

# What Rights Do I Have While in Foster Care?

Federal law, Texas law and Minimum Standards ensure that you have rights while you are in the conservatorship of the Texas Department of Family and Protective Services (DFPS). This handout gives you an overview of your rights and what you can expect from DFPS. You will be required to sign a more detailed copy of your rights and may receive help in understanding them, if needed.

***While in foster care, you have the right to:***

## **Safety and Care**

- Be told why you are in foster care and what will happen to you and your family while in foster care.
- Be told what the rules are.
- Be treated with respect and receive good care in a safe place.
- Not be abused, neglected, exploited, or harassed.
- Receive fair treatment.
- Have privacy for personal needs.

## **Family & Other Contacts**

- Live with your siblings if they are in foster care and if not, to be told why you cannot live together.
- Visit and talk on the phone with your family, teachers, and friends unless prohibited by the court.

## **Have a Normal Life**

- Be spoken to in your own language when possible.
- Go to school.
- Choose a religion or choose not to practice a religion.
- To live a normal life and be included in foster family activities.
- Decide what outside activities you want to participate in.

- Be yourself and choose your friends.
- Privacy.
- Work, keep the money you earn, and have a bank account.
- Eat healthy foods.
- Choose appropriate clothing that you like.
- Have your personal things protected and respected.

## **Discipline**

- Be free of unreasonable punishment, including being denied food, mail, phone calls, or family visits as punishment, or threats of punishment such as physical harm or loss of placement.
- Be informed about behavior intervention policies.

## **Future Life Plans**

- Have my caseworker visit me once a month.
- Participate in meetings that discuss plans about your life.
- Have two people you know participate in meetings that discuss plans about your life.

- Receive and review copies of plans about your life.
- Receive information about services and benefits available to you when you age out of foster care.

## **Medical**

- Go to good doctors, dentists, eye doctors, and therapists.
- Be involved with decisions about your medical care.
- Not be forced to take unneeded or too much medication.

## **Legal/Courts**

- Contact your caseworker, your attorney, probation officer, CASA worker, or anyone else who can help with your case.
- Go to my court hearing and talk to the judge.

## **Records**

- Expect my records and personal information be kept private.
- At ages 16 and 18 receive my personal documents.
- Receive a copy of the CPS Rights of Children and Youth in Foster Care.

## **Complaints**

- Not be punished for making complaints.
- Make a report if you are not safe or are being treated unfairly.
- Receive contact information about Disability Rights of Texas for disability assistance.

## **IMPORTANT PHONE NUMBERS**

**1-800-252-5400**- DFPS' Texas Abuse and Neglect Hotline

**1-844-286-0769**- HHSC's Ombudsman for Children and Youth in Foster Care

**1-800-720-7777**- DFPS' Office of Consumer Affairs

**1-800-252-9108** - Disability Rights of Texas