My RIGHTS in Foster Care
An Activity Book for Young Children in Care

2016
Instructions for using the *My Rights in Foster Care* activity book

**For Caseworkers:**

The purpose of this resource is to help young children in foster care in learning about their rights. Please remove this page before the child completes the activity book.

**Who should use this book?**

This book was designed for caseworkers to use with young children who are in foster care. Caseworkers are strongly encouraged to sit with the child and assist the child in completing the booklet. The caseworker may invite other adults involved in the child’s life to join the caseworker and the child in completing the booklet, including foster parents and kinship caregivers. The adults in a child’s life have a shared responsibility to teach children in care about their rights and to help them understand the role that adults have in upholding their rights.

**How should this book be used?**

Caseworkers should find a quiet place to sit with the child and allow ample time to go through the booklet with the child. This provides the opportunity to start a conversation with the child about their rights. Depending on the age and development of the child, some activities may be appropriate for children to do on their own while the caseworker is present. Consider the cultural identity of children as you explore their rights with them.

Once the child completes the booklet, a copy of the booklet should be shared with the foster parent, kinship caregiver, attorney for the child and any other caseworker who is responsible for planning for the child.

**Bill of Rights for Children and Youth in Foster Care**

The information in the book corresponds to the rights outlined in the *New York State Bill of Rights for Children and Youth in Foster Care*. Older children in care (age 14 and above) must be given a copy of the entire Bill of Rights and have their rights explained to them. The Bill of Rights form can be downloaded as OCFS-2132 or OCFS-2132-S (Spanish).
My Rights in Foster Care

An Activity Book for Young Children in Care
This book belongs to: __________________________________________

My caseworker’s name is: ______________________________________

Phone number: _________________________________________________

Email: _________________________________________________________

My attorney’s name is: _________________________________________

Phone number: _________________________________________________

Email: _________________________________________________________

This book is about your rights while you are in foster care.

Sometimes families need help taking care of their children, and kids go to live with a foster family.

That’s called being in foster care. Being in foster care is not your fault, and it is NOT because of something you have done.

Being in foster care will be different from being at home. But it will be OK. While you are in foster care, you have the right to be in a safe place and to be taken care of.
Encourage the child to draw and color the face so it looks like him/her. As age-appropriate, the adult can help the child fill in the information next to and below the face.
Think about the people you care about and those who care about you. Write a person’s name in each leaf and then color the leaf with the best color for that person.

Ask or help the child to write the name of a friend or family member in each leaf — just first names or titles such as “Grandma” are fine.
Where I live now

Circle the people who live with you now in foster care. If you know their names, write their names on the lines below them.

Grownups (Adults)

__________________________
__________________________
__________________________

Teenagers

__________________________
__________________________
__________________________

Children

__________________________
__________________________
__________________________

Babies

__________________________
__________________________
__________________________

Talk with the child about what they should call each person they live with in foster care. Explain that other children may arrive or leave while they are there.
You have rights when you are in foster care.

What are rights?

Rights are about what you need to be safe and healthy.

Rights belong to you and nobody can take them away from you.

Can you think of something that you need to be safe and healthy?

Circle one or draw it in the box.

Encourage the child to talk about the things they like that they need to be safe and healthy. If they don't identify anything, help them think about what it means to be safe and healthy and have rights.
I have the right to be **SAFE** (and to FEEL SAFE)

This means:

- Having a safe place to live, play, and learn
- Not being hit, bullied, or hurt
- Living with people you can trust

What makes you feel safe?
Find the words in the list!

If the child is too young to do the word search, talk about some of the word pictures. The concept of trust may be difficult for some children. Adults should reinforce the message that children have a right to be safe.
I have the right to be **HEALTHY**

This means:

- Having enough food to eat and clothes to wear
- Having my own comfortable place to sleep
- Getting enough exercise
- Seeing a doctor and a dentist
- Talking to a counselor about my feelings

Picture match (draw lines to things that match up)

Make sure the child understands the roles of the people in the list (doctor, dentist, counselor). Ask if the child has had visits with these people in the past.
I have the right to
VISIT MY FAMILY (if it’s safe)

This means:

- Having regular visits with your parents if it's all right. It might be OK to talk on the phone.
- If your brothers or sisters are not in the same home as you, you should be able to visit or talk to them too.

Across
1. A boy who has the same parent as you
4. _______ to your teacher.
5. A place for a picnic
6. A girl who has the same parent as you
7. When people see each other for a short time

Down
2. When your mouth makes words
3. Join two things together
5. What you do at recess
6. Put money in your piggy bank

This page may prompt a child to ask about when they will have these visits. If you don’t have the answer, let them know you will find out — and follow up!
You will go to school so you can keep up with your schoolwork. Be sure to ask for help in school if you need it.

Try to engage the child about his/her previous experiences in school. Reinforce the message that they can tell you about any problems.
I have the right to do the things I like to do

Everyone has something they are good at. Everyone has things they really like to do.

What do you like to do? Circle as many as you want.

**SPORTS**
- Baseball/softball
- Football
- Soccer
- Swimming
- Running
- Basketball
- Gymnastics

**MUSIC**
- Singing by myself
- Playing an instrument
- Singing in a group
- Listening to music
- Dancing

**ART**
- Drawing
- Painting
- Making videos

**HOBBIES**
- Making models
- Sewing or knitting
- Hiking
- Reading
- Collecting things

**OTHER STUFF**

Encourage the child to talk about things he/she has done. Try to create opportunities for them to continue these activities.
There’s nobody just like you. There are ways that you are different from other people, and there are ways that you are the same as other people.

You have the right to be yourself, to be respected, and to be treated fairly.

Here are some things children say about themselves. Can you think of something you would say?

- I always have a light on at night!
- There are some foods I’m not supposed to eat!
- I speak more than one language!
- My family is from another country!
- Dogs make me nervous!

Write in the empty speech bubble:

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

Read the comments with the child. Help the child identify a special thing about himself or herself and write in the empty speech bubble.
Help the child identify adult helpers with whom they feel safe to share their feelings and worries. Help the child write their names next to the “emojis.” You may want to connect with these supportive adults and communicate that the child has identified them as an adult helper who can be trusted to talk to.

Everyone needs someone to talk to. You have a right to talk to your caseworker every month — with nobody else listening. You have the right to talk to your attorney.

Who can you talk to when you have problems or you don’t feel safe?

Who can you talk to when you’re happy and excited?

Who can you talk to when you have questions about your rights or your time in foster care?
“… promoting the safety, permanency, and well-being of our children, families, and communities. …”