

# COLORADO YOUTH IN FOSTER CARE

## **YOU HAVE RIGHTS TOO! Depending on your age, abilities, and permanency goal (the roadmap for your case), you have the right:**

- To stay with your parents or guardian, unless it is not safe or good for your well-being; otherwise the court will try to come up with a legal plan that is best for you and make sure you have the right services and supports to help you return home or be placed in another safe home permanently, as soon as possible.
- To have equal access to services and not be discriminated against or harassed based on your race or ethnicity; the country where you were born; your religion; your sex, sexual orientation, or gender identity; your mental or physical disability; or your HIV status.

### **Safety**

- To adult support and supervision in a safe place where you are respected
- Not to be abused in any way
- Not to be abandoned or locked in a room
- To have your court records kept private from people not a part of your case.
- If you are 15 or older, to access mental health therapy on your own

### **Placement**

- To be placed in a home that understands your needs and your story
- To be in a placement that is as least restrictive as possible (meaning it has the structure that meets your needs)
- To stay in the same school when you are removed from your home (unless it's not best for you)

### **Involvement in your Case**

- To have a guardian ad litem (GAL), who represents what's best for you in court
- To see your caseworker face-to-face once a month
- To communicate with anyone working on your case (like caseworkers, GALs, CASAs, probation officers, or other case supports)
- To attend court for your permanency hearing and talk with the Judge about what you want to have happen in your case (this can be in person, by letter, or by talking with your team)
- If you are 12 or older, to participate in your case, review your case plan, be told what's going on, and be included in decision-making meetings about your future (along with your family and other supporters)
- If you are 12 or older, to consent to your adoption. Adoption cannot happen without your agreement.
- If you are 14 or older, to choose 2 supportive people in your life (other than your foster parent or caseworker) to be a part of your case planning team

## Preparation for Emancipation

- To keep a bank account and be in charge of your own money if you are preparing to emancipate on your own
- To work and learn job skills
- To attend Chafee and other independent living programs (if you meet the program requirements)
- If you are 16 or older, to be informed about educational opportunities (like job-related training programs, college, financial aid, and scholarships)
- To have a free credit check done, have the report explained to you so that you understand it, and receive help in correcting any errors in your credit report.
- To receive your documents (if you turn 18 while in foster care and were in care for at least 6 months), including your certified birth certificate or green card, your social security card, your state ID or driver's license, your health records, your education records, and your tribal affiliation card if you are a member of an Indian tribe.

## Basic Needs

- To access healthy food
- To be given adequate clothing and toiletries
- To wear your own clothes
- To have a safe place to keep your stuff
- To be given allowance if appropriate
- To be able to go to the doctor, the eye doctor, the dentist, or a therapist
- To only have to take medicine that is actually prescribed by a doctor
- To access birth control from a doctor on your own at any age

## Relationships & Social Activities

- To make and receive private phone calls, and send and receive mail
- To go to religious services (like church) or choose not to go
- To live with or visit your siblings
- To go, and have a ride, to school, after-school activities, and programs
- To have friends and mentors outside of the foster care system and keep in touch with them

## Taking Action If You Think Your Rights Have Been Violated

- To ask questions about these rights and talk to social services and others about any concerns or violations without getting in trouble
- To talk about these concerns in private
- To complain about a violation to the Child Protection Ombudsman (an independent agency that investigates child welfare concerns) at <http://www.coloradocpo.org/complaint-form/>



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