Know The FACTS

Foster Care Through The Eyes Of The Teen.

Florida Regulations
2000 Edition
STATE TEEN ADVISORY BOARD
of FLORIDA

MISSION STATEMENT

WE, THE STATE TEEN ADVISORY BOARD OF FLORIDA, RECOGNIZE THERE IS A GAP BETWEEN FOSTER CARE CHILDREN AND THE SYSTEM. AS REPRESENTATIVES, WE CAN BE THE BRIDGE BETWEEN THE SYSTEM AND FOSTER CARE CHILDREN BY EDUCATING, SUPPORTING, AND ADVOCATING FOR CHANGE.
Forward

All across the state, first in districts, then in regions, foster care teenagers came together to talk about their experiences in foster care. It was clear that most teenagers had experienced the same issues of confusion and frustration in dealing with the foster care system. From these early discussions teens decided to dispel the clouds of confusion, fill in missing information, and make sure all kids in foster care are aware of their rights and opportunities. With the support of the Independent Living Program, a State Teen Advisory Board was formed, and began to work hard advocating for foster care youth. This Handbook is a result of those efforts.

This publication is a collaborative effort of the state, and district Teen Advisory Boards, and seeks to be a powerful source of information to all kids in foster care regarding their personal rights. This Handbook seeks to define confusing terms and introduce foster care youth to the various people they will be working with. As foster care teens, we understand how each of you feel at this point in your life - we've been there - we've felt the same confusion, frustration, anger and fear - we've cried over the same situations - we've run away - we've been moved, and not told why. But, guess what? We've survived! More than survived - we've thrived! No one can take away your future. If you get nothing else from this Handbook, come away with this one truth: There is one special person among all the people in the world: that person is you. Despite all that has happened in your life up to this point, your future is still yours, and you will succeed!

Pointers for Surviving the System

Since we have lived in foster care for a long time, we've had a chance to figure out some ways to make your stay

2

(21) To have all their records available for review by their guardian ad litem and attorney ad litem if they deem such review necessary.

(22) To organize as a group for purposes of ensuring that they receive the services and living conditions to which they are entitled and to provide support for one another while in the custody of the department.

(23) To be afforded prompt access to all available state and federal programs, including, but not limited to: Early Periodic Screening, Diagnosis, and Testing (EPSDT) services, developmental services programs, Medicare and supplemental security income, Children's Medical Services, and programs for severely emotionally disturbed children.

The provisions of this section establish goals and not rights. Nothing in this section shall be interpreted as requiring the delivery of any particular service or level of service in excess of existing appropriations. No person shall have a cause of action against the state or any of its subdivisions, agencies, contractors, subcontractors, or agents, based upon the adoption of or failure to provide adequate funding for the achievement of these goals by the Legislature. Nothing herein shall require the expenditure of funds to meet the goals established herein except funds specifically appropriated for such purpose.
the child on to other forms of permanency.

(14) To receive regular communication with a caseworker, at least once a month, which shall include meeting with the child alone and conferring with the shelter or foster caregiver.

(15) To enjoy regular visitation, at least once a week, with their siblings unless the court orders otherwise.

(16) To enjoy regular visitation with their parents, at least once a month, unless the court orders otherwise.

(17) To receive a free and appropriate education; minimal disruption to their education and retention in their home school, if appropriate; referral to the child study team; all special educational services, including, where appropriate, the appointment of a parent surrogate; the sharing of all necessary information between the school board and the department, including information on attendance and educational progress.

(18) To be able to raise grievances with the department over the care they are receiving from their caregivers, caseworkers, or other service providers.

(19) To be heard by the court, if appropriate, at all review hearings.

(20) To have a guardian ad litem appointed to represent, within reason, their best interests and, where appropriate, an attorney ad litem appointed to represent their legal interests; the guardian ad litem and attorney ad litem shall have immediate and unlimited access to the children they represent.

---

1. Keep in mind that the people in the system (foster parents, group home staff, counselors, judges) are human. That means they make mistakes—they have good days and bad days—they have feelings. Remember: you'll get much more from someone who likes you and respects you. REMEMBER THE GOLDEN RULE: "Treat others as you would wish others to treat you."

2. BE ACCOUNTABLE: This means be on time...be where you said you would be; do what you said you would do; and if you make a mistake, own up to it.

3. KEEP TRACK: Write down important information (e.g. names of counselors, phone numbers, dates, appointments, etc.)

4. FOLLOW UP: If someone said they were going to do something, or if you were going to do something for someone else - make sure the next step is being taken.

5. HAVE A PLAN: Just because you're in foster care doesn't mean that your long-term goals have to change. Make a plan, set personal goals, and do the tasks needed for success.

If you keep these five simple suggestions in mind, you will save yourself a lot of frustration. Remember: You not only have rights, but you have some responsibilities as well.

Acknowledgments

We would like to thank the Independent Living Program, and the district Independent Living Coordinators and Counselors for bringing our group together and providing direction and resources. Without their care and commitment, their efforts and planning, this board and this handbook would not exist.
A TEEN’S BILL OF RIGHTS

A teen has the right....

-to be prepared for the initial removal from his or her home and thereafter, when removed from subsequent placements.

-to be placed in a substitute care setting that can best meet his or her emotional and physical needs, as well as helping to establish or maintain a healthy lifestyle.

-to have a permanent placement appropriate for his or her needs, at the earliest possible time.

-to be placed with siblings whenever possible so long as it is in their best interest.

-to have regular visitation with his or her birth parents, siblings, and other individuals with whom he or she has a meaningful, positive relationship, given the means of the state’s resources.

-to receive honest information regarding any and all decisions affecting him or her and to know what is going on with his or her case...and his or her life.

-to actively participate in the case planning process, appropriate to his or her age and ability.

-to attend any and all court hearings regarding his or her case, as well as to have a guardian ad litem appointed as his or her advocate in judicial proceedings, where he or she has been abused, neglected and/or abandoned.

-to have regular visitation with his or her family service
CHILDREN'S BILL OF GOALS

Florida Statute 39.4085 Legislative findings and declaration of intent for goals for dependent children. The Legislature finds and declares that the design and delivery of child welfare services should be directed by the principle that the health and safety of children should be of paramount concern and, therefore, establishes the following goals for children in shelter or foster care:

(1) To receive a copy of this act and have it fully explained to them when they are placed in the custody of the department.

(2) To enjoy individual dignity, liberty, pursuit of happiness, and the protection of their civil and legal rights as persons in the custody of the state.

(3) To have their privacy protected, have their personal belongings secure and transported with the, and, unless otherwise ordered by the court, have uncensored communication, including receiving and sending unopened communications and having access to a telephone.

(4) To have personnel providing services who are sufficiently qualified and experienced to assess the risk children face prior to removal from their homes and to meet the needs of the children once they are in the custody of the department.

(5) To remain in the custody of their parents or legal custodians unless and until there has been a determination by a qualified person exercising competent professional judgment that removal is necessary to protect their physical, mental, or emotional health or safety.

KNOW THE FACTS:

FOSTER CARE THROUGH THE EYES OF THE TEEN !!!!

FOSTER CARE PARENTS

Foster Care and Adoptive parents have the right to:

- Full participation in the decision-making process of becoming foster/adoptive parents.
- Evaluate their own capacity to care for a particular youth considering the youth’s and family’s own circumstances.
- Participate in the case planning for the youth.
Adequate training, preparation, and information regarding the youth’s history prior to placement.

Available, non-identifying disclosure regarding the youth’s history prior to placement.

Appropriate financial assistance in the form of the reimbursement, medical, or maintenance subsidy.

**Foster Care and Adoptive parents have the responsibility to:**

Prepare their own children and family regarding the impact that fostering/adopting may have on them.

Assist the youth in understanding and appreciating the heritage received from birth parents.

Keep the youth safe and provide for their needs: PHYSICALLY, EDUCATIONALLY, AND EMOTIONALLY.

Give the youth unconditional love and acceptance, understanding that many youths will not be able to give back.

**The Foster Care and Adoptive parents will be rewarded:**

With renewed understanding of tolerance, patience, and small accomplishments.

By helping a special youth grow towards becoming a productive, valued member of society.

By sharing life’s joys, sadness, accomplishments and defeats of their special youths.

“Independent Living has provided me with the opportunity to become a better person in every possible way. I sincerely hope this program is around for a very long time to help young people like me.” Jamie Wright

“Keep your head up. Look to your future. **Stay in school! Stay in school!**” Marilyn Knight

“The Independent Living Program has allowed me the time and training to grow up. I have learned that I’m a much stronger person than I thought and I can accomplish anything I want.” Vickie Lee

“Join your local teen board. Band together—help one another continue to push for positive change.” April Lewis

If you have any questions about the information you have read or would like to get involved in making a difference, please call Sara Bennett, State Youth Advisory Board Coordinator at (850) 922-5957.
QUOTES from Teens in Foster Care:

“Use the foster care system to your advantage to advance yourself: not as a disadvantage. It is what you make it.”
April Ferguson

“Keep your head up!! Remember life does not give you success; you must bring your life’s success.”
Pamela Brown

“I advise all teens in foster care to work towards getting in Independent Living. I’ve been there. In regular foster care you just exist... In Independent Living you LIVE!!!”
Thomas Dauphinee

“Always try as hard as you can; don’t let yourself come in last place. It’s in your hands now.”
Quincy Manasco

“If I fail or if I succeed, the Independent Living Program has given me that chance.”
Jessica Alvarado

“Don’t give up on your dreams.”
Jennifer Lawson

“Be strong, aware, smart, happy, confused, anxious, nervous, loving, sad, careful, great, educate, learn, give... most of all be as excellent as you can be; believe in you and you shall achieve!”
Karen Robinson

“Stand strong, and have faith no matter what obstacles stand in your way. You can do it!”
Tawana Campbell

“Well, all I can say to you kids is ‘Don’t take it personally’. Chill out and let DCF be your guide, not your enemy.”
Brian Cresswell

“Keep your heads up! I wish you all peace, love, and

FOSTER CARE COUNSELOR

Counselors have the right to:

Adequate training, preparation, and information regarding community resources.

Supervision, guidance, and support in the routine performance of their duties.

Be recognized as professionals having valuable skills and abilities.

Counselors have the responsibility to:

Maintain continuous relationships with the youth, his/her family, the foster parents, and adoptive parents as appropriate.

Advocate for youths and their right to privacy.

Provide the youth with support services to remediate the problems associated with being removed from his family.

Provide selected and coordinated resources and services necessary to meet the needs of the youth and his family and foster/adoptive parents.

Gather and document relevant information to preserve the youth’s history.

Place the youth in the most family-like setting available to best meet the youth’s needs and interests.
Counselors will be rewarded:

By having the opportunity to make a meaningful difference in the lives of youths and their families.

By contributing to help a special youth grow towards becoming a productive, valued member of society.

**PROTECTION AND ADVOCACY**

**Protective Investigator (P.I.):** P.I.'s initiate investigation of dependency process by responding to all reports of abuse. Also, they play a role in determining whether the youth should be placed in foster care, shelter, group home, with a responsible family member, or guardian. Reports to the judge and courts system, receives assistance from schools, local police departments, hospitals, and especially law enforcement.

Protective Investigators are the first ones to remove a youth from their abusive environment and place them in a safe one.

**Guardian ad Litem (GAL):** A responsible, adult volunteer who is appointed by the court to represent the best interests of a child in any abuse or neglect case, whether civil or criminal. The youth and the guardian ad litem should have communication; the guardian ad litem is also the voice of the youth in the courtroom.

**Guardian Ad Litem Attorney:** A certified volunteer, a staff attorney, or certified pro bono (free) attorney working on behalf of a guardian ad litem or the program.

**Statute:** An established law or rule. In Florida, these rules are contained in books called Florida Statutes. The laws are made by elected officials who attend sessions each year in Tallahassee. These officials represent the various sections (or legislative districts) of the entire state. Statutes can be added, removed, or changed. State agencies, such as DCF, use the Florida Statutes to determine what they can and cannot do by law.

**Subsequent:** Following in time or order; the next one in a series.

**Subsidy:** A form of money given to an individual to be used to meet their living expenses (such as rent, utilities and food.)

**Substitute care:** Takes the place of your permanent home; mostly temporary. (Examples: foster homes, or shelter homes.)

**Tolerance:** To endure something; typically of pain from sickness or the effects of a medication.

**Visitation:** Time spent together with another person or group of people. Usually refers to visits between parents and children, siblings, or others having the right.
with the individual over a period of time in order to address and solve various issues.

**Psychiatric Consultation** - An examination by a psychiatrist (who is a medical doctor) to diagnose and treat various emotional disorders (such as depression, hyperactivity.) This doctor may prescribe medications to help treat various disorders.

**Reimbursement** - To pay someone back something you owe them. (Example: the State pays back foster parents for taking care of you.)

**Relevant** - Having to do with the current topic under discussion. (Example: If I asked you how old you are, you would respond with your age..."I'm 13." (Which is relevant) - But, if you responded by saying..."I've got brown hair" - that would not be relevant, because your hair color has nothing to do with the question asked.)

**Remediate** - To fix something; to make something right; supplying a remedy. (Example: classes in school re-teaching something you should already know.)

**Resemble** - Similar or having a likeness to; sharing common characteristics. (Example: brothers or sisters who look a lot alike.)

**Restrictive** - To restrict or limit; something which limits movement or behavior; a structured environment; rules.

**Siblings** - Individuals having one common parent; your biological brother or sister.

---

**THE JUDGE AND THE COURT PROCESS**

**Judge** - Decides what is best for the youth in care or entering care; issues orders, reads reports dealing with the youth, contacts schools, families, and listens to other parties and determines whether the youth should be with her family or placed in the foster care system.

The judge also holds review hearings (sometimes every 4-6 months) throughout the youth's stay in care. (See next page for more information on the types of hearings).

The youth is always encouraged to attend review hearings. The judge wants to see the youth and hear his/her opinions. Youths do have a voice in court.

---

**DEFINITIONS OF COURT PROCEEDINGS**

**Detention** - To determine whether the child should be placed in shelter care or remain with the family pending the outcome or adjudication (see below).

**Time Frame:** Within 24 Hrs of placement.

**Shelter Review** - To give the parents a chance to persuade the judge to reverse a detention finding based on new information.

**Time Frame:** Within 48 Hrs of parent's request.

**Arraignment** - To provide the parents with an opportunity to admit or deny abuse or neglect or to agree to let the judge decide.

**Time Frame:** If child has been detained, the arraignment must be held within 24 calendar days of detention.
Adjudication- To establish whether there has been abuse, abandonment, or neglect.  
**Time Frame:** Seven calendar days after the arraignment but still within 21 days of the child being taken into custody.

Disposition- To determine where the child should live while the family works to solve their problems; determine if the youth will be court-ordered into the foster care system.  
**Time Frame:** Must be held within 30 calendar days of adjudication.

Judicial Review of the case- To determine if the family is now a safer place for the youth to live and/or decide what is in the best interests of the child.  
**Time Frame:** First Judicial Review must occur no later than 180 days from the date the child is removed from the home, or 180 days from the date of voluntary placement.

2nd Judicial Review must occur no later than six months from the first Judicial Review.

3rd Judicial Review must occur no later than six months from the second Judicial Review.

Subsequent Judicial Reviews- If the child continues in foster care after the third Judicial Review hearing, the continuing requirements for judicial review vary according to the child's age.

For children who are under age 13, judicial review hearings must occur every six months. For children age 13 and older Judicial Reviews must also be held every 6 months.

Diagnosis- A process of determining the nature and cause of a disease or injury through examination of a patient; a name given to a set of observable characteristics to facilitate consistent communication between professionals. Used by doctors to name an illness (such as tonsillitis - an infection of the tonsils) or by psychologists and counselors to classify a set of behavioral characteristics (such as adjustment disorder.)

Disclosure- To give out information that was previously held in confidence.

Judicial Proceedings- A court hearing or action where the judge hears information from various individuals (the youth, attorneys, doctors, parents, foster care counselors, guardians ad litem, etc.) A decision may be made, or another proceeding scheduled.

Permanency- Something permanent; DCF is required to take action to plan to ensure a stable environment for you. Case plan goals include: being returned home or placed with a relative, adoption, permanent custody to the foster parent, long-term foster care or independent living.

Psychologist- A professional who is trained and licensed to observe individual behaviors and traits and administer various tests to form a diagnosis. This person may talk who signs the plan gets a copy to remind them what is expected of them.

There are several goals that the foster care counselor must consider when developing the plan. (Please refer to "permanency" in this section.)
prejudices in society. Children and teenagers ridicule people whose views differ from their own. They do not understand the different religions and view them as barbaric or crazy!! How would you feel if someone antagonized you because of something you have been raised to believe in? There are many things I made fun of as a child, but as I learned more about other people, I came to respect their beliefs and ideas no matter how they differed from my own. How many people make fun of Buddha, Gandi, or a Native American rain dancer, or know anything about them? I feel that religion should be offered in the foster home and a foster child should be taught about the different major religions and theories of creation."

Catherine, 19

**TERMINOLOGY**

**Advocate**- Someone who speaks or acts in your best interest. Examples of advocates are: Guardians ad Litem, counselors, teachers, friends, etc.

**Case Plan**- A legal document that is written with the assistance of the foster care counselor, the parents or guardians, the guardian ad litem, and the youth. The case plan includes tasks to do for everyone who is involved with the plan. The case plan includes a description of why DCF became involved with the youth and the family, and lists the services to be provided to the youth and family.

The judge has the authority to accept the case plan as is, or make any changes he or she sees fit. Everyone

**Review of cases in which parental rights have been terminated (TPR)**- In all cases in which parental rights have been terminated with custody to DCF, the court must judicially review the status of the child at six-month intervals until the time that the child is placed for adoption.

**Notice of Hearings**- All interested parties must be served with a notice. Interested parties should include the department or licensed agency responsible for the supervision and custody for guardianship of the youth, if the agency is not requesting the hearing; the foster parent or other custodian in whose home the youth resides; the parent, guardian or other custodian who transferred the care and custody of the youth to the department; the youth’s Guardian ad Litem; the case manager, in a case where another program office is providing services, for example, Developmental Services, Vocational Rehabilitation, etc.; and any other persons the court may direct the department (Department of Children & Families) to notify.

**Attendance**- The foster care counselor must arrange to have the youth present at the review hearing unless the court excuses the youth from attendance.

**Citizen Review Hearings**- A panel of volunteers who review the status of a youth placed in foster care. The panel then makes recommendations to the judge.

**Administrative Review**- A third-party review of a youth in foster care to determine the appropriateness and status of the plan for permanence.

**Youths who are subject to Administrative Reviews**- (1) All youths 13 years or older who are court-ordered
into foster care and remain in care beyond 18 months are subject to administrative reviews; (2) Young adults who remain in foster care beyond their 18th birthday; and (3) Youths in adoptive placements that have not been finalized.

**Frequency of Administrative Case Review** - Youths age 13 or older who continue in care beyond 18 months must have an administrative review no later than 6 months from the most recent judicial case review.

**MONTHLY ALLOWANCE and Budgeting for Foster Care Youth**

Foster parents receive an average of about $300 a month from HRS for the expenses of having you live in their home. That really isn't a lot of money, when you stop and think about it. Out of that money, certain things must go to you and certain things must go toward the household bills. Household bills are things like the electric bill, hot water, food, house repairs, and car and gas for taking you places, etc.

Part of that money is supposed to provide you with basic needs, such as decent clothing that fits, shampoo and deodorant, and stuff like that. You should also be getting some pocket money, or allowance. It may be that your foster parent already spends more on you than the total of this allowance. So, be sure to check with your counselor or foster parent to find out how much the allowance is.

Should you receive an allowance in cash from your foster parent, instead of things like movie tickets, for example, you should start trying to build skills in budgeting, comparison shopping, saving, etc. Your foster parent or counselor should

They were very nice people. The lady of the house was a retired nurse and the man of the house preached Christianity every Sunday morning. Although they obtained the requirements to be a licensed foster parent, they lacked the ability to communicate with me and the other children in the home.

This matter should be stressed more prior to any placement of a child, but especially an emotionally disturbed child. In most cases, the child has already become emotionally ill and resists all communication with the substitute parents. When this behavior occurs the substitute parent should not give up on the child and the feelings they may be experiencing.

Frequent discussions with the child will help them understand the things going on in their life and better prepare them for the future. Without this kind of treatment from a parent figure, the child will often become severely depressed and sometimes even suicidal. It is important for them to learn how to deal with emotional pain. All children are special and deserve the best attention available. Remember, they are the future so help them achieve the very best in life.”

Jamie, 20

**“SHOULD FOSTER CARE TEENS BE TAUGHT RELIGION IN FOSTER HOMES?”**

“Personally, I am not too sure about what I believe in, as far as religion. I have a lot of unanswered questions and seem to be lacking in the faith to believe, because that is what it says in the Bible. Today, with such social and ethnic diversity everywhere, having that knowledge could only benefit someone surrounded with the various beliefs present in our society. The knowledge could also end some of the
educational program?"

"Do I have a full- or part-time job?"

If you could not finish these sentences, YOU need a PLAN; or you may be "homeless" too. It is never too late to plan your life. The Department of Children & Families will be there for you, if you are participating in a full-time educational educational program and maintaining a 2.0 GPA. Here are some statements other youths your age wanted to accomplish:

"I want to finish high school."

"I want to go to college or technical school locally."

"I want to go away to college."

All of the following can be achieved only if you communicate with your foster care counselor, GAL, foster parent, citizens review panel, or judge. It is our intention in foster care to assist you in making the transition to adulthood. Choices and opportunities are yours before 18. Take advantage of them.

"Remember: If you do not plan for life, it will plan for you."

"WHY COMMUNICATION IS IMPORTANT"

"From experience, I have learned what it is like to live in a foster home. It was a very dramatic time in my life and I never really understood what was going on, or yet was I able to deal with it. When I first met my foster parents I thought be able to assist you in building these skills. If you are 16 or over, the Independent Living program can help you learn to budget your money.

Also, a $200 annual clothing allowance is provided for all departmental foster youths between ages 5-18 who have been in foster care for longer than six months, and $100 per year for all departmental foster youths ages 0-5 who have been in foster care for six months or longer. This money must be spent on clothing for you.

Money to pay these allowances must be approved each year by the State Legislature; so that means if the Legislature doesn't approve it, the money is not there! But, usually the money is there.

Foster care youths also have Medicaid availability for covering medical care.

**PLACEMENTS**

Florida law states that when a youth is removed from his/her home, they must be placed in the least restrictive, most family-like setting available. This family-like setting is also referred to as "substitute care." Substitute care is a service for youths who are unable to live with their own families. The following are definitions of the types of substitute care available when a youth is removed from the home.

1. **Family Foster Home**- A private residence in which youths are provided 24-hour care. This home is to resemble the most family-like setting available to foster youth. This home is limited to a total of 5 children including the family's own children.
2. **Therapeutic Foster Home** - A private residence in which youths are provided 24-hour care. This home is different from the family foster home in that it is limited to two youths. This foster home provides specialized care to youths with diagnosed emotional problems. The foster family is provided with special training and support in order to help meet the special needs of the youths placed in their home.

3. **Individual Residential Treatment Foster Home** - A private residence in which youths are provided 24-hour supervision and care. This home is unique in the fact that only one youth is to be provided care in this home. This home takes youths with severe emotional problems. One parent must be home at all times to be available to assist the youth whenever the need may arise. This home also receives outside assistance and training in order to meet the needs of the youth placed in their care.

4. **Foster Family Group Home** - A licensed, private family who has demonstrated the interest and special qualifications to care for a total of no more than 5 pre-adolescent and adolescent children. These homes provide individualized treatment for the adolescents placed in their care. The home is provided with group work, individual casework, and psychiatric consultation to further help the youths in their care.

5. **Emergency Family/Shelter Home** - A licensed, family home that receives youths on an emergency basis from DCF. They cannot have more than 5 youths in their home including their own. This is a temporary placement until a more appropriate home can be found.

C. In order to continue receiving a fee exemption, a student must have earned a grade point average of at least a 2.0 on a 4.0 scale for the previous term; maintain at least an overall 2.0 grade point average for all college work, or have an average below 2.0 for only the previous term and be eligible for continued enrollment in the institution.

"**I JUST CANNOT WAIT UNTIL I AM EIGHTEEN!**"

As you approach your eighteenth birthday, you must plan what you will do after that. "Say What?? Plan!!

The reason it is important to PLAN before and after 18, is because in the mid-1980’s studies were conducted that were a shocker. The studies revealed that a high percentage of homeless people were former foster children. Before you say "not me", finish these sentences:

"When I reach 18, what am I going to do for the rest of my life?"

"Where am I going to live?"

"Have I been accepted to a college, university, or other
6 years to 10 years | 2 months to 6 months
10 years to 14 years | 6 months to 1 year

**Visitation setting.** Whenever possible visitation should be arranged in a relaxed, natural setting such as the parent’s home, the foster home, community parks or playgrounds. Visitation should ensure the safety of the youth or a need exists to control or structure the parent-child interaction.

**Cancellation of visits.** Scheduled parent-child visits should not be canceled due to conflicts in the counselor’s schedule. When such a conflict arises it will be the responsibility of the unit supervisor to arrange for the scheduled visit to be held with the assistance of another counselor, if needed. Parents should notify the counselor within 24 hours if they have to cancel a visit.

**Sibling visitation.** It is the responsibility of the foster care counselor to arrange for regular and frequent visits (at least monthly) between siblings who are placed separately.

**STUDENT FEE EXEMPTIONS FOR COLLEGE**

**A.** A student in long-term foster care or Independent Living is exempt from all college undergraduate fees (including tuition). But, before a fee exemption can be given, the student must apply for financial aid. If financial aid is denied, then the student can get a fee waiver.

**B.** A student can continue receiving a fee exemption for

6. **Group Care.** A licensed and staffed 24-hour residential facility for youths. This program does not offer maternity care, emergency shelter, or run away services. This home may have staff that work in shifts and they may have more than 5 youths residing in their home.

7. **Emergency/Shelter Group Home.** A licensed, family residential home that takes youths on an emergency basis. This home or facility takes youths 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. These homes or facilities are temporary placements. Youths live in these homes or facilities until a more appropriate placement can be found.

8. **Therapeutic Group Home.** A licensed facility with 24-hour-a-day staff who are specially trained to help youths who have diagnosed emotional disorders. These facilities have therapists and psychologists available on a 24-hour basis.

9. **Medical Foster Home.** A licensed, family home where the foster parents are specially trained to deal with the needs of youths who may have severe medical needs. Based on the child’s medical needs, nurses are available on call 24 hours a day.

10. **Subsidized Independent Living.** This is a program available to foster care teens aged 16 and older who meet specific criteria. The teens participating in this program live in their own apartments. The state helps these teens by giving them an allotment of money (subsidy) to help them with their expenses. Teens may participate in this program until they reach 21 years of age.
age. In order to participate in the Subsidized Independent Living program you must:
- attend school full-time (with 2.0 g.p.a.)
- earn at least $100 per month in employment
- exhibit responsible behavior during last 6 months
- establish a savings account with monthly deposits

VISITATION

Frequency of visits with the youth after placement - The initial few weeks of a youth's placement are crucial to his adjustment in the foster home. Weekly visits to the youth and the foster family are necessary during the early weeks of placement, in order to identify and correct early adjustment problems as well as to give the youth a sense of security that he has not been abandoned. Once the placement is secure, one visit per month is the minimum acceptable contact level. These visits should focus on helping the youth with the problems related to adjustment in the foster home and the community, as well as keeping the youth informed about his family.

Child-parent visitation - When the goal of foster care is to return the child to his biological family, the department is committed to a visitation policy with his parents and siblings and enhancing the possibilities of reunification. The chances for the child's consistent arrangement of such visitation enhances the child's chances at successful reunification. The foster care counselor is responsible for interpreting and enforcing the visitation policy with the parents. It is not appropriate for the foster care counselor to "wait" for parents to indicate an interest in visiting. Visitations should never be withheld contingent upon the child's or parent's compliance with the provisions of the Case Plan.

Frequency of visits - The frequency of visits between the youth and parents must be such that the visits will continue to improve the parent-child relationship. A minimum of one monthly visit must be arranged for the child and his parents. Visits should occur at least every two weeks where the service goal is to enhance the parent-child relationship and to return the child home. The exact frequency of the visits will depend on factors such as the child's circumstances. At least one visit should occur during the first week of placement. As the parent-child relationship improves and the projected date for return home approaches, extended visits such as weekends should be arranged. Transportation problems should not interfere with visitation plans. Every effort should be made to see that the child and the parents are given whatever assistance they need in regard to visitation.

Trauma of loss and separation for a child - Beyond 14 years of age children usually have an adult sense of time and can tolerate periods of separation. The following data presents maximum time periods that a child can tolerate separation from a parent before new psychological ties are formed. The first visit after placement and the frequency of subsequent visits should be arranged with these guidelines in mind:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age of child:</th>
<th>Amount of Time:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Birth to 2 years</td>
<td>Several Days</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 years to 5 years</td>
<td>1 week to 6 months</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>