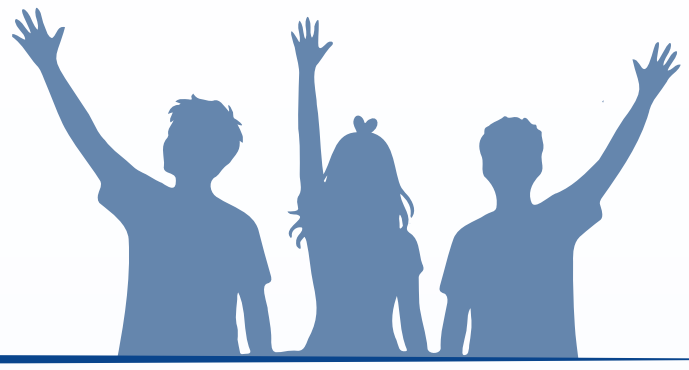
MASSACHUSETTS DEPARTMENT OF Children & Families

FOSTER CHILD BILL OF RIGHTS



The Foster Child Bill of Rights is a law in Massachusetts that tells children in foster care about their basic rights. That means you should feel safe and respected while you are in foster care, and you must have access to the same experiences other kids your age does. The law also says that the Department of Children and Families (DCF) has to give you information about the foster care bill of rights and an adult has to explain it to you.

If you think DCF is not respecting your rights, or you do not feel safe in foster care, you can and should speak up! You can call DCF and talk to a person called an Ombudsman. An Ombudsman's job is to listen to people who have problems with DCF. Or you can talk to someone at the Office the Child Advocate (OCA), who also helps kids in foster care. You may also share your complaint with DCF in writing. To read the bill, visit MGL c. 119, s. 23E.

YOUR BASIC RIGHTS:

- To live in a safe, caring place that meets your needs with people who can help you with hard things you have been through.
- To have enough healthy food, clothes that match the season, personal items to take care of your hair and body, and things that are important to your religion, culture and who you are as a person.
- To see your social worker at least once a month and talk with them privately. DCF will give you the area office phone number and email address for your social worker and their supervisor.
- To have a safe place for your own things, your own space and your own private time.
- To express and celebrate your race, language, religion, disability, gender and who you love.
- To spend time with your family in person and to keep in touch with your parents by phone, video, letters, email or texts. Adults will help you with this, if it's safe.
- To keep speaking the language you know and have help understanding what is happening in your life.
- To have your own attorney who must tell you about court hearings and about what happened in court. You can attend court if you want.
- To be in the same foster home as your siblings whenever possible or, have regular visits and contact.
- To have a plan for a safe, permanent home as soon as possible. This may mean going home, living with relatives, adoption, or another forever plan.

YOUR RIGHTS TO HEALTHCARE, EDUCATION, AND WELL-BEING:

- To see a doctor, dentist, therapist, or other health care provider when you need to and to receive gender-affirming health care.
- You have the right to stay in the last school you were in and participate in after-school activities, unless a different school would be better for you.
- If you have a disability, to have tools, help, and changes you need to live safely.
- To work with DCF on planning for your future, including finding people who are like family to support you into adulthood.

YOUR RIGHTS IF YOU TURN 18 IN FOSTER CARE:

- To begin transition planning with your social worker that includes housing, school, work and other basic needs at least one year before you turn 18.
- To be offered the chance to stay with DCF when you turn 18, and if you do leave at 18 or older, be able to return to DCF and receive voluntary services at any time up until you turn 22.
- To be told about help that's available to you for school, college, jobs, housing, money, and other needs as you get older. DCF will help you find where you can get these opportunities.
- To receive official documents like your birth certificate and copies of your health and school records from DCF.

QUESTIONS OR CONCERNS

DCF Ombudsman's Office
Phone: 617-748-2444
Submit a question, concern or issue to DCF
Visit the DCF Ombudsman's webpage

Office of the Child Advocate (OCA)
Phone: 617-979-8360
Submit a concern to OCA
Visit the OCA Complaint Line webpage