

Youth Bill of Rights Information

As some of you may know, the Normalcy Task Force, a subgroup of the Nebraska Children's Commission, is working to gather input on a youth Bill of Rights (BOR). The following two page handout is part of a facilitation guide that is meant to encourage discussion within youth focus groups on potential rights that youth could be included in the document.

In particular, the section entitled **Access to Information and Services Rights** may be relevant to the work of the Psychotropic Medication Committee. Suggestions or comments on the youth BOR may be directed to Commission staff or to the Community and Family Voice Subcommittee Co-Chairs who are working on the project. Their contact information is as follows:

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In addition to providing professional input, the Task Force and its Community and Family Voice Subcommittee ask that information on their BOR surveys be forwarded to any individuals or entities who may be able to gather youth input. Information on the BOR surveys and facilitation guide can be found on the Nebraska Children's Commission website at: <http://www.childrens.nebraska.gov/News/BORSurvey.html>.

Handout #2 Nebraska Foster Youth Bill of Rights (BOR) Ideas

Personal Rights

- **to be treated with respect**
- **to be safe and well cared for** and to avoid exploitation
- **to be who I am**
- to have my basic needs met
- to keep my personal belongings with me and to age appropriate privacy unless there is just cause for supervision to prevent self-harm or harm to others
- to have confidentiality consistent with state and federal law
- to be free from unreasonable searches of personal belongings
- to be free from harassment, corporal punishment, unreasonable restraint or confinement (i.e., solitary, lockdown, segregation), and physical, sexual, emotional and other abuse
- to attend religious services and activities of my choice that may be reasonably accommodated and be placed as far as practical with someone of my own religion
- to be in an environment that maintains and reflects my culture as may be reasonably accommodated
- to participate in age or developmentally appropriate extracurricular, enrichment, cultural, and social activities and to have my caseworker and judge consult with and talk to me about my opportunities to participate in activities
- to have fair and equal access to all available services, placement, care, treatment, and benefits and to not be subjected to discrimination or harassment on the basis of actual or perceived race, ethnic group, identification, ancestry, national origin, immigration status, color, religion, gender, gender identity and expression, sexual orientation, mental or physical disability, medical diagnosis, and foster care status.

Family Connection Rights

- **to have lifelong family connections** (*LB746 & in BOR*)
- to have reasonable efforts made to reunify me with my parents and to be preferentially placed with my relatives if I cannot remain with my parents
- to have reasonable efforts made to place me and my siblings in the same foster or adoptive placement and/or to have frequent or ongoing communication with my siblings unless it is not safe (and if it is not safe, I have a right to know the reasons it has been determined not safe)
- **to safely visit** and communicate with **my family** and other significant people in my life (unless a judge says you cannot or HHS sets reasonable limits)
- If a pregnant or parenting youth I have a right to raise and make decisions for my own child(ren), as any other minor would, unless a judge says I do not

Notice and Assistance If Rights Are Not Met

- to be given verbal and written information about how and to whom I can make a request to participate in age or developmentally appropriate activities if I am in a group home
- to receive a hard copy of these rights within seventy-two hours of placement and at every dispositional, review and permanency planning hearing and to have them explained to me in an age or developmentally appropriate manner
- **to seek assistance**, free from retaliation, **if these rights aren't being met**

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Youth Voice and Participation Rights

- to have contact with caseworkers, attorneys, probation officers, CASAs, foster youth advocates and supporters, or anyone else involved with or (in) my case
- **to know when court hearings are scheduled and to attend** and participate in **hearings regarding my care** unless a judge determines it is not in my best interests
- to have a guardian ad litem attorney to represent my best interests
- to meet with my guardian ad litem within two weeks and at least once every six months
- to have my own court-appointed attorney if my interests are in conflict with what my guardian ad litem believes is in my best interests
- to be involved in the development of my own case plan and transition plan, and to have individuals selected by me participate on my team
- to attend and participate in family team meetings, treatment team meetings, and school meetings
- to have my voice heard in my case

Access to Information and Services Rights

- **to be fully informed about what is happening to me** and to understand the system or systems in which I am involved in an age appropriate manner
- **to have adequate health care, including mental health care** and substance abuse treatment
- to have a medical exam within two weeks of removal from my home
- to be informed about the types of physical and mental health care I receive, to see and understand my treatment plan and have a say in treatment decisions being made
- to be informed about medications, medication options, and have a voice in decisions about prescription of medication (unless a doctor or judge says I cannot refuse to take medications)
- to have age-appropriate, medically accurate information on sexual and reproductive health
- **to receive a good, stable education**
- to attend the same school (or as before,) prior to foster care unless a judge or your caseworker determines it is not in your best interest
- **to receive a free credit report annually** and help resolving any inaccuracies
- to access my personal information (e.g., birth certificate, health records)
- to have honest and clear communication

Permanency and Placement Rights

- **to have permanency**
- to live in the most family-like setting that is safe, healthy, comfortable, and meets my needs
- to have minimal placement changes and a stable and nurturing living environment

Transition to Adulthood Rights

- to receive skills, knowledge and resources needed to be a successful adult (LB746 & in BOR)
- to have a transition plan created from age 14 and older that addresses the following needs: education, employment, health care and eligibility for Medicaid, behavioral health treatment and support, financial assistance, housing, relationship development, and other adult services
- to receive information about the Bridge to Independence program if I am in an out-of-home placement at (or from) age 16 or older