

SpeakUp

Your Legal Rights in DCF Care



Acknowledgments

This book is written by Attorney Martha Stone, Executive Director of the Center for Children's Advocacy, and updated by CCA Senior Staff Attorney Sabrina Tavi.

The Center for Children's Advocacy fights for the legal rights of Connecticut's most vulnerable children and youth. CCA attorneys provide unparalleled individual legal representation for abused and neglected children and for those who suffer from racial injustice, inadequate educational support, lack of access to healthcare or mental health care, homelessness, juvenile justice involvement or immigration issues. The Center's relationships with state policy makers and administrative leaders enable CCA attorneys to effect systemic change that improves the lives of thousands of children each year.

Since 1997, the Center for Children's Advocacy has been a powerful voice for the state's most vulnerable children and has given youth the support and encouragement they need to speak up for themselves.

Contact Information

If you have questions or want more information, please call the Center for Children's Advocacy at 860-570-5327 or 203-335-0719.

The information in this book is based on the law as of March 1, 2018. It is not intended as legal advice for an individual situation.

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Speak Up

YOU HAVE RIGHTS in DCF care.
You have a say in what happens to you.

This book tells you about your legal rights
and the responsibilities of DCF and others
to keep you safe.

YOUR VOICE is loud.
YOUR RIGHTS are important.

Speak Up.
Let your voice be heard!







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How to Speak Up and Advocate for Yourself

How DCF Works

To be a good advocate for yourself and get what you need, you should know how the Department of Children and Families (DCF) works.

Use this DCF Chain of Command list to know who to call if the first person you call doesn't help you:

1. Call your DCF Social Worker.

2. Call the Social Work Supervisor.

This person's phone number should be on your DCF Worker's voicemail.

3. Call the Program Manager.

This person's phone number should be on the Social Work Supervisor's voicemail.

4. Call the Office Director.

Call the main number at your DCF Office for this person's phone number.
DCF Office phone numbers are on page 51 of this book.

You can also call the DCF Ombudsman's Office at 860-550-6301.

If you still don't get what you need, call the Commissioner's Office at 860-550-6300 or email Commissioner.dcf@ct.gov.

You can also ask for a hearing. Call the DCF Administrative Hearings Office at 860-550-6300.

If you can't reach anyone at DCF, there are other people who can help you.

Try calling these people:

- Your Lawyer
- Your Guardian Ad Litem (if one was appointed for you)
- The Office of the Chief Public Defender, Child Protection Services at 860-566-1341
- A Teacher or other trusted adult

How to Speak Up and Advocate for Yourself

Superior Court for Juvenile Matters

These are the people who are involved in the Court's decisions:

- You
- Your Lawyer
- Your Guardian Ad Litem (if one was appointed for you)
- Your Parent's or Guardian's Lawyer
- Your Child's Lawyer or Guardian Ad Litem (if you are a teen parent)
- Your DCF Worker
- Assistant Attorney General (DCF's Lawyer)

These people all give their reports to the Judge.
The Judge makes the final decision.





How to Speak Up and Advocate for Yourself

When do I have the right to Speak Up for myself and have my voice heard?

You have a lot of legal rights to go to places where your voice must be heard.

- If you are 12 or over, you have a legal right to get notice of and attend the Administrative Case Review (ACR) meetings that are held every 6 months. Your statements must be noted in the plan.
- You have a legal right to object to your case plan by writing a letter to the DCF Hearing Unit, and you have a legal right to participate in the DCF hearing about your objection to the case plan.
- You have a legal right to be at the Adolescent Transition Conference.
- You have a legal right to be at a Child and Family Permanency Team meeting held by DCF.
- You have a legal right to ask about what is happening to your case, your family, and your siblings.
- You have a legal right to ask the Judge if you can come to court.
- If you don't go to court, you have a legal right to have your lawyer tell the Judge what you want or need, including what you want your permanent living arrangement to be.
- You have a legal right to see your Social Worker once a month and to call him or her with problems.
- You have a legal right to ask for more visits with your family.
- You have a legal right to object to the school DCF has placed you in.
- You have a legal right to make a formal complaint about the way your foster parents are treating you. If they are abusing you, call the DCF Careline at 1-800-842-2288.

You have a voice.

Speak Up!

Be a good advocate for yourself so you can get what you need.

Family and Community Contacts

Can I live with my brothers and sisters?

In most cases, you have the right to be placed in foster care with your brothers and sisters.¹

Can I visit with my brothers and sisters if we're not placed together?

Yes, in most cases, you have the right to have visits with your brothers and sisters.²

Can I call my brothers and sisters on the phone?

Yes, you can have a schedule where you can call them or they can call you.³

Can I visit my parents?

Yes, in most cases, you have the right to visit your parents.⁴

The number of times and the place where you can visit will be written in your case plan.⁵ (see page 25)

Can I call my parents on the phone?

Yes, in most cases, you can call your parents.⁶





Family and Community Contacts

What if I want to see my family more often?

You need to tell your DCF worker and your lawyer. Depending on how well your parents are doing and what your needs are, you might be able to see them more often.⁷ You have to speak up and ask for this to happen.

If your DCF worker doesn't do this for you, your attorney can go to court for you and ask the court for this to happen. You can also request an administrative hearing.

Can I see my friends?

You have the right to have visits with people who are “significant” in your life. If you have friends who are important to you, you should tell your foster parents, social worker, or lawyer that you would like to see them.⁸ These visits can only be denied if they think the visits are not in your best interest. If this happens, talk to your lawyer and see if there is anything your lawyer can do to help you.

Can I call anyone I want?

You can make and receive phone calls to anyone at reasonable times.⁹ These phone calls can only be denied to you if it is determined they would not be in your best interest. Call your lawyer if calls are being denied to you and you think this is unfair.

Can I write to anyone I want?

Yes, you can send and receive your own mail.¹⁰



Rules in the Foster Home

What kind of rules can there be at the foster home? What if the rules are too strict?

Foster parents can set rules that are appropriate for kids your age.

- They cannot be physically or verbally abusive toward you and they cannot threaten you, frighten you, or swear at you.¹¹
- They have to give you some privacy, appropriate to your age.¹²
- If their strict rules violate these guidelines, or they hurt you in any way, you should contact your DCF worker and your lawyer. If you are being physically harmed or abused, you should immediately call the DCF Careline at 1-800-842-2288 or call 911.

What is expected of me at the foster home?

You should follow the rules, exercise good judgment and self-control, and be responsible for your own actions.¹³

Can I go to my own church, synagogue, or mosque?

Yes.¹⁴

Can I speak Spanish or another language other than English if I want?

Yes.¹⁵ Foster families are required to accept your language, heritage, and culture.¹⁶

What if my foster family doesn't eat the same kind of food I'm used to? Do I have a right to have the food that I like to eat?

You can ask for different food, but foster families are normally required to provide you with healthy food, not necessarily the food that you like to eat.¹⁷

Can I keep and save the money I earn by myself?

Yes.¹⁸



Rules in the Foster Home

**Do I have a right to get the money my foster parents are paid to care for me?
What if I think that the money paid to my foster parents is not being used for my care?**

The money goes directly to foster parents to pay for your housing, food, clothes, family recreational activities, transportation, and child care.

Foster parents are expected to give you a reasonable allowance.¹⁹ You should talk to your foster parent about this and negotiate a suitable amount. Sometimes, you will need to help out with family chores to get an allowance. If you feel you are being treated unfairly, tell your DCF worker or your lawyer.

Can I get and keep my own clothes?

Yes.²⁰

Can I keep my stuff in a safe storage space?

Yes,²¹ there must be a safe place for you to keep your clothes and other personal items.

Do I have a right to a clothing allowance?

Your foster parents receive a clothing allowance for you.

The first one they get is called an “initial clothing voucher” and can be up to \$300. After that, they receive a monthly payment from DCF and part of this must be used for appropriate clothes for you while you are staying there.²²

You may also be able to get an additional clothing voucher if you ask your DCF worker to assess your immediate needs depending on your growth, the seasons, etc., through a request for some additional funding for you.²³

Rules in the Foster Home

**Who is supposed to know about my past?
Is there a way to keep information about me confidential?**

In most cases, you have the right to have all the information about you and your family kept confidential. There are some exceptions where information can be disclosed by DCF without your consent, such as to anyone who is taking care of you, including doctors and foster parents.²⁴

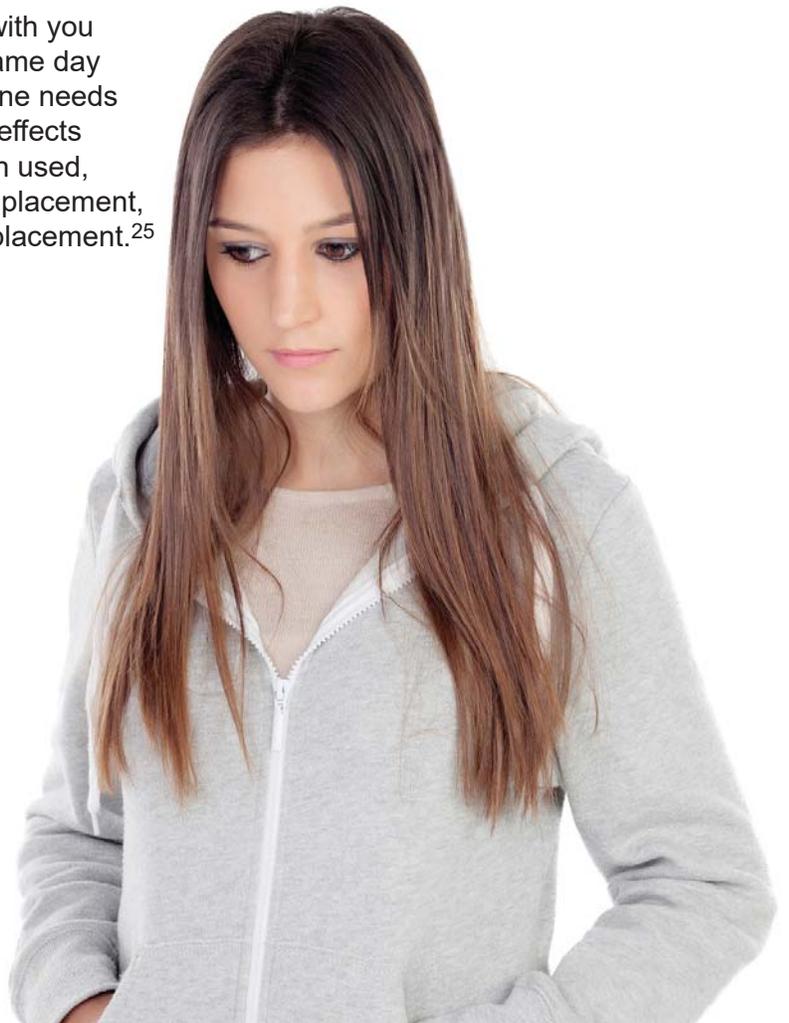
If you think people are telling confidential things they shouldn't, tell your lawyer and social worker.

Can my foster parents say they don't want me anymore and make me move to another home?

Yes, your foster parent can request your removal, but this doesn't happen very often unless there is a problem in the foster home.

When this happens, your DCF worker will meet with you and your foster parent within 5 days (or on the same day in emergency situations). At this meeting, everyone needs to say what the reasons are for the removal, the effects on you if you stay there, what services have been used, how willing your foster parent is to continue your placement, and what new services would help continue the placement.²⁵

If it can't be worked out, you will be moved to another placement.





Rules in the Foster Home

Can I get my driver's license?

You can get your driver's license if you get DCF's permission.

DCF will pay 100% of the cost of the driver's education program. The owner of the car you drive must carry the required insurance and assume responsibility for your driving.²⁶

Do I have a right to money for high school activities like the prom, class ring, and graduation clothes?

Yes, DCF must provide you with assistance for the following school expenses for your senior year, up to \$500, to pay for the following:

- yearbook
- yearbook pictures
- prom expenses (tuxedo or dress, tickets, pictures, flowers, transportation)
- senior class dues
- class ring
- class trip(s)
- graduation cap and gown ²⁷

Other school-sponsored activities may also be covered on a case-by-case basis. Ask your DCF worker about this.

If you are turned down for any funds, you have a right to an administrative hearing.²⁸ Ask your lawyer to help you with this.

Also, the Connecticut Alliance of Foster and Adoptive Families (CAFAP) has a fund for foster youth activities, called the "Children's Hope Fund." You can call CAFAP at 860-258-3400 or visit their website at <http://cafafct.org/our-services/support>.



Rules in the Foster Home

What if my foster family never lets me do things with my friends?

Your foster family must let you take part in appropriate activities including sports, field trips, overnights, and other social activities. They must make careful and sensible decisions that protect your health, safety, and best interests while also encouraging your growth.²⁹

Your social worker must note what activities you're interested in and make sure that you are participating in age or developmentally-appropriate activities.³⁰

What if I can't do anything because I have a service plan or a safety plan?

Your caregiver does not need DCF permission to let you participate in appropriate activities, as long as they follow your service or safety plan and DCF's policy about making reasonable and careful choices about the activities you can do.³¹

What should I do if I have a problem in my foster home?

You should call your DCF worker, or if you can't reach her, call her supervisor. If you can't reach the supervisor, call her boss and go up the chain of command. The DCF chain of command and DCF telephone numbers are on page 51. You should also tell your lawyer what is happening in your foster home.

If you can't reach anyone, and you have a serious problem at night or on the weekend, call the DCF Careline at 1-800-842-2288.

If you are being physically harmed or abused, call 911.



Contact with your DCF Worker

How often is my DCF worker expected to come to see me?

Your DCF worker is required to see you at least once per month.³²

Do I have any rights when my social worker comes to visit?

You have the right to speak to your social worker in private if you want.³³

What if my DCF worker doesn't come to see me and keeps canceling the appointments?

If your DCF worker doesn't come to see you regularly, you can contact her supervisor. If you don't get anywhere with that person, you can go up the chain of command. See page 51.

You can call the DCF ombudsman³⁴ at 866-637-4737 or email Commissioner.DCF@ct.gov, and you should call your lawyer.³⁵

What if I don't like my DCF worker? Can I get a new worker?

Generally, you can't change your worker. If there are real communication problems between you and your worker, you need to tell your lawyer or call your DCF worker's supervisor.

What if my DCF worker doesn't do what I ask?

You need to speak up for yourself and tell your lawyer or your foster parent.



Contact with your DCF Worker

Can I call my DCF worker on the phone?

Absolutely. Your DCF worker should give you her telephone number the first time she meets with you. If you don't have your DCF worker's phone number, ask your foster parent to give it to you.

Write your DCF worker's phone number on your "Important Contacts" card so you will have it when you need it.

What if I keep calling my DCF worker and I always get voice mail?

For all of these issues with your DCF worker, you can do the same thing — call her supervisor, then the Program Manager, then the DCF Office Director, and go up the chain of command to the DCF Commissioner. These telephone numbers are on page 51 .

You can get the telephone number of your DCF worker's supervisor by calling the main DCF Area Office. Your DCF worker should give her supervisor's number on her voice mail.

You should call your lawyer if your DCF worker isn't getting back to you.³⁶

At night or on the weekend, call the DCF Careline at 1-800-842-2288. If you are being physically hurt or abused, call 911.

Contact with your DCF Worker

What if I prefer to speak a language other than English?

When receiving services from DCF (like at a visit or hearing), DCF must let you communicate with your parents, guardians, caregivers, and children using your preferred language.³⁷

What if my social worker doesn't speak the language I prefer to speak?

DCF tries to assign staff who can communicate with you.

When that's not possible, DCF must make efforts to find and pay for an interpreter. The interpreter should not be a DCF staff member unless there's an emergency. If you want to use a family member or friend as an unofficial interpreter, DCF must allow this, unless DCF suspects this might be harmful.³⁸

What if I can't read the documents DCF sends to me?

DCF must translate case-related documents into your primary written language. If you cannot read, DCF must provide audio transcriptions.³⁹





Decisions about Where I Can Live

Who decides where I am going to live?

A judge decides if you cannot live with your parents.⁴⁰ DCF decides the particular foster home you will live in.⁴¹

Can I live in my own town or with my brothers or sisters?

DCF will try to place you in or near your own home town. If DCF wants to place you somewhere else, DCF will have to explain its reasons in writing to the court.⁴² You should be placed with your siblings unless one of you has a special need that makes it impossible to place you together.⁴³

Can I go to court and tell the judge what I want?

Yes, if you tell your lawyer that you want to go to court, in most situations you will be able to, depending on how old you are.⁴⁴

Can I be told ahead of time when the next court date is?

Yes. Your DCF worker is required to let you know about your case planning.⁴⁵ Your lawyer should also let you know when the court dates are.

Can I live with another relative instead of in a foster home?

Yes. DCF must give preference to one of your relatives or to a member of your extended family if they pass all the requirements to be foster parents and have an appropriate home for you.⁴⁶

What if I want to live somewhere else instead of the foster home they put me in?

You should contact your DCF worker and lawyer to tell them that you want to move and why. You should have a full discussion with them about your desire to move and the positives and negatives about the move. DCF must place you based on your best interests and needs.⁴⁷



Decisions about Where I Can Live

How does DCF pick a foster home for me?

DCF must consider your best interests and needs when putting you in a foster home. Putting you in the home of a relative or an adult you know very well is the preferred placement.⁴⁸

If you are unhappy with your foster home for whatever reason, don't be afraid to speak up and tell your DCF worker and your lawyer.

Can I be placed in a home that is the same race or has the same culture or religion as I do?

Yes, you can be, but sometimes these homes are not available. DCF cannot discriminate on the basis of race, color, sexual orientation, or national origin of the foster parent or the child.⁴⁹

DCF must try to identify foster and adoptive parents who can meet your needs.⁵⁰

Can I have any information about my foster family before I am placed with them?

If you're at least 12 years old, DCF must give you a foster family profile at least one week before placing you with a family/caregiver, or in the case of an emergency placement, as soon as they can. The profile must tell you about the school you will attend, who else lives in the home, where you will sleep, and what the household rules are.⁵¹

How will my foster parents know what services I need?

DCF must give a "notification of support" form to all foster parents and relative caregivers at the time of your placement and any time it's requested. The form explains the types of support they can receive from DCF such as training, referrals to doctors and other professionals to help you, information about how to advocate for things you need and communicate with your birth parents if appropriate, and notice about meetings they have a right to attend.⁵²



Decisions about Where I Can Live

What if they keep moving me from one foster home to another?

You should not have to move a lot of times from one home to another.

Any time you are moved, unless it is an emergency or your foster parents request your move, DCF must give 10 days notice to your lawyer and your Guardian Ad Litem (if you have a separate Guardian Ad Litem), and give the reasons for moving you from one foster home to another.⁵³ DCF must also give your foster parents notice at least 10 days before removal. Your foster parent then has 10 days to request a hearing.

Your lawyer can argue against moving you too much. If this is happening, call your lawyer immediately.

Can I give feedback about a foster family after I leave?

If you're at least 7 years old, DCF must give you a foster care family survey within 15 days after you leave or are removed from a foster home. DCF must then use the results of the surveys to help find, train, and keep high-quality foster families.⁵⁴

If I don't want to live in a foster home any longer, can I live in a group home?

You may be able to live in a group home for adolescents. These homes are called PASS (Preparing Adolescents for Self-Sufficiency) Group Homes. PASS homes have round-the-clock staff who help you learn independent living skills. You must attend school and get clinical services. Ask your DCF worker and lawyer about PASS homes.⁵⁵

How do I get adopted?

DCF must have a permanent plan for you.⁵⁶ If your parents can't take care of you anymore and there aren't any relatives available, DCF has to make every effort to find an adoptive family for you.⁵⁷ If you are 14 years old or over, DCF may not move forward with an adoption plan without your consent.⁵⁸

Decisions about Where I Can Live

What is a case plan? Can I participate?

A case plan is a written record of what the plan is for you and your family, what services you and your family will be getting, who will be responsible for getting you those services, and what actions your parents have to take to get you back.⁵⁹ Your case plan will also include a plan for your health care and for visits with your family.⁶⁰ Your DCF worker must complete your case plan within 60 days of the date you came into DCF care.⁶¹

If you are twelve years old or over, DCF must consider your opinions in developing or changing the case plan. DCF must give you a letter inviting you to every Administrative Case Review (ACR), where your case plan will be discussed, at least 21 days before. DCF must try to schedule the ACR at a time and location that allows you to attend. If you can't go in person, DCF must give you a toll-free number so you participate in the ACR by phone.⁶²

Your case plan is reviewed and updated every 6 months.⁶³

Can I object to the case plan?

If you think DCF has treated you unfairly, you can object by writing a letter to the DCF Hearings Unit, 505 Hudson Street, Hartford, CT, 06106, explaining what is wrong. If you are under 16, you have to have your parent, foster parent, guardian or lawyer write the letter for you.

You will then have a meeting that is called a Treatment Plan Review Hearing. You have a right to bring a lawyer or anyone else to help speak for you, and you will get a hearing within thirty days of the date the letter is received by the Hearings Unit.⁶⁴ If you object to your case plan, you can participate in the hearing.⁶⁵ You should contact your lawyer to help you with this process.

Can I talk to the Judge about my permanency plan?

A court must hold a hearing to review your permanency plan one year after you are committed to DCF and then every year after. The court must notify you and your parent/guardian of the time and place of the hearing at least two weeks in advance.⁶⁶

At the hearing, the court must ask what you want the permanency plan to be. If you do not attend the hearing, your lawyer must talk to you before about your desired permanency outcome and report that to the court. The court must also review things such as the progress being made to achieve your permanency goal, the services you and your parents need, and whether DCF has done what they should to achieve the permanency plan.⁶⁷



Decisions about Where I Can Live

What if my permanency plan goal is “another planned permanent living arrangement”?

This permanency goal is only allowed if you’re at least 16 years old. DCF must also: 1) try to return you home or have you placed with a relative, legal guardian, or adoptive parent; 2) make sure that your home is making decisions in your best interests; and 3) make sure that you have regular opportunities to engage in age and developmentally appropriate activities.⁶⁸

What extra provisions need to be in my case plan when I am thirteen or older?

If you are 13 or older, your case plan will include provisions relating to education/vocation, employment, Life Skills, housing, and finances.⁶⁹

Once you turn 14, if you’re in out-of-home placement, DCF must hold an Adolescent Case Transfer Conference where your case will be transferred to a specially trained Adolescent Specialist.⁷⁰

What is an Adolescent Transition Plan?

When you turn 16, DCF must develop an Adolescent Transition Plan for you. Your Transition Plan will be discussed at an Administrative Case Review (ACR). You should attend this meeting so you know what DCF is planning for you.

The plan must be personalized to you and include: contact information for at least three significant adults in your life, plans for your living arrangements, a budget plan for you, sources of income you will have, health insurance, education, local opportunities for mentoring, support for services, work force supports, employment services, immigration services, and any other needs. You can choose a Health Care Representative, and you must be told about your legal rights.⁷¹

Is DCF required to tell me everything that is going on?

Your DCF worker is required to keep you informed about what is happening with your case, your family, and your brothers and sisters. You should also be able to talk to your worker about anything else that is bothering you.⁷²

How long will I stay with DCF? When does my commitment end?

If you get “committed” to DCF, it means DCF is your legal guardian for a period of a year, but this can be shortened or lengthened by going back to the Judge.

You have a right to be heard on this and you can ask the court to end your commitment or extend it.

Decisions about Where I Can Live

How do I get to live on my own or be emancipated?

Emancipation is a legal process that gives a 16 or 17 year old legal independence from his or her parent/guardian. You must be 16 or 17 years old to request emancipation.⁷³

What rights will I have if I become emancipated?

An emancipated minor has most of the rights of an 18 year old.

If you are emancipated, you don't need your parent/guardian's consent to:

- sign a lease
- get a driver's license
- get married
- register a car
- enroll in school or college
- see a doctor, dentist, or therapist
- sue someone

What responsibilities will I have if I become emancipated?

If you become emancipated, you will be responsible for supporting yourself. Your parent/guardian will not be responsible for giving you food, clothing, or shelter. This means you have to pay your own rent (or get a free place to live), pay all your bills and pay for your groceries. You are also responsible for any contract you sign, and you can even be sued by someone.

What is the process to get emancipated?

In Connecticut, you or your parent/guardian must file a form with the juvenile or probate court to request that you be emancipated.⁷⁴ In some courts, a judge will assign someone to investigate your situation. Then, you will have a hearing before a judge. At the hearing, you will have to show one of the following:

- you have a valid marriage; or
- you are in the military; or
- you live apart from your parent/guardian and are managing your own money; or
- it is in your best interests to be emancipated.⁷⁵

Decisions about Where I Can Live

What is the Independent Living Program? How old do I have to be to participate?

If you want to be in the Independent Living Program, your DCF worker must recommend you for Independent Living. The Independent Living Program has many parts. You may qualify for different parts of this program depending on how old you are.⁷⁶

1. Community Based Life Skills Programs

Community-based life skills education and training programs are available from age 14 until your 21st birthday, if you reside in an out-of-home placement within the community (except if you are residing in SWETP, PASS programs or therapeutic foster homes).⁷⁷

2. Transitional Living Programs (SWETP, PASS group homes, maternity group homes)

There are several kinds of Transitional Living Programs including SWETP (Supportive Work, Education and Transition Program); PASS group homes (see page 24), and maternity group homes (see page 25). You are eligible for a transitional living program if you are in DCF out-of-home care, meet the age requirement, ready to live in a less-restrictive setting, and not yet ready to live independently.⁷⁸

SWETP is a type of transitional living apartment program (called TLAP) with staff who provide 24/7 on-site support. It is available if you are 16 or over and your case plan goal is not reunification with your parents or transfer of guardianship.⁷⁹ You will have a mentor and a DCF specialist to help you make plans for your education or employment. You will be responsible for cooking, shopping, and cleaning.

3. CHAP (Community Housing Assistance Program)

CHAP is available if you have graduated from high school or have a GED, and are currently in or have completed the life skills program, and your DCF worker thinks you are ready for more independence. You must spend 40 hours per week in productive activities such as classes, study, extra-curricular activities, part-time work, interning, volunteering, training, and treatment activities.⁸⁰

You will receive a monthly stipend for rent, food and other living expenses for an apartment. You will also receive case management services, and payment for college expenses or a vocational or training program. You will also receive a one-time stipend for furniture, household items (pots, pans, towels), a vacuum cleaner, moving expenses, and storage.⁸¹

You can be discharged from CHAP if you become self-sufficient, a court ends your commitment, or you can't meet the requirements of your CHAP contract. You must be given written notice (called an 800 form) if DCF wants to discharge you, and you have the right to an administrative hearing to oppose DCF's decision.⁸²

Decisions about Where I Can Live

4. CHEER (Community Housing Employment Enrichment Resources)

CHEER provides funding to youth for 18 months immediately following high school graduation (as long as you're not 21 yet) for training for non-certified vocational or technical programs, apprenticeship programs, job readiness development, and job placement assistance. You must voluntarily agree to remain with DCF, comply with DCF policies and complete a DCF-approved Life Skills Program.

You will also receive a monthly stipend for rent, food, utilities, telephone, transportation, and clothing, and money for furniture and housewares. Over the 18 months, you will be expected to start caring for yourself using money from employment. If you complete CHEER before you turn 21, you will still be eligible for DCF funding for college, technical school, or a state-accredited job program, until the end of the year you turn 23.⁸³

What is the One-on-One mentoring program?

All youth age 14 and older in the care and custody of DCF are eligible for mentor services with an adult volunteer mentor. Exceptions can be made for youth under the age of 14. Your mentor must make meaningful and dependable contact with you (weekly, face-to-face contact as well as group events) for at least one year.⁸⁴

If I am a teenage parent, can DCF help me with the care of my child?

If you are in care and your child is living with you, DCF must provide funding, services and supports that will allow you and your child to live in a safe, healthy and nurturing environment. DCF will provide necessary baby start-up equipment (such as a crib, stroller, and car seat) that you can't get from donations. DSS must provide medical coverage for your child.⁸⁵

DCF funds maternity group homes as well as placements in supportive housing for youth who are pregnant or parenting. Services include pre- and post-natal health services, educational programs, professional counseling, parenting education, and child care.⁸⁶

If you are under 18 and have your baby or child living with you, DCF must make sure you are enrolled in the Temporary Family Assistance (TFA) program with the Department of Social Services (DSS). TFA will pay for medical coverage, daycare so you can attend school, and will give you financial payments for your child. DCF must pay for any day care you need in order to work or if TFA stops paying for your daycare for school.⁸⁷

If you are over 18 and in SWETP, CHAP or CHEER, DCF will provide financial payments for you, for your child (at \$100 per month per child if not already included in the program rate), and for licensed daycare, if you are in school or working.⁸⁸



Transitioning Out of DCF Care

How long can I stay in DCF custody?

You can be committed to DCF until you are 18. After 18, you can stay under DCF's care voluntarily until you are 21 if you are in high school or some other educational or vocational program.⁸⁹ You may even be able to stay in DCF until you are 23.⁹⁰

When you are about to turn eighteen you must decide whether you want to stay in DCF care.

What if I stay in DCF care voluntarily and I disagree with something in my permanency plan?

As long as you remain in voluntary placement with DCF, your permanency plan must be reviewed in court at least once every year.⁹¹

How can I get out of DCF Custody? Can I sign myself out?

If you are under 18, you cannot sign yourself out of DCF care.⁹² In order to get out of DCF care, you must ask your lawyer to go to court and file a motion for you, and a judge must make an order revoking your commitment before you can get out of DCF custody; or, you must be emancipated.

If you are over 18, you can sign yourself out of DCF care. Ninety days before your anticipated discharge from DCF care, DCF must hold an ACR to make sure you have a concrete Transition Plan. The ACR must be held at a place and time that meets your needs.⁹³

What happens when I want to be discharged after I turn 18?

When you decide you want to be discharged, you will attend an Adolescent Transition Plan Conference. The Adolescent Transition Plan Conference is different from other meetings you might attend about your case plan because it focuses on you and your needs, not those of your parents. (See the paragraph above about what information must be in your Transition Plan.)⁹⁴

After I am discharged from DCF custody, can I still get health care benefits?

If you were in foster care at age 18 and were receiving Medicaid benefits, you are entitled to medical coverage through your 26th birthday, whether or not you choose to continue receiving services from DCF.⁹⁵ DCF must help you continue your Medicaid benefits with the Department of Social Services (DSS) if you are being discharged. After your DCF case closes, you will be responsible for letting DSS know if your address changes.

Transitioning Out of DCF Care

If I sign myself out of DCF custody, what if I change my mind and want to get back into DCF's Adolescent Services Program?

You may be able to re-enter if you were committed as abused, neglected, or uncared for when you left DCF, and you are not yet 21. You should call the DCF Careline at 1-800-842-2288 to see if you can re-enter DCF care.⁹⁶

When I'm discharged how do I get my ID?

Upon discharge, DCF must give you the original and a copy of your birth certificate and social security card, your health insurance information, medical records, educational records, passport, immigration/citizenship papers, and driver's license or state ID card.⁹⁷

Before you are discharged, DCF must give you and your parents/guardians your health passport health summary, recommendations for ongoing medical care, and contact information for providers.⁹⁸

Can I be in DCF care if I am married or in the military?

No. DCF may ask a court to emancipate you if you get married or are on active duty in the military while you are in DCF care.





Abuse in Care

What if I am physically hurt while I am in a foster home?

Your foster parents are NOT allowed to physically or emotionally abuse you.⁹⁹ If they hit you or touch you inappropriately, immediately call your social worker or her supervisor and your lawyer. DCF telephone numbers are listed on page 51.

If you can't reach your DCF worker or your lawyer, call the DCF Careline at 1-800-842-2288 at any time, day or night.

Can they use physical punishment?

DCF prohibits physically abusive or frightening punishment.¹⁰⁰ Call your DCF worker and lawyer or the DCF Careline if you are physically hurt.

What if I get teased or they are mean to me in the home?

You have a right to be safe. Foster parents cannot be physically, sexually, or verbally abusive to you.¹⁰¹ You should tell your DCF worker and your lawyer right away.

What if I don't like the way my foster parents punish or discipline me?

You should tell your DCF worker and your lawyer. It is important that you try to talk about your concerns with your foster parent to try to reach a suitable solution.

What if someone in my foster home (like other foster kids or the foster parents' own children) touches me in an inappropriate sexual way?

If anyone touches you in an inappropriate way, talk to your foster parent immediately, and call your social worker and your lawyer.

If you can't get in touch with them, call the DCF Careline at 1-800-842-2288 at any time, day or night.



Abuse in Care

What if my foster family or someone from DCF doesn't like me and treats me badly because I am a different race or ethnicity from them, or because I'm gay or lesbian or have a disability?

Your foster parent (and anyone else with DCF) is required to respect your cultural and social differences, and cannot discriminate against you because of your race, ethnicity, disability, or because you identify yourself as Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Questioning or Intersex (LGBTQI).¹⁰²

If your foster family or any DCF person does not respect your differences and you continue to feel disrespected, you should tell your DCF worker and/or your lawyer. If you believe that you have been discriminated against, you can file a complaint with the Office of Diversity and Equity.¹⁰³

Are there protections for me if I'm transgender?

Your gender identity must be reflected in the DCF record, and DCF staff and providers should address you by your preferred name and gender pronouns and avoid using gender stereotypes. All of your placements must be consistent with your gender identity and expression. For sex-segregated placements, you should be placed based on your gender identity if possible, and you should be able to use either a unisex restroom/locker room, or ones that are consistent with your gender identity.

DCF should strive to provide you access to mental health and medical care providers who are knowledgeable about the needs of transgender youth. DCF must make sure that you receive care and treatment that is medically necessary, such as puberty blockers and cross-gender hormones.¹⁰⁴

Can I make a formal complaint against my foster parent if they are not treating me right?

Yes, in addition to telling your social worker and your lawyer, you can also make a formal complaint about your foster parent by calling the DCF Careline at 1-800-842-2288. DCF must investigate your complaint, file a report, and make a decision about what action will be taken. This report will be filed in your foster parent's file.¹⁰⁵

Running Away

What happens if I run away?

If you run away, DCF will try to find you by taking steps such as calling the Careline to report that you are missing, contacting the police and working with your foster parents to come up with a plan to search for you. When they know where you are, DCF must work to get you home as soon as possible.¹⁰⁶

Can I get in trouble for running away?

If you have a delinquency case, you might be charged with a crime for escaping from DCF custody.

If you are on probation, running away could be a violation of your probation, which is a criminal charge. If the police try to pick you up and you resist in any way, you could be charged with a crime. If you are arrested and incarcerated, call your lawyer right away. If your lawyer doesn't respond, call the Center for Children's Advocacy at (860) 570-5327. You are not required to make any statement to the police until you have spoken to a lawyer.

What happens when I return after running away?

When you return to your placement, DCF must be notified, and DCF will work to understand what led to you running away and plan for how to support your needs. They will talk to you to see if you experienced sexual or physical abuse or other trauma, and need special services.¹⁰⁷

DCF and your foster parent will also make or update a safety plan for you, to make sure that you have positive strategies and coping skills that you can use in stressful times instead of running away. You have the right to help make this plan. You should not be sent to an Emergency Department right when you return unless you need immediate medical help.¹⁰⁸

While I was away, I was physically or sexually abused or I was forced to engage in sexual acts in exchange for money, food or shelter. Can I get help?

Yes, you should get help right away. DCF must provide you with specialized care, services, and placement options. You should be referred to and treated by health providers who have specialty training in childhood trauma. You should tell your DCF worker or lawyer right away, or you can call the Careline at 1-800-842-2288 or call 911.¹⁰⁹

Can my foster parents not let me come back when I try to return?

No, they have to let you back in. If they have questions about your return to placement, they must contact DCF.¹¹⁰



Right to a Lawyer

How do I get a lawyer?

Every child or youth in foster care has a lawyer who is assigned to his or her case. The Office of the Chief Public Defender will assign you a lawyer.¹¹¹

How do I find out who my lawyer is?

Your DCF worker or your foster parent must tell you your lawyer's name, address, and telephone number. The lawyer should call you. If you still can't find out, call the Office of the Chief Public Defender at 860-566-1341.

Can I choose my own lawyer?

Yes, but not all lawyers represent children, and some charge a lot of money.¹¹² At the beginning, the Office of the Chief Public Defender will appoint a lawyer for you, free of charge. He or she will be your lawyer throughout the whole case.

What can my lawyer do for me?

Your lawyer can make sure you are safe, don't move around a lot, get back to your family as soon as possible if that is the best plan for you, make sure you have good medical and mental health care, listen to what you want, answer all of your questions, and tell the judge what YOU want.

What if my lawyer doesn't call me or come to see me?

First, call or write to your lawyer. If that doesn't work, tell your DCF worker to get in touch with your lawyer for you. If you still don't hear from your lawyer, call the Office of the Chief Public Defender (Child Protection Services) at 860-566-1341 to complain and tell them you would like a new lawyer appointed to represent you.

The Office of the Child Advocate may also help you contact your lawyer. Their telephone number is 800-994-0939 and email is oca@ct.gov. You can also call the Center for Children's Advocacy at 860-570-5327.

What is the difference between a lawyer and a Guardian Ad Litem (GAL)?

In very simple terms, your lawyer represents you and advocates for what YOU want when he speaks to DCF and to the Court. A GAL tells the Court and DCF what the GAL thinks is in your best interests, even if it might not be what you would want.¹¹³



Health Care

What if I get sick? What doctor will I go to?

Your foster parent and your DCF worker are responsible for arranging your medical care. Your foster parent may choose a doctor for you.¹¹⁴ If you want to go to the same doctor you had before, tell your foster parent, social worker, or lawyer.

If you are under 12, either your foster parent or your parent, caretaker, legal guardian, or DCF must accompany you to the doctor's office. If you are between 12-15, you don't need an adult to accompany you as long as your parent, foster parent, or DCF consents. If you are over 16, you can definitely go to the doctor's office without an adult.¹¹⁵ You may still need the consent of DCF to get certain kinds of treatment, except as provided by law.

Will my foster parents provide special care for my ethnic skin and hair if it needs it?

Yes, your foster parents will work with DCF to get you the necessary products that you need to take care of the special needs of your ethnic skin and hair.¹¹⁶

Can I talk to a counselor or a therapist if I want to, without anyone's knowledge or permission?

Yes, you can have at least six visits with a psychiatrist, psychologist, social worker, or family therapist without getting anyone's consent or telling anyone.

You may do this only if having to get consent would cause you to reject the treatment, it is clinically necessary, failure to receive it is not in your best interests, you knowingly and voluntarily ask for the treatment, and the provider thinks you are mature enough to participate.¹¹⁷

If you want to continue to see a counselor or therapist after the six visits, the provider must tell your legal guardian (parent or DCF) and get his/her permission, unless the provider thinks that telling your legal guardian would seriously harm you.¹¹⁸

If I have drug or alcohol problems, do I need the permission of my parents, foster parents or DCF to get help?

No, if you are 13 or older, you can arrange for help without permission.¹¹⁹ You can also have your lawyer arrange help for you.¹²⁰ It may be helpful for significant adults in your life to know about your efforts toward recovery so they can support those efforts, but you can seek help on your own.



Health Care

Can I get birth control without the permission of my parents, DCF, or my foster parents?

Yes, you have a right to get birth control or emergency contraception without permission. Some doctors or clinics may ask you to inform your parent or DCF worker but this isn't required by law.¹²¹

If you are 12 or older, DCF must give you information every year about responsible sexual behaviors, access to birth control options (IUDs, birth control pills, condoms, etc.) and methods to prevent STDs. All sexually active females must be offered yearly gynecologic examinations and testing.¹²²

What if I am pregnant? What are my options?

You can have an abortion. You can also have the baby and you may be able to have the baby placed with you or a relative, or you can place the baby for adoption.¹²³

Can I get an abortion without permission?

Yes. If you are under 16, a doctor or clinic may counsel you about the possibility of involving your parent or some other adult, but the final decision is yours and will be kept confidential.¹²⁴

If I decide to have the baby, can I keep my baby with me if I am in foster care?

If you have the baby, DCF may be able to find a placement where you and your baby can live together.¹²⁵

Because you are in foster care, it does not mean your baby is also automatically under the custody of DCF. If DCF has not filed any neglect or abuse petition, you can place the baby with other responsible adults of your choice or keep the baby with you.



Health Care

Can I get tested for HIV/AIDS confidentially and without permission?

Yes, you have the right to be tested for HIV/AIDS confidentially and without the permission of your parent or DCF.¹²⁶ A doctor can warn your partner if you test positive, but only if your partner also has the same doctor, the doctor believes that your partner is at risk of becoming infected, and the doctor believes that you won't tell your partner on your own.¹²⁷

Can I get treated for HIV/AIDS without permission?

If you are under 18, the doctor will have to get your legal guardian's permission to treat you unless the doctor thinks you would not get treatment if your legal guardian found out.¹²⁸ Your legal guardian is either your parent or DCF, depending on whether you have actually been committed to DCF.

Can I get tested or treated for a sexually transmitted infection (STI or STD) confidentially?

Yes, if you are 13 or older, you can get tested and treated for a sexually transmitted infection by your doctor or clinic without asking or telling any parent, foster parent, or DCF.¹²⁹ If you are 12 or under, you can still get tested or treated without asking permission, but the doctor or clinic must report your name, age, and address to DCF.¹³⁰

Do I have to take psychotropic medication if I don't want to?

If you are 14 or older and it is not an emergency situation, and you are not committed to DCF, you do not have to take the medication against your will. If you are committed to DCF, and you refuse medication, in some instances, you will still need to take the medication if doctors believe it is "medically necessary" and in your "best interests."¹³¹ In any event, you should contact your attorney if you do not want the medication and DCF believes you should have it.



Disability Benefits

What are disability benefits?

Children and youth who have certain disabilities may be entitled to Supplemental Security Income (SSI) from the federal government. These benefits can provide money each month for your living expenses.¹³²

Why should I apply for disability benefits if I'm in foster care?

You should apply for disability benefits even if you are in foster care now because when you are no longer in care, the benefits will go directly to you. It is best to apply for this as soon as possible.¹³³

Where does the money go if I get disability benefits?

While you are in foster care, the disability benefits (SSI) will go to DCF. Once you turn 18, the money will go directly to you, unless you are unable to take care of yourself.

If you are not able to care for yourself once you leave foster care, your SSI benefits will be sent to the person who is chosen to help care for you.¹³⁴ This person is called your “representative payee.”

How do I apply for SSI benefits?

To receive disability benefits, you have to fill out an application. Ask your DCF worker to do this for you.¹³⁵

How long will it take to get benefits?

It may take a long time to get these benefits, and you should fill out the application as soon as possible. Ask your DCF worker to do this for you.¹³⁶



Education

Can I stay at the same school?

You can stay in the same school, even if your foster home or emergency placement is in a different town, unless DCF determines that it is not in your best interest to remain in that school. DCF has to make this determination immediately when it places you, and DCF must assume that it is in your best interest to stay in the same school.

This means that DCF cannot move you to a different school without a good reason, and it must give you written notice of its decision within three business days of making the decision. In this notice, DCF must identify why it decided to put you in the school it did.¹³⁷

What if I don't like the school DCF decides I can go to?

You can object. Tell your lawyer immediately. You have to object within 3 days of getting the notice. You have the right to stay in the same school you went to before your DCF commitment until the disagreement is settled.¹³⁸

You should call your lawyer immediately if you don't want to go to the school DCF is telling you to go to so he/she can help you.

Can DCF make me go to a different school after my initial placement?

Yes, if circumstances change and DCF decides that it is no longer in your best interest to go to the school they first put you in, DCF can change your school. Like before, DCF has to give you written notice of why the change is being made within 3 days of deciding to change the placement. You can also object to the change, but you must do so within three days of receiving notice. You can stay in your same school until the issue is decided.¹³⁹

If I move out of the district my school is in, who will provide the transportation?

DCF must work with the school board to come up with an appropriate transportation plan, and DCF has to pay any costs to get you to school that are greater than what it would normally cost to get you to school. The cost of transportation cannot be considered when deciding which school it would be in your best interests to attend.¹⁴⁰



Education

If DCF places me in a new school, do I have to wait before I get to start the new school?

There is no waiting period. The new school must take you immediately, even if they don't have all your paperwork.¹⁴¹ DCF must work with your old school and your new school to get you enrolled. Your old school has to transfer all of your most important records to your new school within a day of DCF informing the school that you are being transferred.¹⁴²

What if my school won't give educational information to my foster parents?

Your school is required to give your foster parents, your attorney, and DCF a description of your educational and academic progress including information about your grade level performance and absenteeism, test results, report cards, individual success plans, and discipline reports.¹⁴³

If I was a “special education” student before, will I still get a special ed program at the new school?

Yes, you will remain classified as eligible for special education services until and unless the team that reviews your individualized education plan (IEP) determines that you are not eligible anymore.¹⁴⁴

Can I get special education services in a school run by DCF or CSSD?

When you start going to any facility or school program run or contracted by DCF or CSSD, they must promptly review your educational files to see if you qualify for special education.¹⁴⁵

Will anyone from DCF help me with the special education process?

If you are a special education student or may need special education services, or early intervention services, and you are committed to DCF, a “surrogate parent” will be appointed for you. This is a person who is appointed by the Connecticut State Department of Education to act as an advocate for you.¹⁴⁶

Can I go to an adult high school or attend a GED program?

Adult high school or GED programs may be approved by the Commissioner on a case-by-case basis, as long as you complete the program by age 21.¹⁴⁷

Education

Will DCF pay for college or other post high school education?

Yes, DCF will pay for your educational expenses through the end of the school year that you turn 23 as long as you meet the DCF requirements, such as voluntarily agreeing to remain with DCF, being enrolled in a college, technical school or state-accredited job training program, and maintaining compliance with your post-majority contract. You must either: (1) begin in a full-time post-secondary education (PSE) program immediately after receiving a high school diploma or GED, and have an approved PSE plan; or (2) successfully complete CHEER before your 21st birthday, and have an approved PSE plan.¹⁴⁸ You must also apply for scholarships and financial aid.¹⁴⁹

If I go to college or some other educational program after high school, do I have to move out of my CHAP apartment?

No, you can stay in that program while you are attending school, as long as you comply with the CHAP Program guidelines.

When do I need to start planning, if I want DCF to help me with my education expenses after I turn eighteen?

If you are interested in this program, then you need to start planning in your junior year of high school. Discuss your options with your foster parents, guidance counselor, and DCF social worker.¹⁵⁰

Do I have to start school right away?

You are required to be enrolled as a full time student the first semester after high school. In order to continue to receive funding, you must commit forty hours per week to classes, studying, part-time work, or other school-related activities. Sometimes exceptions can be made for youth who have IEPs or are ELLs who graduate high school after the age of 21, or for students to attend part-time if they otherwise meet the requirements.¹⁵¹

Also, you can defer your college attendance to participate in a volunteer community service program for up to 1 year, and DCF will pay your expenses. After your volunteer experience, you are still eligible for DCF funding for college.

What if I'm transferring out of DCF into the custody of the Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services (DMHAS)?

You are still eligible for post-secondary education funding, and DCF must consider your treatment needs when making your plans.¹⁵²



Education

How much will DCF pay for?

DCF will pay up to what it costs for any undergraduate, in-state, full-time, on-campus student at a Connecticut State University. This includes money for tuition, equipment, books, miscellaneous personal expenses such as a computer, allowance for transportation, room and board, child care expenses (if you have a child), and accommodations for any disability you have.¹⁵³

Can I lose my funding?

Yes, if you do not maintain a 2.0 GPA or better for 12 course credits per semester for a year, then you have one opportunity to re-enroll or select and enroll in a new program before DCF withdraws funding. If during that second year you do not maintain a 2.0 GPA or better, then you will not be able to receive funding anymore.

DCF must notify you that you are losing your funding, and you are entitled to a hearing within 10 days. DCF must continue to pay your expenses until a final decision is made.¹⁵⁴ In addition, you can request a hearing before the Probate Court.¹⁵⁵

Can I get financial help if I finished my program and am looking for a job?

If you've completed a college degree or vocational training program and are looking for a job, you can receive transition funding for an additional 90 days.¹⁵⁶ If you need more than 90 days, you can ask for an extension by submitting a "Transition Extension Application." You should do this 2 months before you graduate.

What if I want to do non-certified job training?

Check out the information about CHEER on page 29. It provides funding for non-certified job training programs.

Will it be hard for me to get a job or internship?

You are not required to disclose the fact that you were or are in DCF custody. However, all state agencies must give preference in hiring or internship placement to anybody under 24 years old who was in DCF custody when they were 18.¹⁵⁷



Immigration

What if I don't have a green card?

DCF must actively serve you, regardless of your immigration status.¹⁵⁸

What is Special Immigrant Juvenile Status (SIJS)?

Special Immigrant Juvenile Status (SIJS) is an immigration status that allows you to apply for permanent status (a green card). If you are under 21, unmarried, and a juvenile, probate or family court finds that you cannot be returned to live with one or both of your parents because of abuse, neglect or abandonment, and that returning to your home country is not in your best interests, you can apply to the U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) for SIJS. To be eligible, a Connecticut family, juvenile or probate court must decide your case before you turn 18 years old.

It's important to talk to your social worker or lawyer about this right away so there is time to file before your 18th birthday.

If you are granted SIJS, you may apply for a green card.¹⁵⁹

Will DCF help me with this process?

If you are under 18, undocumented, in DCF care, and reunification with one or both of your parents is not possible because of abuse, neglect or abandonment, your social worker must immediately file a petition in court for Special Immigrant Juvenile Status. If the petition is granted, DCF must pay for an immigration lawyer to prepare your application for permanent status (a green card) and send it to USCIS within 6 months. If you have trouble getting DCF to do these things, talk to you lawyer or call the Center for Children's Advocacy at 860-570-5327.¹⁶⁰

Immigration

What if I'm older than 18?

It may still be possible for you to obtain permanent resident status after you have turned 18 or left DCF guardianship. Your social worker must work with DCF's Office of Legal Affairs to contract with a specialist in immigration legal matters.¹⁶¹

Are there other options available to get legal immigration status?

If you were a victim of human trafficking, you may qualify for a T Visa. If you were a victim of domestic violence or certain other crimes, you may qualify for a U visa. If your social worker believes that you may qualify for either of these visas, he or she must inform DCF's lawyers, who will help you apply.¹⁶²

Are there special services for immigrant victims of human or sex trafficking?

If you are an immigrant victim of human/sex trafficking (if you were forced to work or do criminal acts, were sold, or forced to engage in sexual acts for things such as money, food, or shelter), DCF must provide services to help you adjust to life in the United States including English language instruction, occupational training, and cultural training, and help you to preserve your ethnic and religious heritage.¹⁶³





Your rights in a Group Home, STAR Home, Shelter or Residential Treatment

Do I have the same rights as someone living in a foster home with a foster family?

When this book talks about a foster home or foster family, those rights apply to you too.

If you live in a group home, STAR home, shelter or residential treatment center, you are in the care and custody of DCF. That means that in general all of the rights discussed in this book apply to you.

You may also have special rights and concerns.¹⁶⁴ Each facility has a rules and regulations handbook and you should get a copy when you first get there. If you don't, ask a staff person for one.¹⁶⁵

How can I speak up for myself?

What if I tried to speak up and it didn't work?

You have the right to ask for help and to say how you're feeling.

- Ask for help from an adult you trust.
- If your facility has a complaint process, start there. Tell staff what is happening.
- If that doesn't work, call your DCF worker and go up the chain of command (see page 9).

Always be clear about what's happening, what you need, and how you feel.

Don't be disrespectful or put someone down.

Be straightforward and truthful, and be ready to brainstorm different ideas and to negotiate.

If you live in a facility or group home that has 10 or more youth, there must be a youth advisory council where youth can talk about how things are going.¹⁶⁶



Your rights in a Group Home, STAR Home, Shelter or Residential Treatment

Can staff limit the visits I have with friends and family or where I can visit with them?

You are allowed to have reasonable and regular visits from friends and family unless your Treatment Plan says the visits are not in your best interest.¹⁶⁷ (see pages 12 - 13)

The place where you are living must set up visiting hours and let you and your family know when they are.¹⁶⁸ The staff can make rules about where you can visit, but there must always be a private place for your visits.¹⁶⁹ If you are restricted from visits, this has to be put in writing.¹⁷⁰

If you have not had visits, or you would like more visits, speak to your lawyer. The Court might decide that you should get more visits even if your Treatment Plan doesn't say this.¹⁷¹

Can staff put limits on my phone calls and my mail?

You have the right to call or write any person as long as your Treatment Plan doesn't specifically prevent you from doing so.¹⁷² Staff is required to give you writing materials and stamps.

Staff can only restrict your calls and mail if they decide that talking to a certain person is going to get in the way of your treatment goals. If you're not allowed to call or send mail to someone, staff has to explain why you can't and put it in writing. The director of the facility must sign this and it must go in your permanent clinical record.

If you are not allowed to call or write someone who is important to you, speak to your lawyer. The Court might decide that you should be allowed to communicate with that person.¹⁷³

Can staff open my mail before I do?

Staff can only open your mail before giving it to you if they think there is something illegal in it. If staff opens your mail, they have to open it in front of you.¹⁷⁴

What if I don't have enough privacy in the showers and bathroom, or there are not enough showers?

The place where you live must have bathrooms and showers that are private,¹⁷⁵ they must have enough showers for everyone, and they must be in the building you sleep in.¹⁷⁶ There must be enough hot and cold water for everyone to shower.¹⁷⁷



Your rights in a Group Home, STAR Home, Shelter or Residential Treatment

Can I have my own toiletries or do I have to share?

You can have your own toiletries as long as they are not dangerous. Some toiletries, like razors, can be dangerous, so a staff person has to make sure they are used properly. Sometimes staff is allowed to hold dangerous items for you.¹⁷⁸

What if I don't like the toiletries they have?

You must be given toiletries that meet your needs.¹⁷⁹ If you have sensitive skin (eczema, rashes, etc.), sensitive teeth, or other special needs, ask the staff to get you products appropriate for your needs. There are also specific guidelines if you need ethnic specific skin and hair care products.¹⁸⁰

Can I keep my medicine in my room?

The staff has to keep all medications (the ones you get from the doctor and the ones you can buy in the pharmacy) in a locked cabinet that only staff members can open. You can keep medication in your room and take it yourself if you have a note from your doctor and permission from the staff.¹⁸¹

Can we get new furniture in the lounge or living room if it is broken?

Each living room or lounge must be comfortable and attractive, well heated, lighted, ventilated, clean and cheerful. It must have enough furnishings for all residents to use it.¹⁸²

Can I have my own bedroom? Can I have a place to keep my stuff safe?

You probably can't have your own bedroom but you must always have your own single bed. You can't share a room with someone of the opposite sex.¹⁸³

You have to be given a locker, dresser or some other type of storage space for your personal things. It must be in your room or very close to your room.¹⁸⁴

If my bed blankets or sheets have holes in them, can I get new ones?

Yes. You must have blankets and sheets that can keep you warm and comfortable year round, and they must be clean.¹⁸⁵

Your rights in a Group Home, STAR Home, Shelter or Residential Treatment

What can I do if my bedroom windows don't open and I don't get any fresh air?

If your bedroom doesn't have windows that open, there must be another way to ventilate your room (for example, a fan or air conditioning).¹⁸⁶

Can the staff make me do chores?

Yes.¹⁸⁶ You can also be encouraged to work in order to train and develop new skills. The work assignments must always be age and ability appropriate.¹⁸⁷

My family doesn't speak English.

Is the place I am living supposed to provide my family an interpreter?

DCF must make sure that you and your family can communicate with staff.¹⁸⁸ If needed, they may provide an interpreter or someone who provides sign language services.¹⁸⁹

If the place you are living does not provide someone who can communicate with your family, tell your DCF social worker right away. If that doesn't help, call up the DCF chain of command (see page 9 of this book) or call your lawyer.

What can I do for fun here?

There must be inside and outside places where you can hang out and do fun activities. There should be games and other things you can use during your free time.¹⁹⁰

What if the rules are too strict?

The rules cannot deprive you of your rights and must be appropriate to the age of the residents.¹⁹¹ The rules also must support your Treatment Plan. If you feel the rules are too strict, talk with your DCF social worker or lawyer about it ¹⁹² (see page 14 of this book for more information).

What if I feel like the staff isn't respecting me or they make jokes about me?

The staff must treat you with respect at all times.¹⁹³ If they do not, talk to your DCF worker or lawyer. If that doesn't help, you can call the DCF Ombudsman's Office (see page 51) or the Office of the Child Advocate (see page 48).



Your rights in a Group Home, STAR Home, Shelter or Residential Treatment

I am unhappy living where I am. What can I do?

Talk to your DCF worker. If DCF won't move you, talk to your lawyer who can go to Court and ask a Judge to order DCF to find you a more appropriate placement.¹⁹⁴ You can also call the DCF Ombudsman's Office (see page 51) or the Office of the Child Advocate (see page 48).

Does the staff have to follow my DCF Case Plan?

Yes. The staff may also develop their own Treatment Plan for you, but this Treatment Plan must always follow what is in your DCF Case Plan and your Adolescent Transition Plan¹⁹⁵ (see page 25 to learn about the DCF Case Plan and page 26 to learn about the Adolescent Transition Plan).

Both your DCF Case Plan and your Adolescent Transition Plan will be made and discussed at an Administrative Case Review (ACR) every 6 months (see pages 25-26 to learn more about ACRs).

If you are 12 or older, DCF must invite you to the ACR and consider your opinions. You should participate in the ACR because important things will be discussed such as: how you are doing; if your case plan is being used correctly; how much progress you have made toward your goals; and whether the place you are living is appropriate.¹⁹⁶

What if I want to be in the Independent Living Program or have my own apartment (CHAP) and DCF says no?

With each step toward more independence, DCF requires more of you.

To learn what you need to do to be eligible, find out the requirements of the Independent Living Program and why your DCF worker said that you cannot live there. For information about the Independent Living Program, see pages 28 to 29 of this book.

You can also talk to your lawyer about it. And you have the right to appeal DCF's decision.¹⁹⁷



Important Connecticut Resources

DCF Offices

| | |
|---------------------------|--------------------------------|
| Bridgeport | 203-384-5300 |
| Danbury | 203-207-5100 |
| Hartford | 860-418-8000 |
| Manchester | 860-533-3600 |
| Meriden | 203-238-8400 |
| Middletown | 860-638-2100 |
| Milford | 203-306-5300 |
| New Britain | 860-832-5200 |
| New Haven | 203-786-0500 |
| Norwalk | 203-899-1400 |
| Norwich | 860-886-2641 |
| Stamford | 203-348-4294 |
| Torrington | 860-496-5700 |
| Waterbury | 203-759-7000 |
| Willimantic | 860-450-2000 |
| DCF Commissioner's Office | 860-550-6300 |
| DCF Ombudsman's Office | 860-550-6301 or 1-866-367-4737 |
| DCF Careline | 1-800-842-2288 |
| TDD number | 1-800-624-5518 |

For more information about DCF offices, go to www.ct.gov/dcf and click on "Office Directions and Phone Numbers"

DCF Chain of Command

Use this list to know who to call for help with questions you have.

Call your DCF Social Worker first. If she/he cannot help you, call the next person on this list. Usually, their phone numbers will be on the voice mail of the last person you called.

1. DCF Social Worker
2. Social Work Supervisor
3. Program Manager
4. Office Director
5. Regional Administrator
6. Commissioner's Office



Important Connecticut Resources

Organizations that Can Help

Center for Children’s Advocacy

860-570-5327

cca-ct.org and speakupteens.org

Office of the Chief Public Defender (Child Protection Services)

(for the name and phone number of your lawyer) 860-566-1341

330 Main Street, 2nd floor Hartford, CT 06106

Connecticut Alliance of Foster and Adoptive Families

(funds available for miscellaneous items for kids in foster care)

860-258-3400 or visit their website at cafafct.org/our-services/support

Info Line

211

Office of the Child Advocate

800-994-0939 or oca@ct.gov

True Colors – Sexual Minority Youth and Family Services

(for LGBTQ youth)

1-888-565-5551 or 860-232-0050 or visit their website at ourtruecolors.org

LOVE 146

(for survivors of child trafficking and exploitation)

203-772-4420

love146.org



Important Connecticut Resources

Juvenile Courts

Bridgeport
Superior Court Juvenile Matters
60 Housatonic Avenue
Bridgeport, CT 06604
203-579-6544

Danbury
Superior Court Juvenile Matters
71 Main Street
Danbury, CT 06810
203-797-4407

Hartford
Superior Court Juvenile Matters
920 Broad Street
Hartford, CT 06106
860-244-7900

Middletown
Superior Court Juvenile Matters
1 Court Street
Middletown, CT 06457
860-344-2986

New Britain
Superior Court Juvenile Matters
20 Franklin Square
New Britain, CT 06051
860-515-5165

New Haven
Superior Court Juvenile Matters
239 Whalley Avenue
New Haven, CT 06511
203-786-0339

Rockville
Superior Court Juvenile Matters
25 School Street
Rockville, CT 06066
860-872-7143

Stamford
Superior Court Juvenile Matters
123 Hoyt Street
Stamford, CT 06905
203-965-5708

Torrington
Superior Court Juvenile Matters
410 Winsted Road
Torrington, CT 06790
860-489-0201

Waterbury
Superior Court Juvenile Matters
7 Kendrick Avenue
Waterbury, CT 06702
203-596-4202

Waterford
Superior Court Juvenile Matters
978 Hartford Turnpike
Waterford, CT 06385
860-440-5880

Willimantic
Superior Court Juvenile Matters
81 Columbia Avenue
Willimantic, CT 06226
860-456-5700

Child Protection Session
Superior Court Juvenile Matters
One Court Street
Middletown, CT 06457
860-344-2986



Important Connecticut Resources

Legal Rights Information for Teens on these topics:

- Staying in School
- Homeless and Runaway Students
- Truancy
- Bullying
- Being “Pushed Out” by Your School
- Special Education Services
- Returning to School After Lock-Up
- Food and Housing
- Sleeping and Eating
- Living Options
- Health
- Seeing a Doctor Without Adult Consent
- Dating Violence
- Your Rights as a LGBT Teen
- Getting Identification
- Can My Record be Erased?
- Can I Get Back into School?
- Getting a Job
- Special Programs
- Rights and Resources
- Benefits
- DCF Care
- Juvenile Justice, Delinquency & Detention
- Emancipation
- Health Care and Mental Health Care
- Immigration
- Pregnant and Parenting Teens

Videos about your Legal Rights in DCF Care
bit.ly/SpeakUpVideos

Center for Children’s Advocacy
For information, go to speakupteens.org



Important Resources

Articles and Essays about Foster Care

100 Prize-Winning Essays by Teens in Foster Care, Rachel Blustain and Kendra Hurley, Youth Communication, 2005. www.youthcomm.org

Etched in Sand: A True Story of Five Siblings Who Survived an Unspeakable Childhood on Long Island, Regina Calcaterra, William Morrow Paperbacks, 2013.

Finding Our Way Home: Teens Write About Separating from Family and Reconnecting
Laura Longhine, ed, and Teens in Foster Care, Youth Communication, 2010. www.youthcomm.org

Foster Care Odyssey: A Black Girl's Story, Theresa Cameron, University Press of Mississippi, 2002.

Heart Knows Something Different: Teenage Voices from the Foster Care System, Al Desetta, ed, Youth Communication, 2008. www.youthcomm.org

Home: Voices of Connecticut's Foster Youth, edited by Connecticut Voices for Children, 2015. www.ctvoices.org/node/3475

In the System and in the Life: A Guide for Teens and Staff to the Gay Experience in Foster Care
Al Desetta, ed, Youth Communication, 2003. www.youthcomm.org

The Lost Boy: A Foster Child's Search for the Love of a Family, David J. Pelzer, Health Communications, 1997.

A Man Named Dave, David J. Pelzer, Plume/Penguin Putnam Inc., 2000.

Steps in My Shoes: The Life of a Foster Child, Ron Deming, Kamahl Publishing, 2017.

The Struggle to be Strong: True Stories by Teens About Overcoming Tough Times
Al Desetta, ed, and Teens in Foster Care Youth Communication, 2000. www.youthcomm.org

They Cage the Animals at Night: A True Story of an Abandoned Child's Struggle for Emotional Survival
Jennings Michael Burch, Signet, 1985.



Important Resources

Newsletters and Magazines for Youth in Out of Home Care

Represent - Bimonthly magazine written by and for youth in care
www.representmag.org

Mockingbird Times, Mockingbird Society of Washington State
www.mockingbirdsociety.org

Websites for Youth in Out of Home Care

DCF (Connecticut Department of Children and Families)
www.oortal.ct.gov/DCF/Youth/Home
- Sibling Bill of Rights
- Adolescent Needs Prior to Transitioning from Care
- Adolescent Bill of Rights and Expectations

Foster Care Alumni
www.fostercarealumni.org

Youth Communication
www.youthcomm.org

Foster Club (National Network for Youth in Foster Care)
www.fosterclub.com

Mockingbird Society
www.mockingbirdsociety.org

National Foster Youth Initiative
www.nfyi.org

Footnotes

1. DCF Policy Manual 36-55-6
2. DCF Policy Manual § 36-55-1.5 (“The foster parents shall.. support and facilitate visits for the child with the birth family and siblings.”); DCF Policy Manual § 36-55-7 (“Written visitation plans shall be developed and immediately implemented for all siblings not placed in the same foster care setting unless a written and signed statement from a professional (e.g., psychologist, psychiatrist) states that visiting is not in the best interests of the sibling needing special care.”); DCF Policy Manual § 36-55-1.2 (“The Social Worker shall . . . ensure the child’s visitation with parents, siblings and significant persons according to the Service Plan.”); DCF Policy Manual § 34-10-7.1(c) (“visits [must] be of sufficient number and duration to ensure continuation of the relationship”); Conn. Gen. Stat. § 17a-10a(You may have weekly visits if sibling is in-state within 50 miles unless documented otherwise.).
3. Conn. Gen. Stat. § 17a-16(c)(1); see also Sibling Bill of Rights.
4. DCF Policy Manual § 36-55-1.5 (“The foster parents shall..support and facilitate visits for the child with the birth family and siblings.”); DCF Policy Manual § 36-55-1.2 (“The Social Worker shall . . . ensure the child’s visitation with parents, siblings and significant persons according to the Service Plan.”).
5. DCF Policy Manual §§ 36-3 (“[T]he CIP [Child in Placement] case plan shall include:..the rationale for placement and visitation with siblings, parents and significant others....”); 36-55-1.
6. Conn. Gen. Stat. § 17a-16(c)(1).
7. DCF Policy Manual § 36-55-1.2 (“The Social Worker shall . . . ensure the child’s visitation with parents, siblings and significant persons according to the Service Plan.”); Conn. Gen. Stat. § 17a-16(e) (1) (“Each child or youth shall be permitted to receive visitors subject to reasonable restrictions consistent with the child’s or youth’s treatment objectives.”); DCF Regs § 17a-145-149(b) (“Foster parents shall accept, cooperate with and support arrangements made for the child to have contact including visits and correspondence with the child’s biological family in keeping with the frequency indicated by the treatment plan.”); DCF Policy Manual § 34-10-7.1 (“Visits [must] must be of sufficient number and duration to ensure continuation of the relationship”).
8. Conn. Gen. Stat. § 17a-16(c)(1) (“Each child and youth shall be permitted to communicate with any individual, group or agency, consistent with his treatment objectives as determined by the Commissioner of Children and Families.”).
9. Id.
10. Id.
11. DCF Regs. § 17a-145-151(c); see also Adolescents in Care Bill of Rights and Expectations, DCF Youth Advisory Board, June 3, 2015, available at <http://www.portal.ct.gov/-/media/dcf/YAB/pdf/AdolescentsinCareBillofRightsandExpectationspdf.pdf?la=en>.
12. DCF Regs. § 17a-145-139 (c).
13. DCF Regs. § 17a-145-151(b) (Foster families “shall be a positive role model to the child and instruct the child in appropriate behavior. They shall establish limits and assist the child to develop self-control and judgment skills. Children in the home shall be encouraged to assume age-appropriate responsibility for their decisions and actions.”).
14. DCF Policy Manual § 36-55-1.2 (“The Social Worker shall . . . ensure that arrangements are made for the child to attend church and receive religious instruction in his/her own faith.”); DCF Regs. § 17a-145-151(a)(8) (Foster parents shall assure “an environment of tolerance and sensitivity to a child’s religion through providing adequate opportunity for religious training and participation appropriate to the child’s religious denomination, and not requiring any child to participate in religious practices contrary to the child’s beliefs.”).
15. DCF Regs. § 17a-145-151(a)(7) (“Children who do not share the same language as their caretaker shall be provided with opportunities to practice their native language as they become bilingual or multi-lingual.”); DCF Policy Manual 31-8-6 (can communicate with parents and others in preferred language).
16. Policy Manual § 36-55-1.5.
17. DCF Regs. § 17a-145-151(a)(5) (Foster parents shall provide for the child’s needs, “including adequate hygiene, nutritional meals and snacks pre- pared in a safe and sanitary manner, readily available drinking water.”).
18. DCF Policy Manual § 50-4 (“The worker and foster parents encourage the youth to take on financial responsibility for himself/ herself in as construc- tive and supportive a manner as possible. In so doing, the youth becomes accustomed to the use and budgeting of his/her time and money When a youth is earning money, he/ she is encouraged to set aside some of the balance as savings. . . . Savings accounts should be in the youth’s own name and control.”).
19. DCF Policy Manual § 36-55-25.4.
20. DCF Regs. § 17-145-139(b) (“Provision shall be made for the safe storage of the child’s clothing and personal possessions.”).
21. Id.
22. DCF Policy Manual § 36-55-25.5.
23. Id.; DCF Policy Manual § 36-100.
24. DCF Policy Manual § 31-8-5. See also, Conn. Gen. Stat. § 17a-28.
25. DCF Policy Manual § 36-55-15.
26. DCF Policy Manual § 42-2.
27. Id.; See also DCF Adolescent Services Practice Guide (April 2015), Policy 42-2, available at <http://www.portal.ct.gov/-/media/dcf/Policy/BPGuides/AdolescentBPGpdf.pdf?la=en>
28. DCF Policy Manual § 42-2.
29. 42 U.S.C.A. §§ 671(a)(1); 675(5)(B) and (10)(A); Conn. Gen. Stat. § 17a-114d(b). DCF Policy Manual 41-1.
30. Conn. Gen. Stat. § 17a-114d(c); see also Adolescents in Care Bill of Rights and Expectations, DCF Youth Advisory Board, June 3, 2015, available at <http://www.portal.ct.gov/-/media/dcf/YAB/pdf/AdolescentsinCareBillofRightsandExpectationspdf.pdf?la=en>
31. Conn. Gen. Stat. § 17a-114d(b); 42 U.S.C.A. § 671(a)(24).
32. DCF Policy Manual § 36-5.
33. Id.
34. DCF Policy Manual § 2-4-1 (“The Office of the Ombudsman shall address inquiries and complaints related to DCF services in order to

resolve these issues and...shall respond to inquiries received from... clients...to resolve disputes with the Department in a manner consistent with the best interests of children and will act as an information and referral source for these individuals.”).

35. Conn. Gen. Stat. § 17a-16(c)(3) (“A child or youth shall be permitted to make or receive telephone calls to or from his/ her attorney at any reasonable time.”).

36. *Id.*

37. DCF Policy Manual § 31-8-6.

38. *Id.*

39. *Id.*

40. DCF Policy Manual § 36-50-10.1

41. DCF Policy Manual § 36-55-1; DCF Policy Manual § 41-1.

42. Conn. Gen. Stat. § 46b-129(b) (“The agency shall give primary consideration to placing the child or youth in the town where such child or youth resides. The agency shall file in writing with the clerk of the court the reasons for placing the child or youth in a particular placement outside the town where the child or youth resides.”).

43. Conn. Gen. Stat. § 41-1

44. Conn. Practice Book § 32a-5; Conn. Gen. Stat. §§46b-129(k)(1)(A), (k)(2)(4).

45. DCF Policy Manual § 36-55-1.2.

46. DCF Policy Manual § 36-60 (“In considering foster care placement for a child, preference shall be given to placement with a relative or extended family.”); DCF Policy Manual § 41-1. See also Conn. Gen. Stat. §§ 17a-114; 46b-129(c)(10). See generally DCF Foster Care Services Practice Guide, available at <http://www.portal.ct.gov/-/media/dcf/Policy/BPGuides/FCBPGpdf.pdf?la=en>

47. DCF Policy Manual § 41-1.

48. DCF Policy Manual § 41-1.

49. DCF Policy Manual § 41-1.

50. DCF Policy § 41-1

51. Conn. Gen. Stat. § 17a-114(b)(1)(B); Conn. Gen. Stat. § 17a-114e; DCF Policy Manual 41-1.

52. Conn. Gen. Stat. § 17a-114f.

53. DCF Policy Manual § 36-55-15.

54. Conn. Gen. Stat. Stat. § 17a-114e.

55. DCF Policy Manual § 42-3.

56. DCF Policy Manual § 36-3.

57. DCF Policy Manual § 48-10-1.

58. *Id.*

59. DCF Policy Manual §§ 36-2, 36-3.

60. *Id.*

61. See DCF Policy Manual § 36-4; DCF Case Planning Practice Guide (March 2014) at pp 14-15, available at <http://www.portal.ct.gov/-/media/dcf/Policy/BPGuides/CasePlanningBPGpdf.pdf?la=en>

62. DCF Policy Manual § 36-11-2; see also DCF Case Planning Practice Guide at pp. 21-24.

63. Conn. Gen. Stat. § 17a-15(b).

64. Conn. Gen. Stat. § 17a-15(c).

65. *Id.*

66. Conn. Gen. Stat. § 46b-129(k)(1)(A).

67. Conn. Gen. Stat. § 46b-129(k)(4).

68. Conn. Gen. Stat. § 46b-129(k)(3).

69. DCF Policy Manual § 36-3; See also DCF Case Planning Practice Guide; Adolescent Needs Prior to Transitioning from Care, DCF Youth Advisory Board, January 18, 2017, available at <http://www.portal.ct.gov/-/media/dcf/Youth/Adolescent-Needs-Prior-to-Transitioning-from-Care-1-2017-FINAL.pdf?la=en>

70. DCF Policy Manual § 42-1.

71. See DCF Policy Manual § 42-7; DCF Adolescent Services Practice Guide, Policy 42-7.

72. DCF Policy Manual § 36-55-1.2 (“The Social Worker shall...keep the child informed about his/her case planning, family situation and siblings...allow the child the opportunity to express his/her anxieties, fears and other feelings, including conflicted loyalties.”).

73. Conn. Gen. Stat. § 46b-150.

74. *Id.*

75. Conn. Gen. Stat. § 46b-150b.

76. See generally Adolescent Services Practice Guide.

77. DCF Policy Manual § 42-3; DCF Adolescent Services Practice Guide at pp. 18-20.

78. *Id.*; DCF Adolescent Services Practice Guide at pp. 22-25.

79. DCF Adolescent Services Practice Guide at pp. 22-25.

80. DCF Policy Manual § 42-3; DCF Adolescent Services Practice Guide at pp. 25-35.

81. DCF Policy Manual § 42-3.

82. DCF Policy Manual § 42-3; DCF Adolescent Services Practice Guide at pp. 34-35.

83. DCF Policy Manual § 42-5.

84. DCF Policy Manual § 42-3.

85. DCF Policy Manual § 42-3.

86. DCF Policy Manual § 42-3; DCF Adolescent Services Practice Guide at pp. 35-37.

87. *Id.* TFA provides daycare coverage only when you are attending high school. DCF is responsible for work-related daycare expenses.

88. DCF Policy Manual § 42-3.

89. DCF Policy Manual § 42-4.
90. DCF Policy Manual § 42-3; DCF Adolescent Services Practice Guide at p. 26.
91. Conn. Gen. Stat. § 46b-129(k)(1).
92. DCF Policy Manual § 42-7.
93. Id.
94. Id.
95. Id.
96. DCF Policy Manual § 42-8.
97. 42 U.S.C.A. § 675(5)(l); DCF Policy Manual § 42-7.
98. DCF Policy Manual § 42-7; § 26-1.
99. DCF Policy Manual § 36-55-1.5 (“The foster parents shall provide corrective life experiences in a safe, nurturing and stable family environment, free from abuse and/or neglect, where the child is respected, valued and accepted.”); DCF Regs. § 17a-145-151(c).
100. DCF Regs. §17a-145-151(c).
101. Id.
102. DCF Regs. §17a-145-151(a)(9); DCF Policy Manual § 9-1.
103. DCF Policy Manual § 9-1.
104. DCF Transgender Practice Guide, available at <http://www.portal.ct.gov/-/media/dcf/Policy/BPGuides/TransgenderBPGpdf.pdf?la=en>
105. DCF Regs. § 17a-150-81(a)(4).
106. DCF Policy Manual § 36-16.
107. 42 U.S.C.A. § 671(a)(35)(A); DCF Runaway Practice Guide (September 2015), available at <http://www.portal.ct.gov/-/media/dcf/Policy/BPGuides/RunawayBPGpdf.pdf?la=en>
108. DCF Runaway Practice Guide; DCF Policy Manual § 36-16.
109. DCF Trafficking Practice Guide (April 2014), available at www.portal.ct.gov/-/media/dcf/Policy/BPGuides/IntakeBPGpdf.pdf?la=en; DCF Policy Manual § 31-10-6.1.
110. DCF Runaway Practice Guide; DCF Policy Manual § 36-16.
111. Conn. Gen. Stat. § 17a-16(g) (“Each child or youth under the supervision of the Commissioner of Children and Families shall have the right to counsel of his own choosing, and the right to receive visits from physicians and mental health professionals as may be arranged by his counsel.”).
112. Conn. Gen. Stat. § 17a-16(g).
113. Conn. Gen. Stat. § 45a-132.
114. DCF Policy Manual § 44-4-1 (“The foster parent may use its own physician or dentist provided the doctor conforms to the fee schedules established by the Department of Social Services.”).
115. DCF Policy Manual § 44-4-1.1.
116. DCF Policy Manual § 31-8-12.1.
117. Conn. Gen. Stat. § 19a-14c(b), (c).
118. Conn. Gen. Stat. § 19a-14c(b), (c).
119. Conn. Gen. Stat. § 17a-688(d); DCF Policy Manual 35-45-3.
120. Conn. Gen. Stat. § 17a-16(g) (“Each child or youth under the supervision of the Commissioner of Children and Families shall have the right to... receive visits from physicians and mental health professionals as may be arranged by his counsel.”).
121. There is no Connecticut statute on this subject but the constitutional protections afforded minors on privacy grounds are controlling. See *Carey v. Population Service, Int'l*, 431 U.S. 678 (1977); *Bellotti v. Baird*, 443 U.S. 622 (1979).
122. DCF Policy Manual § 42-3.
123. DCF Policy Manual § 26-1; DCF Policy Manual § 42-3.
124. DCF Policy Manual § 26-1; Conn. Gen. Stat. § 19a-600 - 602.
125. DCF Policy Manual § 42-3.
126. Conn. Gen. Stat. § 19a-582(a).
127. Conn. Gen. Stat. § 19a-584(b).
128. Conn. Gen. Stat. § 19a-592(a).
129. Conn. Gen. Stat. § 19a-216(a).
130. Id.
131. DCF Policy Manual § 26-1; Conn. Gen. Stat. § 17a-543.
132. DCF Policy Manual § 16-6-1; Conn. Gen. Stat. § 17a-15b.
133. Id.
134. Id.
135. 42 U.S.C. § 1381 et Seq./www.ssa.gov/ssi
136. 20 C.F.R. § 416.1400
137. DCF Policy Manual § 45-12; CONN. GEN.STAT. § 17a-16a.
138. Id.
139. Id.
140. Id.
141. 42 U.S.C.A. § 11432(g)(3)(C); see also DCF Policy Manual 45-4.
142. DCF Policy Manual § 45-12; Conn. Gen. Stat. § 17a-16a.
143. Conn. Gen. Stat. § 17a-65(e).
144. 20 U.S.C.A. § 1414(c)(5)(A).
145. Conn. Gen. Stat. § 17a-65(f).
146. DCF Policy Manual § 45-10.

147. DCF Policy Manual § 42-2.
148. DCF Policy Manual § 42-4. In addition, sometimes you can get a waiver for DCF to extend funding past your 23rd birthday. See Adolescent Needs Prior to Transitioning from Care, DCF Youth Advisory Board, January 18, 2017, available at <http://www.portal.ct.gov/-/media/dcf/Youth/Adolescent-Needs-Prior-to-Transitioning-from-Care-1-2017-FINAL.pdf?la=en>
149. Id.
150. Id.
151. Id.
152. Id.
153. Id.
154. Id.
155. Conn. Gen. Stat. § 17a-11(i)(2).
156. DCF Policy Manual § 42-4. For a fillable Transition Extension Application, see <http://www.portal.ct.gov/-/media/dcf/Youth/Transition-Extension-Application.pdf?la=en>
157. Conn. Gen. Stat. § 4-610o(b), (c); see also Adolescent Needs Prior to Transitioning from Care, DCF Youth Advisory Board, January 18, 2017, available at <http://www.portal.ct.gov/-/media/dcf/Youth/Adolescent-Needs-Prior-to-Transitioning-from-Care-1-2017-FINAL.pdf?la=en>
158. DCF Policy Manual § 31-8-13.
159. 8 U.S.C. § 1101(a)(27)(J); C.G.S.A. § 45a-608n.
160. DCF Policy Manual § 31-8-13.
161. Id.
162. Id.
163. DCF Policy Manual § 31-10-6.1.
164. DCF Regulations concerning the operation of “Children’s Homes or Similar Institutions, Residential Treatment Facilities, Group Homes, and Temporary Shelters” are located at DCF Regs. § 17a-145-59 through § 17a-145-98; see also Conn. Gen. Stat. § 17a-16.
165. DCF Regs. § 17a-145-61.
166. Conn. Gen. Stat. § 17a-10d.
167. DCF Regs. § 17a-145-83.
168. Conn. Gen. Stat. § 17a-16(e)(1).
169. DCF Regs. § 17a-145-83; Conn. Gen. Stat. § 17a-16(e)(1); Conn. Gen. Stat. § 17a-10a; DCF Policy Manual § 36-55-1.2.
170. Conn. Gen. Stat. § 17a-16(e)(1).
171. Conn. Gen. Stat. § 17a-16(i).
172. Conn. Gen. Stat. § 17a-16(c)(1), (2); DCF Regs. § 17a-16-9(a)(b).
173. Conn. Gen. Stat. § 17a-16(c)(1), (3); DCF Regs. § 17a-16-8(c) regarding telephones and § 17a-16-9(b) for mail.
174. DCF Regs. § 17a-16-8(c), regarding telephones and § 17a-16-9(b) for mail.
175. Conn. Gen. Stat. § 17a-16(c)(3); § 17a-16(d)(1)(C); § 17a-16(i).
176. DCF Regs. § 17a-16-9(c); Conn. Gen. Stat. § 17a-16(d)(1)(B).
177. DCF Regs. § 17a-145-74(a); Conn. Gen. Stat. § 17a-16(b).
178. DCF Regs. § 17a-145-74(a).
179. DCF Regs. § 17a-145-74(a).
180. DCF Regs. § 17a-145-65; DCF Regs. § 17a-145-74.
181. DCF Regs. § 17a-145-74.
182. DCF Regs. § 17a-145-71.
183. DCF Regs. § 17a-145-73.
184. DCF Regs. § 17a-145-71.
185. DCF Regs. § 17a-145-73(a).
186. Id.
187. Id.
188. Id.
189. DCF Regs. § 17a-145-89.
190. DCF Regs. § 17a-145-89.
191. DCF Policy Manual § 31-8-6.1
192. DCF Policy Manual § 31-8-6. See DCF Regs. § 17a-145-78. See Conn. Gen. Stat. § 17a-16(a), (b); DCF Regs. § 17a-145-88.
193. Conn. Gen. Stat. § 17a-16(i).
194. Conn. Gen. Stat. § 17a-16(b).
195. Conn. Gen. Stat. § 17a-16(i).
196. Conn. Gen. Stat. § 17a-16(b).
197. DCF Policy Manual § 36-11-1.
197. Conn. Gen. Stat. § 17a-16(i).

Important Contacts

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| DCF Worker | Email | Phone |
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| DCF Program Manager | Email | Phone |
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| Other Important Contacts | Email | Phone |
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DCF Careline..... 800-842-2288
Office of the Child Advocate 800-994-0939
Center for Children’s Advocacy 860-570-5327 or 203-335-0719
If you do not know who your lawyer is, call
Office of the Chief Public Defender, Child Protection Unit..... 860-566-1341

Speak Up Your Legal Rights in DCF Care



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speakupteens.org
Hartford 860-570-5327
Bridgeport 203-335-0719