

Be Your Own Advocate!

**THE
SHORT LIST**

Foster care can be an overwhelming and scary experience. There is a lot to take in, but there are a few things you should know from the start about your rights:

- ✓ You have the right to see your parents every week unless the judge decides that it is not in your best interest.
- ✓ You have a right to live with your siblings while you are in foster care. Sometimes this may not happen because either DCFS or the courts believe it is not in your best interest or there is not a foster home that has room for you and all of your siblings.
- ✓ If you and your siblings must be placed in different homes, you have the right to spend time with them at least once a week either in-person or by phone call, email, FaceTime or a similar program.
- ✓ You may have the right to see other relatives like grandparents.
- ✓ You have the right to have a stable, appropriate placement and to be notified if your placement will change.
- ✓ You have the right to tell your attorney ad litem if you object to a placement change. Your attorney ad litem may be able to help you challenge the placement change.
- ✓ You have the right to participate in the development of your case plan which includes your Transitional Plan.
- ✓ You have the right to participate in all staffings and court hearings related to your case.
- ✓ You have the right to speak with your caseworker each week and as needed.
- ✓ You have the right to have an attorney ad litem represent your best interest and to talk to your attorney ad litem on a regular basis.
- ✓ You have the right to educational stability and to have assistance with any educational issues that might come up for you.
- ✓ You have the right to see a doctor or dentist when you need to.
- ✓ You have the right to get a copy of your credit report for free each year you are in foster care.
- ✓ You have the right to get help to understand your credit report and to get help with fixing any inaccuracies in your credit report.

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- ✓ You have the right to have similar experiences and opportunities other youth have like hanging out with friends, going on field trips, getting a job, and participating in sports and other extracurricular activities.
- ✓ You have the right to stay in extended foster care after you turn 18-years-old and until you are 21-years-old so you can receive important benefits like health insurance and some financial assistance. To stay in extended foster care, you must do at least one of the following:
 - Be enrolled in high school or a similar program leading to a GED (General Education Diploma);
 - Be enrolled in college or a vocational school like cosmetology or auto mechanics;
 - Participate in a program to remove barriers to jobs like JobCorps;
 - Work at least 80 hours a month;
 - Have a medical condition that prevents you from doing one of the other requirements above.
- ✓ If you choose to leave foster care when you turn 18-years-old (or any time after you turn 18 but before you turn 21), you have the right to return to the court’s jurisdiction and/or foster care any time before your 21st birthday under certain circumstances and if you meet one of the extended foster care requirements or have a workable plan to allow you to participate in the extended foster care requirements.
- ✓ You have the right to be your own advocate!

The most important right you have is to know your rights. When you know your rights, you can be a stronger advocate for yourself. Speak up. Voice your concerns. Ask questions. Talk to your caseworker, attorney ad litem, or CASA. They are here to help you!

You can also find much more information about what to expect in foster care by reading the full version of “Be Your Own Advocate!” (Publication 50). You can ask your case worker to give you this document too.

My FSW case worker’s name and phone number: _____

My FSW case worker’s supervisor name and phone number: _____

My attorney ad litem’s name and phone number: _____

My CASA’s name and phone number: _____