OHIO Youth Advisory Board

Foster Youth Rights Handbook

From Youth For Youth

Introduction

Fast forward to 2029. You're an adult, long out of foster care, and an advocate for the rights of youth currently in care. You start to explain how it would have been so amazing if you could have played football or any other sport in high school, or gone to the mall with a friend, or spent the night at a friend's house. Then someone tells you that this actually was allowed, that it's called "normalcy rights," and that the policy for it was in place when you were in care. You reflect on how knowing this would have enhanced your experience in care and added quality to your childhood.

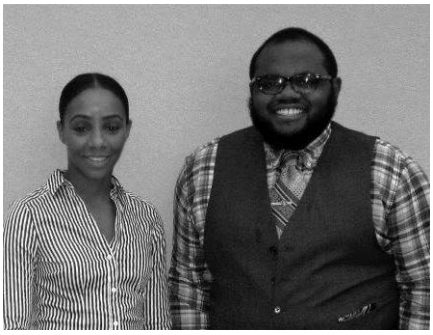
Unfortunately, the above scenario actually happened (in 2017, not 2027), but one of the goals of this handbook is to help make sure that it doesn't happen again. This Foster Youth Rights Handbook is an updated edition of the handbook that a group of brave young adults from across the state first started working on in 2009. The Overcoming Hurdles in Ohio (OHIO) Youth Advisory Board created this publication to close the knowledge gap that existed for too many youth in care.

When we first entered foster care, we hated it. We felt like we had lost our identity. Suddenly everything that made us who we were was masked by what society had labeled us: foster care youth. We didn't know what we were "allowed" to do or why we didn't have control over what was happening in our lives. There were many ups and downs, but as we began to work with our caseworkers and understand what was expected of us, we made it through, emancipated, found jobs and went to college. One of us is even pursuing a doctorate degree.

We're in a good place now, but we wish we'd had this handbook when we were in care. It spells out your rights and responsibilities. It also can help you discover opportunities and remind you that, despite your situation, you still have a say in some of the decisions being made as you approach independence. We also hope it helps you separate your identity from your circumstances.

As of right now, at this very moment, you are no longer a foster youth, but a youth/young adult who is experiencing foster care. Now you just have to decide what your future will hold. We can't wait to hear about the inventor, the electrician or the restaurant manager who experienced foster care – or the teacher, the nurse or advocate for youth in care. The possibilities are endless. More importantly, the possibility is in your hands.

We wish you the best.



Domonique and Nashawn
Foster Care Alumni and Advocates
Ohio Department of Job and Family Services

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Foster Care Overview

Ohio's Child Welfare System

The **OHIO DEPARTMENT OF JOB AND FAMILY SERVICES (ODJFS)** supervises the state's child welfare system, and county **PUBLIC CHILDREN SERVICES AGENCIES (PCSAs)** administer it. County agencies receive and investigate child welfare reports. If they determine that **ABUSE**, **NEGLECT** or **DEPENDENCY** has occurred, a **CASEWORKER** will work with the youth and his or her family to identify needed services and to develop a **CASE PLAN** to reduce the risk of future issues.

Many times, the youth and his or her **BIOLOGICAL FAMILY** will receive services while the youth still is living at home and/or involved with the juvenile court. However, sometimes a youth may need to be removed from the home due to safety concerns. In most situations, the goal is to address these concerns so the youth can live at home again. This is known as **REUNIFICATION**.

What Happens When You Are Placed in Custody?

If you were removed from your home, a caseworker at your county's PCSA will put you in a **SUBSTITUTE CARE SETTING**, or placement. The person who takes care of you in your placement is your **SUBSTITUTE CAREGIVER**. The caseworker will first try to find a placement among your relatives or people your family trusts. This is called a **KINSHIP CARE** placement. If a kinship placement isn't possible, you will be placed with a **FOSTER PARENT** or in a **RESIDENTIAL OR GROUP HOME**. You will live in your substitute care setting until you can safely return to your home. When your caseworker is deciding which placement is right for you, he or she should consider how close the placement is to your home and school, the caregiver's ability to provide for you, and which setting is the least restrictive for you.

Sometimes a placement doesn't work out. This can happen for a variety of reasons. There may be issues with your caregiver or your behavior. You may need a different level of care or a less restrictive setting, such as with a relative. If you are removed from your own home on an emergency basis, a court hearing will take place within 72 hours to determine whether you should be in the custody of the county, a relative or if you should return home.

Your Future

From the time you enter care, you may wonder when you will be allowed to go home. This is hard to say and is ultimately the decision of the court. You can return home only if your family members complete their case plan goals. If they are unable to complete these goals and you cannot return to your parents' or a relative's home, you and the PCSA will work together to find a family that can provide a forever home through **ADOPTION**. If you are 16 or older, you may choose not to be adopted. In that case, you would be placed into a permanent living arrangement until you reach adulthood, at which point you will **EMANCIPATE** from the **FOSTER CARE** system. Whatever happens will depend largely on why you came into care in the first place. Just know that all you can do is complete your own goals. No matter what happens, you should work on learning all you can to become a successful young adult.

Inside Perspective

Foster care is here to help you be who you want to be in your future and to prepare you and teach you life skills. So when it's time to live on your own, you know where to begin and exactly how you want to live your life. Remember, you have one life to live, so live it well.

Justin, Montgomery County

Key Words
Throughout this document, you'll notice that some words are **LIKE THIS**. You can find definitions for these words in the "Glossary/ Definitions" section that begins on page 29.

Foster Care Overview, CONT.

Important People in Your Case

When you're in foster care, many people will be involved with your case. Keeping these people straight and knowing their roles may be difficult. If you're not sure what someone's role is, don't hesitate to ask them. Some of the people who may be involved in your case include:

- Caseworker and/or **INDEPENDENT LIVING CASEWORKER**
- **GUARDIAN AD LITEM (GAL)** or **COURT-APPOINTED SPECIAL ADVOCATE (CASA)**
- **PUBLIC DEFENDER**
- **PROSECUTOR**
- Other attorney
- **JUDGE** or magistrate
- Substitute caregiver
- **MENTOR**
- Birth family
- You!

Legal Process

County PCSAs make recommendations to local juvenile or family courts about custody matters, and the court's judge makes the final decision. Court hearings are held in front of the judge or a magistrate to review and determine your custody status. Other people who participate in these court hearings could include anyone listed on the left. You should be involved and present at these hearings whenever possible. Be sure to talk to your caseworker about attending.

The Supreme Court of Ohio created a brochure that can help you prepare for – and make sure your voice is heard at – court hearings. It's called "Tips for Youth in Court." Ask your caseworker or caregiver to help you get a copy.

Resiliency

Jose, Wood County

The first time I was in foster care, I cannot remember the details because I was a toddler, but I do remember that I loved it. Unfortunately, my mom eventually got custody of us again. That time, she kept us for a little over three years. In that time I started doing drugs, stealing, being unruly, car hopping, sex and everything else a kid shouldn't do. My mom swore that we wouldn't end up in foster care again, but we did. I hated it. Most of all I resented my mom for lying.

The people my brother and I went to live with weren't horrible. They were fair and protective. But only four days into junior high, I got suspended for smoking. I did unforgettable and unthinkable things, but my foster parents got me off of **PROBATION** and turned me into a man. They even took me to Florida to visit my foster father's family. We had a blast. It was my first time on a plane and going to Florida.

But you want to know my true feelings about foster care? I am so grateful. If I weren't in foster care, I'd either be in jail or dead. Yes, I hate the rules. I wish I could get a truck without having to ask the county, and that I could be like a normal child with my parents making my rules. I don't like that I haven't seen any of my friends, but I am drug-free and out of jail so I am doing great. I have a job and am working on getting a truck and my license. I would like nothing more than to stay with my new family. All I have to say to all of the people out there who are in foster care is: **I know how you feel.** I've had 16 years of experience in foster care. **You aren't alone.**

Your Rights and Responsibilities

The best way to improve the lives of young people in foster care is to make sure they know their rights and responsibilities and to involve them as partners in determining the services they will receive.

ODJFS and OYAB want to make sure that all youth involved in Ohio's child welfare system are aware of their rights and responsibilities. While in foster care, you have 13 basic rights. All of these rights are listed on this page and explained in greater detail throughout this handbook. You also can find these rights spelled out in Ohio Administrative Code rule 5101:2-5-35, "Children's Rights." Understanding your rights is the best way to make sure those rights are respected, so you can have the best possible experience in foster care.

Your Rights

1. To enjoy freedom of thought, conscience and religion, or to abstain from the practice of religion.
2. To a reasonable enjoyment of privacy.
3. To have your opinions be heard and included, to the greatest extent possible, when any decisions are being made affecting your life.
4. To receive appropriate and reasonable adult guidance, support and supervision.
5. To be free from physical abuse and inhumane treatment.
6. To be protected from all forms of sexual exploitation.
7. To receive adequate and appropriate medical care.
8. To receive adequate and appropriate food, clothing and housing.
9. To your own money and personal property, in accordance with your service or case plan.
10. To live in clean and safe surroundings.
11. To participate in an appropriate educational program.
12. To communicate with family, friends and significant others from whom you are living apart, according to your service or case plan.
13. To be taught to fulfill appropriate responsibilities to yourself and others.

Spirituality and Religion

Your Right

TO ENJOY FREEDOM OF THOUGHT, CONSCIENCE AND RELIGION, OR TO ABSTAIN FROM THE PRACTICE OF RELIGION.

Your Responsibility

Communicate your religious preferences to your caseworker and caregiver. You might be at an age where you're exploring your spirituality, and that's OK. You can ask to attend a religious institution of your choice. The faith-based community can be a strong support system when you enter foster care, and you have the right to maintain those relationships. You cannot be punished for expressing religious beliefs or thoughts. You also can choose to abstain from religious meetings or events, and you cannot be forced to attend a religious service.

Their Responsibility

Your caseworker and caregiver should acknowledge and respect your religious choices. Your caseworker or caregiver cannot try to restrict your behavior, relationships or participation in events because of their own religious or moral beliefs. If you feel that they are, you should tell someone. (See "Complaint Process" on page 16 for more information.)

Self-Confidence

Philip, Montgomery County

I was 15 when I was placed into foster care. Before placement, I felt like I was coming into my own as a gay teen. I had friends and family who supported me for who I was and seemed to be at ease with the fact that I might be gay. Coming out of the closet didn't seem like it would be much of a challenge.

Then I was placed with a religious family, and my life changed completely. My first morning in my new home was one of the most challenging mornings I faced there. As we ate breakfast, they filled me in on the house rules and asked questions to get a better understanding of who I was. Everything seemed fine until my foster mom asked, "Do you live an alternative lifestyle? Because in your paperwork we read that you do." I sat in disbelief and finally said, "No, I do not." I was hurt that someone at the agency would assume that I was gay and include it in my paperwork like I was already out of the closet.

They asked one other time about my sexual orientation, when an openly gay male was taken into the home. They said they needed to know, to avoid any conflicting situations that may occur. That time, I felt pressured to reveal the truth because my foster dad asked me repeatedly. So I told him, and he said, "I wish that you weren't gay, and you know how God feels about you being gay." He then left my room, slamming the door on his way out. I felt so scared and alone. The next day I called my caseworker, and she told me that she would talk to my foster parents because they were completely out of place to question me and to state such a harsh opinion. After she spoke with them, they apologized to me. After that, I didn't face any problems concerning my sexual orientation. If any other problems would have occurred, **I knew I had rights as a foster youth.**

Privacy

Your Right

TO A REASONABLE ENJOYMENT OF PRIVACY.

Your Responsibility

Although you cannot expect complete privacy, you can expect some privacy while in care. You also must respect the privacy of others. You are responsible for making others aware of your personal boundaries. You may not feel comfortable talking about certain subjects in front of your caregiver, and that's OK. Just ask your caseworker for time alone. You shouldn't be punished for wanting to provide feedback in private. With a few exceptions, personal information cannot be shared with others unless your family gives written permission. Some case information may be shared with agencies that provide services to you and your family.

Their Responsibility

Your caseworker and caregiver should respect your privacy, including your room and your belongings. They also should keep information about you and your family confidential, unless your family has agreed for the information to be released. Your caseworker should give you the opportunity to voice your opinions and concerns privately, when your caregiver is not present.

Perseverance

Dasha, Scioto County

First of all, I'd like you to know you aren't alone in this. I'm sure you're experiencing hard times and have been confused and scared along the way. No one can say they understand [your exact situation] and feel the pain like you do, but there are people willing to learn what you've experienced to help you and to understand how you feel. The hard times will pass, and you will get through them no matter the problem. There is always a silver lining.

I was 11 when I came into the custody of Children Services. You'll never forget the day you go into foster care. You're scared, nervous, vulnerable and probably on the verge of crying. I know; I was right there where you are now. Living with someone who is a complete stranger is probably one of the scariest things you can go through. I promise you, if you have good foster parents like I've had, in a month you'll be the happiest person alive. You wouldn't trade them for the world.

Since I came into foster care, I've learned that foster care was where I was meant to be. I thank God for my experiences in my past because [they have] made me the person I am today. God has brought me through the hardest times in my life and has always been there when I needed him, and even when I thought I didn't.

Everyone deals with their problems differently, but after several years of searching for what I was meant to do in life, I decided to use my past to help someone else's future. I hope I've helped you in ways I wish someone could've helped me.

Your Case Plan, Your Life

Your Right

TO HAVE YOUR OPINIONS BE HEARD AND INCLUDED, TO THE GREATEST EXTENT POSSIBLE, WHEN ANY DECISIONS ARE BEING MADE AFFECTING YOUR LIFE.

Your Responsibility

Ask your caseworker when your initial case plan meeting is scheduled so you have the opportunity to attend. If you would like to invite two other people (besides your caseworker or foster parent) to attend, let your caseworker know. Keep in mind that if your caseworker or the agency determines that inviting your chosen guests is not in your best interest, they may not be invited. After your case plan is developed, it is reviewed during semi-annual reviews and at 90-day reviews. Ask your caseworker when the case planning meetings are scheduled and plan to attend and help develop your case plan. You are allowed to bring two approved adult supporters.

Their Responsibility

Your family will have a case plan that explains what changes need to happen for reunification to occur. After the case plan is developed, it will be reviewed every 90 days to track your family's progress toward the case plan's goals. Your caseworker should make sure that you are invited to attend, when possible, all case plan meetings.

Types of Meetings

When you first come into care, you and your family will meet with a caseworker to talk about a case plan and a **VISITATION PLAN**. This is your chance to give your opinion about the goals established and services provided to your family, so the court and PCSA can consider reunification or other **PERMANENCY GOALS** for you. Your opinion is important!

Other meetings may be held to review your placement and the details of your case plan. The meetings may have different names, depending on what county you live in. Some of these meetings may include initial **FAMILY TEAM MEETINGS**, **CASE PLAN MEETINGS**, **SEMI-ANNUAL REVIEWS**, **TREATMENT TEAM MEETINGS** and **YOUTH-CENTERED PERMANENCY ROUNDTABLES**. If you are invited to a meeting and you're not sure why, ask your caseworker. If you find out that you were not invited to a meeting about you or your family, talk to your caseworker or your caseworker's supervisor. Your input is essential to your success.

Tips from Youth

- **Do NOT blame yourself**. No matter what the situation is, you need to remember that you are the child.
- **Always look forward**. If you keep worrying about the past, you will miss out on positive experiences in the present. The longer you hold on to what you can't change, the longer it will take to build healthy relationships with yourself and others.
- **Accept what you can—and can't—control**. You can't change others, including how they feel, what they've done, or what they may or may not decide to do. You can only change yourself and your attitude.
- **Be open to new situations**. To mend your family, your parent or parents have to comply with your family's case plan and the **JUDGE's** orders. This may take some time. Only they can do that. If they work hard, you will see the change. Please embrace the family that welcomed you into their home. Yes, it is different from what you're used to, but different may be OK.

Support and Guidance

Your Right

TO APPROPRIATE AND REASONABLE ADULT GUIDANCE, SUPPORT AND SUPERVISION.

Your Responsibility

No matter what anyone tells you or leads you to believe, you know yourself better than anyone else does. This means that you need to let others know how they can best support you. Open, honest communication with your caregiver and caseworker will help you succeed. If you feel that you cannot have that conversation with your caregiver or caseworker, try asking another adult who you trust to sit in on any meetings.

Their Responsibility

Caregivers are trained to understand young people in foster care, and they are held to a high standard to treat you well. Your caseworker will visit you during your first week of placement, again within the next 28 days and then monthly after that. Your caregiver should share with you—and possibly develop with you—expectations about house rules and consequences for your behaviors.

Real Hope

Brianna, Licking County

Entering foster care is different for each of us. Some of us are prepared, while others struggle with the abrupt changes. There are and will be many ups and downs, but in the long run you'll find that the move was in your best interest. As I know now, being removed from the home is because of one or both crucial problems: abuse and/or neglect. Being in the system saves many lives (as it has mine), and I hope it will help to save you.

I was removed from my home due to lack of supervision and guidance from my parents. I was placed on probation for a multitude of things, and the underlying factor was that the dysfunction within my family caused a world of problems for my siblings and me. It was several months and moves later before I understood that I was responsible for my actions. Would I take it back? Absolutely not! If I hadn't been through the courts and placed in a wonderful home, I would not be getting the love and support I've always needed. It's hard being away from my biological family, but until they are able to fix their own problems, I am better where I am now.

I will leave you with this: **"Foster parents don't just foster children. They foster hope."**

You Deserve Protection

Your Right

TO BE FREE FROM PHYSICAL ABUSE AND INHUMANE TREATMENT.

Your Responsibility

Know that you are worthwhile, and that you deserve to be protected from harm. Learn the definitions of physical abuse and inhumane treatment. Don't harm yourself or others. Know local emergency numbers. Check to see if your county has a designated safe place and find out where it is. Tell someone "no" if they try to bribe you to keep abuse a secret. If you see or suspect abuse, or if you feel unsafe in any way, report it to your caseworker, to the police or call 855-OH-CHILD, the state's child abuse hotline.

Their Responsibility

Your substitute caregiver and caseworker should treat you with respect and help keep you safe and protected from abuse. They should listen if you express concerns about abuse. Discipline from your caregivers should fall within the rules they are required to follow, some of which are listed below. Your caregivers should never victimize you or let others hurt you. Caseworkers are required to report allegations of abuse and neglect.

Caregiver Responsibilities

Your caregivers have gone through many hours of training to learn how best to care for you. They have learned the many rules explaining what foster parents can and cannot do. These rules are spelled out in the Ohio Administrative Code. Here are a few of them:

- Discipline should stress praise, not punishment.
- Rules and expectations should be age-appropriate and explained before punishment.
- Caregivers should teach the children in their care tasks and skills required for life in the community.
- Caregivers should encourage participation in age-appropriate recreational, cultural, community and school activities and should arrange transportation to and from them. This is called **NORMALCY** rights. See the Introduction and page 11 and for more on this.

Some rules prevent substitute caregivers from using certain types of punishment. For example, caregivers cannot do the following:

- Use any form of **PHYSICAL ABUSE** or **CORPORAL PUNISHMENT**, including spanking, paddling or rough handling.
- Punish you by denying you opportunities to visit or communicate with family.
- Make negative remarks about you, your family or foster children in general; threats to remove you from their home; or threats of physical harm.
- Use physical restraints – unless you are in danger of hurting yourself or others and only if they have been trained in proper physical restraining procedures.
- Use mechanical restraints.
- Restrict your access to food.
- Commit abuse or neglect.

Staying Safe

Your Right

TO BE PROTECTED FROM ALL FORMS
OF SEXUAL EXPLOITATION.

Your Responsibility

Sexual jokes are no joke. What may seem funny to some may be offensive and hurtful to others, especially to anyone who has experienced sexual abuse. If anyone makes statements that make you uncomfortable, tell your caregiver or caseworker. Don't stand for disrespectful labels. If you hear others talking in a sexualized or disrespectful way, confront them in an appropriate manner or tell your caregiver or caseworker.

Their Responsibility

Your caregiver and caseworker should treat you with respect and help keep you safe and protected from abuse. They should listen if you express concerns about abuse and help you learn how to stay safe.

What is Human Trafficking?

Human trafficking comes in two different forms: sex trafficking and labor trafficking.

Sex trafficking is when someone pays money or goods (such as shelter, food or even "fun" items like concert tickets) to have sex with another person, take or look at sexual pictures or videos of that person, or watch them in strip clubs or exotic dance clubs. Young people in these situations are considered victims even if no one forced or threatened them. We tend to think of sex trafficking as organized crime with lots of victims, but it can happen with just one youth, and traffickers can be family members or close friends.

Labor trafficking of children happens when youth are forced, tricked or threatened to work for no pay. Young people have been trafficked to work on farms, in restaurants, in nail salons, or on sales crews that travel across the country. Some youth have been forced to beg for money.

Traffickers go after all kinds of young people, regardless of their gender, sexual orientation, financial situation or citizenship status. It occurs in big cities, small towns and rural farming communities. Although trafficking implies movement, youth can be trafficked right in their own homes.

Traffickers often try to make contact with their potential victims through the Internet—either through advertisements and websites or by reaching out to them through Facebook or other social networking sites. It's important to know how to stay safe when using the Internet.

If you or someone you know is being trafficked, remember: It's not your fault. It's also important to get help. You can tell your caregiver, your parent, your caseworker or the police. You also can call the national anti-trafficking hotline at (888) 373-7888 or send a text to "BeFree" (233733). Traffickers often lie and tell victims they'll get in trouble if they get caught or if they tell someone. In Ohio, this is not true. You will not go to jail if you are a victim of sex or labor trafficking. The most important thing to do if you suspect human trafficking is tell someone.

Physical and Emotional Health

Your Right

TO RECEIVE ADEQUATE AND APPROPRIATE MEDICAL CARE.

Your Responsibility

Inform your caseworker and caregiver of any medical conditions or concerns. Be honest about your past and present medical issues. When you leave care, you're entitled to a copy of your medical records, and you should make sure that you get them. Actively participate in decisions about your medical care. If you have prescribed medications, ask questions about why they are prescribed and what their side effects might be. If something about your body doesn't feel right, be sure to tell someone.

Their Responsibility

Your caregiver will provide daily care, which includes medical treatment. Your caregiver should make sure you have access to such services as vision and dental care and any prescriptions you may need daily, such as birth control. Your caseworker should make sure that all your medical needs are met. Together, they should make sure you have transportation to medical appointments and help you learn how to make these appointments yourself, if possible.

Medicaid Coverage

You may be eligible for free health coverage through Medicaid if you are 18 to 26, if you were in foster care at age 18, and if you received **INDEPENDENT LIVING SERVICES**. Before you leave foster care, you and your caseworker should complete the Medicaid application. If approved, you will receive Medicaid services through a managed care plan.

Be sure to read all the mail you get from Medicaid or your managed care plan and return all the required forms, or else your benefits will be stopped. Your Medicaid eligbility is reviewed every 12 months. If you have changes that might affect your eligibility, you must notify your caseworker within 10 days of the change.For more information, see the following resources:

- Visit **medicaid.ohio.gov** for information about and resource links for Medicaid.
- Call (800) 324-8680, or visit **benefits.ohio.gov** to apply for Medicaid benefits or to get more information.
- Visit **ohiomh.com** for information about Medicaid managed care plans and enrollment.

Blood pressure check during a breakout session at a Fostering Pathways Conference.

Medication

If you ever feel that you don't understand or agree with the medications you have been prescribed, discuss your concerns with your caseworker and/or doctor. You may ask them to explore alternative options. It's important to have enough information about any medication you are taking. Ask questions, because you have a right to know. Ohio has created a tool to help youth, foster parents and doctors understand medications, their side effects and alternative treatments. Visit **OhioMindsMatter.org** for more information.

Basic Needs

Your Right

TO RECEIVE ADEQUATE AND APPROPRIATE FOOD, CLOTHING AND HOUSING.

Your Responsibility

Recognize the difference between basic needs—such as food, clothing and housing—and wants, such as access to social media. You may have some needs that are unique to you—for example, because of medical concerns. Be sure to communicate your needs to your guardian ad litem, caseworker, foster parent or someone close to you. Your caregiver is responsible for meeting your basic needs. However, it may be up to you to meet other needs or to buy things that you want. If you want to spend the night at a friend's house, it's OK to ask your foster parent for permission. Their answer will depend on the agency's **NORMALCY** policies. Normalcy policies provide guidelines for "normal and beneficial" activities you can participate in, just like youth not in foster care. Ask about your agency's normalcy policies.

Their Responsibility

Your caregiver is expected to provide for your basic needs, including food, clothing, shelter and personal items such as hygiene products. If you have a child of your own, your caseworker and caregiver should make sure you have the skills and supplies needed to care for your child during and after your time in care. Your caregiver should consider allowing you to participate in normal and beneficial activities, such as spending the night at a friend's house.

Your caregiver will collaborate with your custodial agency regarding your independent living assessment, plan and skill development. Your caregiver is expected to provide independent living skills instruction daily and is not permitted to prohibit you from participating in independent living services.

Beating the Odds

Vanessa, Montgomery County

I entered foster care after the sudden death of my mother, even though I tried to avoid it. I stayed with family members who couldn't care for me and my 2-year-old son, and with friends whose parents didn't know that I had nowhere to go after spending a weekend with them. I knew foster care would provide shelter and food for my son and me, but the horror stories kept me away. I was told that I may never see my son again.

Caseworkers actually put plenty of effort into making sure that my son and I were placed together, as long as I promised to do right by him. I even got a say in how his room was decorated. While this comforted me, I still had fears when certain situations came up, such as not being able to talk to my son's teacher.

These issues bothered me tremendously, so I began to ask questions, voice concerns and involve myself in the court process in regards to my rights as a teen parent. There were many challenges, but it was worthwhile when my son and I became independent. I learned the importance of speaking up in the face of any injustice.

I never lost my son to the system, like so many warned. He is educated, happy and NORMAL, in spite of our circumstances. It just took self-advocacy.

Personal Items

Your Right

TO YOUR OWN MONEY AND PERSONAL PROPERTY, IN ACCORDANCE WITH YOUR SERVICE OR CASE PLAN.

Your Responsibility

You should take good care of your clothing and personal items. Share your opinion about your clothing and food preferences with your caseworker and caregiver. Respect your caregiver's personal belongings. Make sure you save money for your future. Learn how to compare costs and develop a budget to avoid overspending when shopping. If you want to purchase something and you are told you cannot, you should appropriately address the subject with your caregiver or caseworker to find out why.

Their Responsibility

Your caregiver and caseworker will use your independent living skills assessment to work with you in developing your **INDEPENDENT LIVING PLAN**. At least every 90 days, you will have a **READINESS REVIEW** to update your plan, usually when you have a case review or a semiannual review to discuss your case plan and independent living goals. Your caseworker should discuss the readiness and case reviews with you and your caregiver. You are allowed to invite up to two approved people to attend your semiannual review. Your voice is important so we encourage you to attend.

What is a Lifebook?

Every young person who has been in foster care for six months or more should have a **LIFEBOOK**. This is similar to a scrapbook. Your lifebook can hold anything that is important to you while you are in foster care. This may include such things as your report cards, newspaper articles, school notes and photos. When you leave custody, you should take your lifebook with you.

Getting a Job

Figuring out how to get a job can be confusing. To get help, you can visit **OhioMeansJobs.com** or your county's OhioMeansJobs center. Either through the website or in person, you can get help writing a resume, finding out about job-training programs and finding a job.

If you'd like in-person help—including the help of a free career coach—visit your local OhioMeansJobs center and ask aout CCMEP, which stands for "Comprehensive Case Management and Employment Program." If you're ages 14 to 24 or currently or formerly in foster care, a CCMEP career coach can help you access a variety of free services, including paid work experience, career planning, goal planning, internships, dropout recovery/GED services, training, mentoring, drug and alcohol support, child care, transportation and much more. You just have to commit to spending at least 20 hours a week working toward your goals. To learn more, email **CCMEPQNA@jfs.ohio.gov**.

Choosing career-wear at a Fostering Pathways Conference..

Living Environment

Your Right

TO LIVE IN CLEAN AND SAFE SURROUNDINGS.

Your Responsibility

Make sure that you clean up your own mess. Maintain good personal hygiene. Participate in household chores. Keep your room and personal space safe and free from physical hazards. Know how to correctly use household cleaning supplies, and ask for help from your caregiver if you're not sure. If you feel that your surroundings are not clean or safe, speak to your caregiver and/or caseworker.

Their Responsibility

Your caseworker should select the least-restrictive living environment for you. Your caregiver will provide daily care, including clean shelter and protection from hazards such as dangerous tools, weapons or chemicals. Your caregiver must make sure the home is in a safe, clean condition. This includes not smoking in the home or around you. Pets are allowed in the home, but they should be treated well, provided proper veterinary care and kept in clean conditions.

Exit Interview

When you leave a foster placement, your caseworker will schedule an **EXIT INTERVIEW** with you. This is a time for you to talk to your caseworker about your experience in your foster home. The interview should happen in private within seven days of your leaving a placement. It cannot be done before you leave the placement, and it cannot include your former foster parents. This interview is very important, as it helps the PCSA improve the experiences of other young people who will someday be placed in that home. Be sure to tell your caseworker everything openly and honestly. If this interview doesn't happen, be sure to ask your caseworker about it.

Two youth try on suits in the Suits for Success room at the Fostering Pathways to Success Conference.

Education

Your Right

TO PARTICIPATE IN AN APPROPRIATE EDUCATIONAL PROGRAM.

Your Responsibility

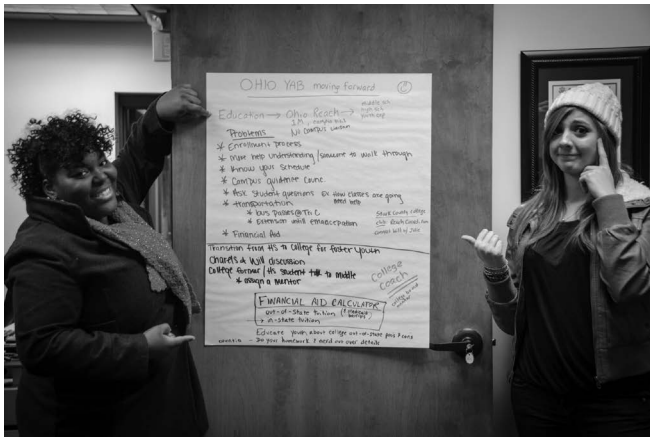
Go to school every day and participate in all of your classes. You can ask to stay in the school you were attending at the time of your removal, but your caseworker cannot guarantee this. You should try to participate in after-school activities. Make sure you get your high school diploma or GED. Tell your caseworker and caregiver what your wishes are for your educational future. School should come before everything else. Focus on your education even if it seems like it's not important.

Their Responsibility

Your caregiver can maintain contact with anyone currently involved with your family's case, such as your school guidance counselor or a teacher. Your caseworker can advocate for your educational needs. Your caregiver and caseworker should help address whether you need an **INDIVIDUAL EDUCATION PLAN (IEP)**. They should make sure that if you must transfer schools, you are enrolled immediately or continue to attend your current school until the transfer can occur.

Changing Schools

Ideally, you should not have to move often while in care. This is not always a reality, but there are laws in place to minimize educational gaps for youth in foster care. If you have to move, your caseworker and your school administrators will try to keep you in the same school district. You should voice your opinions about where you'd like to go to school. School is a place for learning and for building social relationships, so it's OK to say you'd like to stay in a school because you have people who support you there. However, the availability of a placement may determine which school you attend. If you change schools, your caseworker and your new school administrators will make sure that your records transfer properly. A new federal law called the Every Student Succeed Act, or ESSA, allows caseworkers to access your educational records, making it easier for you to get enrolled in a new school.



OYAB officers' proposals to improve education.

Communicating with Others

Your Right

TO COMMUNICATE WITH FAMILY, FRIENDS AND SIGNIFICANT OTHERS FROM WHOM YOU ARE LIVING APART, IN ACCORDANCE WITH YOUR SERVICE OR CASE PLAN.

Your Responsibility

Behave appropriately to establish good relationships. Communicate when you want to have contact with your family, friends and significant others. Don't turn down opportunities to stay in touch with people important to you, and make the most of your time with them. Staying in touch can happen in many ways: face to face or by phone, email, text or social media. When using social media, be sure not to post personal information, such as your address, phone number or birth year. Discuss communication guidelines with your caseworker and caregivers.

Their Responsibility

Your caseworker should arrange for regular visits between you and your family within a reasonable amount of time after your removal. Your caregiver should support your visitation plan. If you have brothers or sisters, your caseworker should do his or her best to place you together. If you're apart from your siblings, you have a right to communicate with them.

Communication

Jonathan, Wood County

The way that I was removed from my home was very rough. Initially, we were treated like criminals instead of kids. We were upset with the rules and regulations of our foster parents, such as no Facebook, cell phones or iPods, and no talking to parents except at visits and supervised phone calls. Though I have stayed in care long enough to see things start to change, it was still upsetting in the beginning. As teenagers, we are naturally pulled toward social networking, and when that is deprived you start to feel upset and out of control.

When my siblings went home, I was no longer allowed to have visits with them unless they were supervised, which nobody wanted to do, because going back to supervised visits meant things wouldn't be different than if we were all still in foster care.

I guess it hasn't been all bad. Having trips to Cedar Point was pretty cool. I went two years in a row. It is also nice to have counseling, but not every week. And the foster parents are cool, some of them, though it's hard not being able to get your license. Those are pretty much my main feelings about being in foster care.

Be Responsible

Your Right

TO BE TAUGHT TO FULFILL APPROPRIATE RESPONSIBILITIES TO YOURSELF AND OTHERS.

Your Responsibility

This handbook explains your rights as a young person in foster care. If you believe any of those rights has been violated or not met, you must advocate on your own behalf. This means standing up for yourself. You should start by talking to your caseworker. The key to getting your concerns addressed is being nonconfrontational, even when it seems hard to not raise your voice or insult others.

Their Responsibility

Your caseworker, caregiver and anyone else involved in your case should be willing to hear your concerns. Your caseworker must conduct your exit interview within seven days after you leave a placement.

Ohio Administrative Code rules 5101:2-5-35 (B) and (D) say this: "If an agency places any restrictions upon a child's rights for more than two hours, the agency shall: (1) Inform the child and the child's custodian of the conditions of and the reasons for the restriction of rights; (2) Place a written report summarizing the conditions of and reasons for the restriction of the child's rights in that child's record...(3)... inform the individual...of the conditions of and reasons for the action; (4) Document review of this decision at least weekly. Any such restriction shall be included in the service plan and approved by the child's custodian."

Complaint Process

If you feel that your rights as a foster youth are not being met, or if you are not satisfied with the services you and your family are receiving, the first step is to express these concerns to your caseworker. If you have done this and feel that your concerns weren't addressed or resolved, you should seek out your caseworker's supervisor. Following these steps when addressing a concern is called "following the chain of command." This means that if you report a concern to someone and it is not resolved, the next step is to speak to that person's boss or supervisor. You can follow this chain of command to the person who is in charge of the agency, if necessary.

Many counties have their own formal complaint processes for those who have tried these steps and whose concerns haven't been resolved. Some agencies even have a client rights or ombudsman's office, which works specifically to address complaints. You can ask if your agency has a formal complaint process. If you're placed in a residential or group home, staff there are required to provide you with a handbook that lists the complaint procedure.

If you believe you were treated unfairly because of your race, color, national origin, religion, gender, disability or age, you can call the ODJFS Bureau of Civil Rights at (614) 644-2703. You have six months from the date of any incident to submit a formal complaint. For more information, visit **www.jfs.ohio.gov/civilrights/index.stm**.

Get Involved

Take part in your case plan, independent living plan and final transition plan. You can help shape your experience in care if you let others know how they can help you. Know your rights, and don't be afraid to ask questions if you feel those rights are not being met. There are appropriate ways to address any concerns through a proper complaint process.

What is Advocacy?

Another way you can advocate for yourself and others is through a youth advisory board. As a youth in foster care, your input is very valuable. All young people in foster care share some things in common, but your own experience is unique, and others could benefit from hearing about it.

More than a dozen local youth advisory boards work with each other and the statewide board, known as the Overcoming Hurdles in Ohio (OHIO) Youth Advisory Board, or OYAB. OYAB's mission is to "*be the knowledgeable statewide voice that influences practice and policies for all youth who have or will experience out-of-home care*."

At OYAB, we focus much of our efforts on working with leaders in Congress and private and public agency staff across the state and even the nation. We even hold trainings for agency staff so they can learn how to better interact with youth and empower them for success. We also train youth on how to share their stories. Your story is part of your private life, and if you decide to share it, we want to make sure you have the tools to do so in a way that protects you and gets your message heard.

OYAB members enjoy a team-building exercise.

We want to change the system because many cultural stereotypes exist for foster care. We call these stereotypes "the stigmas of foster care." These are false ideas about who we are and what we are or are not capable of. For example, some people incorrectly believe that foster youth:

- Did something wrong to get into foster care
- Won't graduate from college
- Are helpless
- Are unadoptable

The fact is, none of these things is true. Foster care success stories don't have to be rare. We want to make them the norm.

We recognize that advocating for better policies, participating in trainings and sharing experiences isn't for everyone. There are many other ways to get involved with your local youth advisory board. You could help plan events for foster youth to come together and get a sense of community and belonging. Some county youth advisory boards have planned rallies, marathons and car washes. Some have even participated in national events to help raise awareness about foster youth.

The only way to create change is by empowering foster youth to speak out. Your county may already have a youth advisory board. If not, you can start one! We hope you'll join us. If you'd like more information on what advisory boards do or how you can join, visit **pcsao.org/programs/ohio-youth-advisory-board** or ask your caseworker if your county has one.

Preparing to Live on Your Own

You can leave foster care in one of several ways: by being reunified with your family, by entering the legal custody of a friend or relative, by being adopted, or by emancipating from your agency's custody on or after your 18th birthday. If a court or PCSA determines that you will not be reunified with your biological family, the PCSA can receive **PERMANENT CUSTODY** of you and then try to find you an adoptive family.

You may have fears and questions about adoption, especially if you have siblings. You should know that adoption can be a great choice for both you and your siblings. You may even be able to set conditions for your adoption, such as allowing sibling contact. When you are making these decisions, be sure to ask as many questions as you can.

If you are 16 or older, another option is a **PLANNED PERMANENT LIVING ARRANGEMENT (PPLA)**. This means the agency will have custody of you, but your parents will maintain their parental rights.

Regardless of the permanency determination, all youth 14 and older are entitled to receive an **INDEPENDENT LIVING SKILLS ASSESSMENT**, to participate in the development of an **INDEPENDENT LIVING PLAN** and to receive **INDEPENDENT LIVING SERVICES**. See pages 20-22 for more details. You can and should be an active participant in all of these.

If you turn 18 when you're in foster care, when you leave foster care, this is called **EMANCIPATION**. You may be able to emancipate after age 18 if you are working toward a high school diploma or GED, or if you qualify for certain developmental disability services.

Many services are available before and after you emancipate to help you live on your own. The services before you emancipate are called **INDEPENDENT LIVING SERVICES**. The services after you emancipate are provided either through the **BRIDGES** program or through your county agency's **YOUNG ADULT SERVICES**.

Independent Living Services

In Ohio, county public children services agencies and courts are required to provide independent living services to all youth ages 14 and older who are in foster care, to help prepare them for future self-sufficiency. These services include, but are not limited to, the following:

- Academic support
- Post-secondary educational support
- Career preparation
- Employment programs or vocational training
- Budget and financial management
- Housing education and home management
- Health education and risk prevention
- Family support and healthy marriage education
- Mentoring
- Supervised independent living
- Room and board financial assistance

BRIDGES

Bridges is a voluntary program for young adults who leave foster care in Ohio at ages 18, 19 or 20 and who are in school, working, participating in an employment program, or have a medical condition that prevents them from going to school or working.

If you participate in Bridges, you will be matched with a representative who will meet with you at least once a month and help you set goals and access services. Among other things, your Bridges representative can:

- Help you find and pay for a place to live
- Help you find a job
- Help you identify individuals and resources that can be permanent connections for you even after you complete the program
- Teach you skills like money management, how to do laundry, how to grocery shop, etc.
- Help you enroll in college or a vocational program
- Help you find a doctor or access other physical or mental health care
- Connect you with community resources to help you become more self-sufficient
- Provide guidance and be a positive adult supporter you can depend on

For more info, visit **bridgestosuccess.jfs.ohio.gov**.

Preparing to Live on Your Own, CONT.

Young Adult Services

If you do not qualify for or do not want to enroll in Bridges, you still may be able to receive young adult services from your county agency after you turn 18. These are very similar to the independent living services offered to those 14 and older. Each public children services agency in Ohio is required to provide them to 18-, 19- and 20-year-olds who age out of foster care and who request help. Young adult services are meant to complement your own efforts to be self-sufficient. Ideally, they will help you become eligible for Bridges so you can get additional supports toward independence.

Housing

While you are in foster care, your custodial agency is responsible for providing appropriate and stable housing for you. It's important that you tell your caseworker your thoughts about your placement at visits and reviews. Also remember that you can call your caseworker at any time if you have concerns about your placement. If you permanently move placements during your time in foster care, your caseworker must complete an exit interview with you within seven days of the placement change. This exit interview will be documented in both your case record and the foster family's placement record.

If you emancipate from foster care, your housing plan will be part of the **FINAL TRANSITION PLAN** that you create with your caseworker at least 90 days before you emancipate. Your county agency will help you locate, secure and maintain safe, affordable and stable housing. The agency also can help you pay rent and utility deposits and help you purchase household items, such as furniture, linens and kitchen necessities.

Here are some things to consider when making a housing choice:

- Based on your budget and income, can you afford it?
- Is the neighborhood safe?
- Is it convenient to the things you'll need, such as a grocery store, gas station, etc.?
- Is it close to public transportation for getting to work or school?
- Is it close to your support team (adult supporters, friends, family, etc.)?

If you participate in the Bridges program, your Bridges representative can help you find housing that's safe and affordable, whether that means an apartment, low-income housing, a college dorm room, housing with a supportive adult or other community-based housing. Bridges also may be able to help you pay for rent, utilities, food, clothing and other personal incidentals. Your Bridges representative can give you tips for managing a household, from cooking and cleaning to paying bills and budgeting. He/she also can connect you to resources in your community that can help you live on your own. For more information, see page 18.

National Youth in Transition Database

The **NATIONAL YOUTH IN TRANSITION DATABASE (NYTD)** stores information from a series of surveys that are given to randomly selected youth who have received independent living services. If you are selected to participate, you will receive the first survey when you are 17. You'll be asked to complete follow-up surveys at ages 19 and 21.

These surveys and the NYTD are important to improving services for future foster youth. It helps caseworkers identify and fix problems with the system, which in turn helps more youth make a successful transition to independent living and adulthood. If you are selected to participate, please do so. Your input is important!

AGE 14

- Within 60 days of turning 14—or within 60 days of entering foster care if you are 14 or older—you will complete your **INDEPENDENT LIVING SKILLS ASSESSMENT**. Within 30 days of completing the assessment, you, your caregiver, your caseworker and anyone else you want to involve (such as a teacher or mentor) will use the assessment to develop an **INDEPENDENT LIVING PLAN**. This will be in addition to your family's case plan. It will be unique to you and will state your goals. At least every 90 days, you will have a **READINESS REVIEW** to update your plan. You should always have a copy of your most recent plan.
- You will begin receiving an annual copy of your **CREDIT REPORT** from your custodial agency. This shows your credit history and will be important if you want to apply for a car loan or rent an apartment someday. If you see something on your report that looks incorrect, your custodial agency should contact the Ohio Attorney General's office for assistance.
- Your caregiver and caseworker will help you learn and practice the **INDEPENDENT LIVING** Skills that you identified in your assessment and that are included in your plan

AGE 15-16

- Your independent living plan will continue to be reviewed every 90 days, usually when you have a case review or a semi-annual review.
- You will continue to receive copies of your credit reports annually until you emancipate from the agency's custody.
- Based on the services and/or skills identified in your assessment and added to your plan, you will be eligible to receive **INDEPENDENT LIVING SERVICES**.
- Your caregiver and caseworker will continue to help you learn and practice the independent living skills that you identified in your assessment and that are included in your plan.

AGE 17

- ○ You may be asked to complete a **NATIONAL YOUTH IN TRANSITION DATABASE** survey. (See page 19.)
- ○ At least 180 days before your 18th birthday, your caseworker will talk to you about BRIDGES, a voluntary program for young adults who leave foster care in Ohio at ages 18, 19 or 20 and who are in school, working, participating in an employment program, or have a medical condition that prevents them from going to school or working.
- ○ At least 90 days before your emancipation, your caseworker will talk to you again about Bridges and how you can meet the eligibility requirements. If you're interested, your caseworker will introduce you to a Bridges representative and work with the Bridges representative until you emancipate.
- ○ At least 90 days before your emancipation, your caseworker will work with you to develop a Final transition plan. You are the primary driver of this plan. It can include as much detail as you'd like. At a minimum, it must include information about the following:
  - Your eligibility for **YOUNG ADULT SERVICES**
  - Your health care options
  - Employment services
  - Secondary and post-secondary education and training
  - Obtaining and paying for housing
  - Budgeting for living expenses
  - Obtaining a credit report
  - Obtaining a driver's license
  - Registering for selective service
  - Any court fees associated with your name
  - Any benefits you're receiving and how to continue them
- ○ 14 days before your emancipation, your caseworker will ensure that you have all the required documentation to enroll in the Bridges program.
- ○ If you do not qualify for or do not want to enroll in Bridges, you still may be able to receive young adult **SERVICES** from your county agency after you turn 18. (See page 19.) These services are meant to complement your own efforts to be self-sufficient. Ideally, they will help you become eligible for Bridges so you can get additional supports toward independence.
- ○ You will receive a copy of your final transition plan, along with the following documents:
  - Your birth certificate
  - Your Social Security card
  - Your state ID and information about obtaining a driver's license
  - Your health and education records
  - A letter verifying that you emancipated from agency custody

AGE 18-21

If you emancipate from foster care, you can receive post-emancipation services. There are two options: Bridges or Young Adult Services. The chart below explains the differences.

	Young Adult Services	Bridges
Eligibility Requirements	You must have emancipated from the custody of a public children services agency—in Ohio or any other state—at age 18, 19 or 20. You must be younger than 21.	You must have emancipated from the custody of an Ohio public children services agency at age 18, 19 or 20. You must be younger than 21. You must be in school, working, participating in an employment program, or have a medical condition that prevents you from going to school or working.
Voluntary Participation Agreement	No. You must request services, but you don't have to sign a voluntary participation agreement.	Yes. You must sign a voluntary participation agreement indicating your willingness to participate and fulfill certain responsibilities.
Court Involvement	No	Yes. A court must determine that participating in Bridges would be in your best interest and ensure that Bridges staff make reasonable efforts to provide care and services.
Housing	Your county agency may be able to help pay for a variety of housing options, including college room and board.	Bridges can help pay for a variety of housing options, including college room and board.
Case Management	Young adult services are administered by county public children services agencies.	Bridges is administered by the Ohio Department of Job and Family Services through a contract with the Child and Family Health Collaborative of Ohio, LLC. The collaborative works in partnership with member agencies throughout the state.
Services	The following services may be available if you request assistance: • Academic support • Post-secondary educational support • Career preparation • Employment programs or vocational training • Budget and financial management • Housing education and home management • Health education and risk prevention • Mentoring, including being matched with a screened and trained adult • Supervised independent living • Education financial assistance These services are meant to complement your own efforts to be self-sufficient. Ideally, they will help you become eligible for Bridges so you can get additional supports toward independence.	Bridges can provide a wide range of supportive services tailored to your unique needs. Through regular meetings with a Bridges representative, you can develop goals, learn skills and access services related to everything from employment and education to health care and household maintenance. All services are designed to help you become a successful, self-sufficient adult. Most of these services fall into one of the following categories: housing, education, employment and well-being. You can opt in or out of Bridges any time up until your 21st birthday, as long as you're in school, working, participating in an employment program, or have a medical condition that prevents you from going to school or working.
More Information	Ask your county public children services agency.	Visit BridgesToSuccess.jfs.ohio.gov.

Education after Foster Care

Wait, More School?

Continuing your education after high school can help you get a good job, build a career, become financially independent, grow intellectually and build important social networks. It can mean freedom from the past and a future rich with possibilities. It may be your most important pathway to a career and personal success.

Talk to your caseworker, school guidance counselor and others about your plans for after high school. Also ask your caseworker about Ohio Reach, an organization with liaisons at various college campuses across Ohio who can help you enroll and stay in school. Whether you are interested in vocational training, a community college, a

two-year certificate program or a four-year degree program, a higher education option is available for you. Aim high, and take advantage of it!

As a current or former foster youth, you may be eligible for financial assistance. Be sure to ask about and complete the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA). When you fill out the FAFSA, be sure to mark if any of the following applies to you:

- You were an orphan, a ward of the court or in foster care any time after your 13th birthday.
- You are an emancipated minor or in legal guardianship, as determined by the court in the state where you legally live.
- You are a verified, unaccompanied youth who is homeless or at risk of homelessness and self-reporting.

Find important dates and deadlines at **fafsa.ed.gov**.

The **EDUCATION AND TRAINING VOUCHER (ETV) PROGRAM** also provides federal financial assistance for youth who aged out of foster care or who were adopted after age 16. Up to $5,000 is available to eligible youth each year until they reach age 26. To qualify, you must enroll in a full-time post-secondary education or training program by age 20, continue to be enrolled, and make satisfactory progress. You can use the funding to pay for tuition, room and board, student loan repayment, books and supplies, transportation, and other related expenses. For more information, visit **fc2sprograms.org/ohio**.

Of course, college isn't the only pathway to a successful career. Ohio ranks second in the nation in the number of apprentices. Apprentices earn while they learn, and when they graduate, they can earn as much as $60,000 a year, all without incurring student loan debt. Ohio has apprenticeships in more than 200 occupations, in fields as diverse as aerospace, construction, energy, health care, manufacturing and computer programming. For more information, talk to your caseworker or visit **Apprentice.Ohio.gov**.

The Cuyahoga County Division of Children and Family Services honored seven graduating seniors who received full academic and room-and-board scholarships to Cleveland State University.

Frequently Asked Questions

Can I have a social life?

You are encouraged to maintain relationships with your friends and family members while in care. However, there may be restrictions about how you can contact them while you are in custody. These restrictions are in place to protect you and should be outlined in your case plan. Your caseworker should give your caregiver a list of people who are approved to have contact with you.

Your caregiver is required to know where you are and who you are with at all times. It is important to talk to your caregiver about your desires and plans for your social life. As part of the agency's normalcy policy, your caregiver also should help you be involved in community, school, recreational and cultural activities with your peers, if you want to be involved in them. This includes providing transportation for you.

Can I get a driver's license while in care? Who can help me with my driver's ed?

Each county PCSA has its own policies and procedures about whether a youth in its custody may receive driver's education and/or a driver's license. If you do not know the policies for your PCSA, please ask your caregiver and/or caseworker.

Will I receive an allowance while in care?

You are allowed to receive an allowance while in foster care. But remember that substitute caregivers are just like birth families in the sense that some may give an allowance, and others may not. Talk to your caregiver about receiving an allowance. If some youth in your home receive an allowance and you do not, talk to your caseworker. If you receive independent living services or may soon be emancipated, you may receive a **STIPEND**. Your county agency can offer you a stipend or a cash incentive as a reward for meeting one of your independent living goals.

Can I work while I am in foster care?

You are allowed to work if you obey state labor laws and if your caregiver and/or PCSA gives you permission. In Ohio, young people ages 14 to 18 may work with certain restrictions and if they have a work permit showing that they have permission.

To apply for a work permit, you will need your birth certificate, Social Security card and a letter from a doctor saying you are healthy enough to work. Ask your caseworker or caregiver how to apply for a work permit.

Overcoming Obstacles

Where would I lay my head down every night?

Will my biological family be OK without me?

Will I be treated the same as everyone else living in the foster home?

What will happen to me in the future?

Foster care could be a good support or a bad experience. It all depends on what you make of it. Think or say what you want, but it is a good system if you let it be good.

Tricidty, Tuscarawas County

Frequently Asked Questions, CONT.

What is permanency planning?

Your caseworker is required to develop a case plan with you and your biological family that outlines how your case may be closed or how you may be reunified. This is known as permanency planning. One aspect of permanency planning is called concurrent planning. Concurrent planning means that while the agency works toward reunification for you and your family, it also must explore other permanency options, in case your family can't complete the activities needed for reunification. This could include kinship placement, adoption or a planned permanent living arrangement. If you are 16 or older, you may request a planned permanent living arrangement if you don't want the court to end your parents' parental rights. If the court agrees, you will emancipate from foster care when you turn 18. Permanency planning is important because it can help you know what to expect for the future.

What happens if I run away?

Running away is sometimes called being absent without leave, or AWOL. It usually is defined as leaving your placement without permission for an extended period of time, without letting your caregiver or caseworker know where you will be. If you are AWOL, your county agency is required to immediately report it to law enforcement and the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children. When you also miss school without an excuse, this is known as **TRUANCY**.

If you run away, you may not be able to return to your placement. After running away, you may need to be placed in a more restrictive living environment, such a locked facility. In addition, the local juvenile court could issue a warrant for your arrest. If this happens, you may be placed in a juvenile **DETENTION CENTER** and considered an "unruly delinquent." In addition to these consequences, running away puts you at greater risk for human trafficking, sexual or physical abuse, or even death. If you feel like running away, tell someone you trust instead. Often, it will benefit you in the long term.

Do I have health insurance?

Yes. All youth in foster care and all young adults who emancipate from foster care receive their health insurance services through Medicaid managed care plans. Your county agency will make sure you have coverage while in custody. If you were in custody at age 18, you remain eligible for coverage until you are 26, and you can choose the managed care plan that best fits your needs. Your county agency will help you complete your enrollment information before you emancipate. Your eligibility will be reviewed every 12 months. If you have changes that may affect your eligibility during that 12-month period, you must notify your caseworker within 10 days of the change.

What documents should I have when I turn 18?

Prior to emancipation, your caseworker should make sure you have the following documents:

- Your birth certificate
- Your Social Security card
- Your state ID and information about obtaining a driver's license
- Your health and education records
- A letter verifying that you emancipated from agency custody

You also should make sure you have your lifebook, information about post-emancipation services, and information about the Bridges program.

Frequently Asked Questions, CONT.

What if I have problems with my caseworker or substitute caregiver?

It's always best to first try to talk about any concerns directly with the person you're having the problem with, whether it's your caseworker or caregiver. If you've tried that and still feel like the problem hasn't been solved, follow the chain of command for resolving your issue. See "What is Advocacy" on page 17 for more information.

Does my PCSA pay for college?

Your county agency may be able to help pay your college tuition and related expenses using federal "Chafee" and/or "TANF Independent Living" funds. First, they will help you and your caregiver complete your FAFSA and apply for Education and Training Vouchers (see page 23). If there is a gap between what those cover and what you can afford, they might be able to help. These funds can be used to purchase books, fees, supplies and dorm/household items, as well as any needed technology, such as a smart phone, laptop or printer. Your county agency may be able to pay you a stipend, or a reward for achieving goals.

Transitions

Brianna, Montgomery County

The transition from high school to college can be exciting, scary, overwhelming and so much more. My transition incorporated many of these emotions. A few days after I graduated, the cousin who had taken guardianship of me when I was 14 put me out of the house. I had already decided to attend Wright State in the fall and live on campus. I stayed with my biological sister until move-in day. The moving around made my transition to college quite stressful.

I was ecstatic when move-in day arrived. It was the most exciting day of my life. I was moving into my OWN dorm! No one could tell me to leave or make me feel as if they did not want me there. My foster mother (who also was my former adoption recruiter) moved me in and got me settled. I decided to get a single dorm room because I wanted my own space. This decision had its pros and cons, but I still think it was the best decision for me personally.

Being on campus and attending college classes was very confusing for me at first. I had to get used to the flow of things and to being one little person surrounded by such a big campus and so many other students. One of my greatest issues in college was watching students go home on the weekends and over breaks. I knew that going home was not the same in their eyes as it was in mine. Most of these students went home to their old bedrooms and their forever families. It was quite different for me. My dorm was my home. Everything I owned was in my dorm, and this was the only place I could call mine. This was not an easy transition, but it was the best transition I have experienced so far.

Resources for Youth

Finding Resources

One of the biggest challenges you will face as a youth in foster care is finding resources. Because resources change quickly, and because you may or may not have this handbook when you emancipate, we'll start by telling you how to locate resources yourself. Then we'll provide specific phone numbers and web links. Whether you have this guide or not, if you remember these four things, you will be successful:

- Visit your local OhioMeansJobs center and/or county department of job and family services. You can find these local agencies at **jfs.ohio.gov/county**.
- Talk to your caseworker or independent living worker. All 88 county PCSAs provide post-emancipation services to youth ages 18 to 21. This does not mean you must come back into custody.
- You may need a "referral" from a county agency for some resources.
- Different parts of Ohio offer different resources.

Your local OhioMeansJobs center or county department of job and family services can help you with things like financial assistance, job training, finding a job, Medicaid, food assistance and more. Be sure to talk about these things with your caseworker before you leave care.

You may have to fight to get the resources you need. Asking more than one person for help or information is OK. If you know you are eligible for something but are having trouble getting it, it's OK to refuse to take "no" for an answer, as long as you do it in a polite and nonconfrontational manner. Remember that chain of command and persistence are key. See "What is Advocacy" on page 17 for more guidance on this.

We tried to make the following list of phone numbers and websites as comprehensive as possible, but we may have missed some. Check out pcsao.org/programs/ohio-youth-advisory-board for others.

Hotlines

Crisis Text Line
Text "4HOPE" to 741741
Free, trained counselors avalable 24/7

GLBT National Help Center Youth Talkline
(800) 246-PRIDE (246-7743)

Ohio Child Abuse Reporting Hotline
(855) OH-CHILD (642-4453)

Medicaid Consumer Hotline
(800) 324-8680 or **medicaid.ohio.gov**

National Runaway Hotline
(800) RUNAWAY (786-2929)

National Suicide Prevention Lifeline
(800) 273-TALK (8255) or (800) SUICIDE (784-2433)

National Sexual Assault Hotline
(800) 656-HOPE (4673)

The Trevor Project – 24-hour hotline for LGBT youth
(866) 4-U-TREVOR (488-7386)

Human Trafficking Help

National Human Trafficking Resource Center
polarisproject.org
(888) 373-7888; text "Help" or "Info" to BeFree (233733)

Central Ohio: Central Ohio Rescue and Restore
centralohiorescueandrestore.org
(614) 285-HELP (4357) or (888) 3737-888

Northeast Ohio: Northern Tier Anti-Human Trafficking Consortium International Services Center
iibuff.org
(716) 883-1900

Northwest Ohio: Crime Victim Services
CrimeVictimServices.org
Allen County: (877) 867-7273
Putnam County: (877) 274-7471

Southwest Ohio: Salvation Army of Southwest Ohio and Northeast Kentucky
endslaverycincinnati.org
(513) 800-1863 or (513) 762-5658

Resources for Youth, CONT.

Miscellaneous Web Links

BridgesToSuccess.jfs.ohio.gov
A voluntary program for young adults who leave foster care in Ohio at ages 18, 19 or 20 and who are in school, working, participating in an employment program, or have a medical condition that prevents them from going to school or working.

fafsa.ed.gov
Website for the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA). See page 23.

FosterActionOhio.org
Foster Action Ohio is a statewide organization of former foster youth. Ohio activities include hosting regional Thanksgiving reunions for foster care teens and alumni, Suits for Success, and the Pay It Forward program. You can find information about the OHIO Youth Advisory Board here, too.
Email: **staff@fosteractionohio.org**.

FosterActionOhio.org/yab
The is the website for the OHIO Youth Advisory Board, an organization for youth ages 14 to 24 who have experienced foster care.

FosterClub.com
FosterClub is the national network for young people in foster care. This site has many resources for young people, including internships, advocacy opportunities and a forum to connect to other young adults who are or were in foster care.

FosterFocusMag.com
An in-depth, monthly look at the foster care industry, with stories written by doctors, attorneys, authors and former foster youth.

ItGetsBetter.org
The It Gets Better Project's website offers a variety of resources for LGBTQ youth.

jfs.ohio.gov/owd/CCMEP
CCMEP is an innovative program that can help low-income 14- to 24-year-olds build career paths, find employment and break the cycle of poverty.

law.capital.edu/FYAC
Capital Law School's Foster Youth Advocacy Center provides a free legal clinic for current and former foster youth ages 16 to 25 who need help with understanding legal papers; accessing health care, public benefits, housing or insurance; expunging criminal records; and/or obtaining a Social Security card, birth certificate or other personal documents.

MHA.Ohio.gov/Supports/Crisis-Text-Line
Throughout Ohio, individuals can text "4hope" to 741 741 to be connected to a trained crisis counselor within five minutes.

Making Healthy Choices
This is a guide for youth in foster care to help them understand psychotropic medications. Visit **youth.gov/feature-article/making-healthy-choices-guide-psychotropic-medications-youth-foster-care** to download a copy.

OhioBenefits.org
This website connects to the Ohio Benefit Bank (OBB). Here you can apply for benefits (including Medicaid), keep track of important documents and file your income taxes.

OhioHigherEd.org
Visit this website to learn more about the Ohio College Opportunity Grant program, which offers grant money to eligible low-income students to help them pay for college.

OhioMeansJobs.com
Online employment and career center, where you can look for jobs, create and post a resume, and explore careers. You can even practice interviewing and take free online trainings. From the home page, click on the image of the cardinal in a graduation cap.

RepresentMag.org
A monthly magazine for youth in foster care, written and edited by youth.

RhondaSciortino.com
Rhonda Sciortino is a former foster youth, business owner and a child welfare advocate.

statevoucher.org
This website provides information about the federal Education and Training Voucher Program, which offers up to $5,000 a year for eligible former foster youth enrolled in full-time post-secondary education or training programs.

Glossary/Definitions

ABUSE: When someone is directly and intentionally harmed. Types of abuse include the following:

- **Physical abuse**: Any non-accidental incident that results in marks, bruises or injuries. This includes injuries resulting from excessive corporal punishment.
- **Sexual abuse**: When nonconsensual sexual contact of any kind occurs.
- **Emotional abuse**: Any kind of mental injury. An example would be a youth who experiences repeated negative comments about himself or herself, or is blamed for a family's problems.

ADOPTION: When a court grants parental rights for a child to a new parent or parents. This can occur only if the birth parents agree to give up their parental rights or if their rights have been terminated by a court.

ADVOCACY: The support or promotion of a person or cause. Many people involved in the child welfare system advocate for children and their families. Self-advocacy is when someone advocates for his or her own rights

AGE OUT/AGING OUT: When a youth reaches an age where he or she can leave foster care and live as a legal adult. This age is typically 18. However, some PCSAs may maintain custody beyond age 18 if the youth has not earned a high school diploma or GED or under other special circumstances.

BIOLOGICAL FAMILY: Sometimes called "birth family," this is the group of people a youth is related to by blood. It includes the mother who gave birth to the youth, the man who fathered the youth, and any brothers or sisters born to the youth's mother and/or father.

BRIDGES: A voluntary program for young adults who leave foster care in Ohio at ages 18, 19 or 20 and who are in school, working, participating in an employment program, or have a medical condition that prevents them from going to school or working.

CCMEP: Comprehensive Case Management and Employment Program; an innovative program that can help low-income 14- to 24-year-olds build career paths, find employment and break the cycle of poverty.

CASE PLAN: A written document that outlines the goals that must be achieved in order for a youth in foster care to be returned home and for the family's case to close.

CASE PLAN MEETING: A meeting between a youth and his or her caseworker and biological family to discuss the family's case plan. The initial case plan meeting outlines the plan, and follow-up meetings check the family's progress.

CASEWORKER: An individual who is employed by a public agency to provide supportive or protective services to children, families and substitute caregivers.

CORPORAL PUNISHMENT: The use of physical discipline such as spanking, hitting, whipping or beating. Ohio law forbids foster caregivers from using corporal punishment.

COURT APPOINTED SPECIAL ADVOCATE (CASA): A volunteer who a court assigns to a youth to represent the youth's best interests. A CASA researches the youth's case and speaks at court hearings, case plan reviews and other important events. He or she should ask for the youth's opinions, but their opinions may differ.

CREDIT REPORT: The results of a credit review, also known as a financial rating, from one of the three main credit reporting bureaus: Experian, TransUnion or Equifax. This information is important if you want to apply for a car loan or rent an apartment.

DEFENSE ATTORNEY: A lawyer who represents the defending party in a court case. The defending party is the side with charges brought against it. In many child welfare cases, the biological parent(s) is (are) the defending party.

DELINQUENCY: When a youth has broken a law or laws, including truancy.

DEPENDENCY: When a parent is unable to care for a child through no fault of the parent's. Reasons for dependency could include mental illness or alcohol or drug addiction.

DETENTION CENTER: A secured facility where a youth may await a hearing if he or she has been arrested and accused of a crime.

Glossary/Definitions, CONT.

EDUCATION AND TRAINING VOUCHER (ETV) PROGRAM: A federally funded, state-administered program for youth who have aged out of foster care or who were adopted after the age of 16. It provides financial assistance for higher education or vocational training.

EMANCIPATION: When a youth ages out of foster care and gains the legal rights of an adult. In Ohio, there is no legal process for any youth under the age of 18 to be emancipated.

EVERY STUDENT SUCCEEDS ACT (ESSA): A new federal law that allows caseworkers to access educational records, making it easier for youth in foster care to change schools.

EXIT INTERVIEW: The interview between a youth and the youth's caseworker, which must occur within seven days of the youth leaving a foster care placement. The interview evaluates the placement to ensure it will be safe for future youth in care.

FAMILY TEAM MEETING: A meeting between the youth in foster care, the caseworker and the foster family at the beginning of a placement.

FINAL TRANSITION PLAN: A written document that includes a young adult's proposals for housing, education, employment, health care and financial management after foster care

FOSTER PARENT: An adult who has completed training and been issued a certificate by ODJFS allowing them to provide substitute care for youth.

FREE APPLICATION FOR FEDERAL STUDENT AID (FAFSA): A form used to apply for federal financial aid to attend college and/or vocational schools.

GUARDIAN AD LITEM (GAL): A lawyer appointed by a court to represent and protect the best interests of a youth.

INDEPENDENT LIVING CASEWORKER: A caseworker who helps foster youth age 14 and older prepare for independent living.

INDEPENDENT LIVING PLAN: A plan outlining how a youth in foster care will learn the skills needed before emancipation. The plan is based on the youth's life skills assessment and what the youth wants to do after emancipation, such as find a job or attend college or vocational school.

INDEPENDENT LIVING SERVICES: Services to help youth 14 and older in foster care prepare for self-sufficiency.

INDEPENDENT LIVING SKILLS: Knowledge and abilities needed to be self-sufficient.

INDEPENDENT LIVING SKILLS ASSESSMENT: A questionnaire that youth in foster care complete at age 14 to determine which life skills they have and need to develop. Two common assessments are the Annie E. Casey and Daniel Memorial tools.

INDIVIDUAL EDUCATION PLAN (IEP): A plan developed through a school for a youth who receives special education services.

JUDGE: A public officer who hears and makes decisions on cases in a court of law. Also known as a magistrate.

LAWYER: Someone who represents a person in a court of law; also called an attorney.

LIFEBOOK: A book maintained by a youth in foster care and his or her substitute caregiver(s). A lifebook may contain pictures, stories and mementos about the youth, his or her biological and/or foster family, and life in general. This book stays with the youth between placements and after emancipation.

MANAGED CARE PLANS: A type of health insurance provided through contracts with health care organizations

MEDICAID: A public health insurance program that pays medical bills of certain groups of people, including youth in foster care. See page 10.

MENTOR: A trusted adult who can provide guidance, support and help when needed. A mentor can help teach professional, educational and/or life skills. A mentor could be a trained professional, or the relationship could be more informal. Youth advisory board members often serve as mentors to other youth in foster care.

NATIONAL YOUTH IN TRANSITION DATABASE (NYTD): A survey given to randomly selected youth in care at age 17 to evaluate the effectiveness of independent living services. Those chosen are asked to take follow-up surveys at ages 19 and 21.

NEGLECT: When a parent is able to care for a child but does not; for example, when a parent fails to provide proper food, shelter, clothing, medical care or supervision.

Glossary/Definitions, CONT.

NORMALCY POLICIES: An agency's guidelines for foster parents regarding "normal and beneficial" activities that youth in their care may participate in.

OHIO DEPARTMENT OF JOB AND FAMILY SERVICES (ODJFS): The state agency that supervises county agencies serving youth in foster care, including agencies that operate residential or group homes, residential centers and other programs.

PERMANENCY GOAL: The optimal future living situation for a youth in foster care, as outlined in the case plan. The permanency goal often is reunification. When reunification isn't possible, the goal may be adoption or emancipation.

PERMANENCY ROUNDTABLE: Group of people working together to help find permanent homes for youth in foster care. The youth themselves are participants.

PERMANENT CUSTODY: When a PCSA is given custody of a youth in foster care, after a court determines that he or she should not return to his or her biological family. A youth can remain in PCSA custody until being adopted or emancipating.

PLANNED PERMANENT LIVING ARRAGEMENT (PPLA): When a PCSA is granted custody of a youth 16 or older, but parents' rights still are maintained.

POST-EMANCIPATION SERVICES: Services provided to young adults who have emancipated from foster care to help support their own efforts at self-sufficiency.

PROBATION: An alternative to detention in a detention center if a youth has been found guilty of a crime; if a judge sentences a youth to probation, he or she will be required to do certain things and have ongoing contact with a probation officer.

PROSECUTOR: A lawyer who represents the prosecuting party in a court case. The prosecuting party is the side bringing charges. In many child welfare cases, a county agency is the prosecutor.

PUBLIC CHILDREN SERVICES AGENCY (PCSA): An agency that administers a county's child welfare services, including foster care and adoption. A PCSA holds legal custody of a youth while he or she is in foster care. A PCSA also investigates allegations of abuse, neglect and dependency.

PUBLIC DEFENDER: A defense lawyer appointed to represent someone who can't afford to hire his or her own lawyer.

READINESS REVIEW: A meeting between a youth in care and his or her caseworker to assess independent living skills.

RESPITE: When youth in foster care briefly stay in an alternative foster care setting before returning to their regular foster home; this is sometimes called "going to respite."

REUNIFICATION: The return of a youth in PCSA custody back to his or her biological family.

SEMI-ANNUAL REVIEW (SAR): A meeting held every six months to review a family's case plan. The youth, his or her biological family, caseworker, substitute caregiver(s), CASA, GAL and others are invited.

SOCIAL SECURITY CARD: A card with an identifying number assigned by the federal government to U.S. citizens who apply for them so that any wages earned can be recorded. Social Security numbers are needed to get a job, to collect Social Security benefits and to receive some other government services.

SPECIAL EDUCATION SERVICES: Additional services provided by schools to help eligible students with their academic work.

STIPEND: Money youth in care may receive as an incentive or reward if they participate in an independent living activity or attain a goal.

SUBSTANCE ABUSE: Addiction or overuse of alcohol and/or legal or illegal drugs.

SUBSTITUTE CAREGIVER: A person or facility caring for a youth in PCSA custody. Can be a foster parent, kinship caregiver or group home.

SUBSTITUTE CARE SETTING: A living arrangement where youth are placed when they cannot safely remain with their biological families. Sometimes called a "placement." Types of substitute care include the following:

- **Kinship care**: When a relative or close family friend assumes the full-time care of a child. The kinship caregiver must meet certain requirements and be approved by the PCSA.
- **Foster care**: Care in a family home setting with parents who have completed training and been certified by ODJFS.

Glossary/Definitions, CONT.

- **Treatment foster home**: A type of foster home for youth with special needs, in which the parents have completed specialized training.
- **Residential or group home**: A supervised living arrangement for multiple youth in care when individual placements cannot be found.
- **Transitional living**: When several older youth in care live together with adult support to prepare for independent living.
- **Independent living**: When a youth ages out of foster care and lives in his or her own residence as a legal adult.

TEMPORARY CUSTODY: When a PCSA assumes responsibility for youth who cannot safely remain with their biological families. Youth in temporary custody are placed in substitute care settings.

THERAPIST: A person licensed to help others address mental health or substance abuse issues; sometimes called a counselor.

TREATMENT PLAN: A written strategy developed by a therapist or clinician to address a youth's mental health or substance abuse issues; sometimes called a service plan.

TREATMENT TEAM MEETING: A discussion to address a youth's treatment plan for mental health or substance abuse issues; may include the youth, the caseworker, the substitute caregiver and one or more health care professionals.

TRUANCY: Leaving school without permission or not attending school as required.

VISITATION PLAN: Parameters developed by the youth and his or her caseworker, biological family and juvenile court, outlining how often the youth can visit his or her biological family, how long the visits can be, where the visits can be held, who may visit, and if the visits need to be supervised or restricted.

YOUNG ADULT SERVICES: Post-emancipation services provided by county public children services agencies to young adults who have emancipated from foster care and are not yet 21.

YOUTH-CENTERED PERMANENCY ROUNDTABLE: Group of people working together to help find permanent homes for youth in foster care. The youth themselves are participants.

Personal Resources

MOTHER: _____
Address: _____
Phone Number: _____
Email: _____

FATHER: _____
Address: _____
Phone Number: _____
Email: _____

FOSTER PARENT: _____
Address: _____
Phone Number: _____
Email: _____

CASEWORKER: _____
Address: _____
Phone Number: _____
Email: _____

CASEWORKER'S SUPERVISOR: _____
Address: _____
Phone Number: _____
Email: _____

INDEPENDENT LIVING CASEWORKER:
_____
Address: _____
Phone Number: _____
Email: _____

THERAPIST: _____
Address: _____
Phone Number: _____
Email: _____

CASA/GAL: _____
Address: _____
Phone Number: _____
Email: _____

ATTORNEY: _____
Address: _____
Phone Number: _____
Email: _____

HEALTH CARE PROVIDER: _____
Address: _____
Phone Number: _____
Email: _____

DENTIST: _____
Address: _____
Phone Number: _____
Email: _____

GUIDANCE COUNSELOR: _____
Address: _____
Phone Number: _____
Email: _____

MENTOR: _____
Address: _____
Phone Number: _____
Email: _____

ADULT SUPPORTER/OTHER: _____
Address: _____
Phone Number: _____
Email: _____

Notes

Use this space to jot down notes.

Notes

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Notes

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Foster Youth Rights Handbook Signature Page

YOUTH COPY

Each youth age 14 and older will receive a Foster Youth Rights Handbook. The youth should be given the opportunity to ask questions about the handbook during the caseworker's or probation officer's visit.

I have received the handbook.

_____ _____
Youth Signature Date **RECEIVED**

I have reviewed the handbook with my caseworker or probation officer.

_____ _____
Youth Signature Date **REVIEWED**

Youth refused or was unable to sign.

_____ _____
Substitute Caregiver Signature Date **SIGNED**

- - - -

OHIO ADMINISTRATIVE CODE

5101:2-5-35 CHILDREN'S RIGHTS

The right to:

1. Enjoy freedom of thought, conscience and religion, or to abstain from the practice of religion.
2. Reasonable enjoyment of privacy.
3. Have his or her opinions be heard and included, to the greatest extent possible, when any decisions are being made affecting his or her life.
4. Receive appropriate and reasonable adult guidance, support and supervision.
5. Be free from physical abuse and inhumane treatment.
6. Be protected from all forms of sexual exploitation.
7. Receive adequate and appropriate medical care.
8. Receive adequate and appropriate food, clothing and housing.
9. His or her own money and personal property in accordance with his or her service or case plan.
10. Live in clean, safe surroundings.
11. Participate in an appropriate educational program.
12. Communicate with family, friends and significant others whom he or she is living apart from, in accordance with his or her service or case plan.
13. Be taught to fulfill appropriate responsibilities to him- or herself and to others.

OHIO ADMINISTRATIVE CODE

5101:2-5-35 CHILDREN'S RIGHTS

The right to:

1. Enjoy freedom of thought, conscience and religion, or to abstain from the practice of religion.
2. Reasonable enjoyment of privacy.
3. Have his or her opinions be heard and included, to the greatest extent possible, when any decisions are being made affecting his or her life.
4. Receive appropriate and reasonable adult guidance, support and supervision.
5. Be free from physical abuse and inhumane treatment.
6. Be protected from all forms of sexual exploitation.
7. Receive adequate and appropriate medical care.
8. Receive adequate and appropriate food, clothing and housing.
9. His or her own money and personal property in accordance with his or her service or case plan.
10. Live in clean, safe surroundings.
11. Participate in an appropriate educational program.
12. Communicate with family, friends and significant others whom he or she is living apart from, in accordance with his or her service or case plan.
13. Be taught to fulfill appropriate responsibilities to him- or herself and to others.

Mike DeWine, Governor
State of Ohio

Kimberly Hall, Director
Department of Job and Family Services

JFS 01677 (Rev. 2/2019)

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