Rights and Expectations for Children and Youth in Shelter or Foster Care

Provided by the Department of Children and Families and its Community Partners - August 2007

Your Rights and Expectations While in Shelter or Foster Care

This pocket-size booklet is being provided to you so you can always have this Important Information close to you. A more detailed explanation of your rights and expectations is available to you in a brochure you will receive when first placed in shelter or foster care, when moved to a new placement or upon your request.

You also have a place on the back of this booklet to write down your worker's name and telephone number and other important names and contact information you want to keep with you at all times.

Why We Wrote This Booklet

We wrote this booklet because your health and safety are very important to the state of Florida. You can help us make sure that you are safe and healthy by speaking up for yourself. In order to help you do that, we are providing this handy booklet and the larger brochure that goes with it so you can know what your rights are and what you can expect from the Department of Children and Families.

You can carry this booklet with you at all times.

Where do Your Rights Come From?

There are many sources for the rights of children and youth in the shelter and foster care of the Department of Children and Families. Some rights come from the United States Constitution, others from the Florida Constitution.

Florida statutes (laws) and federal statutes also tell the state how it is supposed to treat you.

My Commitment To You

As Secretary of the Department of Children and Families, I will do my best to make sure that everyone responsible for providing care and services to children in foster care will protect the rights listed here. I will also do my best to make sure that they meet the expectations listed after the rights.

Bob Butterworth
Secretary of the Department of Children and Families

You have a right to:

- Know Your Rights and Have Your Rights Respected
- Privacy and to Have Your Property Protected
- Live With Your Parents or Caregivers and in a Safe Place
- Understand Documents You Are Asked to Sign
- Complain about Your Care or Services
- Be Heard in Court and Have Representation in Court
- Medical Care, Education and Permanency
- To the Same Rights as Everyone Else

What you can expect from DCF:

SAFETY

- A Professional Investigation of Your Risk for Harm
- The Assistance of a Services Worker Who Will Visit You in Person No Less Than Every 30 Days
- The Department Will Keep Your Important Records
- A Plan for Your Safety and the Safety of Others
- Being Heard in Court and at Meetings

What you can expect from DCF:

SERVICES

- Appropriate Evaluations of Your Needs
- A Case Plan That Meets Your Needs
- Counseling
- Government Benefits You May Be Eligible to Receive
- A Trained Staff to Meet Your Needs

What you can expect from DCF:

LIVING SITUATION

- To Be Placed with Your Brothers and Sisters (Siblings)
- To Not Have to Move to Another Home Without Explanation
- To A Home with No More Than One Other Child Unless a Sibling
- Those Who Care for You Will Know Your History and Understand Your Needs

What you can expect from DCF:

PERMANENCY

- To Visit With Your Parents or Legal Caregivers
- To Have a Reunification Case Plan To Help You Return to Your Family If Safe To Do So
- To Have a Permanent Home and Family

EDUCATION

- To Go to the School Best for You
- To Receive the Services You Need and Participate in School Activities and Career Planning

What you can expect from DCF:

NORMALCY

- To Participate in Normal Activities for Your Age
- To Have Opportunities to Learn to Become Self Sufficient As An Adult
- To Receive Your Own Allowance, Have a Bank Account and a Job
- To Receive Independent Living Services for Youth Ages 13-17
- To Join Foster Youth Advocacy and Support Organizations

My Services Worker's Name & Phone Number

Other Important Numbers