back to Camp to Belong and its individual Member Camps.

Over the past five years, the evaluation and research conducted with Camp To Belong has grown in multiple ways. The first area is the camper survey design. In the first iteration of the camper survey, each member camp would have the camper's complete the survey on the last day of camp. The survey was designed to ensure that the mission of Camp To Belong was being fulfilled at each of the member camps, primarily that campers were connecting with their siblings, advocating for their needs, and youth were being empowered. Examples of questions asked include: while at CTB I was able to make special memories with my sibling, spending time at CTB helped me know what my rights are for contact with my sibling, and after this week at CTB I feel hopeful about my life and my future. As a result of this survey, we were able to say that in our first year of implementation that 95.8% of all the campers reported making special memories with their siblings while at CTB, 94.2% of campers felt hopeful about their life and future, and 88.8% of campers felt that they could advocate for more contact with their sibling.

Given these results and the strong support for all items related to the mission, the Evaluation Committee decided to expand the previous design to include a pre-test, and to add measures of sibling relationship quality, individual resilience, and adult mentorship. This pre-post test design will enable the Evaluation Committee to determine if attending Camp To Belong improves sibling relationships and impacts youth resilience and adult mentorship. Results from administration of a pre and post-camp survey demonstrate the promising effect CTB has as an intervention for improving sibling relationships. Decreasing sibling conflict and promoting warm sibling relationships is important, particularly for maltreated children who are separated by foster care. According to CTB camper surveys, children [pre ($M = 5.56$, $SD = 1.9$), post ($M = 4.84$, $SD = 1.91$)] and adolescents [pre ($M = 5.16$, $SD = 1.50$), post ($M = 4.56$, $SD = 1.67$)] who attended CTB had significant decreases in how they perceived their sibling conflict after participating in CTB's five-day sibling enhancement intervention [$(t(72) = 2.87$, $p < .01$), $(t(80) = 2.79$, $p < .01$)]. Siblings who attended CTB indicated that a warm sibling relationship significantly predicted individual resilience [child R^2 change = .28, $F(5, 47) = 3.70$, $p < .01$, and adolescence R^2 change = .33, $F(3, 60) = 6.95$, $p < .01$] when controlling for the number of times they attended CTB, gender, and race. Resilience is an important trait to promote for children and youth who have experienced adversity. Promoting sibling relationships as a tool to enhance resilience may have positive effects for these youth.

Year after year campers continue to rate aspects of camp positively. Specifically they report that they have developed special memories, felt like their sibling cared about them and provided an opportunity to express that care, and siblings felt like they could count on one another and be strong in the face of family problems. Overall, campers enjoyed the company of their siblings. Campers felt that spending time at camp increased their self-advocacy, provided hope for the future, and helped them develop peer relationships with others in situations similar to theirs.

A second area of growth has been in the capacity of CTB International's Evaluation Committee. Over the past five years, the Evaluation Committee has expanded membership, both in numbers and in research qualifications. The Committee Chair is a CTB Board member, Dianna Walters, a Program Associate at the Annie E. Casey Foundation's Jim Casey Youth Opportunities Initiative. Dianna is not only able to contribute to the Committee in terms of her training and experience in evaluation and policy, but also as a former foster youth who was separated from her sibling. Committee members also include Armeda Wojciak, Jeff Waid, and Penthea Burns, MSW. Armeda Wojciak, PhD, is an Assistant Professor at University of Iowa. Armeda's dissertation, *Exploring Sibling Relationships Among Youth in Foster Care*,

was conducted with CTB data. She examined CTB as an intervention for improving sibling relationships and the influence of warm sibling relationships on individual resilience. Results of this are reported below. Armeda has also co-authored the article "Sibling Relationships and Internalizing Symptoms of Youth in Foster Care," published in the 2013 edition of *Children and Youth Services Review*. Jeff Waid, PhD (expected 2015), is a Senior Research Assistant at Portland State University where he has worked on a Sibling in Foster Care research project for the past four years. Jeff's dissertation topic, *Sibling Foster Care, Placement Stability, and Well-Being*, utilizes data from the *Supporting Siblings in Foster Care Study (SIBS-FC)*, the first randomized controlled trial of its kind. In his dissertation, Jeff examines the role of sibling relationships and its impact on the stability of foster care placements and its impact on placement change, permanency, and well-being outcomes. In 2014, Jeff published a peer reviewed article titled "Sibling Foster Care, Placement Stability, and Well-Being: A Theoretical and Conceptual Framework in the Journal of Family Social Work." Jeff has also supported and co-authored multiple peer reviewed articles from the SIBS-FC study and works with a team of prevention scientists to further examine and clarify the protective role of siblings in substitute care settings. Penthea Burns is a Policy Associate at the University of Southern Maine's Muskie School of Public Service. She has worked on issues of siblings in foster care since 2000, co-founded Camp To Belong Maine, and serves as the Director of Maine's Youth Leadership Advisory Team (YLAT), a nationally recognized foster care youth leadership program. YLAT members have been involved in the founding of and volunteering with CTB Maine, developing a state agency policy regarding sibling placement and visitation, passage of a state law regarding sibling visitation rights and delivering presentations to all levels of the child welfare system about the experiences and needs of siblings in foster care. Penthea has also worked with the Northeast and Caribbean Implementation Center until 2014 and currently with the Capacity Building Center for Tribes.

The capacity of the Evaluation Committee is a great strength and a testament to the research and evaluation that is, and can be, conducted with CTB. This strong Evaluation Committee has crafted a logic model, is strategically working to strengthen the evaluation tools, and investigating how to collect data from the referring caseworker, foster caregiver, and child welfare administrative records. CTB International is able to use the findings provided by the Committee to strengthen their knowledge and advocacy for the importance of promoting sibling relationships for youth in foster care and the impact of the camp experience on important well-being and permanency related outcomes.

A third area for future growth, is the possibility of what the Evaluation Committee can do with the existing measure and how it can expand upon the work that CTB is doing. In future iterations of the survey, the Evaluation Committee would like to propose the following;

- 1) Re-examine the pre and post-camp survey items to ensure that the content of the survey questions is measuring what the camp sites intend to measure (content validity);
- 2) Restructure the wording of corresponding pre and post-camp survey questions to ensure they match (measurement reliability);
- 3) Consider redesigning the pre-camp survey administration schedule (That is, many youth rated the pre-camp test responses highly, which may be because they were already on the bus or at the camp and thus already exposed to the magic of the camp. If the pre-survey was administered at the application phase or in the week prior to camp, there may be much more significant differences between the pre and post-camp findings);
- 4) Consider adding a measure of youth functioning and permanency indicators during the application phase;
- 5) Add a 6-month follow-up to the post-camp survey, to help detect the more subtle, long term impacts of the camp experience on the sibling relationship; and

- 6) Add a 6-month follow-up for well-being and permanency indicators.

Additionally, future analyses can include longitudinal growth curve modeling to examine the trajectories of sibling relationships and resilience for youth who have attended camp three or more times, as well as multilevel modeling to account for the interdependence and cluster effects of the sibling groups within camp.

Please provide contact information below:

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