FOSTER YOUTH BILL OF RIGHTS
A Guide to Your Rights in Foster Care

Personal Rights
You have the right to live in a safe, comfortable home where you are treated with respect and to have:
- enough clothes and healthy food
- clothing, grooming, and hygiene products that respect your culture and ethnicity
- a private place to keep your things
- a phone you can use to make private calls (unless a judge says you cannot)
- a caregiver that has special training on trauma and ways to help you

You have the right to:
- go/have to religious services and activities of your choice
- participate in cultural, social, ethnic, personal enrichment, and social activities
- fair and equal access to all available foster care services, placements, care, and benefits

No one can:
- lock you in a room or a building (unless you are in a community treatment facility)
- make you stay in juvenile hall because they can’t find a home for you
- use law enforcement as a threat or retaliation
- abuse you physically, sexually, emotionally, or exploit you for any reason
- punish you by physically hurting you for any reason
- look through your things unless they have a reasonable or legal reason
- treat you unfairly because of your race, ethnicity, ancestry, national origin, color, religion, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, and expression, mental or physical disability, HIV status, or membership in a federally recognized Indian tribe

Sexual Orientation, Gender Identity, and Expression (SOGIE)
You have rights to protect your SOGIE. You have the right to:
- be called by your chosen name and gender pronouns
- be protected from discrimination at school, work (unless the law says otherwise)
- choose and wear clothing, grooming, and hygiene products that respect your gender identity and expression
- be a caregiver, social worker/profession, and lawyer that have been trained on SOGIE and how to care for LGBTQ youth
- keep your SOGIE information private

Indian Child Welfare Act (ICWA)
Are you a member, or could you be a member, of a federally recognized Indian tribe?
You have the right to:
- live in a home of your relatives and extended family (if you are old enough)
- live in a place that reflects and keeps you connected to the cultural and social standards of your Tribe and/or tribal community
- keep your things and other belongings at a place that meets your needs
- participate in traditional Native American religious practices
- get help learning about your background as a member of an Indian tribe or Alaskan village
- get all the benefits that come from being a member of an Indian tribe or Alaskan village
- be free from discrimination and be recognized for your relationship with an Indian Tribe or Alaskan village
- have protections for your tribal relationship in your case plan

Education
You have school rights. You have the right to:
- go to school every day
- get help with school
- stay at your same school if it’s best for you
- go to a new school every 90 days if you are in an STRTP or in a therapeutic foster home
- get priority enrollment at California State Universities and community colleges
- have priority enrollment at California State Universities and community colleges
- access information about college and career education programs

Health
You have health rights. You have the right to:
- see a doctor, dentist, eye doctor, or talk to a counselor when you need to
- see a doctor who is gender affirming
- refuse to take any medicines, vitamins, or herbs, and no one can punish you for it
- keep your medical records private
- have the risks/benefits of treatment explained to you in a way that is easy to understand

Mental Health
You have mental health rights too. You have the right to:
- keep your mental health records private
- get gender affirming mental health treatment
- work with your doctor to safely stop taking psychotropic medication
- refuse to take psychotropic medication, and no one can punish you for it
- know about your diagnosis and understand treatment options
- get help with an alcohol or drug problem without permission
- get gender affirming services in a place that meets your needs
- if you are 12 years or older, choose your own doctor or counselor and make decisions about your mental health treatment

Sexual & Reproductive Health
You have sexual health rights too. You have the right to:
- get information about your sexual health in a way that you understand
- use or refuse services for birth control, condoms, other types of protection, and pregnancy care, including abortion, without telling an adult
- get healthcare services for sexual assault without telling an adult
- if you are 12 years or older, choose your own doctor or counselor and make decisions about preventing, testing, or treating STIs and HIV without permission from any adult

Children and Family Team (CFT)
You have the right to:
- request a CFT meeting when any changes are going to be made to your case plan

Family and Social Connections
You have the right to:
- visit and contact your parents, siblings, and other family members in private (unless a judge says you cannot)
- contact people who are not in the foster care system (like friends, church members, teachers, and others), unless a judge says you cannot

Preparing for Adulthood and Money Management
You have the right to do some things on your own. You have the right to:
- have an allowance
- have your own bank account (unless your case plan says you cannot)
- learn job skills for your age
- work (unless the law says you are too young)
- earn, save, and manage your money (unless your case plan says you cannot)
- go to independent Living Program (If you are old enough)
- begin at age 14, get a credit report every year from 3 major reporting agencies and have help fixing any issues

Communications
You have the right to:
- use a phone to make and get confidential (private) calls
- use a computer and the internet
- privately use email, text messages, or other electronic communication
- send and receive unopened mail

These rights can be changed if there is a safety concern. Only a judge can take these away or stop them if you or someone else is in danger.

You have the right to contact the following people in private, and no one can stop you or punish you for speaking with them:
- your social worker/profession officer
- your lawyer
- service providers
- foster youth advocates and Court Appointed Special Advocates (CASA)
- Education Rights Holder
- Tribe (if you have one)
- Office of Foster Care Ombudsperson (OFCO)
- Community Care Licensing Division (CCL)

Records
You have the right to see and get a free copy of the following until you are 26:
- medical records
- school records
- juvenile court records
- educational records

Who to call about my rights
California Foster Care
Ombudsperson
Helpline: 1-877-846-1602
Website: www.fosteryouthhelp.ca.gov
Email: fosteryouthhelp@dss.ca.gov

Community Care Licensing Division
Helpline: 1-844-538-8766
Email: letalknow@dss.ca.gov

For more information on your rights, visit: www.fosteryouthhelp.ca.gov