

***In Legal Proceedings,
You Have the Right:***

- To attend all court hearings where your case is reviewed
- To be consulted by the judge about your permanency and transition plans
- To be represented by a lawyer
- To be provided with the contact information of your attorney and members of your team
- To meet with your lawyer and tell your lawyer where you want to live and what services you need to meet your goals
- To tell your judge what you think about your placement, your permanency and transition plans, and any needs or concerns that you have
- To have the judge approve your transition plan before your case can be closed
- To have the information shared in court be kept confidential and discussed only with people who need to know about it to provide you with care and services
- To have your lawyer file an appeal if you do not agree with the decision the judge has made
- To ask the judge to appoint another lawyer for you if you don't think your lawyer is doing their job (the judge will then make the decision if a new lawyer is appointed)

Rights are things that are guaranteed to you by law and regulation. When you have a right to a certain service or a way of being treated, a judge can make sure that you get what the law requires. Your rights are also tools to help advocate for yourself.

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Know Your Rights

A Brochure for
Youth in Foster
Care in
Pennsylvania

**Juvenile
Law
Center** advancing the rights and
well-being of children in jeopardy

Youth in the Child Welfare System Have the Right:

- To services that will help you stay with or return to your family
- To the most family-like and least restrictive placement
- For your relatives to be notified if you come in to care and for first preference for placement to be given to family and kin
- For reasonable efforts to be made to place you with your siblings
- If you are not placed with your siblings, to visit with your siblings (if they are in care) at least once every two weeks
- To visit with your parents at least once every two weeks
- To not have family visits used as a reward or punishment for your behavior
- To be treated with dignity and respect
- To be free of discrimination based on race, religion, disability, national origin, or gender
- To be free from corporal punishment (punishment that uses physical force, threats, or verbal abuse)
- To appropriate food and clothing
- To a placement where you are safe and protected and have all physical and behavioral health needs met
- To be placed with your own child if you are a parent unless a judge orders that you cannot

Your Educational Rights:

- To continue in the school you went to before you were placed or changed placements
- To attend the public school where you are placed if you decide to do so unless your IEP or action related to school discipline says otherwise
- To take part in extracurricular, cultural and personal enrichment activities
- To apply for the Education and Training Grant for money for college or vocational training

Your Rights as an Older Youth:

- To have the opportunity to work and develop job skills
- To Independent Living Services beginning at least at age 16
- To aftercare services if you age out of care and are still under age 21
- To stay in care until you are age 21 if you are doing at least one of the following:
 1. Completing high school or a GED program;
 2. Enrolled in a post secondary education or vocational program;
 3. Participating in a program to help you get a job;
 4. Employed for at least 80 hours per month;
 5. Cannot do any of the activities listed above because of a documented behavioral health or medical condition

Your Rights as an Older Youth:

- To request to re-enter care before turning age 21 if you discharged from care at 17 and nine months of age or older and are engaged in one of the activities listed above

Your Right to File a Grievance:

- To be explained your rights and given a copy of the Children in Foster Care Act
- To file a grievance or complaint with the placement agency or the child welfare agency when you feel you have been mistreated or your rights are being violated
- To have the grievance policy of the county and private agency explained to you in a way you can understand

Your Rights in Planning for Your Future:

- To an Individual Service Plan (ISP) and Child Permanency Plan (CPP) that explain your goals and needs and what is being done to meet them, including your responsibilities
- To be present and participate in all the meetings in which these plans are created
- To an Independent Living Plan if you are age 16 or older
- To a detailed transition plan at least 6 months before you leave care (at age 18 or older) that includes specific options on housing, health insurance, education, local opportunities for mentors and continuing support services, and work force supports and employment services