



**LOS ANGELES COUNTY COMMISSION
FOR CHILDREN AND FAMILIES**

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March 12, 2018

TO: Supervisor Sheila Kuehl, Chair
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Supervisor Kathryn Barger

FROM: Dr. Wendy B. Smith, Commissioner 
Tamara N. Hunter, Executive Director 
Los Angeles County Commission for Children and Families

SUBJECT: **REPORT BACK ON THE LOS ANGELES COUNTY FOSTER YOUTH BILL OF RIGHTS AND SERVICES. (BOARD AGENDA ITEM 11, JULY 18, 2017).**

On July 18, 2017, the Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors (Board) adopted a motion that recognized the need to ensure that youth in the foster care system are provided every reasonable resource to facilitate their development as “healthy, educated, and self-sufficient” young adults. The motion also recognized that, as the largest child welfare system in the country, Los Angeles County should create its own Foster Youth Bill of Rights and Services that provides the necessary information about services, programs, and legislative mandates to youth and resource families.

To accomplish this important task, the Commission for Children and Families (CCF) was directed to convene a work group to include, at a minimum, the Chief Executive Office, Department of Children and Family Services, Office of Child Protection, County Counsel, Department of Mental Health, Probation Department, Department of Health Services, other County departments, community stakeholder groups, and at least six current or former foster youth, and report back to the Board in 120 days with:

1. A proposed Foster Youth Bill of Rights and Services (FYBoRS) for Los Angeles County, to be adopted by the Board of Supervisors, and that has incorporated:
 - a. Feedback from foster youth;
 - b. Review of the State of California Foster Youth Bill of Rights and any proposed changes resulting from, and significant gaps in Assembly Bill 1067;

- c. Review and presentation of the California Welfare and Institutions Code and all other relevant Federal, State, and local statutes and policies in plain language; and
 - d. Consideration of a wide range of domains and topics, including education, mental and physical health, housing, income, employment, dependency court proceedings, visitation, reunification, adoption, and rights related to immigration status;
2. A proposed communication plan targeting foster youth, resource parents, social workers, and probation officers that utilizes web and print mediums;
 3. A plan for annual review and updating of the FYBoRS, as necessary, to reflect current legislation and policy.

The Work Group requested and was granted an extension to March 20, 2018, so that feedback from all stakeholders could be incorporated. The Board directives will be delivered through a two-phase process, beginning with the compilation and development of content, followed by dissemination.

This report is comprised of five parts: 1) FYBoRS Guiding Principles and Vision; 2) FYBoRS Work Group; 3) Current Law Governing Foster Youth Rights; 4) Work Group Recommendations; and 5) Next Steps.

FYBoRS Guiding Principles and Vision

The ongoing efforts to develop the FYBoRS are shaped by the following *guiding principles*:

- The FYBoRS must not be simply a compilation of existing laws and policies, but a living expression of the County's vision, hopes, and responsibilities for the youth in our care.
- These rights must be explained in plain language that is age and developmentally appropriate.
- The FYBoRS must be known, understood, and adhered to by the Los Angeles County child welfare system as a whole, including all public and private partners, and stakeholders who interact with youth in our care.
- The assumptions around system responsibilities regarding rights of foster youth must shift from required periodic informing youth of their rights, to an embrace by all who serve or support foster youth of their role in engaging, educating, and empowering youth regarding their rights.

In view of the guiding principles, the following vision statement serves as preamble to the FYBoRS:

Every child, teen, and young adult in foster care in Los Angeles County, as well as those who have left the system, deserves to have a safe, loving, stable, and nurturing home and family; to be valued and respected; to have a say in making decisions that affect their lives;

to have access to help and support when they need it, through a trauma-informed system that will help them and their families heal and be stronger; and to have educational and other supports that will help them reach their own chosen goals as successful and healthy adults.

Foster Youth Bill of Rights and Services Work Group (Work Group)

On July 31, 2017, the Commission for Children and Families (CCF) adopted a motion establishing the Los Angeles County Foster Youth Bill of Rights and Services Work Group (Work Group). With the goal of assembling the most inclusive and representative Work Group possible, the CCF invited all parties named in the Board motion, as well as numerous other organizations and individuals known to have interest, experience, or expertise in working with foster youth to an August 24, 2017, stakeholder engagement convening. The stakeholder engagement convening served as the first FYBoRS Work Group meeting, and an initial step in the process of creating the FYBoRS. Work Group participants and contributing organizations are listed in Attachment A. During the convening, the eighty-four attendees participated in small group discussions, co-facilitated by current and former foster youth and CCF Commissioners, regarding the vision and principles that should underlie the work and subject matter-specific processes associated with foster youth rights.

The Work Group employed a subcommittee structure to compile FYBoRS content. Four of the five subcommittees focused on a subject matter-specific “domain” of a foster youth’s life, as illustrated in Attachment B, and one subcommittee focused on developing a proposed communications and dissemination plan. Each subcommittee, comprised of subject matter experts, was co-chaired by a CCF Commissioner and County department representative, and had the following objectives:

- Compile and translate domain-specific law and policy into plain language that will be easily understood by foster youth.
- Identify areas for improvement of County processes regarding foster youth rights and services, and develop relevant recommendations.
- Further development of the FYBoRS vision statement.

Subcommittee participation across County departments and external organizations was enthusiastic and robust. The work to create the FYBoRS has already proven to be an engaging and educational process for all participants, and has facilitated the shared view that the final product will be an important and useful tool for youth, caregivers, staff who serve foster youth, parents, and mentors.

Youth Voice

Current and former foster youth have been key members of the Work Group, and demonstrated a high level of interest and desire to participate. More than 40 current and former foster youth, ranging in age from 14 to mid-thirties, were engaged as part of this process. At times their work and school commitments, with few exceptions, precluded their

being able to regularly attend subcommittee meetings. Therefore, our solution to ensuring their participation was to send youth all material being reviewed by each subcommittee, to encourage teleconference participation and written input, and then to meet with them where they were. Focus groups were held with youth at National Foster Youth Institute, California Youth Connection, the Alliance for Children's Rights, and a DCFS Teen Club to hear and incorporate their feedback on FYBoRS content, as well as their experiences with regard to their rights. Current and former foster youth frequently expressed surprise and frustration when they learned of rights to which they were entitled, but that had been violated at some point in time. Similarly, they were dismayed to learn how many policies governing important aspects of their lives leave them out of the decision-making process. An example of this is the identification of an education rights holder, when necessary. They expressed a strong desire to have a formal role in policy development at both local and State levels, noting that the FYBoRS development process serves as an exemplar of how they should be engaged.

FYBoRS Content Compilation

Domain-specific content compiled by subcommittees has been organized into the FYBoRS Master Matrix, Attachment C, with input received from County Counsel as part of the process. Given the broad scope of the areas of focus required by Board directive, the FYBoRS Master Matrix is a voluminous document, comprehensively consisting of more than two hundred pieces of Federal, State, and local legislation and policy. It is important to note that the FYBoRS Master Matrix should be viewed as the raw material from which age and developmentally appropriate materials will be developed during phase two. The most essential rights, of which all foster youth should be aware, have been identified through subcommittee work, focus groups, and legislative mandate, and will be featured in abbreviated versions of the FYBoRS.

Current Law Governing Foster Youth Rights

California Welfare and Institutions Code (WIC) Section 16001.9 lists twenty-seven rights that youth have in foster care. WIC Section 16501.1 governs dissemination of these rights and requires that:

- At least once every six months, at the time of a regularly scheduled visit with the youth, and at each placement change, the youth's social worker or probation officer shall inform the youth, the caregiver, and the child and family team, if applicable, of the youth's rights as a foster child, as specified in WIC Section 16001.9.
- The social worker or probation officer shall provide the rights-related information to the youth in an age and developmentally appropriate manner, and document in the case plan that the youth has been informed of and provided with a copy of these rights.

Further, Health and Safety Code (H&SC) Section 1530.91 requires any licensed facility providing care for six or more foster children to post in an area accessible to foster youth a listing of foster youth personal rights as specified in WIC Section 16001.9.

On September 30, 2016, Governor Jerry Brown signed into law Assembly Bill (AB) 1067, which called for the revising of WIC Section 16001.9. Specifically, AB 1067 required that:

- The California Department of Social Services (CDSS) convene a work group regarding the specified rights of all youth in foster care in order to educate them, foster care providers, and others;
- Make recommendations to the California State Legislature (Legislature) for revising the rights based on a review of state law by January 1, 2018;
- Develop standardized information regarding the revised rights in an age-appropriate manner and reflective of any relevant licensing requirements with respect to the foster caregiver's responsibilities to adequately supervise youth in care by July 1, 2018;
- Develop recommendations regarding methods for disseminating the rights-related information by July 1, 2018; and,
- Develop recommendations for measuring and improving the degree to which foster youth are adequately informed of their rights by July 1, 2018.

AB 1067 applies specifically to the collection of the twenty-seven foster youth rights enunciated in WIC Section 16001.9, and not to the broader universe of rights afforded to youth in care. On February 16, 2018, AB 3046, which proposes amendments to WIC Section 16001.9, was introduced.

The CDSS and the Office of the Foster Care Ombudsperson are leading the work mandated by AB 1067. In light of the overlapping requirements of AB 1067 and the Board's directives, as well as the mandates of WIC Section 16501.1 and H&SC Section 1530.91, the Work Group has collaborated closely with the Office of the Foster Care Ombudsperson to ensure alignment of the FYBoRS with the revised WIC Section 16001.9 and minimize the risk of developing conflicting documents. Moreover, the Office of the Foster Care Ombudsperson, a participant in the Los Angeles County FYBoRS Work Group, shares the vision and principles that have guided Los Angeles County in this work.

Work Group Recommendations

In the course of the processes described above, and through the significant experience and expertise of its participants and contributors, including a cross section of County contracted service providers, the Work Group gathered vital information and invaluable insights that informed the recommendations included in this report. Key takeaways and recommendations are provided below.

Accountability

Work Group participants consistently expressed in no uncertain terms the importance of ensuring accountability for adherence to the rights contained within the FYBoRS. Although the current draft FYBoRS identifies persons and organizations to be contacted for recourse when rights are violated, some members of the Work Group expressed the belief that the

respective responsibilities of social workers, probation officers, caregivers, and foster youth should be delineated in the FYBoRS. Work Group members, youth in particular, voiced concerns that empowering foster youth with information about their rights without also educating them as to their responsibilities and providing proper context would be a disservice, and could have unintended consequences, such as discord between the youth and caregiver. For example, foster youth have the right to participate in extracurricular activities; however, the caregiver may limit participation in some activities based on California's reasonable and prudent parent standards. Conversely, other Work Group members expressed concerns that calling out foster youth responsibilities in a listing of statutory rights, could suggest that foster youth shared responsibility when their rights were violated.

State of Knowledge of Foster Youth Rights

The Work Group determined that foster youth in general are not knowledgeable about their rights, despite the fact that various legislative mandates and other State directives, described in the previous section, govern how and when they are to be informed. Current foster youth, especially younger youth, reported that they knew little about their rights beyond those involving basic needs, such as the right to reside in a safe placement and have enough food to eat. Former foster youth were able to identify a greater number of rights; however, most reported that they learned about these rights only after exiting the child welfare system. These responses reflect the need to develop better strategies to engage, educate, and empower foster youth regarding their rights in ways that are authentic and impactful.

The Work Group also determined that employees of foster youth-serving County departments, as well as non-County foster youth-serving partners, would benefit from additional information and training on foster youth rights, including training specifically on ways of effectively communicating with youth about their rights. Some departments have not yet established a standardized policy or process for training staff on foster youth rights, and may lack procedural guidance for their employees as to best practices for educating foster youth about their rights. The lack of standardization extends to informational materials, as multiple versions of foster youth rights documents are used throughout the County, among foster youth-serving departments, and in some instances, within departments. Inconsistencies and gaps in these areas among County departments also impact County-contracted service providers and their work with current and former foster youth.

Recommendation One: Proposed Communications Plan

The Work Group recommends development of the following multi-media products, as shown in Table 1, for optimal dissemination of the FYBoRS. Essential (priority) recommendations are noted with asterisks.

Table 1. Multi-media Recommendations

Print Materials	Web-based Materials	Other
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Handbook (including PDF version)** ▪ Activity/comic book ▪ Multi-fold wallet card** ▪ Mini handbook ▪ Poster** ▪ Brochure 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Mobile-friendly webpage** ▪ Interactive videos ▪ Peer-to-peer videos ▪ Animation ▪ Social Media 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Promotional Material ▪ Phone App ▪ E-learning module

Durable print materials constitute the best medium overall for disseminating rights information to foster youth, as most do not have consistent access to the internet. Print materials should be developed to accommodate the range of ages and developmental stages of youth in care, and translated into common languages. This will require collaboration with experts in the development of youth-accessible educational information content. Graphic art and design expertise will also be required. The Graphic Arts section of the Executive Office of the Board of Supervisors has committed to work on the development of FYBoRS print materials; however, the Graphic Arts section does not provide web-based design or printing services.

A mobile-friendly FYBoRS webpage should also be viewed as an essential component of the proposed communications plan. The webpage will be hosted by the Department of Children and Family Services and the webpage URL will be provided to other foster youth-serving organizations to include on their websites as a resource.

The multi-media materials that will be developed can also be utilized by caregivers, social workers, probation officers, and other stakeholders.

Recommendation Two: Proposed Plan for Dissemination

The Work Group recommends the following policy and training actions for effective dissemination of the FYBoRS:

- Foster youth-serving County departments develop and/or update policy consistent with current law, as well as the FYBoRS vision and guiding principles.
- The FYBoRS be used County-wide in standardized forms and manner;
- All County employees of foster youth-serving organizations who interact with foster youth in any capacity receive training on the FYBoRS;
- All County contracts for services to foster youth include language in contract terms and conditions requiring all parties to the contract who interact with foster youth in any capacity, to receive training on and comply with the FYBoRS; and,
- Training, compliance, and use of the FYBoRS by non-County members of Los Angeles County’s child welfare system.
- All training should be developed to meet the training objectives shown in Table 2.

Table 2. Training Objectives

Training Objectives
<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Increase awareness and knowledge of foster youth rights and responsibilities related to upholding foster youth rights;▪ Provide procedural and best practice guidance for use of the FYBoRS to engage, educate, and empower foster youth regarding their rights; and,▪ Build capacity to embody the FYBoRS vision and guiding principles in practice behaviors and all interactions with and on behalf of youth in care.

Recommendation Three: Funding for Development of FYBoRS Materials

Funding will be required to develop and produce the recommended youth-accessible multi-media FYBoRS materials, shown in Table 1. The Work Group recommends that the Department of Children and Family Services, Probation Department, Department of Mental Health, and other foster youth-serving County departments, including the Center for Strategic Public-Private Partnership within the Office of Child Protection, identify the necessary funding. County departments have been advised of this recommendation. When costs and funding sources have been identified, Board action may be required.

Recommendation Four: Proposed Plan for Updating the FYBoRS

The Work Group recommends that the Department of Children and Family Services and the Probation Department, as the primary agencies responsible for the supervision of youth in care, jointly re-convene and lead public and private stakeholders, which must include current and former foster youth, caregivers, biological families, and other foster youth service providers and supporters, in the process of annual review and updating of the FYBoRS, as necessary.

Next Steps: Development and Dissemination (Phase Two)

Phase Two involves the following actions required to deliver the FYBoRS:

- **Finalization of the FYBoRS content**

The Work Group requests authority to finalize the FYBoRS content in parallel with the revising of WIC Section 16001.9 to ensure consistency between County and State. The CDSS and Office of the Foster Care Ombudsperson are projected to finalize revisions to WIC 16001.9 in July 2018, as required by AB 1067, and proposed in AB 3046.

- **Budget development**

The Work Group will consult with and obtain estimates from organizations specializing in content development of youth-accessible print and web-based informational materials, as well as printing services, to inform the FYBoRS budget.

▪ **Develop FYBoRS materials**

The Work Group requests authority to develop FYBoRS materials upon finalization of content. Development of materials will be led by the Work Group's Communications Subcommittee, with all prototypes being vetted through a robust focus group process, before approval by the full Work Group.

Enclosure

- c: Acting Executive Officer, Board of Supervisors
Chief Executive Officer
County Counsel
Chief Probation Officer
Auditor-Controller
Director, Department of Children and Family Services
Acting Director, Department of Health Services
Director, Department of Mental Health
Director, Department of Public Health
Director, Office of Child Protection
Children's Deputies, Board of Supervisors
Health Deputies, Board of Supervisors
Justice Deputies, Board of Supervisors

ATTACHMENT A

**Foster Youth Bill of Rights and Services
Contributing Organizations**

Advocates 4 Family Caregivers	Grandparents As Parents	Los Angeles County Probation Department
Alliance for Children's Rights	John Burton Advocates for Youth	Los Angeles Unified School District
Anthony & Jeanne Pritzker Family Foundation	Kids in the Spotlight	Los Angeles County Women and Girls Initiative
Association of Community Human Service Agencies	LA Compact at the LA Chamber of Commerce	National Center for Youth Law
C.I.T.Y.	LA LGBT Center	National Foster Youth Institute
Cal Strat	Los Angeles County Auditor-Controller	Nuevo Amanecer Latino Children's Services
California Department of Social Services, Office of the Foster Care Ombudsman	Los Angeles County Chief Executive Office	Optimist Youth Homes and Family Services
California Youth Connection	Los Angeles County Commission for Children and Families	Public Counsel
Children's Law Center	Los Angeles County Department of Children and Family Services	Raising Our Children's Kids
Children's Empowerment Network	Los Angeles County Department of Health Services	Southwestern Law School
Extraordinary Families	Los Angeles County Department of Mental Health	The Chronicle of Social Change
FASD Network of Southern California	Los Angeles County Department of Public Health	United Friends of the Children
First 5 LA	Los Angeles County Office of Child Protection	Youth Justice Coalition
First Place for Youth	Los Angeles County Office of the County Counsel	Current and Former Foster Youth
Foster Education Xchange	Los Angeles County Office of Education	

Foster Youth Bill of Rights and Services Work Group Subcommittee Structure

SUBCOMMITTEE	DOMAINS OF FOCUS	CO-CHAIRS
<p>OUT-OF-HOME CARE SUBCOMMITTEE</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Out-of-Home Care ▪ Continuum of Care Reform ▪ Core Practice Model 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Wendelyn (Wende) Nichols-Julien, CCF ▪ Robbie Odom, DCFS
<p>HEALTH & QUALITY OF LIFE SUBCOMMITTEE</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Personal Rights ▪ Quality of Life ▪ Health ▪ Mental Health ▪ Reproductive & Sexual Health ▪ LGBTQ ▪ Native American 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Wendy Smith, CCF ▪ Bryan Mershon, DMH
<p>EDUCATION & TAY SUBCOMMITTEE</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Education ▪ Non-Minor Dependents ▪ Transitional Housing ▪ Independent Living Program/Self Sufficiency 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Gene Berger, CCF ▪ Rachelle Touzard, LACOE
<p>JUDICIAL SUBCOMMITTEE</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Dependency Court ▪ Delinquency Court ▪ Probation ▪ Cross-Over Youth 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Jacquelyn McCroskey, CCF ▪ Judge Michael Nash, OCP
<p>COMMUNICATIONS SUBCOMMITTEE</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Communications and Information Dissemination 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Candace Nafissi, CCF ▪ Neil Zanville, DCFS ▪ Genie Chough, DCFS

ATTACHMENT C

[Click here to access the FYBoRS Master Matrix](#)

Foster Youth Bill of Rights and Services

Glossary (Definitions)

Term	Definition
AB12 (Also called Extended Foster Care)	AB 12 (California Fostering Connections to Success Act) is a 2010 California law that extends foster care benefits for eligible youth up to age 21. Youth who get these benefits are called nonminor dependents (NMDs).
AB 490 Educational Liaison (Sometimes called AB 490 Counselor)	A person appointed by the school district to help foster youth with: (1) ensuring proper educational placement, school enrollment, and “checkout” (withdrawal) from school and (2) transfer of grades, credits, and records when there is a school change.
California State Graduate Requirements	<p>The California Education Code sets requirements for graduation from California high schools. The minimum requirements for graduation are passing the California High School Exit Exam (unless the student has a qualifying IEP) and taking the following courses:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (A) Three years of English. (B) Two years of math, including Algebra I. (C) Two years of science, including biological and physical sciences. (D) Three years of history/social studies, including one-year of United States history and geography; one year of world history, culture, and geography; one semester of American government and civics; and a one semester of economics. (E) One year of visual or performing arts, foreign language, or career technical education. (F) Two years of PE, unless the student has been exempted.
California Dream Act Application (CADAA)	Allows undocumented and nonresident students who meet certain eligibility requirements to apply for state financial aid, and allows qualified students to pay state resident fees (instead of higher out-of-state fees) at California’s public colleges and universities.
Case Plan	A written document prepared by DCFS that describes the care and services to be provided to a youth who has been placed in foster care. It must include: a description of the placement, a plan for providing the youth with safe and proper care, a plan for services that will be provided, along with a timeline, and other issues relating to health, safety, and well-being.
Chemical Substances	Chemical substances are sometimes called drugs. They include those prescribed by a doctor, and legal or illegal non-prescription drugs, including those you can purchase over the counter.

Child and Family Team (CFT)	A group of people, which may include extended family members, community, tribe, and others identified by youth, who come together to talk and make decisions about case planning and placement that will best support success of the family, and positive outcomes for the youth's safety, permanence, and well-being.
Child Welfare System	The group of government agencies that (1) take and investigate reports of possible child abuse and neglect; (2) provide services to ensure safety and care of youth and to support their families; (3) arrange for youth to live with relatives, non-relative extended family members, or foster families when they are not safe at home, and; (4) arrange for reunification, adoption, or other permanent connections for children leaving foster care. The Los Angeles County child welfare system also includes non-government agencies that provide services to youth and their families.
Community Care Licensing	The divisions of the State Department of Social Services that licenses and oversees foster family agencies, daycares, group homes, short-term therapeutic residential facilities, and residential care for children and adults throughout California.
Community Treatment Facilities (CTF)	Mental health treatment facilities where youth stay or visit if they need to get treatment. Some CTFs are locked.
Contraception	A number of ways to prevent pregnancy and sexually transmitted diseases, including condoms and birth control pills.
Conviction	A person is found (proven to be) guilty of breaking the law.
Court Appointed Special Advocate (CASA)	Volunteers appointed by the court to look out for what is best for a youth who is placed in foster care. A CASA can: (1) advocate or speak up for the youth; (2) investigate or look into problems that the youth is having; (4) report or speak to the Judge for the youth; and, (5) recommend or ask the judge to make orders that will help the youth.
Court Personnel	The people who work inside the courtroom, including the judge, bailiff, court reporter, and clerk.
Criminal Act	A crime or an act that is against the law.
Danger to Self or Others	When someone seems to be at risk of harming themselves and/or others, the person can be considered a danger to themselves or other people. Examples are having done something or threatened something that would hurt themselves (suicide attempts) or someone else in a serious way.
Delinquent	A person under age 18 who has done something that is against the law, and needs formal supervision by the Juvenile Delinquency Court.

Delinquency Court	Delinquency court is a specialized court for minors who are being accused of doing something that is against the law, and is focused on rehabilitation. The Probation Department or the District Attorney's office can file a petition asking the court to get involved. The petition describes what the minor is accused of doing.
Dependency Court	Dependency court is where a judge makes decisions about the safety of a youth, and decides if they are in danger of neglect or abuse, abandonment, or injury. Decisions can also be made about where the youth will live, and the services the youth and their family might need.
Dependent	A legal word that means an abused or neglected child who is supervised by dependency court.
Dignity	Dignity is a person's right to be valued, respected, and receive fair treatment.
Discrimination	Discrimination is unfairly treating a person or group of people differently from other people, often because of age, race, sex, nationality, sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression, religion, or disability.
Education Rights Holder (ERH)	The person legally responsible for making educational decisions for the youth, and protecting the youth's educational rights and best interests. When it cannot be the biological parent, the court appoints someone to make educational decisions.
Expulsion	When a school removes a student from the entire school district for a specific period of time, usually one semester or year, as punishment for the student's behavior.
Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA)	The Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) is used by two and four-year colleges, universities, and career schools to award Federal, state, and college-funded student aid.
Foster Youth Verification Letter	Written verification of a youth's time spent in foster care. This used to be called the Ward of the Court letter.
Gender	Gender is what it typically means to be male or female. It is how society expects you to act because you are male or female.
Gender Expression	The way a person expresses their gender identity, such as through how they dress or behave.
Gender Identity	How a person feels inside and thinks of their identity. Gender identity might be different from what is on their birth certificate or child welfare records.
Gender Pronoun	A word used to refer to people, such as <i>she</i> , <i>hers</i> , and <i>her</i> or <i>he</i> , <i>his</i> , and <i>him</i> , or other terms.
Green Card	A registration card that shows an immigrant's status as a permanent U.S. resident, allowing the person to live and work in the United States.
Group Home	Group homes provide 24-hour care to a small number of foster youth in a structured environment. Group homes will be

	transitioning into Short-Term Residential Therapeutic Programs (STRTP).
Harassment	Harassment is words, behavior, or action that causes the person it is directed at to feel scared, annoyed, or emotionally upset and should be reported to a trusted adult.
Independent Living Program (ILP)	<p>The ILP provides training, services, and programs that help current and former foster youth to be self-sufficient before and after leaving the foster care system. Youth are eligible for ILP services up to the day before their 21st birthday if they meet one of the following conditions:</p> <p>(1) They were or are in foster care at any time from their 16th to their 19th birthday, or</p> <p>(2) They were or are between the ages of 16 and 18 years of age and participating in the Kinship Guardianship Assistance Payment Program (Kin-GAP).</p> <p>Some of the ILP services are: daily living skills, money management, decision making, building self-esteem, financial assistance with college or vocational schools, educational resources, housing (transitional housing), and employment.</p>
Jurisdiction	Jurisdiction is the court’s authority to decide what happens in a case, and to make decisions and orders.
Juvenile Detention	Juvenile detention centers and juvenile halls (“juvie”),” are secure residential facilities for young people who are accused of violating the law, who have been found to have violated the law, or are awaiting a court hearing or long-term placement.
Lawyer/Attorney	A person who is licensed to practice law. The court will appoint a lawyer to represent (speak for) youth in dependency and delinquency courts.
Legal Service Organizations	Legal service organizations provide free legal assistance to people who can’t afford an attorney.
Mental Health	Mental health is emotional or psychological well-being. It includes feeling able to enjoy life, engage in work or school, and in healthy relationships with others. It includes feeling able to recover from difficult experiences and being able to cope with the normal stresses of life.
Medication	Medications, sometimes called drugs, are substances used to treat a physical medical condition or mental health problem. Medications may be prescribed by a doctor, or bought “over-the-counter”, without a prescription from a doctor.
Naturalization	Naturalization is the way in which U.S. citizenship is granted to immigrants after they complete certain legal requirements.
Nonminor Dependent	Under AB 12, foster children who meet certain conditions and choose to remain in foster care past age 18, and up to age 21

	are referred to as nonminor dependents. (Also see AB-12 definition)
Non-Relative Extended Family Member	An adult who has a supportive relationship with a youth and is important to the youth, but not a blood relative.
Ombudsperson	An ombudsperson is an official who receives, investigates, and reports on individuals' complaints against the government and its officials and employees.
Patients' Rights Advocate	All state hospitals must have a Patients' Rights Advocate who receives and investigates complaints from or concerning people receiving mental health services and residing in licensed health or community care facilities. Complaints can be about abuse, and/or unreasonable denial or withholding of their rights as a punishment. A Patients' Rights Advocate also helps ensure that people receiving mental health services in licensed health and community care facilities know what their rights are.
Permanent Placement	A living arrangement that is meant to be the permanent home or permanent living arrangement for a child until he or she leaves the child welfare system.
Probation Department	A youth is supervised by the Probation Department and Delinquency Court when he or she has violated the law.
Probation Officer	Probation officers are responsible for supervision of some youth (juveniles) on probation. They are required to make regular home visits to ensure that that youth are healthy and safe, and that delinquency court orders are being followed. They also meet with youth and their families to help with rehabilitation.
Pregnant and Parenting Teen Conference	A voluntary meeting for parenting and expectant teens in foster care, where they can share their concerns, identify things they need, and figure out the best plan for them and their baby. Youth can invite people who are important to them. The youth's social worker and a specialist on resources for expectant and parenting teens will attend the conference and be able to help the youth with services.
Psychotropic Medication (also called drugs)	Psychotropic medications are prescription drugs used in the treatment of various psychiatric conditions or mental health problems.
Reproductive Health	Reproductive health is about the conditions, diseases, and ways in which the male and female reproductive systems work at all ages.
School of Origin	School of origin means one of the following: (1) the school that you were last enrolled in when permanently housed, (2) the school that you were last enrolled in, or (3) a school that you feel connected to and you attended in the last 15 months, and the educational liaison and your educational rights holder all agree it is in your best interest to consider that your school of origin.

Sexual Orientation	Sexual orientation is about who you're attracted to and want to have sexual or romantic relationships with. Sexual orientations include, but are not limited to, gay, lesbian, straight, bisexual, and asexual.
Short-Term Residential Treatment Program (STRTP)	A residential facility that provides specialized and intensive services and supports to a group of youth placed in foster care.
Social Worker	Social workers are DCFS employees and also called Children's Social Workers or CSWs. They are responsible for supervision of youth under DCFS supervision. They make regular home visits to ensure that that youth are healthy and safe, and that dependency court orders are being followed. They also meet with youth and their families to help youth reunify with their parents.
Special Immigrant Juvenile Status (SIJS)	SIJS allows youth under age 21 who cannot be reunited with their parents due to abuse, neglect, or abandonment, to apply for a green card and remain in the U.S. legally.
Suspension	When a school temporarily sends a student home as punishment for the student's behavior.
Transitional Independent Living Plan (TILP)	A plan to help a youth prepare for exiting the child welfare system and being a successful adult. Youth should write their first TILP with their social worker when they are 15 or 16 years old. The TILP must be updated every six months.
Transition Jurisdiction	<p>Former wards who meet certain requirements can participate in extended foster care without having to remain under delinquency jurisdiction. For those under 18, transition jurisdiction is available if the youth:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. is subject to an order for foster care placement; 2. is between 17.5-18 years of age; 3. no longer requires the supervision of the delinquency court because they have met their rehabilitative goals; 4. is at risk of abuse and neglect and cannot be returned to the parental home safely; and, 5. intends to meet the nonminor dependent participation requirements. <p>Youth who are under an order for foster care placement on their 18th birthdays are eligible for extended foster care and would enter transition jurisdiction when they meet the terms of their probation (as long as they are under 21 years old).</p>
Tribal Customary	An option for Indian children who are dependents that allows

Adoption	them to be adopted through customs and laws of the child's tribe without terminating parental rights of their parents.
Written Consent	A written agreement, approval, or permission for something to happen.