



*be  
respected*

## in foster care...

*You should live a life free  
from abuse and discrimination.*

**No one should:**

- lock you in a room.
- abuse you physically, sexually, or emotionally for **any** reason.
- punish you by physically hurting you for any reason.
- look through your things (unless they have a good *and* legal reason).
- discriminate against you because of your sex, race, color, religion, sexual orientation, gender identity or for any other reason. If you are lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, or questioning youth, your rights and protections include not being subjected to discrimination or harassment on the basis of your actual, or perceived, sexual orientation or gender identity.
- make you to participate in any type of sexual activities by force, intimidation, or coercion, or in exchange for, or a promise of money, goods, or services.

**Contact your Family Service Worker  
if you have concerns about the way  
you are being treated.**

*This list was developed with help from the Shelby County Youth 4 Youth Board 2013, East Tri-regional Youth 4 Youth Board, and former foster youth.*



*be  
unique*

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*be  
safe*



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# A guide for teens in foster care

No decision about me, without me.



**Tennessee Department of Children's Services**  
tn.gov/youth

*Foster care is not the end of the world.*

*Youth in foster care should be empowered to make decisions about their lives. Here are some important things you should be able to expect. If this is not true for you, talk to your Resource Parents, Family Service Worker or Guardian ad Litem (GAL) about what is right for you.*

## first and foremost...

1

***You should live in a safe, comfortable home.***

***You should also:***

- have enough clothes and healthy food.
- have your own place to store your belongings.
- talk to your Resource Parents about respect and privacy, including with whom they share information about you.
- contact and spend time with people who do not live in your foster home or who are not in the foster care system (like friends, church members, teachers, and others).
- make contact with your Family Service Worker, attorney/GAL, probation officers, CASA volunteers, foster youth advocates and supporters, or anyone else involved with your case.
- obtain a state photo ID.
- be told about your placement by your Family Service Worker.
- voice your opinion and be empowered.
- be treated equally and with respect.
- be accepted and not rejected.
- fulfill your potential.

2

***You should be able to keep in touch with family and friends.***

***You can:***

- visit and contact brothers and sisters (unless a judge says you cannot).
- contact parents and other family members (unless a judge says you cannot).
- live with a family member if that would be a safe place.

***You should be able to pursue your education, interests and enrichment.***

3

***You should:***

- go to school regularly.
- pursue vocational or college education.
- attend after-school activities appropriate for your age and development level.
- get help with school if needed.
- request a parent-teacher conference to talk about what's best for you academically.
- participate in age-appropriate extracurricular, enrichment, and social activities such as community activities, church, sports, scouting, 4-H and prom.
- attend gatherings and functions with the Resource Parent's permission without direct supervision.
- learn job skills right for your age.
- find employment unless the law says you are too young.
- manage the money you earn (if right for your age and developmental level).
- have a checking or savings account.
- attend life skills classes and activities if you are old enough.
- have access to essential documents when leaving care (State ID/Driver's license, Social Security card, birth certificate, medical records, health insurance information, etc.)
- if you are over 14, have annual credit checks and learn about credit.

***You should have your health needs met.***

4

***You should:***

- see a doctor, dentist, eye doctor, or counselor if needed.
- access your health records.

5

***You should have a voice.***

***You can:***

- go to court and talk to the judge.
- see, and receive a copy of, your court report and your permanency plan.
- keep your court records private (unless the law says otherwise).
- request updates from your Family Service Worker and your attorney regarding changes in your plan or placement.
- tell the judge how you feel about your family, attorney, and Family Service Worker.
- tell the judge what outcome you prefer.
- you should be consulted in your plan and goals.
- have the option to invite support people to child and family team meetings.

## ***additionally...***

***You should expect:***

- to be held accountable for your actions.
- to follow rules and obey the law.
- to be respectful.
- that some of the items and activities on this list can only happen if you have built trust with your Resource Parents, Family Service Worker, and others.
- to be allowed to maintain or develop relationships with appropriate people who are important to you, as long as it's in your best interest. No one should leave foster care without a permanent, caring relationship with an adult. Speak with your Family Service Worker about who is important in your life.