

CareCertify LLC

Foster Care Training Series

FC-03

Children's & Youth Rights in Foster Care

Participant Guide

Foster Care Training Series · Audience: Foster Parents · Agency Staff · Treatment Foster Care Providers · CE Hours: 1.0

A Child in Care Is a Whole Person With Rights

Children don't check their rights at the door when they come into foster care. They keep their dignity, their voice, their connections to family and culture, and their right to be safe, healthy, and treated well. Foster parents and agency staff are responsible for knowing and protecting these rights.

This guide covers the rights every child in care holds and how you honor them in daily life — including the right to as normal a childhood as possible. Honoring rights is how foster care becomes healing.

Learning Objectives — by the end of this module you will be able to:

- Summarize children's rights in foster care
- Explain the rights to safety, voice, and connection
- Apply the reasonable and prudent parent standard for normalcy
- Protect privacy, belongings, and dignity
- Support a child in raising concerns

Section 1: Children's Rights in Foster Care

Children in foster care keep their rights. They have the right to be safe, to be treated with dignity and respect, to have a voice, to stay connected to family and culture, to education and health care, to privacy, and to as normal a childhood as possible. Foster parents and agency staff are responsible for knowing and protecting these rights. Children should be informed of their rights in age-appropriate ways. A child in care is a whole person, not a case file.

Section 2: The Right to Safety and Good Treatment

The most fundamental right is to be safe and well-treated. Children have the right to be free from abuse, neglect, and maltreatment in care — including freedom from corporal punishment, threats, humiliation, and unreasonable restrictions. Discipline must be positive and developmentally appropriate (covered in FC-06). If a child is harmed in care, it is reported and addressed. Children also have the right to adequate food, clothing, shelter, and care.

Section 3: Voice, Participation, and Being Heard

Children have the right to be heard and to participate in decisions affecting their lives, in age-appropriate ways. Listen to their feelings, preferences, and concerns, and take them seriously. Older youth have the right

to participate in case planning and court proceedings about their future. Supporting a child's voice respects their dignity and supports better outcomes.

Section 4: Connection to Family, Culture, and Community

Children have the right to maintain connections to their family — including visits with parents and siblings (siblings are often placed or kept connected together) — and to their culture, language, religion, and community identity. These connections are central to a child's sense of self and healing. Support them actively; never sever or disparage a child's connections to family or culture. Cultural and tribal identity is covered further in FC-07.

Section 5: Education, Health, and Development

Children in foster care have the right to education — including, when possible, staying in their same school — and to medical, dental, and mental health care. Foster parents support and advocate for these: getting children to appointments and school, supporting their learning, and nurturing their development, activities, and interests. Every child deserves the chance to grow and thrive.

Section 6: Normalcy and the Reasonable and Prudent Parent Standard

Children in foster care have the right to as normal a childhood as possible — sleepovers, sports, field trips, jobs, and other typical experiences. The 'reasonable and prudent parent standard' empowers foster parents to make everyday decisions about age- and developmentally-appropriate activities, using the careful, sensible judgment a reasonable parent would, without needing case-by-case agency approval. Normalcy supports healthy development and belonging.

Parent normally

Normalcy is a right, not a privilege. Use the reasonable and prudent parent standard to give children the ordinary childhood experiences they deserve.

Section 7: Privacy, Belongings, and Dignity

Children have a right to reasonable privacy and to keep their own belongings — clothing, photos, mementos, and gifts. Keep their personal items safe; for children who arrive with little, these things matter enormously. Protect a child's private information and story, sharing only with the team as needed. Don't discuss a child's history with others or on social media. Dignity includes their space, their belongings, and their story.

Section 8: Supporting Children in Raising Concerns

Children have the right to raise concerns and complaints — about their care, their placement, or anything affecting them — without fear of retaliation. They can talk to their caseworker, guardian ad litem (their court-appointed advocate), a foster youth advocate, or trusted adults. Support children in being heard, never punish honesty, and know how a child can report a concern. A child who can safely speak up is a child who is protected.

Key Terms

Term	What it means
Children's rights in care	The rights every child keeps while in foster care.
Normalcy	A child's right to typical, age-appropriate childhood experiences.
Reasonable and prudent parent standard	Letting caregivers approve normal activities using sensible judgment.
Guardian ad litem	A child's court-appointed advocate.
Voice	A child's right to be heard and participate in decisions.
Sibling connection	A child's right to maintain relationships with siblings.

Check Your Understanding

1. Do children keep their rights in foster care?
2. What is the most fundamental right, and what does it prohibit?
3. What is the reasonable and prudent parent standard?
4. Why is connection to family and culture a right?
5. How can a child raise a concern, and what must you never do?

What's Next

Looking ahead

Next, FC-04: Professional Boundaries & Healthy Relationships covers the boundaries that keep relationships safe.