

A HANDBOOK FOR YOUTH

Out of Home Placement - Foster Care



MARYLAND DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN RESOURCES

Social Services Administration



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INTRODUCTION

This Handbook explains Out-of-Home Placement Services for youth between the ages of 14 and 21 and what you can expect while in foster care. The Maryland Department of Human Resources hopes that this handbook is helpful in telling you about some of the important things you need to know about being in foster care and what you can expect when you leave foster care.

You are in foster care because your family was unable to provide for your care and supervision. The court found reasons for you to live away from your family or your family asked to voluntarily place you in foster care. It will be up to your family, you, the local department of social services and the court to work on the issues that brought you into foster care so that you can go home. However, sometimes the issues that brought you into foster care cannot be taken care of and you may not be able to return home.

While in foster care, you will learn to understand how certain legal decisions and service plans are developed to meet your individual needs. There are rules in place to protect you and to make sure you receive educational and health care services. Your caseworker will work to help you return home to your family or find you another permanent home.

A. OUT-OF-HOME PLACEMENT – FOSTER CARE

In Maryland, foster care is provided primarily by the local department of social services in each of the 23 counties and Baltimore City. Some private childcare agencies also provide foster care services. Services are provided to you, your family or caregivers with the goal of solving the issues that brought you into foster care. If for some reason, these issues are not resolved, plans will be made to make arrangements for you to live with relatives or get you another family so that you can leave foster care.

During the first five (5) days in foster care, you can expect to have a placement selected for you based on your needs. While in foster care, you will receive personal care items, clothing, food, and a bedroom that you may share or have to yourself. If you need personal care items or clothing, tell your caregiver. If your caregiver does not get the things you need, you should tell your caseworker. Also, no one should abuse you physically, emotionally or sexually. You can be punished but you can not be spanked or hit. During the first five (5) days in foster care, you will have a physical examination that will be completed to determine if you have any health care needs. Also, your caseworker will make sure you are registered for school.

You and your family will be asked to attend court for a Shelter Care Hearing to determine if there is a good reason that you cannot go home. If so, you will have to enter foster care at least for the next 30 days. If you have any questions, you may ask your attorney or your caseworker to explain about the court hearing, placement, or anything that bothers you.

Within 30 days of your coming into foster care, there will be a second court hearing called an Adjudicatory Hearing where you, your family and the local department of social services may present information to the court for the judge to determine if you can return home or be found a Child In Need of Assistance (CINA) and therefore remain in foster care. At this court hearing, like at the shelter care hearing, everyone (parents, child) will be represented by an attorney.

After the court finds you to be a Child In Need of Assistance, the caseworker will meet with you and your family. They will be asked to complete a service agreement that identifies the issues that will need to be worked on while you are in foster care. You may also be asked to sign a service agreement to work on your own issues while you are in foster care.

Within 60 days of your placement you must have a complete medical exam that includes looking at your eyes, teeth, and addressing any emotional concerns that you may have and need to discuss with the doctor.

During the next 120 days, your caseworker will be developing a plan of care for you and asking your family to complete certain tasks that will lead to your returning home. The court will look to see where you and your family are in completing these tasks.

- The moment you come into foster care, your family, you, your caseworker, and the court will begin planning for where you will go when you leave foster care. This is called permanency planning for you.
- The first priority is for you to leave foster care and return to either one or both of your parents.
- If you cannot return home, it may be possible to keep you within your family by arranging for you to go live with relatives who will take legal and parenting responsibility for you when you leave foster care.
- If there are no relatives to care for you, you will need another family to care for you. In that case, we will attempt to find a family that will take legal guardianship of you or adopt you.

- If guardianship or adoption is not an option, everyone in your life will work with you on seeking Another Planned Permanent Living Arrangement (APPLA). This means that everyone will be involved in helping you establish and maintain relationships with one or more persons who can be there as a support to you as you leave foster care and live independently.

The local department of social services, you and your family will have to tell the court how you are all doing on these tasks. This will be done with the court every six (6) months at Permanency Planning Hearings. At these hearings, the court determines if you can go home or whether you must remain in foster care until the tasks are completed and permanency plans are in place.

B. TYPES OF PLACEMENTS

Foster Home

This is when you live with an individual or family that was approved by the local department of social services. The foster parents have attended training and their home has been inspected and approved. The family meets certain standards to care for children. They receive a payment from the State that helps them to meet the cost of caring for you in their home. Both you and the foster parents have caseworkers that

supervise and monitor the services provided in the foster home. In some cases, relatives or close family friends known to you may be asked to provide care for you and become approved foster parents.

Shelter Care Facilities

This is a place where you stay temporarily but no longer than 60 days until another foster care placement is found that can meet your need for a longer-term placement.

Group Home Residence

The Group Home placement is in a residence where as a rule there are at least three (3) children in your age range who are the same sex as you and have the same type of placement needs. The group homes are supervised by childcare staff on a 24-hours a day basis.

Residential Treatment Centers (RTC)

Residential Treatment Centers are places to stay and live while you receive a series of medical and emotional services. This is meant to be a short-term placement to enable you to move to another setting when you are better. RTCs are supervised by childcare staff on a 24-hours a day

basis. Usually you go to the school at the RTC, but sometimes you can go to school outside of the facility.

Semi-Independent Living

Semi-independent living is a placement in an apartment, room or on a college campus for you to practice living independently. Some semi-independent living programs have staff to monitor or supervise the placement.

C. REQUIRED SERVICES FOR FOSTER CARE YOUTH

Youth Services Ages 14 to 18

If you are between the ages of 14 and 18 you will be provided with instructions about basic living skills primarily in partnership with your foster parent, caseworker or another adult.

You will have the opportunity to participate in skill-building groups that are based on your age and needs. Where you begin with your learning skill will be determined by the results of an assessment (i.e. the Daniel Memorial or the Ansell/Casey) you complete on a computer.

You will receive Independent Living Preparation Skills Training that will include instructions about:

- Decision making
- Time management
- Educational and vocational planning
- Home maintenance
- Emergency and safety plans
- Personal hygiene
- Physical and mental health care
- Understanding legal issues that impact your care
- Selecting hobbies and positive leisure activities
- Employment readiness and retention
- Money management
- Nutrition and meal planning
- Social relationships
- Using public transportation
- Activities of daily living
- Problem solving

Youth Services Ages 18 to 21

If you are between 18 and 21, the local department of social services may continue to provide Independent Living Preparation Services to you. The process for the young adults 18 to 21 years of age includes:

- An assessment of your financial resources;
- An assessment of your social and emotional supports; and
- An assessment of your basic living skills, education, employment, housing and personal goals.

Based on the information obtained from the assessment for any age youth, the local department of social services, along with you will develop a service delivery plan to identify services that are needed to prepare you to live on your own. The service delivery plan will include what is expected to happen in the future if the plan is followed.

The plan will be reassessed every 180 days and may be updated as necessary to reflect all changes made. A service agreement is also included in the development of the plan.

The service agreement states the expectations for you to meet the identified goals between, you, the local department of social services, your

birth family, foster parents and/or other designated adults. Services will be provided to you to meet your goals.

The services arranged by the caseworker will include:

- Assistance in accessing education or training programs that are appropriate to the your skills and future plans;
- Instruction in independent basic living skills;
- Assistance in securing and maintaining employment;
- Assistance in developing a community support network;
- Assistance in locating appropriate living arrangements or housing while you are in foster care;
- Assistance with your living arrangements just prior to achieving independence;
- Assistance with aftercare services upon leaving foster care;
- Counseling or mental health services as needed and
- Workshops and instructions to deal with issues you will face that may cause you concern.

Remember that you may review your service agreement/plan with your attorney before signing it.

D. YOUTH AS PARENTS

When you are a parent of a child while you are in foster care:

- Your child does not have to be a foster child.
- Your child can live with you in the foster care placement and the cost of his/her care will be covered by foster care even though the child is not in foster care.
- You are responsible for all of the daily care of your child.
- The foster care provider is available to provide guidance to you in parenting your child and will continue to parent you.
- You are expected to continue to follow the rules of the foster care placement while parenting your own child.
- You are expected to continue your education and/or vocational training.
- If you are unable to parent your child, your child may become a foster child. If your child comes into foster care, all attempts will be made to keep you and your child together.
- If your child does come into foster care, as the parent, you have the responsibility for making sure your child receives the foster care services he or she needs. You are also responsible to plan for the

child's exit from foster care back to your care, to a family member or another family.

E. PEOPLE YOU WILL MEET WHILE IN OUT-OF-HOME PLACEMENT

Caseworker

- Your caseworker will remain a very important person throughout the time that you are in foster care.
- You may encounter more than one caseworker. This person works for the local department of social services and it is their responsibility to make sure you receive services you need as they relate to your individualized service plan.
- Your caseworker will maintain contact with you and assist you with making the best decisions to meet your needs.
- Your caseworker will maintain communication with you no matter where you are living.
- It will be very important for you to remember the telephone number of your caseworker as well as the name and telephone number of the caseworker's supervisor.
- If you have important questions that cannot wait for your caseworker, contact your caseworker's supervisor and tell him or

her your concerns. The supervisor will make every effort to help you and will share your concerns with your caseworker.

- In the event that your caseworker is reassigned or leaves the agency, you will be assigned a new caseworker.

Attorney (Lawyer)

- Your attorney (also referred to as your lawyer) is the person who will represent your legal rights in court.
- The attorney is assigned to oversee your legal rights while in foster care.
- Prior to any court hearing, it is the responsibility of your attorney to contact you, meet with you to discuss your desires and to represent your interest in court.
- If you have concerns about the direction of your legal proceedings or want to consider a change of plan, it is your right to discuss your position with your lawyer. Feel free to call your attorney. Your communication with your attorney is not limited just to a court date.
- You can ask to speak with your attorney at anytime. If the attorney is not available, leave a clear message along with a telephone number for the attorney to reach you and request that he or she return your call at their earliest opportunity.

- Your attorney will come to see you wherever you are living.
- You have a confidential relationship with your attorney. This means that your attorney will not share information that you provided with anyone else without your permission.

The Judge

- The judge leads the court. The master acts in the judge's place in some courts.
- The judge has the responsibility to listen while attorneys present all sides of the information about you and your family's situation. You can also talk to the judge if you would like.
- Based on all of the information presented, the judge makes a decision about what is best for you, your sisters, your brothers and your parents. If the judge does not have all of the information he or she needs to make the best decision, the judge may reschedule the court hearing and require that additional work be done to obtain more information.
- Your caseworker has the responsibility to submit court reports about your family and how they are doing as well as to tell the court how you are doing in foster care. These reports are sent to the judge and all attorneys so they can know about your situation. This

is done so that upon each hearing to review your permanency plan, everyone has an idea of what has happened since the last court hearing.

- Once the judge hears about your situation, he or she may order that additional services be provided to meet your needs, or the judge may send you home.
- If anyone disagrees with the judge's decision, they can talk to their attorney about appealing that decision to a higher court.

Foster Parent or Group Home Care Staff

- While you are in foster care, your caseworker has the responsibility to meet with you monthly. He or she will also meet with your foster parents/group care staff monthly. This is done to make certain that you are being cared for and supervised properly.
- You should feel comfortable to talk to your foster parent or childcare staff about anything.
- You and the foster parents/group care staff may not always agree on everything about your care and supervision, but there are rules that you are required to follow while in foster care. Again, you may talk about this with your caseworker and your attorney.

- If you have sisters or brothers, your caseworker will make every effort to have all of you placed together. Sometimes it is not possible for you and your sisters or brothers to be placed together. If that is the situation, the caseworker and your foster parents or group care staff understand the importance of you and your sisters or brothers having visits together and will make every effort to arrange them. There may be times when these visits may be difficult for you. If this happens, tell your caseworker so that he or she can help you work through any type of difficulty you have with the visits.
- Your foster parent or group care staff understands the importance of not sharing information about you and your family situation with others.
- Your foster parent or group care staff may be asked to attend your court hearing. They will be asked to tell the caseworker how you are doing in the home and identify any issues you are having.

Therapist, Psychiatrist or Mental Health Specialist

- Depending on how you feel, you may need to speak with someone like a therapist, psychiatrist or mental health specialist about how you feel and think about certain things, how you behave towards

certain people, how you perform at school or other places, how you respond to other persons and most importantly, how you can keep yourself safe.

- Your therapist, psychiatrist or mental health specialist and agency caseworker will maintain communications with you to make sure you get the services you need. It is important that you tell your caseworker about how things are going between you and these helping professionals. However, you do not have to tell the caseworker the details about what you talk about with these people. The caseworker is listening to you to make sure you receive all the assistance you are entitled to and that there are no problems.
- When information is being shared between helping professionals about services offered to you, your caseworker will inform you about this.
- There may be times when it is necessary for the caseworker to discuss certain details of your care with your foster parent or group care staff.

School Principal, Teacher(s) and Guidance Counselor

- Your caseworker, parents and/or foster parents/group care staff will have contact with your school.

- Education will play a large part in your success. Conferences may be arranged to discuss your progress or address specific issues that require immediate attention.
- If school absences or poor grades become a concern, frequent contact with your teacher or guidance counselor may be necessary. These issues should also be discussed with your caseworker.
- Grades 9-12 are important and require that you make sure your courses and credits are accurate. If you are interested in technical training or preparation courses for college entry, you will need to establish a course plan that will need to be followed at each grade level. Discuss this matter with your caseworker, foster parent/group care staff and family to make sure you are going in the right direction.
- You need to have regular talks with your guidance counselor so that you can determine if you are prepared to either go to college or obtain technical training by the time you graduate from high school. Most importantly, don't forget to keep an accurate record of the community service hours requirement that usually starts in the 6th grade and must be completed by the time you graduate from high school.

- When you get your report card, make sure you share the report card with your caseworker as well as your family and foster parents/group care staff.
- If you get suspended or expelled from school, discuss this action with your caseworker and caregiver. Also, call your attorney. Your attorney may be able to get you back in school.

F. RIGHTS AND EXPECTATIONS WHILE IN FOSTER CARE

As a youth in foster care, there are certain rights that you have. At anytime you can talk to your caseworker or your attorney about your feelings in regard to your rights.

Your Rights

- You have the right to have visits with your parents, your sisters and brothers and other family members unless the court and/or your caseworker has information that has determined that the visits are not safe nor in your best interest. If these visits are denied, you must be informed by your caseworker and attorney.
- You have the right to have your own caseworker.
- Your caseworker will have a face-to-face visit with you at least monthly.

- Your caseworker will visit with you and your foster parent/group care staff in your placement.
- You have the right to attend your court hearings and receive a copy of your court documents for your records.
- You have the right to be placed in school within five (5) days after entering a foster care placement. If you are age 18, you are required to attend school in order to remain in foster care unless you are disabled or in a vocational program.
- You have the right to request a meeting between your caseworker and foster parents if you think a particular rule in the foster home is unreasonable.
- You have the right to have your own bed while in foster care; and you have the right not to share a room with another adult.
- You have the right to receive meals in your foster care placement.
- You have the right to feel safe and protected while in your foster care placement.
- You have the right to store your belongings in a safe place and have privacy when you bathe, shower and dress.
- You have the right to medical services that are paid for through the Medical Assistance Program. These services include a yearly physical, dental examinations and eye examinations. When you

first entered foster care, your caseworker arranged for a health care assessment to determine your health needs.

- You have the right to tell your caseworker that you are no longer interested in foster care after your 18th birthday. Once you leave foster care, you cannot re-enter foster care. However, you can receive after care services. You should discuss this decision with your attorney.
- If you leave foster care after your 18th birthday, you have a right, up to your 21st birthday, to return to the agency, request and receive services to assist you.

Expectations

- It is expected that you can participate in after school extra curricular activities as long as your grades are satisfactory and the activities do not create any trouble for you regarding your behavior or following rules.
- It is expected that you participate in the development of your service plan and sign the document indicating that you have reviewed it.
- It is expected that male and female youth shall not share the same bedroom in your foster care placement.

- It is expected that if a therapist or psychiatrist sees you and you are referred for therapy sessions that you keep the appointments and participate in the sessions.
- It is expected that if you are scheduled for court, or have appointments for medical or therapy sessions that you keep the appointment or notify your foster parent, group care staff or caseworker before the appointment date, if you are unable to keep the appointment.
- It is expected that when you are away from home that you provide a telephone number for your caseworker or foster parents/group care staff. The caseworker and foster parents/group care staff are responsible for your safety and you need to make sure they know how to reach you.
- It is expected that if you want to work, you can, as long as you are of legal age and your grades are not affected by working.
- It is expected that if you want to open a bank account to save your own money that you may do so.
- It is expected that if you attend independent living classes, that you arrange your extra curricular and work schedules so that you can attend those classes.

- It is expected that you participate on your local youth advisory board.
- It is expected that when you leave foster care you leave a telephone number and keep in touch with the caseworker every two (2) months, so that the caseworker can know how you are doing and if you need assistance.

G. EDUCATION

When you enter foster care, your caseworker will enroll you in a school that is near your new placement home. This will be done within the first five (5) days of coming into foster care. If you have an Individualized Educational Plan (IEP), your caseworker will have to call the school within the first five (5) days so they can determine the right school for you to attend.

Once you are enrolled in the school you will need to:

- Attend school regularly;
- Go to school on time;
- Allow time to do homework assignments;
- Ask your foster parent/group care staff and/or caseworker for help if you need it.

Remember to celebrate your teen years in high school. Attending high school as well as completing high school are important milestones in your life. You should participate in the traditions and activities planned by your school. Talk to your caseworker and foster care provider about the available funding for class pictures, the class ring, class dues, junior/senior class activities (such as dances/proms) and other events your school may celebrate.

You may be eligible for help with college costs. There are two programs, the Federal Education Training Voucher (ETV) and the Maryland State Tuition Fee Waiver that you can talk with your caseworker about.

Maryland State Tuition Fee Waiver program provides tuition for children only at Maryland colleges and universities. Vocation and trade schools are not part of this program. Under this program you attend a college or university and do not have to pay tuition. Books, transportation and other cost are not included. To be eligible you must:

- Be a youth in foster care who was in a Maryland foster home placement at successful completion of high school.

- Be a youth in foster care who was in a Maryland foster home placement at successful attainment of GED (General Education Development).
- Be a youth no longer in foster care, but who was in a Maryland foster home placement at the time of successful completion of high school or GED.
- Be a youth adopted from care at age 14 or older.
- Be a high school graduate or have a GED.
- Be accepted at a Maryland college or university.
- Have completed the Free Application for Student Federal Aid (FASFA) package on or before March 1st of the year you plan to attend school.
- Complete your educational studies within five (5) years of when you start.

The Federal Tuition Voucher Program provides for tuition, books, transportation and any other related educational cost for up to \$5,000 per year. Under this program you can attend vocational and trade school as well as colleges and universities within Maryland and in other states. To be eligible you must:

- Be a current foster care youth;
- Be a youth who was in foster care at age 14 or older;
- Be a youth adopted from foster care after age 16;
- Be a high school graduate or have a GED;

- Be accepted at a college or university or accepted at an accredited post high school vocational or trade institution;
- Have completed the Free Application for Student Federal Aid (FASFA) federal financial aid package on or before March 1st in the year you plan to attend, and
- Funding will only be available for completion of your educational studies up to age 23.

Consult with your caseworker, foster care provider, and attorney prior to signing your college financial packet. This may avoid unnecessary college loans that may cause financial burdens in the future.

KEEP A RECORD OF YOUR EDUCATIONAL EXPERIENCE

Name of School	Address/City/State/Zipcode	Telephone	Date Attended
Elementary			
Middle School			
High School			
High School			
High School			
High School			
GED Center			

High School Graduation Date or Date Completed GED: _____.

THINK ABOUT EDUCATION BEYOND HIGH SCHOOL
SUGGESTED HIGH SCHOOL COURSES TO PREPARE FOR COLLEGE

Subject	Minimum Requirement Years	Types of Classes
English	4	Composition American Literature English Literature World History
Mathematics	3 – 4	Algebra I (if not completed in 8 th grade) Geometry Algebra II Trigonometry Pre-calculus
History and Geography	2 – 3	Geography U.S. History U.S. Government World History World Cultures Civics
Laboratory Science	2 – 3	Biology Earth Science Chemistry Physics
Foreign Language	2 – 3	French Spanish German Latin Russian Japanese
Visual and Performing Arts	1	Art Drama Dance Music
Electives	1 – 3	Economics Psychology Statistics Computer Science Communications

Note: This list of courses provides only a general guideline. School graduation and college entrance requirements vary. Students should consult their school guidance office and college admissions office for more information. Talk to your school guidance counselor about what is needed for the vocational career path (i.e. culinary or fashion school).

H.

YOUTH ADVISORY BOARD

Every county and Baltimore City are required to have a Local Foster Care Youth Advisory Board consisting of current foster care youth who advise independent living staff about their service needs. In addition, former foster care youth are also part of this board.

You are welcome and encouraged to become a member. The local Foster Care Youth Advisory Board members represent their peers from their county and Baltimore City.

The purpose of the Youth Advisory Board is to provide a forum for you to participate in the development of the services you receive. It also will give you a chance to participate in the making of policies that affect you and other youth by giving you a place to voice your concerns. You will be able to help plan training events and conferences to meet the needs of youth in foster care. In addition, you will serve as a link between your peers, foster parents, group care staff, and the local department of social services by talking about your desires and requests for improved services.

Most importantly, you are needed to recruit other youth in foster care to join the Youth Advisory Board. You will be able to share information and give updates on information among your peers in the meetings. You are also needed to help educate caseworkers on ways to best reach and help other youth in foster care.

I. TRAININGS/CONFERENCES

You will have the opportunity to receive independent living services as well as be trained by local department of social services staff on how to strengthen the skills you already have and learn new skills. Your caseworker is encouraged to make travel arrangements using the independent living flex funds and to provide supervision for you and other youth when you attend the in-state and out-of-state conferences.

Conferences are held every year in various places throughout the United States. Every year Maryland conducts a teen conference for Maryland youth in foster care.

The Youth Advisory Board plans the state annual conference. Other persons that help plan the conferences are from the Maryland Department of Human Resources, and the Independent living coordinators from the local departments of social services. When you help to plan the

conference, you develop skills in planning, leadership, organization, creativity, and you learn to talk with your peers throughout the State.

Some of the past topics for workshops at the conferences have included:

- Employment assistance, how to prepare a resume, presentation and preparation for a job interview, ways to maintain employment, and the importance of maintaining responsible behavior;
- Healthy relationships;
- Budgeting and financial discipline;
- Practicing good physical and mental health/proper nutrition/healthy eating habits;
- Sex education; and
- Seeking and maintaining housing.

J. MARYLAND'S AFTER CARE PROGRAM

- All of Maryland's youth must exit foster care by their 21st birthday.
- Under the John H. Chafee Independence Act, you have an opportunity to receive independent living services that are designed to help former foster care youth from ages 18 to 21 continue to learn and practice independent living skills.
- If you leave foster care between the ages of 18-21 and feel that you need services, you are eligible to receive aftercare services. To

access these services, you will need to contact the Independent Living Coordinator in the local department of social services where you currently live. Services are voluntary (not ordered), short-term and require a service agreement. You are not eligible if you left care prior to your 18th birthday or after you reach 21.

- You will not be placed back into a foster care placement. However, financial assistance can be given to secure housing in the community.
- Examples of aftercare services are:
 - Temporary medical coverage/health insurance
 - Temporary financial assistance
 - Establishing and maintaining living arrangements
 - Peer support and advocacy
 - Daycare
 - Crisis counseling, information and referrals
 - Life skills training
 - Educational/vocational/employment assistance

K. COMMUNITY RESOURCES

Before you leave foster care, make sure your caseworker gives you a list (or a resource book) of the addresses and telephone numbers of

community resources that you can use in the area in which you plan to live. That list should also include emergency telephone numbers that you can call when you are faced with a hardship.

L. **TERMS AND DEFINITIONS**

Abuse - The physical, mental, or sexual injury, of a child by a person who is responsible for their care or supervision, who may be any household or family member, if there are indications that the child's health or welfare is harmed or threatened.

Access - The ability to obtain the services that you need.

Adoption - A legal process in which a person related or unrelated to you becomes the adoptive family for you and you are given all of the legal rights and privileges as if you were born to that family. Your birth parents no longer have any legal responsibilities or rights.

Adoptive Parents/Family - Persons who did not give birth to you, but selected you to be their child and a member of their family. Once you are adopted, they have all of the legal rights to be your parent(s).

Aftercare - These are services provided when you leave foster care. There are two types of aftercare. The first type of aftercare is a service given to you, your parent(s) or your relatives when you go to live with them. The second type of aftercare is a service given directly

to you when you are between the ages of 18 and 21 to help you live independently.

Agency - Public or private organization providing a service.

Advocate - A person who acts or who speaks on behalf of another person to get things done for that person.

Another Planned Permanency Living Arrangement (APPLA) - A future plan in which you are connected with a person(s) and a relationship is established, nurtured, and maintained so when you leave foster care you will have someone close to you that will be supportive to you.

Anxiety - A feeling of being fearful, worried or nervous. This may interfere with playing, learning, and your sense of well being.

Assessment (also called evaluation) - The process of obtaining information from tests and observations.

Attorney (lawyer) - A person who will represent your legal desires and interests while you are in foster care.

Birth Parents - The two people who gave birth to you.

Chafee (John H.) Foster Care Independence Act of 1999 - A federal law from the United States Congress that requires States to provide services and money to help youth in foster care become self-sufficient.

Child Protective Services (CPS) - A child welfare program responsible for investigating reports of child abuse and neglect as well as providing services to families in crisis. It is usually the first service that a child and family receive to prevent the child's removal from the home and placement in foster care.

Citizen Review Board for Children (CRBC) - An organization of volunteers appointed by the Governor that reviews the cases of children in foster care. There are times when you may be invited to talk to this group about your foster care experience and your plans when you leave foster care.

Concurrent Permanency Plans - Are two future plans that spell out where and with whom you will live when you leave foster care and the legal relationship between you and the future caregiver(s). You, your family and your caseworker will work on these plans to see which one can happen first to get you out of foster care.

Commitment - The process through which the local department of social services obtains the legal responsibility for your care and placement.

Court Appointed Special Advocate (CASA) - A trained volunteer appointed by the court to ensure the safety of children in foster care, and that they receive the services they need.

Custody - A legal term describing the legal right/responsibility of either a person or an agency to make decisions about where you should live.

Depression - Sad or lonely feelings that are sometimes caused by a certain event or hormones in the body. It may interfere with how you function daily.

Early Periodic Screening, Diagnostic, and Treatment Program

(EPSDT) - A State medical program that requires that you receive health care services that include full medical, dental exams, immunizations (shots) and laboratory work.

Eligibility - The determination that you do or do not qualify to receive services based on certain rules.

Emergency Foster Care - Immediate placement in foster care because of a crisis that you or your family may be having.

Foster Child - A child up to age 18 or 21 placed in the care of a local department of social services by either a voluntary placement agreement with the birth family, adoptive family, legal guardian or by a court commitment order.

Foster Care - A short-term service consisting of placing a child in a foster family home, group facility or semi-independent living arrangement.

Foster Care Placement - An approved family home, a group home setting, or a residential treatment facility where you will reside 24 hours a day and receive care, nurturing and support.

Foster Parent - A relative or non-relative adult who is approved by the local department of social services to protect, nurture, educate, and care for you.

GED - Means General Education Development and is a series of reading and math schoolwork. Upon completion you will receive a diploma.

Individual Education Program (IEP) and Individualized Family

Service Plan (IFSP) - Educational Services Plans that are developed by the school to provide needed special education services.

Judge - Is the head of the court and is responsible for listening to you and others involved in your life. The judge makes decisions about what will happen to you.

Local Department of Social Services (LDSS) - Exist in all 23 counties and Baltimore City to provide services to citizens such as foster care, medical assistance, food stamps and financial assistance when people are in crisis.

Managed Care Organization (MCO) - This is a health care company that is selected to provide health care services to you.

Maryland Department of Human Resources (DHR) - Is a State agency that is the overseeing agency for the local department of social services.

Medicaid - A joint federal and state health program that pays for health care services.

Mental Health Service - Services provided to assist individuals in identifying and resolving issues that impact one's thoughts and behavior. The main goal is to make self-improvements and learn ways to cope with your concerns.

Mentor - An individual who listens, supports and encourages another individual. A mentor serves as a role model and helps you get through difficult times.

Neglect - Not providing food clothing, shelter, health care or education to a child.

Out-of-Home Placement - Means living away from your home. It is short-term care that consist of 24-hour care and supervision as well as supportive services for a child whom the local department has determined needs to live outside the home because the child has been abused, abandoned, neglected or the family is unable to provide care.

Permanency Plan Hearing - It is a court hearing for all children in foster care that must occur within 11 months of coming into foster care and every 6 months after that until you leave foster care.

Reunification - Means getting you back to live with your birth parents.

Residential Placement - A private or public group type facility that provides 24-hour care for a child with medical or emotional needs.

Semi - independent Living Arrangement (SILA) - A placement in an apartment, room or college campus for you to practice living independently.

Service Agreement - A plan signed by two or more people that spell out what each person must do to get to a certain goal.

Shelter Care Order - This gives the local department of social services the right to remove you from your home and place you in foster care.

Termination of Parental Rights (TPR) - When a judge signs an order that permanently ends the ties between you and your parents.

Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (TANF) - Temporary funds to assist families that are in crisis and need financial help.

Treatment Foster Care (TFC) - A program in which foster parents are trained to provide care for children with disabilities or serious health care needs that require special services. Youth in treatment foster

care have an extra caseworker called a TFC caseworker who sees them once a week and helps them if there is a crisis.

Transition - The process of moving from one living arrangement to another.

Voluntary Placement - When your parent or guardian places you temporarily in foster care by signing a voluntary placement agreement with the local department of social services, instead of going to court. Voluntary placement is used to provide care for you when your parents are unable to because of a crisis you or your family may be having. If you are in foster care voluntarily for more than 6 months, the court will hold a hearing to decide whether or not you should remain in foster care.

Youth Advisory Board (YAB) - Current and former foster care youth who come together to look at policies and procedures for foster children as well as to plan activities for them. There is a youth advisory board for every local department of social services. Representatives from these local youth advisory boards meet monthly to form the State Youth Advisory Board.

PERSONAL INFORMATION

Space for you to document pertinent information on family members, friends and your support network.

Name: _____

Address: _____

Telephone: _____ Cell telephone: _____

Email: _____

Relationship: _____

Special Dates (i.e. birthdays, graduations, weddings): _____

Name: _____

Address: _____

Telephone: _____ Cell telephone: _____

Email: _____

Relationship: _____

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