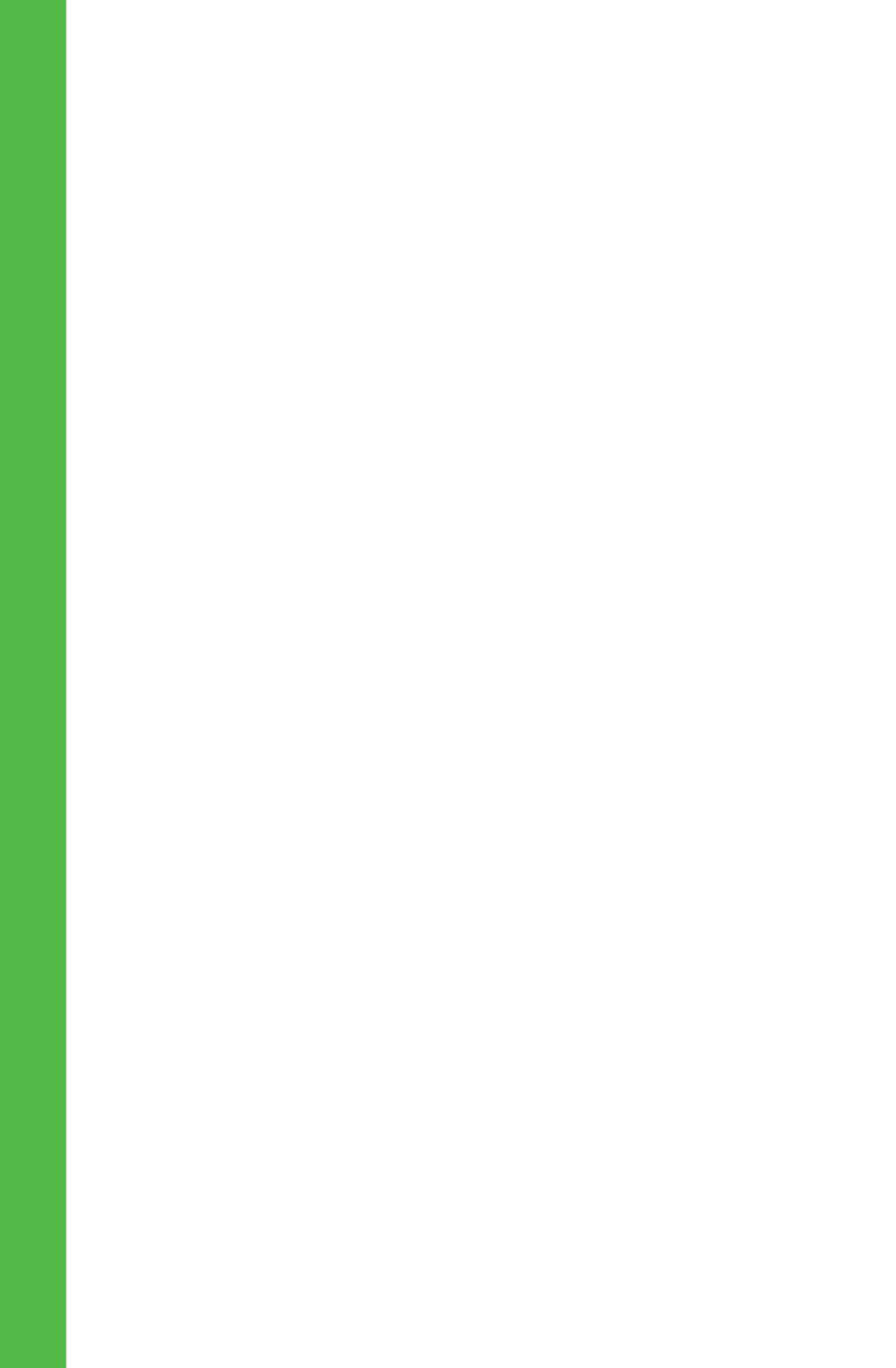


My Roadmap...





...To Life in Foster Care

A Guide for Idaho Youth

This guide is for you. It tries to answer as many questions as it can about living in foster care.

Of course, not all questions can be answered in one guide. Use this guide as a starting point. If you have any other questions, take them to your caseworker, your foster family, the judge, or any other trusted adult or friend.

You have the right to know what is happening in your life and to have a voice in the decisions about your life.

Ask questions and keep asking questions until you understand what is happening!

What's Inside

This guide is broken down into sections:

Important Information: In this section, there is a place for you to keep track of all the phone numbers and contact information of the different people you will be meeting. Next, there are some blank calendar pages that you can fill in and use to keep track of important dates and appointments. Finally, there are “Words to Know,” a list of important words and abbreviations (and their definitions!) that you might hear.

The Basics: Here are answers to some basic questions about different parts of your experience in foster care. This includes information about the Idaho Department of Health and Welfare, foster families, guardians ad litem, and about living in foster care.

Court: This section tells about the court process and what to expect when you go to court for your child protection case.

Independent Living Services: This section gives you information about what's available to help you transition from foster care into adulthood.

Resources: Look here for where to go to get information and help on all sorts of issues.

This guidebook is yours to keep. You can use it however works best for you. We hope that it helps you to better understand what it means to be in foster care.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Important Information	4
Contact Information.....	5-6
Calendars.....	7-19
Words to Know.....	20-24
The Basics	25
General.....	26-27
Department of Health and Welfare.....	28-29
Foster Parents.....	30-31
Guardian ad Litem/CASA.....	32
Living in Foster Care.....	33-37
Leaving Foster Care.....	38-39
Court	40-45
Independent Living Services	46-48
Resources	49-51

IMPORTANT INFORMATION

In this section there are three different things going on.

First, there is a place for you to write down names and contact information. It's a good idea to keep this information all in one place – that way, you can always get a hold of someone when you need or want to!

Next, we've included some blank calendar pages, as well as an example calendar all filled out. You'll want to fill out the pages, starting with whatever month you get this handbook. Then you will have an "appointment book" to write down all the important dates and appointments that you need to remember. This is a good way for you to take some control over your life by keeping track of where you need to be.

Finally, there's a list of words and definitions in the "Words to Know" section. Coming into foster care is hard enough, but sometimes it seems like you have to learn a whole new language! Use this section to look up the new words that you hear. Using the "Words to Know" section to learn new words is a great way to help you understand all the new stuff that is going on around you. If you hear a new word that isn't included, find a blank space and write it down – this is your book and you can use it anyway that works best for you!



Caseworker: _____

Phone _____

Address _____

Caseworker's Supervisor: _____

Phone _____

Address _____

Judge: _____

Phone _____

Address _____

Guardian ad litem: _____

Phone _____

Address _____

Lawyer: _____

Phone _____

Address _____

Foster Parents: _____

Phone _____

Address _____

Counselor/Therapist: _____

Phone _____

Address _____

Doctor: _____

Phone _____

Address _____

Dentist: _____

Phone _____

Address _____

Name: _____

Phone _____

Address _____

February

S **M** **T** **W** **T** **F** **S**

1 Superbowl!	2 Counseling 9:00	3	4	5	6	7 Visit 1-4
8 Movie w/J.	9 c. 9:00	10	11	12 Call S.W. @ 555-6262	13 No School!!!	14
15	16 c. 9:00	17	18	19 Court 2:30	20	21 Visit 1-4
22	23 c. 9:00	24	25 Dr's. Appt 2:30	26	27 School Done!!!	28

S					
F					
T					
W					
T					
M					
S					

S					
F					
T					
W					
T					
W					
S					

S					
F					
T					
W					
T					
M					
S					

S					
F					
T					
W					
T					
W					
S					

S					
F					
T					
W					
T					
M					
S					

S					
F					
T					
W					
T					
W					
S					

S					
F					
T					
W					
T					
M					
S					

S					
F					
T					
W					
T					
W					
S					

S					
F					
T					
W					
T					
M					
S					

S					
F					
T					
W					
T					
W					
S					

S					
F					
T					
W					
T					
M					
S					

S					
F					
T					
W					
T					
W					
S					

WORDS TO KNOW

Adjudicatory Hearing This hearing happens about 30 days after you come into foster care. The adjudicatory hearing is where the judge decides if you will stay in foster care while your birth parents work on their case plans or if you will go home.

Adoption Sometimes youth can't return home to their birth parents. If this happens you may be adopted by (become a permanent, legal member of) a new family. In Idaho, if you are over 12 years of age, you must give consent (agree) to be adopted.

Alternate Care Plan This document is filled out every six months and reviews what's been going on in your child protection case.

CASA (Court Appointed Special Advocate) This is the guardian ad litem, whose job it is to represent your best interests in court.

Case Plan This plan lists out what must happen before you can go home.

Case Plan Hearing This is the hearing where the judge okays the plan for what needs to happen in your child protection case.

Caseworker This is the person from Health and Welfare who works with you and your family to make sure that you get what you need while you are in foster care. This person may also be called your "case manager" or your "social worker."

Chafee Foster Care Independence Program Act This is a federal program that provides money and resources to older youth who are or have been in foster care.

Concurrent Planning This is the main plan and the back-up plan for where you will live long term.

ETV (Education and Training Voucher) This is money from the federal government that may be available to help pay for college, college expenses, and other training programs after high school.

Family Group Decision Making (FGDM) This is a meeting that can be used by family and important people in your life (including you!) to get together to come up with a plan for you.

Foster Parent/Family A foster family is a family who has been licensed (approved) to care for youth who are in foster care.

F.Y.I. (Foster Youth of Idaho) This is a group of youth who have been or are in foster care in Idaho and who get together to share about their experiences in foster care and to support each other.

Guardian ad litem (GAL) A GAL is the person appointed by the judge to look out for your best interests and to help you in court and with other parts of your life. In Idaho, this person may also be called your CASA (Court Appointed Special Advocate).

Guardianship A guardianship is where someone other than your birth parent is given responsibility (legal custody) of you. A guardian is often a relative or a friend of the family.

ICPC (Interstate Compact on the Placement of Children) This is the law that makes it possible for youth to live with someone in another state.

Independent Living Services These are the services you get to help you handle the responsibilities of becoming an adult.

Lifebook A lifebook is a something that you create. It is sort of like a scrapbook with things like pictures, words, or decorations. In your lifebook, you can record your life before, during, and after foster care – it is a great place to keep track of important memories, feelings, and experiences. You can work with your caseworker, foster family, and birth parents to create a one-of-a-kind memory book that is all about you!

Long Term Foster Care This is when a youth stays in foster care until his or her 18th birthday.

Permanency Permanency is finding lifelong connections in addition to those you have already.

Permanency Hearing A permanency hearing takes place when a youth is in foster care for 12 months. At this hearing, the judge chooses a permanency option after hearing input from everyone, including you!

Recreation Policy These are the rules that say what recreational activities you can do while in foster care.

Permanency Option Permanency options are the choices that a judge has when deciding what will happen with a youth in foster care. Permanency options include: reunification, guardianship, long-term foster care (including with a relative placement), and termination of parental rights and adoption.

Relative Placement This is when a youth in foster care lives with a relative who has been licensed as a foster family.

Residential Care Facility A residential care facility is one type of foster placement. A residential care facility, or group home, is a place where more than one youth live together under the supervision of adults who work at the facility.

Reunification This is a permanency option in which youth go home with (are reunified with) their birth parents.

Review Hearings These are hearings that can take place throughout your child protection case. They are an opportunity for the judge to find to find out how things are going.

Shelter Care Hearing The shelter care hearing is the first hearing in a child protection case. At this hearing, the judge decides if you will stay in foster care until the next hearing or if you will go home.

Social Worker This is the person from the Department of Health and Welfare who will work with you and your family to make sure that you get what you need while you are in foster care. This person may also be called your “caseworker” or “case manager.”

Supervised Visitation Supervised visitation is when family members meet with a person watching to make sure that the rules of the visit are followed. Visits can be ended early if the rules aren’t followed.

Termination of Parental Rights and Adoption Termination of parental rights and adoption is a permanency option where the judge decides that it is not safe for a youth to return to his or her birth parents. If the judge decides this, the birth parents lose their rights to the youth and the youth can then be adopted by a new family. Termination of parental rights is also known as TPR.

Visitation Visitation is planned contact between you and your family. Visits may be with parents, grandparents, siblings, or other important people in your life.

Other Words to Know

NOTES

THE BASICS

Entering foster care is a new experience for most youth. Like many new experiences it can be scary! Learning as much information as possible will help to make your time in foster care easier. This section answers questions about the different parts of foster care. (The court system will be talked about in the next section of the handbook.)

First are answers about general foster care questions, then questions about the Idaho Department of Health and Welfare (Department), foster parents, guardians ad litem, living in foster care, and leaving foster care.

Remember, it is very important that you have all your questions about foster care answered. This guide can be helpful, but it won't be able to answer all of your questions about your unique experiences. Please be sure to get information from all the sources available to you.



What is foster care?

Foster care means that you are in the custody of Health and Welfare and living outside your home.

Why am I in foster care?

Youth come into foster care for all sorts of reasons. Mostly, youth come into foster care to keep them safe. You have the right to know what is going on in your life. If you don't know why you are in foster care, talk with your caseworker and your birth family about what happened to bring you into care.

Is it my fault that I'm in foster care?

No, it is not your fault.

What are the different types of foster care placements?

There are different kinds of places where youth can live when they are in foster care. You could live with a foster family in their home, a relative or friend who becomes licensed as a foster parent, or in a residential care facility.

Will I be living with my brothers and sisters?

Making sure that siblings in foster care stay together is very important. The Department tries hard to make sure that you stay with your siblings. Sometimes this isn't possible. If you are not able to live with your siblings, make sure you, your caseworker, and your foster parents figure out a way for you to stay in touch with them. Your caseworker should arrange for you and your siblings (who are also in care) to have a visitation every month if possible. If you're not having these visits, find out why.

How long will I have to stay in foster care?

Every youth's experience in foster care is different, including how long they stay in foster care. You will leave foster care when the court decides that it is safe for you to return to your birth parents or when some other permanent arrangement has been made.

Can I choose my foster placement?

It is important that you maintain relationships with the special people in your life. If you know of a person or a family who would be willing to care for you in their home, let your caseworker know. The Department will ultimately decide where you live in foster care.

Are my birth parents still my parents?

Yes. Your birth parents will always be your parents, and they will always be important to you. Sometimes, though, youth need another family and a safer place to live. Even when youth get another family, they can still love their birth parents.

NOTES

What does the Department do?

The Idaho Department of Health and Welfare is in charge of making sure that youth have a safe and healthy place to live.

What is a caseworker?

Your caseworker is the person from the Department who is going to work with you and your family to make sure that you get what you need while you are in foster care.

What does a caseworker do?

Caseworkers do lots of things, but their most important job is to make sure that you are safe and taken care of. They also work to make sure that you and your family have every chance of being reunified and that you are all participating in the decision making and planning of the child protection case.

How often will I see my caseworker?

Your caseworker should see you at least once a month. You may see your caseworker more often depending on your situation. Your caseworker should meet with you in your foster placement at least once every other month. During your caseworker's visit, he or she should have a private conversation with you about how things are going with your foster placement.

Can I call my caseworker?

Yes. You can call your caseworker whenever you need to talk with her or him. Caseworkers usually work Monday through Friday from 8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. If your caseworker is not available, you may need to leave a message. Your caseworker should get back to you as soon as possible. Be sure to write your caseworker's name and phone number down in the first section of this guide so that you always know how to get a hold of her or him. You can also ask your caseworker if you can contact her or him via email.

If it is very important and you cannot get in touch with your caseworker, ask to talk to your caseworker's supervisor or another caseworker. After 5:00 p.m., there is number to call in an emergency; ask your caseworker for this number.

You might want to write down your questions before you call; that way you won't forget anything important.

What if I have a problem with my caseworker?

As with any relationship, it's best to try and work things out. If you can't fix things with your caseworker, talk with your foster parents about the problem and see if they can help you. If you are still not able to work things out, you can also call your caseworker's supervisor (write down his or her name and number so that you always have this information, too).

NOTES

FOSTER PARENTS

What type of people become foster parents?

All kinds of different people become foster parents. The one thing that they all have in common is a desire to provide a safe home for youth.

What are the qualifications of foster parents in Idaho?

All foster parents must be licensed by the Department. Foster parents go through training and show the Department that they have a safe home for youth.

What should I call my foster parents?

What you call your foster parents will depend on what you and your foster parents decide together. Some youth call their foster parents “Mom” and “Dad,” while others call them by their given names.

What if I have problems with my foster family?

If you have a problem with your foster family, try to work it out with them. If you can't work it out or feel you are being mistreated, let your caseworker and/or your guardian ad litem know so that they can help you work things out as soon as possible.

Will I have to change foster families?

One of the main goals of the Department is to find you a safe, stable place to live. The Department will work very hard to keep you in one placement. But sometimes things come up and you may have to change homes.

How can I get to know my foster family?

This guide has a page called “Getting to Know Your Foster Family” that has some questions you can ask – and answer – when you move to your new home. You can use this list of questions as a starting of point for conversations with your new foster family.

GETTING TO KNOW YOUR FOSTER FAMILY

Moving into someone else's home can be weird. Getting to know your foster family – and letting them get to know you – is an important way of making this easier. Here are some questions that you can ask your foster family and that they can ask you:

- What is your home like?
- Where will I sleep?
- What kind of food does your family eat?
- Will you make some of my favorite foods?
- What does your family do together for fun?
- What are three activities that your family did together last month?
- Why do you want to have foster children in your home?
- What are some of your rules?
- What kind of music do you listen to?
- Can I listen to my music?
- What TV programs and movies do you watch?

GUARDIANS AD LITEM/CASA

What is a guardian ad litem/CASA?

Your guardian ad litem (GAL)/Court Appointed Special Advocate (CASA) is a person appointed by the judge to look out for your best interests while you are in foster care.

How often will I see my guardian ad litem/CASA?

There is no set schedule. If you're having trouble getting a hold of your GAL/CASA be sure to talk with your caseworker.

Can I call my guardian ad litem/CASA?

When you first meet your GAL/CASA, be sure to get his or her name and number and write it down in the first section of this handbook. You can call your GAL/CASA if you need to.

What if I have a problem with my guardian ad litem/CASA?

If you can't work out the problem with your GAL/CASA, ask your caseworker or your foster family to help.

NOTES

Will I get to see my family while I'm in foster care?

It is important that you maintain your relationships with your family, unless it's not safe for you to see them. Generally, visits between parents and youth should happen once a week, although there could be more visits or less visits depending on your situation. Canceling a visit with your parents should never happen as a punishment for something you or your parents do.

It is also important that you maintain contact with your brothers and sisters. This could include visits (normally once a month), telephone calls, e-mail, and/or letters. Work with your caseworker to develop an arrangement that works for you and your siblings.

Will everyone know that I am in foster care?

If you want to tell someone you're in foster care you can, but you don't have to. Remember – you haven't done anything wrong and you have nothing to be ashamed of. Your life is your life, and you can be as private or as open about it as you want to be.

How do I find a way to tell people that I'm in foster care?

If you need some help telling people you are in foster care, practice with your caseworker or foster parents. For example, you could say "Right now I'm staying with another family while my family gets some things worked out."

Can I call my family?

Yes. Talk to your foster parents and caseworker to decide how often, where, and who should be present during the call.

What sort of privileges should I expect?

Just like with any youth, your privileges will depend upon your behavior. The more responsible you are, the more privileges you earn. It is important that you make good choices because your actions will determine your privileges.

Whose permission do I need to do stuff?

For most day-to-day situations, you work this out with your foster placement. For some things, you may need to get permission from your caseworker.

How will I be disciplined while in foster care?

It's important that you follow the rules of your foster placement. If there are problems, certain kinds of punishment CANNOT be used.

Here is a list of the types of punishment that are against the rules:

- a. physical force or any kind of punishment inflicted on the body, including spanking;
- b. cruel and unusual physical exercise or forcing you to take an uncomfortable position;
- c. use of excessive physical labor with no benefit other than for punishment;
- d. mechanical, medical, or chemical restraint;
- e. locking you in a room or area of the home;
- f. denying you necessary food, clothing, bedding, rest, toilet use, bathing facilities, or entrance to the foster home;
- g. mental or emotional cruelty;
- h. verbal abuse, ridicule, humiliation, profanity, threats or other forms of degradation directed at you or your family;
- i. threats of removal from the foster home;
- j. denial of visits or communication with your family (unless authorized); and
- k. denial of necessary educational, medical, counseling, or social services.

Some discipline may be necessary, but if you think that you have been treated unfairly or inappropriately, contact your caseworker immediately.

Can my foster parents go through my room?

Yes. Although you should expect some privacy, your room is still in your foster parents' house and they have a right to inspect it. Talk with your foster parents about privacy expectations.

How will I get my mail?

Your mail will come through your caseworker, who will read it first to assure your safety and wellbeing.

May I get a driver's license while I'm in foster care?

In some situations, yes, you can get a drivers license. Work with your caseworker, foster parents, and birth parents to work out issues like insurance, a car, etc.

May I participate in sports and other activities?

Yes. If there is an activity or sport that you would like to participate in, talk with your foster parents and your caseworker to get the necessary permission. There are some activities that are prohibited outright (for example, kayaking), but permission for other activities is decided on a case-by-case basis.

May I spend the night at my friend's house?

Usually. Talk with your foster parents and caseworker to get permission.

May I have a job?

Like with all youth, it depends. Talk with your foster parents and caseworker.

Will I get an allowance?

This depends on where you are living and the rules of your house.

May I go on dates?

Yes, with the permission of your foster parents and caseworker.

Do I have to go to school?

Yes.

Will I get to stay in my school?

Your caseworker will try very hard to find you a new home near your old school. However, this will not always be possible, and you might need to go to a new school.

May I go to college or get work training?

Yes! All youth are encouraged to participate in post-high school academic and vocational training. In fact, the state of Idaho will pay up to \$5,000 a year to help most older youth who have been in foster care to attend an institution of higher education. Other programs and scholarships might also be available, so you should talk with your caseworker and your foster parents about your future educational plans.

May I still practice my own religion?

Yes, maintaining connections to your religion and your religious community is important. Work with your foster parents and caseworker to make arrangements to practice your own religion/spirituality. Be sure to let your caseworker know if you feel forced to participate in any religious services or activities.

Will I still see my friends?

You might be able to keep seeing your old friends. Each situation is different, so you'll need to work out with your caseworker and/or foster parents whether or not you can keep seeing your friends.

What if I need to see a doctor?

All youth in foster care qualify for Medicaid, a type of health insurance. You have the right to see a doctor and in fact, you must see a doctor at least once a year while you are living in foster care. Work with your caseworker and/or foster parents to make an appointment with a doctor if you are in need of medical attention. (Then, be sure to write down your appointment information in your calendar!)

What if I need to see a dentist?

All youth who are in foster care must see a dentist every six months. Work with your caseworker and foster parents to make all necessary appointments.

What if I need to see a counselor?

Your mental health is just as important as your physical health. Being a youth in foster care can be tough, and it makes sense that you might need someone special to talk to. If you think that you might benefit from talking with a counselor, be sure to work with your caseworker and your foster parents to get set up for counseling. Don't forget your school counselor or a special teacher who might also be a good person to talk to.

Will I have a lawyer in the child protection case?

It depends. In some places around the state older youth are represented by a lawyer in child protection cases. If you think that your interests are not being represented to the court, ask your caseworker or the judge if you can have a lawyer to represent you.

What if I am an American Indian or Alaskan Native?

The federal government has passed a national law to protect the rights of Indian children, their families, and their tribes in child protection cases. This law is called the Indian Child Welfare Act (ICWA). Make sure your caseworker knows if you have Indian heritage or ancestry

How will I leave foster care?

There are many ways that youth can leave foster care. For example, you may return home (be reunified) once your parents have completed their case plan and taken care of the issues that brought you into care.

Sometimes parents aren't able to fix the issues that bring youth into care, and the youth can't return to live with their parents. In these cases, another plan for permanency is identified. One plan might be for you to remain in long-term foster care. This means that you would stay in foster care until you turned 18. Another option is for a guardianship. A guardianship is when someone other than your parents is given responsibility (legal custody) for you. Guardians are often relatives or friends of the family.

One final option is for the parental rights of your parents to be terminated and for you to be adopted by another family who loves you and wants to make you a permanent part of their family.

What if I turn 18 while I am in foster care?

Usually, the child protection case ends when you turn 18. However, if you are working full-time towards your secondary education (traditional high school, alternative high school, or a GED/Equivalency) when you turn 18, arrangements can be made for your case to remain open and for you to voluntarily remain with your foster family until you graduate from high school.

Other services from the Department may be available to you even after you turn 18, so be sure to work with your caseworker beforehand.

NOTES

COURT

All over the country, people are working to give youth in foster care a greater voice and more input in their child protection cases. It is especially important that youth be heard in the court process. The Idaho Supreme Court recently passed a rule that requires that youth be given notice of hearings and the right to be heard in child protection cases. In some Idaho courts, youth are expected to attend many of the court hearings.

Going to court can be exciting and empowering; it can also be scary! This section answers some questions about the court and the child protection court process. As always, if you still have questions after reading this section, be sure to ask your caseworker, your foster parents, or anyone else who can help you to better understand the court process.



Who will be in court?

There are a lot of different people involved in the court process.

Judge The judge is the person who runs the courtroom, listens to what everyone has to say, and makes the final decisions.

Court Clerk The court clerk sits up next to the judge and takes notes about what happens in court and schedules the next hearings.

Bailiff The bailiff is an officer of the court who helps the judge.

Prosecuting Attorney Child protection cases are not criminal cases, although the county prosecuting attorney is often in charge of representing the state in these cases. The state could also be represented by a deputy attorney general.

Health and Welfare The Idaho Department of Health and Welfare (Department) should have a representative at all court hearings. This representative is often the caseworker.

Birth Parents Your birth parents are a part of the child protection case and should be at most of the court hearings.

Birth Parents' Attorney(s) Your birth parents can be represented by an attorney.

Guardian ad litem (or CASA) Your GAL/CASA should be at the court hearing to represent your best interests to the court.

Guardian ad litem/CASA Attorney Your GAL/CASA may be represented by an attorney.

Your Attorney Youth in foster care are sometimes represented by an attorney. If so, your attorney will be in court.

Others Any other person who has information for the judge can be called as a witness at court. Only people with permission from the judge can be in the courtroom. For example, counselors, school personnel, and foster parents often testify.

YOU! Remember, you have the right to be heard at court. This means that you can go to court and talk with the judge.

What is the court process?

There are a lot of different kinds of hearings in a child protection case. Here are the most common kinds of hearings:

Shelter Care Hearing A shelter care hearing is the first time that a child protection case goes to court. Basically, the judge decides whether you will stay in foster care until the next hearing (the adjudicatory hearing). The shelter care hearing must take place within 48 hours after you have been placed in foster care.

Adjudicatory Hearing The adjudicatory hearing is where the judge decides whether or not you will remain in foster care while your birth parents work a case plan and make it safe for you to go home. The adjudicatory hearing should normally take place within 30 days after you come into care.

Case Plan Hearing The case plan lists the tasks that must be completed – by your birth parents and the Department – to take care of the issues that brought you into care. Also, a big part of the case plan is devoted to making sure that you get the services and help that you need. At the case plan hearing, the judge reads through the case plan, makes sure it gets everyone the help they need, and then orders your birth parents and the Department to follow the case plan.

Permanency Hearing The permanency hearing is where the long-term plan for you is decided. This hearing must take place within 12 months of you being in care. Permanency options are: reunification, guardianship, long-term foster care, and termination of parental rights and adoption (check out the “Words to Know” section for definitions of these options).

Review Hearings Review hearings can take place throughout the child protection case and must take place at least once every six months. Review hearings are used to make sure that everyone is following the case plan and to see how things are going.

What is permanency?

Permanency is the belief that all children deserve to grow up in a safe, stable, and loving home and to enjoy a life-long relationship with a loving caregiver.

Often the best permanent placement is with your birth parents, but sometimes this is not an option. When living with a birth parent is not possible, it is very important that the Department and the court find some other long-term relationship for you.

What is concurrent planning?

When you come into care, everyone works together to come up with a plan for where you will live long term. Usually the main plan is to get you home living with your birth parents. But in case that doesn't work out, there is also a backup plan. Backup plans include guardianship, termination of parental rights and adoption, and long-term foster care. If things don't work out with your birth parents, concurrent planning means that there is a backup plan in place to get you another permanent home as soon as possible.

Will I get notice of the hearings?

Yes, you should get notice of all child protection court hearings that take place after the adjudicatory hearing. (You can use the calendar section of this handbook to mark the date and time of all hearings.) You should be told when and where the hearings are to take place, and you should be given the opportunity to be heard at the hearings. This means that you have the right to talk to the judge, either in person or in writing.

Be sure to let your caseworker know if you want to go to court or if you have a letter for the judge. In your child protection case, it is very important that you play an active role in shaping your future.

Will I get to talk to the judge?

You have the right to be heard by the judge. Ask your caseworker what you need to do to make sure that the judge knows how you think and feel about what is going on!

How should I act in front of the judge?

You should treat the judge (and all the people in the courtroom) with respect. This means, for example, that you speak clearly and honestly, but never yell or use swear words in court. It also means that you should dress nicely and never wear a hat in court! Your caseworker can help you get ready for court.

Will I have a lawyer?

Whether or not you have a lawyer depends upon your individual situation and where you live. It is sometimes easier for youth in larger communities to be appointed a lawyer. If you feel like you need your own lawyer, talk with your caseworker (or GAL/CASA) about what can be done to get you a lawyer.

Is going to court like what I see on TV?

No. Most of what we watch on TV is for entertainment, and the writers and actors make sure that the action is as exciting as possible. In real life, court can often be slow, boring, and uneventful. And unlike on TV, not everything will be resolved by the end of the court hearing.

Every court experience is different. Make sure that you talk with your caseworker, foster parents, and GAL/CASA if something happens at court that you don't understand.

What about what I want?

It is important that you have a voice in the child protection case and participate as much as possible. However, it's also true that sometimes you don't have much power. In child protection cases, the judge or the Department will make most of the decisions. Don't let this discourage you. Make sure that you are telling the court and your caseworker what you want and what you need.

NOTES

INDEPENDENT LIVING SERVICES

Independent living services – often referred to as IL services – are the services you need to help you handle the responsibilities of being an adult. These services can include:

- Instruction in daily living skills
- Money management
- Career planning and support
- Educational planning
- Support services to enter college or job training
- Assistance in finding housing
- Assistance in maintaining personal and community connections
- Physical and mental health support



The goal of IL services is to ensure that older youth in foster care are provided with resources to successfully transition from living in foster care to being an adult. Some IL services are provided in a class while some are one-on-one instruction so that you can really practice your skills. Wherever you live in foster care (foster home, relative home, or residential treatment center), you should be taught independent living skills. Your caseworker will be able to tell you what IL services are available to you.

As you approach adulthood, you will have more and more control over decisions that affect you. As you get closer to 18, your caseworker and others will be working with you to develop a plan for your successful transition to adulthood. This plan, called the Independent Living Plan (IL Plan), will list the IL services that will fit your needs. **Your participation in the planning process is the best way to guarantee that your voice is heard and that the plan reflects what you want for your life.**

At what age should I begin receiving IL services?

Sometime after you turn 15, your caseworker should help you to develop a plan for IL services based on your independent living assessment.

Who is eligible for IL Services?

There is a special law called the Chafee Foster Care Independence Program Act. This law provides money to Idaho and other states to provide IL services to youth who are likely to remain in foster care until age 18. Idaho defines “youth likely to remain in care and eligible for IL services” as youth age 15 to 21 who live, or have lived, in foster care or a similar eligible placement for 90 or more days after the 15th birthday while in the custody of the Department or an Indian Tribal Court.

Am I eligible for IL services even if I’m no longer in foster care?

Yes. Once established, your eligibility for IL services is maintained up to your 21st birthday.

Can I still get IL services if I move to another region or state?

Yes. If you are still in foster care and move, your home region is still responsible for providing IL services to you.

If you have left foster care after becoming eligible for IL services, the region or state where you currently live must provide the IL services if you are under 21 years of age. Your home region can help you get in touch with the Independent Living Coordinator in your new region or state.

Is there special assistance to help pay for my post-secondary education or training?

Yes. Idaho provides Education and Training Vouchers (ETV). You can apply for the voucher if you are or were receiving IL Services and you are under 21 years of age. If you were receiving ETV before you turned 21, you may be able to receive it until age 23. ETV provides up to \$5000 toward the cost of attending school and is in addition to any federal and state financial aid you may receive.

NOTES

RESOURCES

Here are a few of different places you can go to get more information and to get more of your questions answered:

NATIONAL

Casey Family Programs:	www.casey.org
Foster Care Alumni of America:	www.fostercarealumni.org
Foster Club:	www.fosterclub.com 503-717-1552
National Domestic Violence Hotline:	1-800-799-SAFE (7233)
TTY:	1-800-787-3224 www.ndvh.org
National Suicide Prevention Lifeline:	1-800-273-TALK (8255)
TTY:	1-800-799-4TTY (4889)
En Español:	1-888-628-9454 www.suicidepreventionlifeline.org

STATE

Call the Idaho CareLine for information on services in your area:

2-1-1
www.idahocareline.org
1-800-926-2588



REGIONAL

Idaho Department of Health and Welfare:

Region 1

1120 Ironwood Drive
Coeur d'Alene, ID 83814
208-769-1515

Region 2

1118 "F" Street
Lewiston, ID 83501
208-799-4338

Region 3

3402 Franklin Road
Caldwell, ID 83605
208-455-7113

Region 4

1720 Westgate Drive
Boise, ID 83704
208-334-6800

Region 5

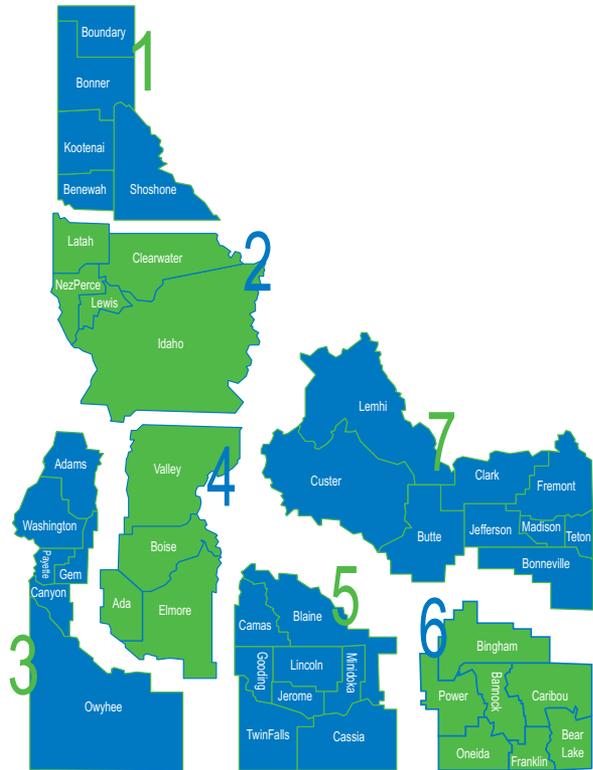
601 Pole Line Road
Twin Falls, ID 83301
208-732-1369

Region 6

1070 Hiline Road
Pocatello, ID 83201
208-239-6280

Region 7

150 Shoup Avenue
Idaho Falls, ID 83402
208-528-5791



Remember, knowledge is power! The whole point of this guide is to get you as much information as possible. We hope that we've answered some of your questions and we hope that you have more questions! Work with all the important people in your life to make sure that you know what is going on and to advocate for what you need.

Good luck on the rest of your journey!

If you have suggestions or ideas about how to make this guide better for other youth in foster care, please give your suggestions to your caseworker to be sent to the state Foster Care Program Specialist.

My Roadmap to Life in Foster Care:
A Guide for Idaho Youth

A publication of the



IDAHO DEPARTMENT OF
HEALTH & WELFARE

450 W. State Street
Boise, ID 83720-0036
(208) 334-5500
www.healthandwelfare.idaho.gov