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STATEWIDE
YOUTH ADVISORY BOARD
∞
Infinite Possibilities.

Primed for Life

PARTNERING
WITH PARENTS

SWFCAC-Statewide Foster Care Advisory Council

IAAC
Illinois Adoption Advisory Council

NCTSN youth TASK FORCE

A Children's Guide to Foster Care
Hi! I’m Starbe! This booklet is yours to keep and to use. Make sure to read it with you caregiver or staff.

This booklet belongs to:

NOTES AND OTHER IMPORTANT INFORMATION

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TALK TO SOMEONE.
You are special. You do not have to feel you are alone.

Why don’t I live at home?
No matter where you live, we are here to make sure you are safe. It is important to know you did nothing wrong. Your family is going to get all the help they can so you can be safe at home.

A doctor, teacher, neighbor, member of the family, police officer, or someone else thought you were not safe at home. That is why someone asked us to come and help you and your family.
Here are some reasons you might live somewhere different:

1. Someone thought you were not safe
2. Someone hurt you
3. The situation at home was bad
4. Other situations such as when the parents are sick or in the hospital and they cannot take care of their children

What happens next?

You might live with your foster parents or relatives, or with other children until your parents get the help they need.

Director’s Office Chicago:
100 West Randolph St.
312-814-6800

Director’s Office Springfield:
406 East Monroe St.
217-785-2509
If something is going wrong, in an emergency call 911

If someone is hurting you or someone you know, call the Child Abuse Hotline: 1-800-252-2873

If something isn't going well you can call someone to take a second look...
Call the Youth Hotline: 1-800-232-3798
Who am I living with?

Foster parents and relatives are special people who have been carefully chosen to look after children. Foster Parents and relatives do all the things that parents do, such as helping you with homework, take you to the doctor, cook for you, and set rules.

Why do I have to live with a foster parent or a relative?

When a child cannot live with their own family, they can move into a foster home or other relatives. Children live with foster parents or other relatives for all sorts of reasons but it is important for you to know that you did not do anything wrong to move into foster care or with other relatives.

Your foster parent or relative will provide a safe, stable place for you.

Where else can I turn for help?
Who can I contact for help?

Case or Social worker: __________________________
Phone: ______________________________________________________________________________

Foster Parent: ________________________________
Phone: ______________________________________________________________________________

CASA/GAL________________________________________
Phone: ______________________________________________________________________________

Therapist: __________________________________
Phone: ______________________________________

Other important people:
1. ____________________________________________
2. ____________________________________________

Your caseworker should find out what you want and what your feelings are. We want to hear them. They are really important to us!
Sometimes the first place you live isn't a foster home. You might start in a Shelter, or in a Group Home, or some other type of home.

No matter where you live, we are here to make sure you are safe, healthy, and well taken care of!

Sometimes, your family will not be able to get better, and the court may decide that you should not go back home.

If this happens, you should let your social worker or other people in your life know who you might want to live with instead.

Just because you want to live with someone doesn't mean you will be able to. It might seem unfair but make sure you talk to important people like your therapist or social worker.

Just because you do not live with your family doesn't mean they do not love you. If you want to keep in contact with them, let your social worker know so they can speak up for you!
Will I ever be able to go back to my family?

This is a great question and one many children in foster care ask. Like the care plan that was created for you, one was also created for your parents to help them. These plans are talked about in court and the court decides when you get to go home. All of these things are done to make sure you are safe.

Can you draw your favorite people?
What can/should I do while I wait for decisions to be made:

There are so many things you can do while you wait for decisions about your family to be made. Make sure you focus on school, your education is so important to your long term success!

Every family has rules. What are some of the rules in the home you live in? Let’s work to write them down to help you remember.

We want you to get involved in things that are exciting for you!
Can you draw what home looks like?

Help us find things that you are good at, such as singing, dancing, writing, reading, and so much more!

You live in a big world full of beautiful things and one day you will be a big part of this world. Prepare yourself for that because your family is working so things can be better.

Make sure if there is something you want, or something you need, or something you are interested in let your caregiver or caseworker know!
**What should happen while I live here?**

1. No one should hit you or do anything else that could cause you harm
2. Someone should tell you why you entered foster care and why you are still in foster care
3. You can participate in decision making and ask for help
4. You have the right to visit with your parents, brothers, sisters, family members and other people important to you unless the court or your caseworker thinks it is not good for you
5. You should see our caseworker at least one time each month
6. You should be listened to and respected.
7. We will make sure you are healthy and get all the medical attention you need like check ups, dentist appointments and eye exams
8. You have the right to go to school
9. You have the right to participate in activities like school, church or other activities
10. We will make sure you have enough food and clothes

We know moving into a new and different home without your family is not easy, but your social worker and your foster parent want to make sure you are in a safe, caring and happy home.

Help the Bear find his way through the maze!
What if I have a problem or I am unhappy?

We want to know if you have any problems at all. Please tell us.

Problems like:

- Worries about your family
- Do not like the food at your home
- Do not like your new school

Your foster parent or other caregiver is not allowed to hurt you in any way. If you are worried about anything at all, please don’t be afraid to speak up as there are lots of people who care about you and want to help.
“My caregivers are

.......................................................... “

Can you draw who is important?

Sometimes you will feel happy, sometimes sad and sometimes worried.

That’s OK!

Your foster parents will not mind if you ask them questions like...

“When do we eat?”

“Can I have friends over?”

“What time do I have to get up in the morning and go to bed at night?”
**When will I see my family?**

Just because you live in a foster home, with relatives, or with other children. It doesn't mean that you will not get to see your family.

**Can I see my siblings?**

You have the right to see your brothers and sisters. Talk with your caseworker about setting a time up.

**How long will I have to stay?**

Your social worker will make a plan for you called your “service plan” that includes everything that’s important to you such as your school, your health, and when you see your family and friends and how long you will stay with your foster family.

Tell your social worker if there is anything in the plan that you do not like as they may be able to change this. If you ever feel worried, tell your social worker, and they will do everything they can to help.

**Who decides what will happen to me?**

While you live with your foster parent or other relatives, there will be meetings called court, where all the important grown-ups in your life will get together and make a plan for you.

You will be asked what you think about this plan. If you think something is missing, you should tell your social worker. If you have questions at any time you should talk with your social worker.

If you have any concerns in between these meetings, you can talk to your social worker.
Color in the pictures...