

Notes

**Know YOUR RIGHTS**  
**Live up to YOUR**  
**RESPONSIBILITIES**

## A guide for youth in care



check out our kids and teen section on the web for useful links [www.facswaterloo.org](http://www.facswaterloo.org)



Kitchener Office: 576-0540  
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[www.facswaterloo.org](http://www.facswaterloo.org)

# A guide for youth in care

When you are in care, living away from your family, you need to know that you have rights... and responsibilities.

You need to know that help is available if you need it.  
That's what this booklet is all about.

## How Can This Booklet Help Me?

Some kids who are living in care feel like everything is changing. They're getting used to living in a different place, with new rules, and with people they don't know very well yet. All these changes can be difficult and confusing. Other kids just want to know what's expected of them and what can they expect for themselves while living in care.

Whichever way you feel about being in care, it's important for you to know that you have rights. These rights are guaranteed by law. No one can take them away from you.



Family & Children's Services is responsible for making sure that your rights are protected. This includes your right to a safe, healthy environment and to respect from those around you. You also have the right to ask questions whenever you need to — and the right to answers that you understand.

You may not always like the answer you are given or agree with it. This booklet explains what you can do if you have a disagreement.

With rights, come responsibilities. This booklet also tells you what people will expect of you — so that you can live up to your responsibilities.

Your worker will talk to you about your rights and responsibilities and try to answer any questions you may have. This booklet is yours to keep.

## Who Can Help Me?

You have a right to complain to someone you trust if you think your rights are not being respected.

You may feel afraid or alone. But there are people who care and who will help you if you ask.

If you feel your rights are not being honoured, and if you need help dealing with the situation, begin by talking to your social worker. Foster parents and care providers are expected to respect your privacy with your worker. It's likely that she or he can give you the help you need.

### If that isn't helpful:

- ◆ You can talk to your foster parent or group home staff privately.
- ◆ You can talk to another person you feel could help such as a teacher, a friend or your worker's boss.

### If you need to talk to a lawyer call:

- ◆ the Office of the Children's Lawyer at (416) 314-8000, or
- ◆ your local Legal Aid Office, or
- ◆ Toronto Legal Aid Office at (416) 598-0200

### What if I still have a problem?

If you've tried to solve your problem, but are not satisfied, you have a right to:

### Call

the Advocacy Office for free: 1-800-263-2841

TTY (For people with hearing impairments): (416) 325-9756, or

### Mail or fax a letter to:

The Office of the Children's Lawyer    Office of Child & Family Service Advocacy  
393 University Avenue, 14th Floor    2195 Yonge Street, 2nd Floor

Toronto, Ontario M5G 1W9

Toronto, Ontario M7A 1G2

Fax: (416) 314-8050

Fax (416) 325-5681

**Make sure your letter includes all the important details.**

## What Are My Responsibilities?

You have a right to know the rules in the place where you live. And you have a right to know what will happen if you choose to break them.

While you are in care, people will expect you to:

- ◆ **Keep in touch** with your worker
- ◆ Go to **school** when you should and do your **homework** as required
- ◆ **Talk** with your **foster parents** about your plans for the day and where you will be when you're not at home
- ◆ **Show up** for your **appointments**
- ◆ **Respect** other people, **neighbours and property**
- ◆ **Respect** the **privacy** of others
- ◆ **Respect** other people's **differences** in gender, ability, race, colour, culture, religion, gender identification and sexual orientation
- ◆ **Be helpful** to others in the home and do your share of household chores that are appropriate to your age/ability
- ◆ Take good **care** of your **body**
- ◆ **Take responsibility** for yourself and your actions



## What Are My Rights?

You have the **right to be informed** of your rights and responsibilities in a language you understand.

If you have special needs please tell your worker.



You are unique. You have the **right to be respected** for who you are. This includes the things that may be important to you — such as your culture, race, religion, heritage, sexual orientation and gender identification. You have the right to freedom from physical, sexual or verbal abuse.

No one has the right to make fun of you, hurt you or touch you in a way that doesn't feel right.

You have a **right to appropriate discipline**. If you break the rules of the place in which you're living, you may lose some of your regular privileges. But no one has the right to hit you, or mistreat you.

You have a **right to privacy**. This includes your right to:

- ◆ Visit in private with your family — unless a judge or your social worker decides it's not a good idea
- ◆ Speak in private with your social worker or lawyer (if you have one)
- ◆ Have a place to keep your own things and time to be alone
- ◆ Send and receive mail that has not been read by others. In very rare cases, your mail can be read or examined in your presence and prohibited items may be removed and withheld for your own safety.



## What Are My Rights?

You have the **right to receive good care**. This means:

- ♦ **Healthy** meals
- ♦ **Education** that suits your abilities
- ♦ Regular **medical** and **dental** care
- ♦ Age appropriate **clothing**
- ♦ **Participation** in after-school activities—such as sports, drama club etc.
- ♦ The **right** to practice your **religion** and to receive religious instruction
- ♦ The right to **participate** in activities that are important to your **culture** or heritage.



- ♦ **Respect** for your **individuality**, including gender identification and sexual orientation.
- ♦ You have the **right to participate** in planning your care—and to be heard when important decisions are made about you.



## What Rights Do I Have As I Get Older?

If you are over the age of 12:

- ♦ You have a **right to see information** in your Family & Children's Services file. The only exception is confidential information about other people.
- ♦ You have a **right to be notified** of, and to attend, court hearings that may affect your life — unless the court decides it's not in your best interest.
- ♦ You have a **right to request a placement review** if you become unhappy where you are living. You can ask your worker, lawyer, parent, foster parent or advocate to help you with this.

If you are a Crown Ward at age 18 you have the right to ask for Extended Care and Maintenance to help you achieve your goals for self support up until you turn 21.

We want you to do your best and we will help you to succeed. If you want to go to university or college or a specialized training program, talk to your social worker about your opportunities.

