



*Welcome*

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## Welcome To The Children's Center

The Children's Center is a safe place for children entering foster care. We understand this may be a tough time for you. We are here to support you.

### What Happens When You Arrive at the Children's Center?

**Intake staff** will gather information from your Child Protective Specialist (CPS), Police or Foster Care Agency Planner to learn about the reason(s) you are entering foster care.

An **Engagement Specialist** will welcome you when you arrive at the Children's Center to help with your needs.

You will see a **Nurse** to check your health. There are nurses at the Children's Center to help you 24 hours a day / 7 days a week.

You will be interviewed by a **Child and Family Specialist / Social Worker** to determine what type of care you need. You may be referred to a Safe Horizon Counselor, the Mental Health Team, a Substance Abuse Counselor (CASAC), or an Educational Specialist (ES); and be connected to a **Youth Advocate** for additional help.

You will be assigned to a pod based on your age and gender identity (nursery, preteen boys/girls, teen boys/girls). The pods are group sleeping quarters. **Child Care staff** is available 24/7 to support you and answer any questions.

### Where Do I Go From Here?

The Office of Placement Administration (OPA) will work on finding placement to fit your unique needs by:

- Connecting you to family through our kinship services. You can help by telling us about family or friends you may be able to stay with, such as a grandmother, aunt, uncle, or cousin.
- We will contact different agencies to find out if their programs meet your needs.
- You will have a chance to ask questions and learn about the placement setting being considered for you.



**OUR COMMUNITY TREE**

**Transportation.** There are buses and vans to take you to school, court and doctor appointments. Staff will accompany you to keep you safe.

**Programming.** There are age-appropriate recreational and educational activities, wellness programs, plus many fun off-site trips. Eligible teens may have an opportunity to receive a Community Pass for visits outside the Children’s Center.

**Meals.** The Wellness Policy at the Children’s Center ensures that you will be served and have access to healthy foods, plus opportunities to be physically active throughout the day. Copies of the Wellness Policy are available upon request.

**Family and Sibling Visits.** You will have time with your brothers and/or sisters. Visits with your family, lawyer or social worker can take place here, over the phone, via video chat or at a location away from the Children’s Center.

**Safety.** We want you to be safe! There are ACS Peace Officers on site to make sure you are protected.

## What You Can You Do While Waiting For Placement?

- Follow the rules of the Children’s Center program.
- Be patient. We are working on finding a placement for you.
- Ask an adult questions and for support at any time.

While at the Children’s Center both you and your support team are expected to **REACH** for one another:

- R – Respect**
- E – Empathize/Encourage**
- A – Aspire for greatness**
- C – Communicate**
- H – Hope**

### The rules and guidelines to follow are:

1. Respect personal space
2. Maintain personal hygiene
3. Follow instructions
4. Respect staff and other residents



# Attorney for the Child

## Who is the Attorney for the Child (AFC)?

- The (AFC) is a specific lawyer with special education and certifications who represents YOU in court.
- They are hired by the state and don't work for anyone but YOU.
- It is their responsibility to speak on YOUR behalf after carefully considering YOUR wishes.

## When is an AFC assigned?

- A parent or guardian is accused of abuse and/or neglect.
- A parent or guardian wants custody or the right to visit.
- You are placed in foster care by a parent/guardian.
- Minors are in trouble or need extra supervision.

## AFC Summary of Responsibilities

- Starts representing YOU as soon as they are assigned to your case by the court.
- Meets with YOU before a court hearing.
- Represents YOU at all court proceedings and actively participates on YOUR behalf.
- Continues to meet with YOU regularly and maintain communication.
- Reviews your paperwork and history and speaks with the people involved with YOU.
- Considers all options for YOU and explains them to you.
- Remains available to YOU.

## Frequently Asked Questions

### What should I expect?

Expect your AFC to do their job. They will try to get to know you and a bit about your life so they can help you make the best decisions.

### What will the AFC expect of me?

They will expect you to be open and honest as well as willing to help them help you.

### Will my AFC tell anyone what we talk about?

Everything you say to your AFC should be confidential, unless you are currently harming yourself or others, intend to harm yourself or others, or if someone else is harming you or others. **Can my AFC come to service plan reviews?**

Your AFC MUST be invited to them.

# Frequently Asked Questions

## Can I go to court?

Talk with your AFC about whether you should and under what circumstances you can attend.

## What if I am a JD/PINS youth?

Your AFC is your defense attorney.

## What to Do if You Feel Your Rights are Not Being Respected?

Tell a Children's Center Child Care staff or Child and Family Specialist (CFS).

# Glossary of Common Terms

**Advocate:** A person who speaks or writes to support or defend a person or cause.

**Criminal court:** The court that handles criminal cases, which involve illegal actions.

**Guardianship:** The position of being legally responsible for someone.

**Family court:** The court that deals with issues of family, youth, and children.

**Foster care:** A place to live while youth and their family obtain care and the support they need. The purpose is to provide a safe home and maintain wellbeing when their parent cannot.

**JD (Juvenile Delinquent):** A youth between the ages of 7- 18 who commits a crime. They may be placed in foster care.

**Trial discharge:** A period (at least 6 months) when a youth in foster care is living on their own or with a parent, relative, or other adult permanency resource before final discharge.

**Visitation plan:** A plan for the youth in foster care to see their families, including how often, how long, and where and whether the visits should be supervised.



# Bill of Rights

## 1. The right to live in a safe and healthy home

You have the right to live in a safe home and to not be exploited by anyone, including parents, foster parents, group home staff, or guardians of your case. You have the right to food and clothing that is healthy and appropriate.

## 2. The right to be treated fairly and with respect

You have the right to be treated fairly and not be discriminated against because of your gender, race, religion, sexual orientation, or mental or physical health. You cannot be treated unfairly just because you are in foster care!

## 3. The right to visits with your parents and live with your children

You have the right to visit with family members, siblings, parents, and grandparents as it is deemed appropriate by the court. You have the right to see and live with your own children whenever possible, as well as the right to make choices for your own children as it is deemed appropriate by the court.

## 4. The right to live with siblings or to visit them

You have the right to live with your siblings if possible and if not possible, you have the right to visit with them if deemed appropriate, and if no barrier prevents it.

## 5. The right to know contact information for your county workers

You have the right to know your attorney, caseworker, and caseworker's supervisors. You have the right to see your caseworker at least once a month, and the right to speak with your caseworker, attorney, and/or caseworker's supervisor in private. You have the right for your personal information to be kept private and only given to those who have the legal right to see it.

## 6. The right to be free from cruel and unnecessary punishment

You have the right to be free from cruel and unnecessary punishment, including but not limited to being physically hit, bullied, or being isolated from others. No one can deny you food, water, or sleep. No one can deny you the right to see your family as a form of punishment. You may not be disciplined justly without reason, and you must know why you are disciplined.

# Bill of Rights

## 7. The right to have a voice in your permanency goals

You have the right to have a say in your future and to have the court consider your wishes. Depending upon your age, you may have a right to participate in your permanency hearing. You may also have the right to continued contact with your caseworker after leaving care.

## 8. The right to receive medical, dental, vision, mental and behavioral health services regularly

You have the right to receive medical attention on a regular basis for dental, medical, vision, and mental and behavioral health. You have the right to information about healthy and safe sexual practices as well as reproductive health information. You have the right, after the age of 18, to receive your birth certificate, social security card, medical records, and state-issued identification.

## 9. The right to an education until you get an HSE diploma or high school diploma

You have the right to receive a free and appropriate education until you receive a high school diploma or HSE diploma. You also have the right to request assistance in applying to colleges and vocational programs that are in or out of state.

## 10. The right to participate in activities that are age-appropriate

You have the right to participate in activities that are age appropriate, such as after school activities, summer activities, and work experience. and to practice religion if you have one. When you reach the age of 16, you have the right to apply for your driver's license and to receive guidance in getting a job.

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## What To Do If You Feel Your Rights Are Not Being Respected

You have the right to report whoever is disrespecting your rights, and you cannot be punished for reporting them.

- Tell a Children's Center Child Care staff or Child and Family Specialist (CFS).
- Tell your caseworker or their supervisor. You can ask to speak to them in private.
- Tell your attorney. They cannot tell anyone else about the conversations you have, unless you give permission or if your safety is at risk.

# The Children's Center Purpose, Mission, Vision and Values

## Purpose:

We believe that every child deserves safety, happiness, health, and love in our care, no matter how long or short their stay.

## Mission Statement:

To provide a temporary living environment that is non-judgmental, supportive, caring, and structured that strives to heal past and ongoing trauma.

## Vision:

Children and youth will be prepared to transition to placement or achieve permanency after their stay at the Children's Center.

## Values we hold in caring for our youth:

1. Acceptance
2. Compassion
3. Respect
4. Equality
5. Growth, education and development
6. Promote self-esteem
7. Preservation of self-identity
8. Tolerance

## Values we hold in our work:

1. Team work
2. Accountability
3. Professional development
4. Open lines of communication
5. Empathy and Understanding

My Name:

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My Case  
Planner:

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My Lawyer:

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My CFS:

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NOTES:

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