



Children and Youth in Care Handbooks

Youth in foster care are becoming increasingly aware of their own potential to effect change for themselves personally and within the system. One avenue that allows them to learn more about their own rights and responsibilities, and that can lead to empowerment for them, is the use of handbooks written for and about young people in care. The NCCWE has compiled this state-by-state listing of free online handbooks. These handbooks assist children and youth in navigating the child welfare system, provide answers to common questions, and list available resources.

State: Arkansas

Title: *Be Your Own Advocate! A roadmap to your time in Arkansas foster care*

Description: This handbook addresses the following questions: Why am I here?; Is it normal to feel this way?; Who's here to help me?; Where will I live?; When will I see my family?; Will just anyone know I am in foster care?; What are my rights?; What laws protect me and other youth in foster care?; What do I do when there's a problem?; What if I need something?; Who else is here to help?; What are DCFS's responsibilities to me?; What are DCFS's responsibilities to my bio-family?; and, What responsibilities does my bio-family have?. It also includes the following sections: Court Process; Transition; Lifelong Connections and Permanence; and, Other Helpful Stuff. (September 2012)

Link: <http://humanservices.arkansas.gov/dcfs/DCFSpublications/PUB-050.pdf>

State: California

Title: *Fight for Your Rights*

Description: This guidebook from the National Center for Youth Law was authored by a former foster youth who is also an attorney with the NCYL. Its goal is to inform foster youth, former foster youth, and advocates about the services and issues that are important to youth preparing for the transition from foster care to self-sufficiency. (2004)

Link:

http://www.youthlaw.org/fileadmin/ncyl/youthlaw/publications/fight_for_rights/Fight_for_your_Rights_Handbook_2007.pdf

State: Colorado

Title: *What Happens to Me Now?: Handbooks for Colorado Children Who Are Not Living at Home*

Description: The Colorado Court Improvement Project has developed age-appropriate handbooks in both English and Spanish for children ages 3-6, 7-12, and 13-18

Link: <http://www.courts.state.co.us/userfiles/File/Media/Brochures/dnchildrens.pdf>

State: District Of Columbia

Title: *It's Time to Take Matters into Your Own Hands: DC Foster Youth Handbook*

Description: This handbook, created by the Young Woman's Project is written by youth for youth. It provides information and resources that can help guide and support youth while in the DC child welfare system. This book presents explanations, steps, advice, contacts and phone numbers in order for youth to better understand and navigate the system. (2008)

Link: [http://www.youngwomensproject.org/sites/default/files/MATTERS%20final--%20%20MTN-Ig-to-all%20edits\(1\).pdf](http://www.youngwomensproject.org/sites/default/files/MATTERS%20final--%20%20MTN-Ig-to-all%20edits(1).pdf)

State: Florida

Title: *On Your Own, But Not Alone: A Handbook to Empower Florida Youth Leaving Foster Care*

Description: This handbook was made possible by the Bar-Youth Empowerment Project, in collaboration with Casey Family Programs and the Eckerd Family Foundation. Its goal is to provide answers to questions and offer resources to foster care youth in Florida before they leave care. (2008)

Link: <http://www.dcf.state.fl.us/programs/indliving/docs/OnYourOwnFinal.pdf>

State: Idaho

Title: *My Roadmap to Life in Foster Care: A Guide for Idaho Youth*

Description: This guide was published by the Idaho Department of Health and Welfare for foster youth. It provides answers to many questions about being in foster care. Topics include: Important Information – places to write down important contact, blank calendar and a glossary; Basic information about the Department, foster families; guardians ad litem/CASA, living in and leaving foster care; Court which familiarizes youth with the process and what to expect when they go to court; Independent Living Services gives information about what's available to youth to help transition from foster care to adulthood; and Resources where youth can find links and places to look for more information.

Link:

http://healthandwelfare.idaho.gov/Portals/0/Children/AdoptionFoster/FosterGuideFINAL_pla in.pdf

State: Illinois

Title: *Putting it All Together, A Handbook for Youth*

Description: This DCFS handbook can help youth by: answering questions they may have; describing what may happen after placement; describing what they can do in different situations, such as in court or DCFS care; describing the responsibilities of the people involved at this time; providing phone numbers and names of people they can call for help; providing definitions of terms they may hear while in DCFS care and in court. (Rev. 2009)

Link: <http://www.fixcas.com/scholar/Illinoisfoster.pdf>

State: Maine

Title: *Answers Handbook*

Description: This handbook, by youth in foster care, serves as a guide to youth and adults, addressing many of the issues and questions that youth may have about the foster care system.

Link: <http://www.ylat.org/rights-resources/answers-handbook/>

State: Maine

Title: *Influencing Public Policy in Your State: A Guide for Youth in Care*

Description: This guidebook from the Maine Youth Leadership Advisory Team helps young people who are in custody (through foster care or juvenile justice) gain the skills and confidence they need to testify at hearings or meet with public officials. (2013)

Link: <http://www.ylat.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/10/policy.pdf>

State: Maryland

Title: *A Handbook For Youth: Out of Home Placement - Foster Care*

Description: This Handbook explains Out-of-Home Placement Services for youth between the ages of 14 and 21 and what you can expect while in foster care. The Maryland Department of Human Resources hopes that this handbook is helpful in telling you about some of the important things you need to know about being in foster care and what you can expect when you leave foster care. (2005)

Link: <https://www.dhr.state.md.us/blog/wp-content/uploads/2012/10/a-handbook-for-youth-out-of-home-placement.pdf>

State: Michigan

Title: *A Handbook for Youth in Care*

Description: This handbook was written collaboratively by the Michigan Department of Human Services and Michigan Youth Opportunities Initiative (MYOI) to help youth understand the foster care system. It provides youth with information about important key people, documents, and ways to maneuver through the foster care system. (2011)

Link: http://www.michigan.gov/documents/dhs/DHS-Pub-0089_353116_7.pdf

State: Missouri

Title: *What's It All About?*

Description: If you are a teenager who lives in a DFS "placement" outside your own home, this handbook should help answer some of your questions. It deals with subjects that may be of special interest to you, such as school, money, clothing, and preparing for your future. (Originally written in 1992; revised in 1996 and 2001.)

Link: <http://dss.mo.gov/cd/chafee/wiaa.pdf>

State: Nebraska

Title: *Know Your Rights: A Guide for Youth in Nebraska's Foster Care System*

Description: This guidebook from the Nebraska Court Improvement Project is intended to help foster youth understand their rights and the services available to them while they are in the system and once they leave the system. (2008)

Link: <http://www.throughtheeyes.org/files/Know%20Your%20Rights.pdf>

State: New Mexico

Title: *What's Going On?*

Description: A coloring booklet for children in foster care.

Link: http://www.hunter.cuny.edu/socwork/nrcfcpp/downloads/NM-What's%20Going_On.pdf

State: New York

Title: *Handbook for Youth in Foster Care*

Description: This handbook, from the New York State Office of Children and Family Services is for youth placed in foster care through local departments of social services

(DSS). It was written for youth entering foster care for the first time as well as youth already in foster care. The handbook describes youths' rights and responsibilities while in foster care. It also describes what happens when they are older and leaving foster care. It represents minimum New York State requirements, but specific counties or agencies may have some additional rules. (September 2010)

English Link:

http://www.youthinprogress.org/documents/Youth_in_Care_Handbook_english.pdf

Spanish Link:

http://www.youthinprogress.org/documents/Youth_in_Care_Handbook_spanish.pdf

State: New York

Title: *A Medical Guide for Youth in Foster Care*

Description: New York State's Office of Children and Family Services has developed this 28-page booklet to guide youth in care through the health care system. The booklet covers informed consent, rights to privacy and to refuse medication, and information about how to get and pay for medical care. (2011)

Link: http://www.youthsuccessnyc.org/PDF/2011_medical_guide_for_foster_youth.pdf

State: New York

Title: *You Are Not Alone: Aging Out of Foster Care*

Description: This handbook includes the following sections: Introduction; Know the Basics Before Leaving Foster Care; Your Lawyer; Permanency Planning; Discharge from Foster Care; Housing; Education; Financial Aid; Employment Programs and Referral Services; Allowances; Public Assistance; Becoming a Parent; Other Issues to Consider Before Leaving Foster Care; Abuse and Violence; and, Quick Reference Guide: Foster Care and Family Court Terms. This resource is available through Lawyers for Children, a not-for-profit organization in New York City dedicated to representing children in foster care. (2007)

Link: http://www.lawyersforchildren.com/siteFiles/Aging_Out.pdf

State: New York

Title: *The Rights of Pregnant & Parenting Teens*

Description: If you're a pregnant or parenting teen, you have the right to stay in school, the right to consent on your own to all health care for yourself and your child, and many other important rights and liberties. This booklet from the New York Civil Liberties Union is designed to help protect those rights. (2006)

Link: <http://www.nyclu.org/publications/booklet-rights-of-pregnant-and-parenting-teens-2006>

State: Ohio

Title: *For Youth From Youth*

Description: Produced by the Ohio Youth Advisory Board, the purpose of this handbook is to provide a resource for teens involved in Ohio's child welfare system. If you are a youth under the custody of a Public Child Serving Agency, this handbook should answer some of the questions you may have about your experience. This handbook covers topics related to Ohio's child welfare system, such as: Overview of Foster Care, Rights & Responsibilities, and, The Dos and Don'ts of Foster Care. (2009)

Link: <http://www.pcsao.org/OhioYAB/2009/09YouthBook.pdf>

State: Ohio

Title: *Overcoming Hurdles in Ohio YAB*

Description: The OHIO Youth Advisory Board blog contains resources for Ohio youth “aging out” of foster care related to employment, food, education, healthcare, housing, legal assistance, mental health, parenting, phone bills, self advocacy, and social security.

Link: <http://overcominghurdlesinohio.blogspot.com/2011/05/resources-for-ohio-youth-aging-out-of.html>

State: Oregon

Title: *A Teen's Legal Guide to Foster Care In Oregon*

Description: This guide from the Juvenile Rights Project is intended to answer some of the questions foster youth might have about legal rights, foster care, and about going to court. (September 2002)

Link:

<http://courts.oregon.gov/OJD/docs/osca/cpsd/courtimprovement/jcip/ateenslegalguide.pdf>

State: Pennsylvania

Title: *Know Your Rights: A Guide for Youth in Substitute Care in Pennsylvania*

Description: In cooperation with KidsVoice and members of the Pennsylvania Youth Advisory Board, Juvenile Law Center issued this guide, which is based on Pennsylvania law. It provides youth with information about their legal rights in the substitute care system and about how they can advocate for themselves. The guide is presented in a question and answer format and covers many of the issues that are important to teenagers in care. (2010)

Link: <http://www.independentlivingpa.org/Know%20Your%20Rights%202010.pdf>

State: Rhode Island

Title: *Rhode Island Youth Advisory Board*

Description: The Rhode Island Youth Advisory Board has published *Questions for Youth in DCYF Care* online.

Link: http://www.dcyf.ri.gov/questions/youth_questions.php

State: Tennessee

Title: *Tennessee's Foster Youth Handbook: A Handbook to Empower Tennessee Youth in Their Transition from Foster Care*

Description: This handbook was prepared by the Tennessee Citizen Review Panels. It covers must know issues identified by youth who have been through the system. This handbook offers many resources and websites to help you navigate life—both during and after foster care. It will answer some questions and concerns about leaving care such as negotiating your way through the world of work, paying for school, finding housing, and health care services. (2011)

Link:

https://www.sworps.tennessee.edu/children/pdf/TN%20Foster%20Youth%20Handbook_final.pdf

State: Texas

Title: *Texas Foster Care Handbook for Youth*

Description: This handbook was written collaboratively by the Texas Department of Family and Protective Services and the DFPS Youth Leadership Committee. It covers the following topics: What Does It Mean to Be Placed in Foster Care?; Separation and Loss, The Right to Feel Sad; Youth Perspectives About Foster Care; CPS Rights of Children & Youth in Foster Care; Family Service Plan; Child Service Plan; Medical Health Passport; Education Portfolio or “Green Binder”; Youth in Foster Care Responsibilities; Foster Parent and Kinship Caregiver Responsibilities; Caseworker Responsibilities; Definitions of Different Kinds of

Foster Placements; Relative and Kinship Care; Where to Turn for Help: CPS Chain of Command; Life Skills Activities for Youth 14-15 Years Old; Transitional Living Services for Youth 16-22 Years Old; Preparation for Adult Living (PAL); Transition Centers; Receiving Your Personal Documents at Age 16 and 18; Extended Care; Return to Care; Additional Resources Available to You; The National Youth in Transition Database; Common Terms and Phrases; and, Frequently Asked Questions. (2010)

Link: http://www.dfps.state.tx.us/Documents/Child_Protection/pdf/foster-care-handbook.pdf

State: Virginia

Title: *Learn Your Rights: A guide to Foster Care in Virginia for children, teens and young adults*

Description: Written by Virginia Poverty Law Center, this handbook serves as a general guide for foster youth in care. It provides a basic overview of the system and gives a list of resources and information to answer questions a youth may have regarding their situation. (2007)

Link: <https://www.fosterclub.com/files/LearnYourRights2007-.pdf>

State: West Virginia

Title: *What's Next? Navigating the Foster Care System in West Virginia*

Description: The purpose of this handbook is to help address issues and questions that youth may have about the foster care system, and hopefully, make it easier for youth to understand what the system is like. It was developed with help from youth who know what it is like to be in the foster care system. (2004)

Link:

http://www.wvdhhr.org/bcf/children_adult/foster/documents/whatsnext_fostercare_low.pdf

State: Wyoming

Title: *YOUR RIGHTS: A Guide to Juvenile Court in Wyoming for Children and Youth*

Description: This handbook, developed by the Wyoming Children's Justice Project will give youth the information they need to empower themselves. This book explains the steps throughout the court process and the roles of the people involved in a case such as CASA, the Guardian Ad Litem, the Judge and the Department of Family Services caseworker. (2009)

Link: http://courts.state.wy.us/Documents/CJP/Publications/Your_Rights.pdf