

## **In legal proceedings, you have the right:**

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

This brochure was prepared by Juvenile Law Center, a non-profit, public interest law firm that advances the rights and well-being of children in jeopardy.

**To download a copy of the complete Know Your Rights Guide, go to:**

[http://www.jlc.org/publications/know\\_your\\_rights/](http://www.jlc.org/publications/know_your_rights/)

**For more information or to request a Know Your Rights workshop, contact:**

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

# **Know Your Rights**

**A Brochure for Youth in Substitute Care in Pennsylvania**

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

**Rights are things that are guaranteed to you by law. That means a judge can make sure that you get what the law requires. Your rights are also tools to help advocate for yourself.**

**In substitute care, you have the right:**

- To services that will help you stay with or return to your family
- To the most family-like and least restrictive placement
- For reasonable efforts to be made so you can be placed with your siblings
- If you are not placed with your siblings, to visit with your siblings (if they are in care) at least once every two weeks
- To visit with your parents at least once every two weeks
- To not have family visits used as a reward or punishment for your behavior
- To be free of discrimination based on race, religion, disability, national origin, or gender
- To a placement where you are safe and protected
- To Independent Living Services beginning at least at age 16 and continuing until you are age 21 (even if you are no longer in care)

- To continue in the school you went to before you were placed
- To be placed with your own child if you are a parent unless a court has said that you cannot
- To consider whether you want contact with your biological family (if you are adopted after April 2011) and your adoptive family is in agreement
- To stay in care until you are age 21 if you are in a program of treatment or instruction
- To save any money you have earned
- To talk on the phone (reasonable rules may apply)
- To send mail
- To receive mail and not have it opened by the county child welfare agency or private provider staff unless they have a reason to believe that you have been sent something that will be harmful or that you are not allowed to have (in that case, the mail must be opened in front of you)
- To communicate and visit privately with your lawyer and clergy
- To practice or not practice any religion
- To appropriate medical, dental, and behavioral health treatment
- To appropriate clothing and food
- To be free from excessive medication

- To be free from corporal punishment (punishment that uses physical force, threats, or verbal abuse)
- To be explained your rights and given a copy of the Children in Foster Care Act
- To file a grievance or complaint with the placement agency or the child welfare agency when you feel you have been mistreated or your rights are being violated
- To have the grievance policy of the county and private agency explained to you in a way you can understand

**Regarding planning for your future, you have the right:**

- To an Individual Service Plan (ISP) and Child Permanency Plan (CPP) that explain your goals and needs and what is being done to meet them, including your responsibilities
- To be present and participate in all the meetings where these plans are created
- To an Independent Living Plan if you are age 16 or older
- To a detailed transition plan at least 90 days before you leave care (at age 18 or older) that reflects your individual needs and includes specific options on housing, health insurance, education, local opportunities for mentors and continuing support services, and work force supports and employment services