I HAVE THE RIGHT:

- for my rights to be explained in an age-appropriate way and to ask questions about the Rights of Children and Youth in Foster Care.
- to ask for help if I feel that my rights are not being protected.

If you feel any of your rights are not being protected or you have questions, complaints or concerns, contact your caseworker, GAL/CASA or attorney.

You may also contact:

The Washington State Department of Children, Youth & Families Constituent Relations
Email: **ConstRelations@dcyf.wa.gov**
Toll free phone: 1-800-723-4831
Phone: 360-902-8060

Office of the Family and Children's Ombuds
6840 Fort Dent Way, Suite 125
Mail Stop TT-99
Tukwila, WA 98188
Toll free phone: 1-800-571-7321
Phone: 206-439-3870
TTY: 206-439-3789
Fax: 206-439-3877
http://ofco.wa.gov/

You can find additional information on the website: **www.Independence.wa.gov**.

The Mockingbird Society
Improving foster care | Ending youth homelessness

Passion to Action
taking the steps

*If you would like free copies of this publication in an alternative format or language, please contact DCYF Constituent Relations at 1-800-723-4831 or email **communications@dcyf.wa.gov**.*

DCYF PUBLICATION CWP_0031 | DSHS 22-1632 (05-2025)

Rights of Children and Youth in Foster Care

Washington State Department of
CHILDREN, YOUTH & FAMILIES

Safety and Well-Being

I HAVE THE RIGHT:

- to be protected from abuse and neglect.
- to be treated fairly and equally, whatever my gender, gender identity, race, religion, ethnicity, national origin, disability, medical problems or sexual orientation and be addressed by the gender pronouns I prefer.
- to have my basic needs met (food, clothing, shelter, health care and education).
- to participate in "normal" childhood activities (overnights with friends, after-school activities and sports).
- to have space for storing my clothing and belongings.
- for my case file and personal information to be confidential and kept in a secure place. Discussions of my information should only occur with people who are involved in my case.
- to be free from cruel, frightening or unsafe discipline.
- to practice my own religion or not at all.
- to report abuse, neglect, exploitation or violation of my personal rights without fear of punishment, interference or coercion.

Court Proceedings/Case Planning

I HAVE THE RIGHT:

- to have someone appointed to represent my best interests in my case, such as a Guardian Ad Litem (GAL) or a Court Appointed Special Advocate (CASA).
- at any age to request an attorney or have someone request one on my behalf.
- to have my case reviewed in court every six months.
- if I am 12 or older, to be notified of and participate in my hearings.
- if I am 12 or older, to be notified that I can request an attorney to represent what I want.
- to be appointed an attorney six months after my parents' parental rights have been terminated.
- to be appointed an attorney if I am in Extended Foster Care.
- to access and review my case records.
- if I am 14 or older, to be consulted about my permanent plan.
- if I am 14 or older, to invite two people of my choice to my Permanency Planning meetings.

Education

I HAVE THE RIGHT:

- to attend school.
- to remain in the same school even when I move to a foster home, when it is possible and in my best interest.
- to enter school within three days of placement into foster care or placement change.
- to have an Educational Liaison at my court hearings under certain circumstances.

Placement and Visitation

I HAVE THE RIGHT:

- to be placed in a residence where I am safe, that can meet my needs and provide appropriate privacy for my personal needs.
- to be placed in a home with my siblings whenever possible.
- to be placed with a willing and able relative or suitable adult I know and who I am comfortable with, whenever possible and appropriate.
- to have regular and frequent contact or visits with my parents, unless otherwise ordered by the court.
- to visit my parents and siblings. These visits cannot be limited as punishment for my behavior.
- to maintain regular contact or visits with siblings when separated, unless the court orders that contact or visits are not appropriate.
- to initiate and receive private phone calls and letters, unless otherwise determined by the court.
- to ask the court if I can move back home even if my parents' parental rights have been terminated and three years have passed since termination (and to have an attorney appointed to help me with the request).

Healthcare

I HAVE THE RIGHT:

- to be informed of my health needs, medications, and medical history.
- to have annual well-check exams.
- to have dental exams every six months through age 18 and annually thereafter until age 26.
- to be informed of the benefits and risks of any and all medicines, vitamins, or herbs that are prescribed or recommended to me.
- to agree or refuse taking any or all medicines, vitamins or herbs unless the court says I must take them.
- to obtain or refuse reproductive health care, including birth control and/or counseling regarding birth control, without consent or knowledge of a parent or guardian.
- to receive outpatient mental health treatment without consent or knowledge of a parent or guardian if I am over the age of 13.
- to receive outpatient substance abuse treatment without consent of a parent or guardian if I am over the age of 13.
- to obtain tests and treatment for sexually transmitted infections without consent of a parent or guardian if I am age 14 or older.
- to know The Washington State Department of Children, Youth & Families' (DCYF) duties and responsibilities if I am pregnant or a parenting foster youth and that my needs will be addressed and services will be provided.

Transitioning Out of Foster Care / Extended Foster Care

I HAVE THE RIGHT:

- to develop a transition plan for moving out of foster care.
- to obtain my consumer credit report annually starting at age 14.
- to know in advance what my options are on if I am dependent on my 18th birthday.
- to know and understand all the components of the Extended Foster Care program.
- to be appointed an attorney if I am enrolled in Extended Foster Care.
- to enter or exit Extended Foster Care as needed prior to my 21st birthday.
- to be provided my vital documents when needed and upon leaving foster care, including birth certificate, social security card, Washington State ID, a Ward of the Court letter, medical insurance information and a copy of my health and education records.
- to receive medical coverage through state health insurance (Medicaid) until age 26, if I was a ward of the state on my 18th birthday.
- to know how to request my case records once I turn 18.
- for my rights to be explained in an age-appropriate way and ask questions about the Rights of Children and Youth in Foster Care.