

2026 -- S 2596

LC004241

STATE OF RHODE ISLAND

IN GENERAL ASSEMBLY

JANUARY SESSION, A.D. 2026

A N A C T

RELATING TO DOMESTIC RELATIONS -- ADOPTION OF CHILDREN

Introduced By: Senators Thompson, Burke, Pearson, Patalano, Raptakis, Dimitri,  
DiMario, LaMountain, Tikoian, and Bissaillon

Date Introduced: February 13, 2026

Referred To: Senate Judiciary

It is enacted by the General Assembly as follows:

1 SECTION 1. Chapter 15-7 of the General Laws entitled "Adoption of Children" is hereby  
2 amended by adding thereto the following section:

3 **15-7-14.2. Decree of open adoption / foster placement / guardianship - siblings.**

4 (a) At the time an adoption decree is entered, or at the time of placement in foster homes  
5 or at the time any sibling is placed under guardianship in a home, residence or facility and separated  
6 from their siblings, the family court shall enter a decree granting post-separation sibling visitation  
7 and/or contact between the siblings (hereinafter "post-separation sibling privileges"):

8 (1) Any child or children that have been separated from their sibling(s) because of or by  
9 and through an open adoption, or who have been placed in a foster home or placed under  
10 guardianships shall be entitled to and eligible for post-separation sibling privileges. Post-separation  
11 privileges shall include, but not be limited to, the right to visit, contact and interact with their  
12 siblings pursuant to this section.

13 (2) Any adoptive parent, foster parent, or guardian shall cooperate with the  
14 child's/children's request to exercise post-separation sibling privileges, any court order and any  
15 administrative investigation to be conducted in order to facilitate the visitation, and contact and  
16 interaction with the subject children.

17 (b) A court shall grant post-separation sibling privileges if:

18 (1) The court determines that the best interests of the child would be served by granting  
19 post-separation sibling privileges;

1           (2) The court finds there is a significant emotional attachment between the separated  
2 siblings;

3           (3) The adoptive/foster parents and/or guardians of the children and the birth parents, in  
4 the event that the birth parents have custody of one or more other siblings, jointly negotiate and  
5 execute a post-separation sibling privileges agreement. Any post-separation sibling privileges  
6 agreement shall be negotiated in good faith and if attempts at negotiating the agreement fail, the  
7 family court shall consider the facts and circumstances and enter a court order setting forth the  
8 terms and conditions of the agreement;

9           (4) The department of children, youth and families (“department”) and the child’s court-  
10 appointed special advocate or the guardian ad litem, if one has been appointed pursuant to § 40-11-  
11 12, shall cooperate with the adoptive/foster parents and/or guardian and shall recommend post-  
12 separation sibling privileges unless, after investigation, the department finds that one or more of  
13 the siblings may be at risk of physical or mental harm by one of the other siblings.

14           (c) Any sibling shall have a right to be heard by the family court relative to post-separation  
15 sibling privileges; provided that, the child is at least twelve (12) years of age; and

16           (d) The post-separation sibling privileges agreement shall be approved by the court and  
17 any request to modify the agreement shall be reviewed by the family court if the adoptive/foster  
18 parents and/or guardians are unable to agree to the requested modifications. Any modifications  
19 agreed upon by the adoptive/foster parents and/or guardians shall be filed with the court.

20           (e) In the event that court intervention is sought pursuant to subsection (b)(3) of this section,  
21 the court shall not award monetary damages to either party seeking either a court order establishing  
22 post-separation sibling privileges or a modification of those privileges.

23           (f) Any request seeking modification of a previously established post-separation sibling  
24 privileges agreement may only be granted by the court if it determines, after a hearing, that the best  
25 interests of a child or children require modification of the agreement. The court may, but is not  
26 required to, seek the input of the department before entering any court order modifying said  
27 agreement.

28           SECTION 2. This act shall take effect upon passage.

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EXPLANATION  
BY THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL  
OF  
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- 1           This act would establish the rights of adoptive/foster children or those in guardianship, to
- 2   have post-separation visitation with their sibling(s).
- 3           This act would take effect upon passage.

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