



For Youth From Youth:

*The Overcoming Hurdles in Ohio Youth Advisory Board
Foster Youth Rights Handbook*

Summer 2009

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Introduction

OVERCOMING HURDLES IN OHIO YOUTH ADVISORY BOARD FOSTER RIGHTS HANDBOOK

The purpose of this handbook is to provide a resource for teens experiencing Ohio's child welfare system. If you are a youth, under the custody of a Public Child Serving Agency (PCSA), this handbook should answer some of the questions you may have about your experience. The handbook covers many topics related to Ohio's child welfare agencies however if you are unable to find the answer you are looking for we strongly suggest that to you contact your caseworker and/or speak to your caregiver.

About the OHIO Youth Advisory Board

MISSION STATEMENT

We exist to be the knowledgeable statewide voice that influences policies and practices that effect all youth who have or will experience out of home care.

HISTORY

During the spring of 2006 the Public Children Services Association of Ohio (PCSAO) gathered youth from across the state to participate in focus groups regarding their experiences with Ohio's child welfare system. As a result of these focus groups a list of recommendations, based on what the youth shared, was developed. In July 2006 many of the youth that had participated in the focus groups convened in Columbus, Ohio for a meeting. At this meeting the youth present decided to formally adopt the recommendations and form the "Founder's Group." The goal of the Founder's Group was to develop a statewide youth advisory board that could advocate on behalf of youth experiencing Ohio's child welfare system.

Through the generous support of PCSAO, the Ohio Independent Living Association (OHILA), and many local child welfare agencies the youth were able to finally come together formally in February 2007 and the Overcoming Hurdles in Ohio Youth Advisory Board (OHIO YAB) was born. Youth adopted a mission statement, bylaws and a regular meeting schedule. Since the inception of OHIO YAB, members have successfully advocated for change, brought together youth from across the state and provided a voice for youth in foster care. Their accomplishments include presenting to over 1,500 child welfare professionals across the state of Ohio, traveling to Washington D.C. to lobby for change on the federal level, advocating for Ohio Medicaid coverage to be extended until age 21 for former foster youth, and providing a one-day statewide Youth Track at the PCSAO Conference in 2007 and 2008.



Through their advocacy and outreach efforts, OHIO Youth Advisory Board members have educated policy makers, child welfare workers, foster parents, and community members on the unique needs of foster youth. Pictured on the left is Adrian McLemore, former OHIO Youth Advisory Board President, shaking hands with US Senator Sherrod Brown, (D-Ohio) on a congressional visit in Washington, DC.



KELLY KNIGHT, FOSTER RIGHTS HANDBOOK PROJECT MANAGER

A MESSAGE TO OHIO'S FOSTER YOUTH

I have been working with the OHIO YAB, in some way, shape or form, since the organization's inception. The youth involved with OHIO YAB have always sought to make a difference in the lives of foster youth. Without knowing it, they have also greatly influenced my work as child welfare professional. For Youth From Youth: The Overcoming Hurdles in Ohio Youth Advisory Board Foster Youth Rights Handbook is a reflection of my gratitude.

I am truly excited about the meaning of this possibility for Ohio's youth. Across the state, as I met youth at meetings, speaking engagements, and conferences, one thing was said many times and in many different ways but still rang true—they wanted to be able to speak out regarding their experiences and what could be improved, they wanted to make sure that all of their brothers and sisters in the child welfare system also had a voice, and they wanted to be as informed as possible. I strongly feel that this handbook is one part of that dream realized.

When I started working as a PCSA caseworker, I had a difficult time navigating the child welfare system. It was difficult to learn all of the terminology used, to understand the complex legal system and to understand how decisions were made on cases. I can only imagine how becoming involved with Ohio's child welfare system may feel for a youth. Providing Ohio's youth with this handbook is an important first step of a youth understanding their experience.

This handbook will become an invaluable tool for Ohio's foster youth and it will empower them to be heard at all levels. The handbook can become a starting point for ongoing dialogue between a youth and their PCSA regarding their case and their future. To paraphrase a youth I once met, "If I'm old enough to go through it then I'm old enough know it." Youth, the true customers of the child welfare system, deserve to be informed.

An Overview of Foster Care

OHIO'S CHILD WELFARE SYSTEM

Ohio is composed of county-administered Public Children Services Agencies (PCSAs). These agencies are required both by state and federal laws to receive reports of child abuse and neglect and, when necessary, to investigate those reports in specified time frames. If abuse and neglect is found, the agency will work with youth and their families to identify services and develop a case plan to reduce the risk of future abuse or neglect. For many of the PCSA cases, services are provided to youth and their families while the youth remain in the home. In some situations it may become necessary for a PCSA to work with their local juvenile court to remove a youth from their home. Once a youth is removed from their home the PCSA must develop a case plan, except under special circumstances, to work with the family to allow them to reunify with 12 months.

TYPES OF CHILD WELFARE CASES

Physical Abuse: includes bruises, marks, or injuries as a result of an incident that was not accidental. Sometimes these injuries may result from excessive physical discipline.

Neglect: is a form of child maltreatment that occurs when a parent fails to act on behalf of a child. Neglect may include a child who does not receive adequate food, shelter, clothing, medical care, or supervision.

Sexual Abuse: is considered any sexual activity between an adult and a child.

Emotional Abuse: is defined as mental injury. A youth who experiences repeated negative comments or is blamed for a family's problems may be found to be emotionally abused.

Dependency: is a case in which a child is without the necessary parental care but this is not at the fault of the parent.

Delinquency: If a youth has been charged with a delinquent act (an act that if committed by an adult would have been a crime) a judge/magistrate may have a case opened with a PCSA in order to assist the youth in resolving their delinquency charges. Removal from the home is a possible consequence of committing a delinquent act.

Unruly: If a youth has been charged with an unruly act (which is unlawful behavior of a juvenile and applies only to those under the age of eighteen), they may become involved with a PCSA in order to obtain services to address the unruly act.

IMPORTANT PEOPLE INVOLVED WITH YOUR CASE

When a youth is involved with a PCSA there may be a lot of people who are involved with the case. Keeping these people straight and knowing what role they serve may be difficult. If you are unsure of someone's role, don't hesitate to ask them. Some of the people who may be involved in your case include: Caseworker and their supervisor, Guardian Ad Litem, Court Appointed Special Advocate, Defense Attorney, Prosecutor, Magistrate or Judge, Substitute Caregiver, Foster Care Worker, your Birth Family and an Independent Living Worker. Please see the glossary section of this handbook for additional information on these case members.

LEGAL

Every county PCSA makes recommendations to a local juvenile court in regards to custody matters pertaining to youth. The court makes the final decision regarding custody decisions. Every youth who is placed under the care of a PCSA also has a case with the local juvenile court. Court hearings are held on an ongoing basis to review the youth's custody status and to determine if the youth should remain under the custody of the PCSA or return home to their parents. Typically either a juvenile court judge or magistrate oversees these court hearings and make decisions. Other people who participate in these court hearings include PCSA staff including staff members, prosecutors, CASA volunteers, Guardian Ad Litem, defense attorneys, youth and their families. Youth may also become involved with their local juvenile court as a result of receiving unruly or delinquent charges.

WHAT HAPPENS WHEN A YOUTH IS PLACED INTO CUSTODY

A youth may be removed from their home as a result of an investigation of abuse/neglect. A court order and/or police involvement is necessary to remove a youth from their home. If you are removed from your home, your PCSA is required to place you in a substitute care setting. Substitute care is a place for you to reside until you can return to your home. A PCSA will decide as to what type of substitute care setting a youth is placed in and when making this decision a PCSA will consider the following factors: closeness to the youth's own home, closeness to the youth's school, the caregiver's ability to provide for the youth and which setting is the least restrictive (meaning the most home-like) for the youth. In some instances a youth may have to move to a new placement. There can be many reasons as to why a youth may change placements. Those reasons include: concerns with the caregiver, issues regarding the youth's behavior, the youth needing a different type of care or a PCSA being able to locate a less restrictive setting (i.e. a relative or kinship person has been approved to provide care for the youth.)



YOUR RIGHT

Whenever you see the above icon throughout the handbook another youth right is being highlighted.



YOUR RESPONSIBILITY

Check out this icon to find out about your responsibility related to the right. You may find additional information about what you can do to ensure that your right is met and what you can do if it's not being met.



OHIO YAB RECOMMENDS

Under this icon you can find recommendations and other creative ideas for Ohio's child welfare system. Rights are a great starting point for Ohio's foster youth however OHIO YAB knows there are always opportunities for improvement.

Rights and Responsibilities

The OHIO Youth Advisory Board wants to ensure that all youth involved with Ohio's child welfare system are aware of their rights and responsibilities. The rights featured in this handbook are derived from the Ohio Administrative Code (OAC). These rights can be located in Section 5101:2 Division of Social Services, Chapter 5101:2-5 Child Services Agency Licensing Rules. The OAC notes the following in regards to the rights of youth:

- No agency, foster caregiver or residential facility or any employee of an agency or residential facility shall in any way violate the rights of youth.
- An agency operating a foster care or independent living program shall include a list of youth's rights in any handbook used by the agency for youth in care of the agency.
- A residential facility shall include the list of youth's rights in the handbook for residents and their families.
- If any agency places any restrictions upon a youth's rights for more than 2 hours the agency shall:
- Inform the child and the youth's custodian of the conditions of and the reasons for the restrictions of the rights
- Place a written report summarizing the conditions of and reasons for the restrictions of the youth's right in the youth's record.
- When a restriction of the youth's rights affects another individual, inform the individual, as appropriate, of the conditions of and reasons for the action
- Document a review of this decision at least weekly. Any such restriction shall be included in the service plan and approved by the youth's custodian.

Thirteen youth rights are featured in the OAC. One of those rights, **the right to be taught to fulfill appropriate responsibilities to yourself and others**, is a primary focus of this handbook. Youth need to be aware of their own responsibilities, especially in conjunction with their rights. This is the best way for youth to ensure that their rights are met. You'll find the other 12 rights throughout this handbook. Check out the icons to your left for more information on how to locate information regarding these rights.



LAMAR, FRANKLIN COUNTY

"I was never aware of my rights as a foster child until my later years in High School. Because of that I felt I was unwanted. Although I did succeed with sports and had plenty of friends, I was still alone and no one really knew me. Once I met my mentor, who I still continue to speak with, I opened up with my feelings and received the support that helped drive me to where I stand today."

COMPLAINT PROCESS

If you feel that your rights as a foster care youth are not being met or you are not satisfied regarding the services that you and your family are receiving the first step is to express these feelings directly with the service team member they are related to. If you have done this and don't feel your concern has been resolved or your concern is not specific to them you should seek out their supervisor to discuss the concern. Following these steps when addressing a concern is typically referred to as "following the chain of command," which means if a concern is reported to someone and is not resolved the next logical step is to speak to the next person in charge. One can follow this "chain of command" all the way up to the person who is in charge of the entire agency.

Additionally most of Ohio's child welfare agencies have their own internal policies and procedures as to how they deliver services to children and families. As part of those policies and procedures some agency may have a formal complaint process. Some agencies even have a Client Right's or an Ombudsman Office that work specifically to address complaints.

If you have attempted the above mentioned steps to address your concerns and feel that they have not been resolved they you may want to inquire about the agency's formal complaint process.



YOUR RIGHT

You have the right to enjoy freedom of thought, conscience, religion.



YOUR RESPONSIBILITY

You need to appropriately communicate regarding your religious preferences. You cannot be forced to attend a foster family's religious services. You should request, if you would like, to be able to attend a church of your choice.



OHIO YAB RECOMMENDS

Social workers and or foster parents should ask youth about their beliefs and religious preferences and allow youth to partake in personal choices. Adults should not force their beliefs and/or religious preferences upon youth.



YOUR RIGHT

You have the right to reasonable enjoyment of privacy.



YOUR RESPONSIBILITY

You must respect the privacy of others. Additionally, it is your responsibility to make others aware of your personal boundaries. You must let others know when you feel your privacy is invaded. Remember to be open and honest about your behaviors and let others know what you consider is your personal space.



OHIO YAB RECOMMENDS

Social workers should ask about and listen when youth are expressing their boundaries and definitions of personal space. PCSAs should ensure compliance with confidentiality laws and the National Association of Social Worker's Code of Ethics. Foster parents should also adhere to confidentiality laws and respect the privacy of a youth's personal items and space. Social workers and foster parents should not eavesdrop into a youth's personal conversations, phone calls, diaries or social situations unless there is a safety issue.



Youth from across the state participated in a Statehouse Rally to bring awareness to the issues of foster care. Ohio State Senator Ray Miller also photographed on far right.

CONFIDENTIALITY

Confidentiality is the protection, by law, of the personal information found in records about a child and family that cannot be shared without written parental consent. PCSAs must comply with state and federal rules regarding confidentiality. PCSAs typically maintain a confidential record of documents regarding a youth and their family. Some of this information may be shared with members of your treatment team, however they must agree to maintain the confidentiality of the information. Confidentiality means that information regarding you and your family must be kept private. As a youth involved with the child welfare system you may encounter people who ask why you no longer reside with your family. It is your right to choose what information to share with them. If you are unsure what to say discuss the situation with your caseworker or caregiver.



TRACI, ATHENS COUNTY

"I think each youth that has their head on their shoulders should have their opinions heard of what they would like or want to do in their life. They should be able to go to Court hearings, team meetings, case reviews, or anything else that involves the youth. I think youth should be given the opportunity to attend meetings that have to deal with their life, if you are mature enough for the information. Your team members should work with you to have more responsibilities as you get older, including having your voice heard. Youth should always have a caring, adult supporter to use as a soundboard for their opinions."

TYPES OF MEETINGS

PCSAs often hold a variety of meetings in order to review a youth and their family's case. The focus of these meetings tends to be developing and reviewing the progress on a case plan. Other meetings may also be held to review a youth's placement and to review the aspects of a youth's treatment. Individual meetings may have many different names depending on the county. Some names of these meetings may include: Initial Family Team Meetings, Case Plan Meetings, 90 day Reviews, Semi-Annual Reviews, and Treatment Team Meetings. If you are invited to a meeting and the purpose of that meeting is not clear, ask someone. If you find out about a meeting regarding you or your family that you weren't invited to, talk to your caseworker.



YOUR RIGHT

You have the right to have your opinions heard and be included, to the greatest extent possible, when any decisions are being made affecting your life.



YOUR RESPONSIBILITY

Ask your caseworker when your semi-annual review is. Request to be assigned a CASA/GAL. If you have been assigned a CASA/GAL and you haven't heard from them, call your local CASA office. If given the opportunity to attend your court hearing make every effort to be there on time, dress and act appropriately. Make sure to give your work or school notice if you have to miss because of attending a meeting or a court hearing.



OHIO YAB RECOMMENDS

Youth should be present at their semi-annual reviews and any other meeting at which their case will be discussed. Youth should have the opportunity to have their voices heard in court.

Youth should be assigned a CASA/GAL and meet with that person at least once before their court date. Youth should be provided transportation to attend meetings and/or their court hearings.



YOUR RIGHT

You have the right to receive appropriate and reasonable adult guidance, support and supervision.



YOUR RESPONSIBILITY

If you've not be given proper support and guidance for your future, follow your agency's chain of command until the issue is resolved. If you are locked out of your foster home notify your social worker and/or their supervisor immediately. Know that the level of supervision that your foster parent provides you is often dictated by state law and your behavioral needs.



OHIO YAB RECOMMENDS

Social workers and foster parents should prepare youth for the next step in their journey. Even small gestures such as a warm welcome upon placement are important. PCSAs should ensure that youth receive appropriate vocational and educational preparation prior to emancipation. Youth should receive information to prepare for college and be able to participate in college tours. Youth should start being prepared, at a young age, for independent living. Youth should not be locked out of their foster homes. Social workers and foster parents should always look at the context of a youth's behaviors (i.e. don't just look at what a youth does but look for the why?)



Alex McFarland, OHIO Youth Advisory Board President, presented testimony before the Ohio House of Representatives Full Finance Committee to urge support of full restoration of the \$2.5 Million dedicated to Independent Living Services to the Biennial Budget. The Ohio House of Representatives partially restored the funding at \$1.5 Million.

LEAVING FOSTER CARE

PCSAs will work with youth and their families to reunify them. In other situations a PCSA may find permanency for a youth who is unable to reunify with their family. Permanency options may include a relative or close family friend assuming legal custody of the youth, the youth being placed for adoption or the PCSA assuming PPLA of the youth. PPLA stands for Permanent Planned Living Arrangement and means that the PCSA is agreeing to provide long term care of the youth until the youth is able to successfully emancipate. While the age of 18 is seen by many as the age a youth becomes an adult it is important to remember that a PCSA may maintain custody beyond eighteen. In some instances, many PCSAs will not terminate custody of a youth who has not obtained a high school diploma or a G.E.D. PCSAs are required to provide services to allow youth, who remain under their custody at the age of 18, to successfully make the transition to be independent adults. Services may vary based on the county that is serving the youth. Independent Living Services may include the following: vocational and career planning, educational support, budgeting and financial management, locating housing and home management skills and learning about community resources.



ALEX, MONTGOMERY COUNTY

"Now that I am emancipated I make my own medical decisions and I get things done. When I was in care my caseworker tried to make my medical decisions, moreover he didn't care when my problems were treated. This caused me to not get the glasses I needed. After I found out I needed them it was 6 months before I received them. I was in school and couldn't even see the board! Now that I am on my own and Medicaid is extended, it's my choice what medical care I receive and how I receive it. If it takes six months it's my own fault now. But I'm responsible for myself now!"

OHIO EXTENDS MEDICAID COVERAGE UNTIL AGE 21 FOR FORMER FOSTER YOUTH

The OHIO Youth Advisory Board's mission of advocating on behalf of other foster youth in Ohio and across the country has been demonstrated in numerous activities: meeting with members of Congress; presenting at various conferences; and working with members of the Ohio General Assembly on budget advocacy and legislation. Members of the OHIO Youth Advisory Board successfully advocated for extending Medicaid coverage up to age twenty-one for current and former foster youth. You may be eligible for free health coverage if you: are age 18-21, were in foster care at 18, received Title IV-E funding or independent living services, and meet basic Medicaid eligibility requirements. To apply or get more information, visit your Local County Department of Job and Family Services, call the Medicaid Hotline at 1-800-324-8680 or talk to your caseworker.



YOUR RIGHT

You have the right to receive adequate and appropriate medical care.



YOUR RESPONSIBILITY

Youth should inform their social worker of all legitimate medical concerns. Youth should remain honest about all of their medical issues, both past and present. Youth should ensure that they have all of their medical records upon emancipation. Youth should actively participate in medical decisions pertaining to them. Youth should ensure that they are informed about the medications they are prescribed and should ask question such as why is it prescribed and what could be the side effects.



OHIO YAB RECOMMENDS

Social workers should listen to medical concerns shared by the youth and ensure proper medical follow-up, when applicable.

Social workers and foster parents should educate youth regarding medical rules and regulations, their medical needs, how to access medical care and what is routine medical care and procedures. Youth should be informed in advance about their medical appointments, any prescribed medications or treatment. All proper medical examinations for youth in care should occur in the designated timeframes. Youth should be provided, whenever possible, input in their medical decisions, including deciding their medical home and physicians.



YOUR RIGHT

You have the right to be free from physical abuse and inhumane treatment.



YOUR RESPONSIBILITY

Know you are worthwhile. Alert the necessary people as soon as you feel unsafe. Check to see if your county has a designated safe place & know how to locate it. Know the local police phone number. Educate yourself on what is inhumane treatment. Don't abuse yourself and don't abuse others. Don't let yourself be bribed not to tell. If you see or suspect abuse in your home or elsewhere report it. Know that it's not your fault and you don't deserve any form of abuse.



OHIO YAB RECOMMENDS

If a county doesn't have a designated safe place, create one. Social workers should pay attention to a foster parent's temperament. Social workers should get to know the child they are assigned to and look for any change in their behaviors such as their hygiene and mannerisms. A youth's concerns should always be taken seriously. Social workers and foster parents need to be informed and inform youth what constitutes inhumane treatment. Everyone needs to be watchful of abuse and neglect. Abuse should be prosecuted and foster parents who abuse should have their licenses revoked.



Youth photographed at the bill signing of Senate Bill 163. Pictured from left to right, back row, Adrian McLemore, Rep. Mark Wagoner, Sen. Courtney Combs, and Governor Ted Strickland. Front Row, Kierra Williams, Kelly Knight, and Taneah Matthews. Senate Bill 163 enhances oversight for foster parents by requiring certain background checks.

RESPONSIBILITIES OF CASEWORKERS

- To inform your parents, typically through a case plan, what issues led to the case opening and/or your removal from the home and what changes they need to make in order for the case to close or for reunification to occur.
- To see you in your placement setting within the first 7 days that you live there, to see you again between the 8th and 28th day and then monthly for the entire time you are placed there. If you change placements the contact requirements start again.
- To select the least restrictive and most appropriate substitute care setting for you
- To arrange for visits between you and your family and to review your visitation plan between you and your family. To provide, locate or link your family with the services they need to complete the activities indicated on their case plan.
- To maintain the information regarding you and your family in a confidential manner unless your family has agreed for the information to be shared or if the information shared is to assist you and your family.
- To provide the court with updates regarding you and your family's progress on the case plan and provide recommendations regarding case closure and/or reunification.
- To comply with federal and state guidelines for providing case management to youth and their families.



ADRIAN, MONTGOMERY COUNTY

"The relationship between a caseworker and foster child is unquestionably a very important one. It should be a bond of friendship and openness. However, often times it is a stressful and strained relationship. As a former foster youth and former President of the OHIO Youth Advisory Board, I learned and realize how important the relationship between the two should be. As I traveled the state as President and spoke with both caseworkers and foster youth, I learned valuable lessons and how much caseworkers truly care for the youth and their job. Through all the conferences, meetings and panels I have concluded that there are 3 important factors on how the relationship can be established (if it is non-existent) and maintained. The first crucial factor is communication. Both sides must be able to communicate effectively in order to understand each other and achieve success in being reunited with family, adopted, or a permanent placement. There must be a vision for the foster child. I believe a caseworker should inspire the foster youth to have a vision for him or herself. To let them know that there is a prosperous life beyond foster care. To help guide them and instill in them (while fulfilling your caseload) values that you would want your children or family members to have. I'm not asking you to raise foster youth I'm asking you to nurture and guide them and inspire them. To the foster youth reading this handbook, realize that you can be anything in life; no matter the circumstances. The last factor is patience. Caseworkers must realize foster youth are children forced to handle adult issues. It must be noted that foster youth will make mistakes and that caseworkers must teach and educate. Foster youth must also realize that caseworkers can not wave a magic wand or snap a finger. That it takes time to get appropriations or resources. Foster youth need to be patient yet diligent. This is how we perfect in imperfect system. These factors, along with this handbook, will begin to make this vitally important relationship a standard across our foster care system."



YOUR RIGHT

You have the right to be protected from all forms of sexual exploitation.



YOUR RESPONSIBILITY

You should respect yourself, your body and others. You should speak with an adult or someone you trust if you have questions regarding sexual abuse. If you're being sexually abused don't be afraid to report it; the people involved with your case are there to protect you.



OHIO YAB RECOMMENDS

PCSAs should provide education and resources to youth regarding forms of sexual abuse. Social workers and foster parents should be sensitive to the needs of sexual abuse victims. Social workers should receive more training so they are more aware of the signs of sexual abuse. PCSAs should provide workshops or curriculums that focus on self-esteem, empowerment and sexuality issues of foster youth.



YOUR RIGHT

You have the right to communicate with your family, friends and “significant others” from whom you are living apart, in accordance with your service or case plan.



YOUR RESPONSIBILITY

Inform your caseworker whether or not you want your family involved. Maintain appropriate behavior in order to establish good relationships. Behave appropriately to obtain special visitation privileges. Appropriately communicate when you want contact with your family, friends and “significant others”. Don’t turn down opportunities to maintain contact with your family, friends and “significant others” and make the most of the time that you do have with them.



OHIO YAB RECOMMENDS

Youth should be afforded the opportunity to develop appropriate relationships with their family members. PCSAs should always keep biological families informed and involved. PCSAs should ensure that they allow and provide for appropriate communication between youth and their families as well as regular face to face contact. Youth should be able to maintain strong relationships with their siblings which includes regular contact and being placed together whenever possible. The right to visitation should not be used as a form of punishment. If a youth does not want contact with their families, with good reason, the proper legal channel should be pursued to terminate the visitation rights of the parent.



ELIZABETH, ATHENS COUNTY

“My experience with visitation and communication with my family, friends and significant others was bad at first but ended up alright. I was allowed to talk to my mother and step father three times a week and I was allowed to see them once every two weeks. I was allowed to visit with my step aunt and grandmother anytime because they were a great support for me growing up. I was also allowed to see my Aunt Emmie but only on the days that I had visits with my mother and step father. I am allowed to talk to my step aunt and grandmother anytime and I haven’t seen my aunt in about a month. I am not allowed to visit or talk to my mother or step father anymore because my mother and step father got real bad into drugs so, the judge told my mother that she was allowed to see me as long as he receives a clean drug screen from her every month and my mother never did quit and never once went to get a drug screen. The last time I saw my mother I was fifteen. I still have contact with my aunts and grandmother through.”



Members of the OHIO Youth Advisory Board at a Statewide Meeting; from left to right, Derek, Alex, Lisa Dickson, adult supporter from FCAA-OH, and Adrian.

FAMILIES HAVE THE RIGHT

- To be informed by the PCSA regarding the changes they need to make in order for their case to close or for reunification to occur. This is typically done through a case plan that the PCSA develops along with the family to address the issues that led to the case opening or the removal of the youth from the home.
- To be notified regarding any court hearings pertaining to their case and any case reviews that the PCSA may have on their case. Case reviews may have various names such as family team meetings, case plan meetings, 90 day reviews and/or semi annual reviews.
- To be allowed, at a minimum, at least one hour of weekly visitation and to be able to maintain regular contact through phone and letters. Contact may be supervised by the PCSA and can be further restricted by the court. Families should be informed of their visitation plan and any restrictions related to visitation. A visitation plan should include the following: how often the visits will be scheduled, how long each visit will last, where the visits will occur, if the visits will be supervised and who will be present during the visits.
- To be kept informed of their children's care, health, education and placement
- Families have other additional rights regarding their case with a PCSA and should be informed of their rights. Families should be informed as to who they need to speak to if they feel that their rights have not been honored. Families are also afforded rights through the court process and have the right to maintain legal counsel regarding their PCSA case. In some situations families may be appointed legal counsel if they are unable to pay for it on their own.



YOUR RIGHT

You have the right to live in clean, safe surroundings.



YOUR RESPONSIBILITY

Make sure that you clean up your own mess. Maintain good personal hygiene. Participate in household chores. Keep your room/ personal space safe and free from physical hazards. Know how to correctly use household cleaning supplies; ask for assistance from your foster parent if you're not sure. If you are not comfortable in your surroundings speak to your foster parent and/or social worker.



OHIO YAB RECOMMENDS

PCSAs should ensure that a foster home, especially a youth's bedroom, is safe prior to placement. Foster parents should adhere to all safety procedures outlined by their PCSA.

Foster parents should be conscientious regarding household items that youth may use to self-harm and ensure that those items, such as weapons and drugs, are kept secure. Foster parents should purchase the necessary hygiene products for foster youth. Foster parents should not assume that a youth knows how to clean and/or maintain a home to their standards. Household cleanliness should be a topic of discussion after a youth is placed.

Just like any family, foster parents should try to compromise regarding household chores and cleanliness.



YOUR RIGHT

You have the right to receive adequate and appropriate food, clothing, and housing.



YOUR RESPONSIBILITY

You should take good care of your clothing and household items. Voice your opinion on your clothing and food likes and dislikes. Respect your foster parent's personal belongings.



OHIO YAB RECOMMENDS

Social workers should keep a close eye on a youth's personal hygiene and their outward appearance as they can be indicators that this right is not being met.

Social workers should not be afraid to confront foster parents about concerns with a youth's appearance, hygiene or clothing.

Social workers should ask questions and spend adequate time with a youth during their foster home visit. Social workers should visit a foster home more often if they start to see minor changes with a youth. Fit, condition, gender and cultural norms are all important aspects of a youth's clothing needs; consider allowing youth to "earn" nicer clothes if they desire them.



At the PCSAO Annual Conference, the OHIO Youth Advisory Board was presented PCSAO's 2008 Child Advocate of the Year Award by Sandra Holt, Deputy Director at the Ohio Department of Job and Family Services. Pictured above from left to right: Adrian, James, Sandra Holt, Derek, and Laura.

RESPONSIBILITIES OF CAREGIVERS

(including residential treatment facilities)

- To complete and continue with the necessary training for them to be licensed
- To keep youth safe and protected from abuse and neglect
- To provide for a youth's daily care which includes but is not limited to food, shelter, clothing, medical treatment and personal care.
- To develop and maintain expectations, which include rules and consequences, for a youth's behavior in their home
- To treat youth with dignity and respect
- To maintain confidentiality regarding a youth and their family
- To maintain regular contact with a youth's caseworker and any other service providers (i.e. a counselor or an independent living worker) involved with the case
- To participate in team meetings and semi-annual reviews regarding a youth and their family
- To work in support of the PCSA's plan for youth and their family (i.e. reunification, independent living)
- To work in support of the visitation plan that the PCSA has developed for youth and their family
- To assist a youth with maintaining a life book which is a collection of youth and their family's personal memories and your life history.
- To comply with federal and state guidelines for providing substitute care of youth.



MARCELLA, FRANKLIN COUNTY

"During my experience in foster care, I felt I was often treated as an incompetent person, as far as decisions that were to be made regarding me. Not just the issues like placement, but also the decisions, like what I could spend my allowance on, or when I would even be able to spend it. Having to deal with this was so frustrating that it got to the point that I didn't want to listen to anything that my caseworker, or my foster mother told me. I do believe that money management is an important factor that all children need to learn, but especially those of us who are soon going to be on our own, fending for ourselves. Also, I was often restricted from doing such things like going to school sporting events, pep rallies, and other activities. By not being able to participate in such events I not only lost an important part of my high school social life, I felt it disqualified me from gaining any trust or responsibility from my foster family."



YOUR RIGHT

You have the right to your own money and personal property in accordance with your service or case plan.



YOUR RESPONSIBILITY

Make sure you save for your future. Know the difference between a want and a need. Learn how to compare cost when you shop. Have respect for your personal stuff and household items. Learn how to develop a budget so you don't overspend your money.



OHIO YAB RECOMMENDS

Provide information regarding comparison shopping, coupon cutting and the best ways to save. Social workers and/or foster parents should ensure that youth maintains a savings account but also receives some type of an allowance so they can learn about money management. Foster parents should respect a youth's personal property. Youth should receive information on financial planning/ money management methods and this information should be provided prior to emancipation. Foster parents, social worker, and/or independent living workers should monitor a youth's management of their money.



YOUR RIGHT

You have the right to participate in an appropriate educational program.



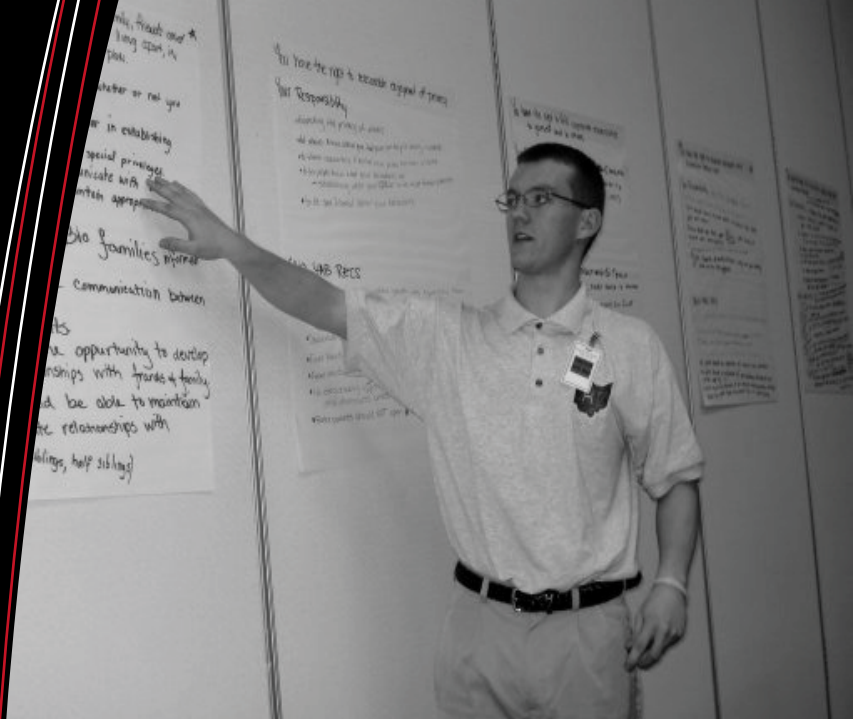
YOUR RESPONSIBILITY

Attend school daily and participate in all of your assigned classes. You can ask to remain in the school you attended at the time of removal, if you would like to do so. You should try to participate in after school activities. Ensure that you receive your high school diploma or your GED. Articulate your wishes regarding your educational future. Try to be the best in everything you do. School should come before everything; focus on your education instead of always "kicking it with your friends".



OHIO YAB RECOMMENDS

Social workers and foster parents should maintain regular contact with a youth's teachers and be informed regarding youth's educational plans. PCSAs should ensure that youth are afforded all of their educational rights. Social workers should talk with a youth to ensure that they are content with the school they attend and are having their educational needs met. Social workers should ensure that youth are able to participate in after school activities. Foster parents should make sure that school work is completed.



DEREK, SANDUSKY COUNTY

"I'm a smart kid. Everyone's proud of me. But there was a time when I was in constant battle with my casework team about schooling. I always wanted my education plan done my way. But now, looking back on everything, I realize they were only looking out for my best interest. They could see my true potential and that I wasn't living up to my true potential. Now that I'm a junior in high school, I've made National Honor Society and have a GPA of 4.168. All that my casework team has ever wanted me to do was to work to my full potential so that I would have the best life after I graduate. Now that I understand this, I'm very appreciative of that."

PURSUING HIGHER EDUCATION

College is a means for young people to secure good jobs, advance in their careers, achieve economic independence, grow intellectually, and build important social networks. For youth from foster care, college can mean freedom from your past and a future rich with possibilities. It may be your most important pathway to career and personal success.

Research shows only about 10 percent of students from foster care enroll in higher education, with less than 2 percent obtaining bachelor's degrees. Many youth in foster care often report that few people in their lives ever expected them to attend and succeed in college.

Talk with your case worker, guidance counselor and others about your plans after high school. As a current or former foster youth, you will be eligible for financial assistance. Be sure to ask about, complete and seek the FAFSA (Free Application for Federal Student Aid <http://www.fafsa.ed.gov/>) and seek ETV (Chafee Education and Training Voucher funds, <https://www.statevoucher.org/>). Whether you are interested in Community College or other two year certificate program, or a four year college program, there is something special for you. Change the statistics. Shoot high, be the success!

DOS & DONTs OF FOSTER CARE:

Real Wisdom from Those Who Have Been There

IF INVOLVED WITH THE CHILD WELFARE SYSTEM YOU SHOULD:

- Advocate for yourself and others
- Look for the positives
- Keep yourself informed about your case
- Attend court hearings
- Be actively involved and attend all of your case reviews
- Be open, honest, and respectful
- Cooperate with your service team members
- Do research on your own
- Take responsibility for your actions
- Keep yourself safe
- Speak your mind
- Allow for diversity and be respectful of others and their differences
- Believe in yourself
- Consider other points of view and opinions
- Accept help

IF INVOLVED WITH THE CHILD WELFARE SYSTEM YOU SHOULDN'T:

- Be afraid to speak your mind
- Be reluctant to ask questions
- Put yourself at risk to get attention
- Be physically aggressive
- Decline the supportive services that are offered to you
- Isolate yourself
- Allow past breaches of trust to stop you from building positive relationships with people
- Run away from others or your problems
- Be afraid to confront your social worker in an appropriate manner
- Take your anger out on your brothers and sisters in foster care
- Focus on the negatives
- Allow others to put down your heritage, culture or religion
- Be afraid to report abuse/neglect about yourself or others
- Break the law
- Forget about your future

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS



CAN I GET A DRIVER'S LICENSE WHILE IN PLACEMENT? IF SO, WHO CAN ASSIST WITH MY DRIVER'S EDUCATION?



Individual counties maintain their own policies and procedures regarding if and when a youth may receive driver's education and/or a driver's license. If you do not know your county's policy please request this information from your caregiver and/or caseworker.



DO I RECEIVE AN ALLOWANCE WHILE IN PLACEMENT?



You are allowed to receive an allowance while in placement unless your case plan indicates otherwise. However substitute caregivers are just like birth families in that some may provide allowance to the youth that they provide care of and some may not. Speak to your caregiver about receiving an allowance. If some youth in your home receive an allowance and you do not, then speak to your caseworker about this issue.



WHAT IS PERMANENCY PLANNING?



A PCSA is required to develop a plan with you and your family that outlines how your case may be closed or how you will be reunified with your family. This is typically completed in the form of a case plan. For a youth under the custody of a PCSA one aspect of permanency planning is concurrent planning. Concurrent planning means that as the agency works towards reunification between you and your family they must also explore other forms of permanency for you, such as custody to a relative, adoption or independent living, in the event that your family is unable to complete the activities necessary for reunification. Permanency planning is important because a youth should know what the future holds for them and what they can expect.



WHAT HAPPENS IF I RUN AWAY?



Running away is sometimes called AWOLing by PCSAs. Running away is often defined as leaving your placement setting without permission. If you run away you may not be able to return to your past placement and may need to be placed in a more secure placement which may be locked. It could also mean that the local juvenile court may issue a warrant for your arrest. You may be placed in a juvenile detention center. Additionally running away places youth at risk for both sexual and physical abuse and even death.



DO I HAVE HEALTH INSURANCE?



The PCSA will ensure that a youth has medical insurance when they are under the custody of a PCSA. Typically this medical insurance is funded through the state and is called Medicaid. Youth in Ohio, who were under the custody of a PCSA at the age of 18, are eligible to receive this medical insurance until they reach the age of 21. For more information, see page 10.

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS



CAN I HAVE A SOCIAL LIFE?



Youth are encouraged to maintain their relationships with their friends and family members when under the custody of a PCSA. However when a youth is under the custody of a PCSA there may be restrictions regarding how this contact may occur and it may need to be supervised. This is typically outlined in your case plan. PCSAs will typically provide a substitute caregiver with a list of people who are approved to have contact with a youth. PCSAs, due to state rules, typically cannot allow a youth under their custody to have unsupervised contact with an adult who has not completed the necessary background checks. Additionally if a youth wants to spend the night at that adult's home the PCSA may need to complete a home study on that home. Caregivers are required to know where you are at all times and who you are spending your time with. It is important to communicate to your caregivers your desires and plans regarding your social life.



CAN I WORK WHILE I AM IN FOSTER CARE?



Youth in foster care are allowed to work if they comply with state law and have the permission of their caregivers and/or their PCSA. In the state of Ohio youth under the age of 14 may not be employed, youth 14 and older may be employed with certain restrictions. Employers require youth to provide documentation called a Work Permit which is proof that a youth has received permission from their caregiver to work. In order to apply for your Work Permit you must bring your birth certificate, your social security card and a letter from a doctor indicating that you are healthy enough to work. Ask your caregiver where one applies for Work Permit in your county.



WHAT DOCUMENTS SHOULD I HAVE WHEN I TURN 18?



A youth should be provided with their birth certificate and social security card. A youth should be provided their Life Book. They should also have either a Driver's License (if applicable) or a state identification card. A youth may also be provided their medical insurance card. Individual counties may also provide additional documents. Speak with you caseworker to find out more.



HOW DO I ADDRESS PROBLEMS WITH MY SOCIAL WORKER OR FOSTER PARENT?



It's always best to first attempt to discuss any concerns or issues directly with your social worker and/or foster parent. Open communication is often a key to successful relationships. If you have attempted to discuss a problem with either your foster parent or social worker and feel that it has not been resolved the next best thing is to discuss the problem with another team member. You may want to consider asking to have one team member (such as your social worker) be present when discussing a concern with another team member (such as your foster parent). Youth should ask for a meeting to occur with their team members if they feel that it's necessary. Also check out page 6 for more information regarding what to do if you feel your concerns or issues are not being taken seriously.



DOES MY PCSA PAY FOR COLLEGE OR TECHNICAL SCHOOL?



A PCSA will not typically pay for college or technical school. The PCSA may assist with the purchase or provide certain items to support the transition of a youth to a college or technical school. Youth are encouraged to complete a FAFSA (see definition) application in order to obtain financial aid for college or technical school. Youth may also apply for ETV (see definition) funds to help cover some of the cost of being in school.



GLOSSARY

ADOPTION: when the court grants the rights, responsibilities and legal relationship of a youth to new parent(s). This can only occur if either the birth parents agree to the adoption or if their legal rights have been terminated by juvenile court. If a youth is 12 or older they will be asked by a judge if they want to they agree to being adopted.

ADVOCACY: the act of giving support on behalf of another. Many people involved in the child welfare system work as advocates for children and their families or will advocate on behalf of youth's special interest.

AFTERCARE SERVICES: services provided to a youth or family upon a child's return home. These services are supposed to support reunification and assist in maintaining the child in the home.

AGING OUT: the act of reaching an age at which you no longer need to be under the custody of a PCSA. This is age is typically 18 however some counties may maintain custody of a youth beyond age 18 if the youth has not received their high school education or have extenuating circumstances.

AWOL: Absence without Leave—a term used to refer to a youth who has run away and would include leaving your placement without permission.

BIRTH OR BIOLOGICAL PARENT: a term used to refer to the mother who gave birth to a youth and the man who fathered them

CASEWORKER: an individual who is employed by the PCSA to work with children and families who have open cases with the PCSA.

CASE PLAN: a written document developed by a PCSA for a youth and their family that outlines the activities that they all must complete in order for the child welfare case to close or for the youth to be returned home. The case plan should indicate who must complete what activity and how long they have to accomplish that activity.

CORPORAL PUNISHMENT: punishing a child by utilizing physical discipline such as spanking, whipping or beating

COURT APPOINTED SPECIAL ADVOCATE/CASA: volunteers, who typically work in conjunction with an attorney, to represent the best interests of a youth in juvenile court. Similar to a Guardian Ad Litem.

DETENTION CENTER: a place where a youth may await an adjudicatory hearing. There are 40 juvenile detention centers in Ohio.

EDUCATION AND TRAINING VOUCHER (ETV) PROGRAM: a federal program for youth who have aged out of the foster care system which provides them with financial assistance if they are pursuing further education or vocational training.

EMANCIPATION: a youth who has the legal rights of an adult. In the state of Ohio there is not a legal process for a youth under the age of 18 to become emancipated.

FAFSA: the Free Application for Federal Student Aid. This form is used by youth to apply for federal aid to attend college and/or vocational schools.

FOSTER CARE WORKER: typically a licensed social worker assigned to work with a foster family on issues related to being foster parents and providing care for foster youth. Foster care workers assist in ensuring that foster parents comply with the rules of fostering.

FOSTER PARENT: an adult guardian to who one or more youth have been legally entrusted. A Foster parent must complete standardized training and become licensed in order to provide care for youth. Foster parents may receive a per diem in order to provide care for the youth.

GUARDIAN AD LITEM: an attorney appointed by the court to represent the best interests of a child in the courtroom, sometimes referred to as a child's voice in the courtroom.

IMMUNIZATIONS: shots, typically provided to children under the age of five, to protect them from various childhood diseases.

INDIVIDUALIZED EDUCATION PLAN (IEP): a plan developed by a school for a youth who receives special education services.



GLOSSARY

INDEPENDENT LIVING: living arrangements in which a youth maintains their own residence in the community without the 24 hour supervision of an adult.

INDEPENDENT LIVING SKILLS AND ASSESSMENT: an assessment completed for youth either by one of their service team members to determine the independent living skills a youth has and which ones they need to develop. This assessment is a useful tool when a PCSA is planning for a youth's future. Two types of assessments that are commonly used is the Annie E. Casey and Daniel Memorial Tool.

INDEPENDENT LIVING WORKER: a individual, employed by a PCSA or private agency, who is assigned to work with a foster youth in regards to independent living preparation

JUDGE/MAGISTRATE: a public officer authorized to hear and decide cases in a court of law; a magistrate charged with the administration of justice.

LAWYER: represents a person in a legal action. A lawyer's job is to do what the client requests within ethical and professional guidelines. The state also has a lawyer (the prosecutor) representing their interests in the case. A lawyer is the same as an attorney.

LIFE BOOK: a book maintained by a youth and their substitute caregivers to collect and store pictures, memories and mementoes regarding the youth, their family and their life.

LIFE SKILLS SERVICES: services provided by either a public or private agency to assist youth, who have experienced out of home care, to prepare for employment, college or vocational opportunities and independent living.

MEDICAID: a public health insurance plan that typically assists in paying the medical bills of children placed in foster care.

MENTOR: a wise and trusted counselor or teacher, an influential sponsor or supporter.

PATERNITY: the act of establishing oneself as father. Sometimes DNA testing is completed to determine if a person named as a father is biologically related to a youth.

PCSA: a Public Child Service Agency which is the local agency that oversees a county's child welfare services, which can include preventive, foster care and adoption services. A PCSA is the agency that holds custody of a child or youth while they are placed in foster care or an out of home setting.

PREVENTIVE SERVICES: services, typically provided in the home or the community, geared towards maintaining a child in their own so that the family can be together.

PROBATION: if a judge or magistrate determines that a youth committed the act that he or she is being charged with they may decide to place the youth on probation. The probation department will provide the youth with written "terms" of what a youth must do while on probation. The youth and their family will be required to have ongoing contact with their probation officer in order to ensure compliance.

RESPIRE: licensed individuals who provide short term care of youth. Youth which are placed in foster care may sometimes "go to respite." This typically means they visit another foster home for a short period (a weekend, a week) until they can return to their regular foster home. Sometimes respite is used to give both the youth and the foster parents a break from each other.

REUNIFICATION: the act of returning a youth, who is under the custody of a PCSA, back home to their parents. Reunification is one of the most common goals of a case plan.

SEMI-ANNUAL REVIEW: a meeting typically held every 6 months by a PCSA in order to review a youth or family's case plan. Family members, including youth, caseworkers, supervisors, foster parents, foster care worker and GALs are typically invited to these meetings.

SPECIAL EDUCATION SERVICES: additional services provided by schools to assist eligible students with their academic work.

STIPEND: Some youth who participate in either a transitional or independent living program may receive a monthly check to cover their expenses.



GLOSSARY

SOCIAL SECURITY NUMBER: an identifying number provided by the federal government to United States citizens. This number is often requested by employers and is needed to apply for a driver's license and public benefits.

SOCIAL WORKER: an individual who has a bachelor or master's degree in social work. Many individuals employed by child welfare agencies have a degree in social work and consider themselves social workers.

SUBSTANCE ABUSE: addiction to drugs or alcohol

SUBSTITUTE CAREGIVER: a person or facility who has been designated by a PCSA to provide care for a youth who is under the custody of the PCSA. Substitute caregivers include foster parents, relative and kinship caregivers.

TREATMENT/SERVICE PLAN: a plan developed by a therapist or clinician to address specific mental health or substance abuse issues.

THERAPIST/ CLINICIAN: a person licensed to provide therapy to address either mental health or substance abuse issues.

TRUNANCY: leaving school without permission and/or not attending school as required

TYPES OF SUBSTITUTE CARE SETTINGS:

EMERGENCY SHELTER CARE (ESC): A substitute care setting that provides short term care for a youth based on their immediate needs. A youth should not reside in an ESC long term.

RELATIVE OR KINSHIP: A relative or close family friend may be approved by a PCSA to provide care for a youth. There are typically requirements that a relative or close family friend need to complete prior to be approved for placement.

FOSTER CARE: A family home setting in which individuals (foster parents) have completed a formal set of trainings and met set requirements to be approved by a PCSA to provide care for youth.

TREATMENT FOSTER CARE: A family home setting in which individuals (foster parents) have completed a formal set of specialized training and met set requirements to be approved by a PCSA to provide care for youth which special treatment needs.

GROUP HOME: A substitute care setting where several youth may live together in a home with varying levels of supervision.

RESIDENTIAL: A substitute care setting that provides youth with a formal structured living arrangement in which the youth receives treatment for needs such as alcohol and drug abuse or mental health issues. Some youth may also be placed in a residential setting due to their behavioral issues. Residential settings may be secure and/or locked.

TRANSITIONAL LIVING: a substitute care setting in which several youth reside together and prepare for their transition to independent living along with the support and assistance of adults.

INDEPENDENT LIVING: Youth who have met specific requirements of a PCSA may reside in their own apartment under the supervision and guidance of the PCSA.

VISITATION PLAN: the plan that is developed between PCSAs, youth in foster care and their family determining how often and how long visits will occur. The plan also typically addresses where the visits will occur, who may visit and if the visits need to be supervised.

WORK PERMIT: a required form for minors to be able to work. It states that a youth is old enough to work and can be obtained through a school.

OHIO & NATIONAL RESOURCES



COALITION ON HOMELESSNESS AND HOUSING IN OHIO: COHHIO supports a range of housing assistance services in Ohio, including homeless prevention, emergency shelters, transitional housing and permanent affordable housing with linkages to support services, as needed. Helping hundreds of housing organizations and homeless service providers pursue their missions, COHHIO provides public policy advocacy, training and technical assistance, research and public education. www.cohhio.org

FOSTER CARE ALUMNI OF AMERICA, OHIO CHAPTER: The statewide chapter of the Foster Care Alumni of America, a national organization which was established with support of Casey Family Programs to connect alumni and transform the child welfare system. www.fcaa-oh.org

FOSTER CLUB: A national network for young people in foster care, a peer support network, which opens the way for young people to transform their own lives. www.fosterclub.com

MEDICAID CONSUMER HOTLINE: (800) 324-8680 or <http://ifs.ohio.gov/OHP>.

MOCKINGBIRD SOCIETY: An independent, non-profit organization that is dedicated to improving the safety, quality of life and future of children and adolescents living in the foster care/group home system nationwide. www.mockingbirdsociety.org

www.mymissiontransition.org: A website empowering independence and adulthood by providing information to youth transitioning from foster care regarding: education, finances, citizenship, employment, housing, and various other topics.

NATIONAL INDEPENDENT LIVING ASSOCIATION: NILA is a grassroots organization that is committed to enhancing the futures of young people by promoting quality services for our most vulnerable and valuable population; its youth. www.nilausa.org

NATIONAL RUNAWAY SWITCHBOARD: 1-800-621-4000 (1-800-RUNAWAY)

NATIONAL SUICIDE PREVENTION LIFELINE: 1-800-273-8255 (1-800-273-TALK) or 1-800-784-2433 (1-800-SUICIDE)

OHIO ASSOCIATION OF CHILD CARE AGENCIES: OACCA is a statewide network of public and private child and family serving agencies that represents member interests to the Ohio General Assembly and other areas of the state government. www.oacca.org

OHIO DEPARTMENT OF ALCOHOL AND DRUG ADDICTION SERVICES: Provides statewide leadership for alcohol and other drug addiction prevention and treatment services. www.odadas.state.oh.us

OHIO DEPARTMENT OF JOB AND FAMILY SERVICES: Develops and oversees programs that provide health care, employment and economic assistance, child support and services to families and children. www.ifs.ohio.gov

OHIO FAMILY CARE ASSOCIATION: Serves as the statewide voice for resource families, uniting the voices of children and families involved in adoptive, foster, kinship and respite care. www.ofcaonline.org

OHIO INDEPENDENT LIVING ASSOCIATION: OHILA exists to provide leadership, advocacy, training and networking opportunities for Independent Living programs and youth throughout the state of Ohio. This professional support is committed in serving and preparing Ohio's youth for Independent Living and transitioning into adulthood. www.ohila.org

ORPHAN FOUNDATION OF AMERICA: A national organization focusing on education, support, and workforce development for youth aging out of the foster care system. www.orphan.org

PUBLIC CHILDREN SERVICES ASSOCIATION OF OHIO: A coalition of public children services agencies that promotes child safety, family stability and community strength. www.pcsao.org

RAPE, ABUSE, AND INCEST NATIONAL NETWORK: 1-800-656-4673 (1-800-656-HOPE)

TRANSITION CLUB: A comprehensive, youth oriented site with information, advice, interactive features and a useful glossary of foster care terms. www.transition.fosterclub.com

www.YouthComm.org: Publisher of Represent, a monthly magazine for youth in care, written and edited by youth.



IMPORTANT CONTACT INFORMATION

MOTHER:

Address
Phone Number
Email

INDEPENDENT LIVING WORKER:

Address
Phone Number
Email

FATHER:

Address
Phone Number
Email

ADULT SUPPORTER:

Address
Phone Number
Email

SOCIAL WORKER'S NAME:

Address
Phone Number
Email

MENTOR:

Address
Phone Number
Email

SOCIAL WORKER'S SUPERVISOR'S NAME:

Address
Phone Number
Email

GUIDANCE COUNSELOR:

Address
Phone Number
Email

THERAPIST/ CLINICIAN'S NAME:

Address
Phone Number
Email

ETV COORDINATOR:

Address
Phone Number
Email

CASA/ GAL'S NAME:

Address
Phone Number
Email

SOMEONE I CAN TRUST:

Address
Phone Number
Email

HEALTH CARE PROVIDER:

Address
Phone Number
Email

SOMEONE I CAN TRUST:

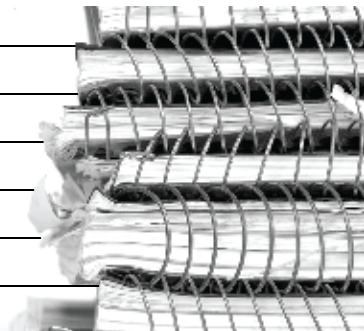
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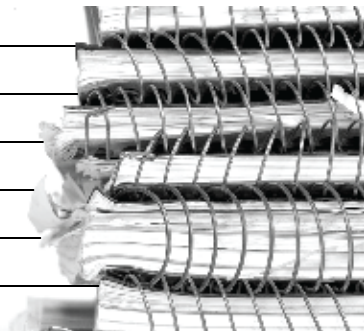
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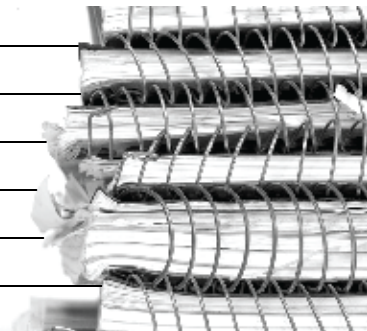
SOMEONE I CAN TRUST:

Address
Phone Number
Email

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HOW TO JOIN

If you are a current or former foster youth between the ages of 14-23, please consider joining OHIO YAB. There are no major membership requirements other than filling out the OHIO YAB Membership Sign Up Form, located at www.pcsao.org/ohioyouth and submitting it by fax, email, or mail. By becoming a member you will be informed of upcoming meetings, be invited to participate in OHIO YAB events and be provided with information regarding Ohio's foster youth and OHIO YAB.

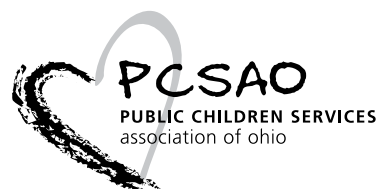
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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Youth Advisory Board*

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www.pcsao.org