

Excerpt from

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I. Rights of Children

I.3. Children should have connections with their family and communities.

Children have the right to live with their families of origin unless living with their families is harmful to them. When a child cannot live with both parents, the child has a right to be connected with both parents unless connection with one of the parents would be harmful to the child. The child also has a right to know parents, siblings, and extended family, and to maintain connections with their extended family. A child whose parents reside in different countries should have the right to maintain relationships and contact with both parents and other family members. Governments should respect the right of the child and his or her parents to leave the country and reenter the country, unless restrictions are necessary to protect the child or public's health and safety.

It should be understood that the child's right to be connected with family is not precluded by decisions that a child be raised by a single parent, a same-sex couple, grandparents, adoptive parent(s), or any other family configuration. Regardless of any decisions about the child's living arrangement and family constellation, the child has a right to be connected with his/her original parents. When connection is not possible, or is not in the child's best interests, the child has a right to know about his/her original parents.

When a child is adopted, the child has rights to connections with and awareness of both the original family and the adoptive family.

When siblings cannot live with their family they should be placed together unless there is a clear rationale for why it is not in their best interests. Separated siblings have a right to visit each other and to maintain contact.

Children have a right to maintain connections with their communities—schools, friends, neighbors, special people, and places they are connected to—even when they are required to move from where they are living.

I.4. Children should have access to information about their family history and background information.

Access to and understanding of family history is vital for children’s development and sense of self. Such access is also important for understanding family medical history.

I.5. Children should be able to preserve their racial, ethnic, cultural, and religious identity.

Children have a right to understand their heritage; to preserve their connections to culture and religion; to learn and preserve their traditions; and to have adults and peers support their development of strong and healthy racial, ethnic, cultural, and religious identity.