



Senate Committee on Human Services, January 21, 2025
Presentation by: Alexis Amorelli, Foster Care Ombudsman (FCO)

Oregon's Foster Care Ombudsman

Operates under the Oregon Department of Human Services (ODHS)

- Within the independent and impartial Governor's Advocacy Office (GAO)
- Separate from all ODHS programs, including Child Welfare

Key Responsibilities:

- YES (Youth, Empowerment, and Safety) phone line
- Authority to receive, investigate, and address concerns
- Advocate for youth, the Foster Children's Bill of Rights (FCBoR) and Sibling Bill of Rights (SBoR)
- Access to the Child Welfare Case Management System
- Engagement with Child Welfare leadership
- Trend identification and reporting

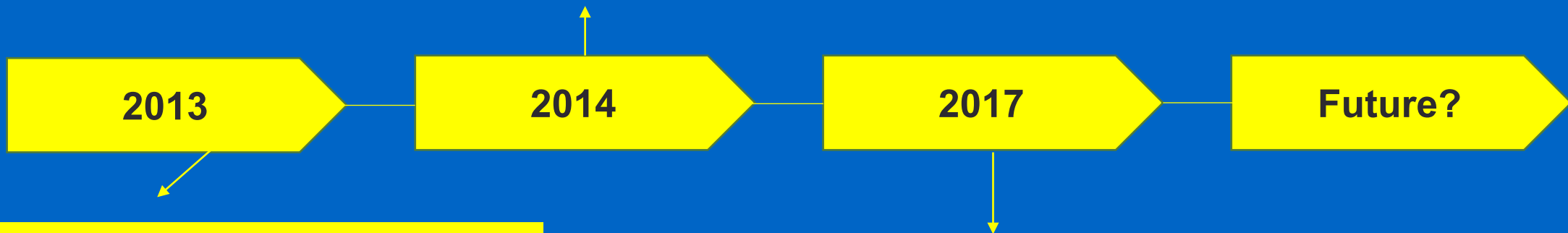
January 21, 2025



History of Foster Care Ombudsman

FCBoR Becomes Law

Oregon's Foster Children's Bill of Rights was created by Senate Bill 123 and officially signed into law. Oregon's first Foster Care Ombudsman was hired to receive concerns directly from youth and their advocates.



FCBoR Concept Created

Oregon Foster Youth Connection (OFYC) developed the Foster Children's Bill of Rights for youth experiencing foster care in the state of Oregon.

Sibling Bill of Rights

OFYC continued their championing for youth experiencing foster care in Oregon, building Oregon's Foster Children's Sibling Bill of Rights.

Voices of Youth Senate Bill 123 2013

- “If SB123 passes into law, foster youth in the state of Oregon will have a private hotline in which youth can make formal and private complaints. This would not be a whole office dedicated to the hotline for private complaints, but simply one phone, one answering machine, and one helpful tool for foster youth.”
- “Passing SB123 empowers youth like me and gives foster youth a sense of control over our own destiny. With your support we can give youth the power to navigate foster care far more effectively, if they chose to, and with your support we can make this difficult situation more manageable.”
- “As a foster child, all you want to know is that someone has your back. By educating foster children about their rights and setting up a grievance procedure if their rights are violated, we make one solid push to give foster kids safety and protection. That’s the very minimum any parent wants for their kid.”

Oregon Foster Children's Bill of Rights

ORS 418.200 – 418.202 / OAR 413-010-0180

- Created by youth who wanted better for themselves and other youths experiencing foster care in Oregon.

**OREGON FOSTER CHILDREN'S BILL OF RIGHTS
AS A CHILD OR YOUTH IN FOSTER CARE,
I HAVE THE RIGHT:**

TO HAVE WHAT EVERY CHILD NEEDS:

- * A permanent family
- * A home where I am part of the family and am treated as such
- * Nutritious food that meets my dietary needs
- * Clean and appropriate clothes that fit me and correspond to a gender identity of my choice
- * Safe housing
- * Free access to soap, shampoo, toothpaste and other hygiene needs that are necessary for my gender, age, individual health and ethnic needs
- * A safe and appropriate sleeping arrangement and adequate space for my personal belongings
- * To keep my belongings, including things I buy and gifts I receive, if I have to move
- * Access to a working telephone

TO BE SAFE:

- * To be treated with respect
- * To be appropriately disciplined
- * To be protected from physical, mental, emotional and sexual abuse including exploitation and trafficking
- * To tell my caseworker, judge or the Foster Care Ombudsman when contact with someone is harmful to me or inappropriate so that I can be protected without fear of retaliation
- * To be free from group punishment

TO SEE AND TALK TO PEOPLE I CARE ABOUT:

- * To visit and communicate with a parent or guardian, siblings, members of my family, and other significant people in my life, knowing that reasonable limits may be set by DHS and the court
- * To visit and communicate with friends and other significant people except when DHS or the court determines that contact may be unsafe or emotionally harmful
- * To participate in age appropriate activities with my peers, so long as the activity is not restricted by DHS and the court

TO BE HEALTHY:

- * To have routine check-ups to keep me healthy
- * To see a nurse or a doctor if I am sick and request medical attention
- * To have the medical, dental, and mental health care I need with a qualified appropriate provider
- * To be included in discussion and make decisions about my own body and my physical or mental health
- * To have or receive competent, understandable information about me and my family's medical history as appropriate and authorized by law

TO LEARN:

- * To be provided with age-appropriate educational opportunities and schooling to prepare me for adult life
- * To have the opportunity to participate in activities that interest me, including sports, arts, music or others
- * To receive extra help and tutoring if I am struggling in my school or educational placement
- * To make choices about my classes (electives, advanced placement, or college prep) and schools where the law allows me to
- * To receive age-appropriate information and assistance with enrolling in college or vocational education

TO HAVE MY RIGHTS PROTECTED:

- * To have an attorney if I want one, and to request the judge appoint a CASA to my case
- * To talk to my attorney in private
- * To be notified of court hearings, reviews by the Citizen Review Board, and what is being decided about me and my family, taking into account my age and developmental stage
- * To be invited to and provided transportation to court, taking into account my age and developmental stage, and to be able to talk to the judge in court about what I want and need
- * To decide whether or not I want my attorney and/or CASA to speak for me
- * To call the Foster Care Ombudsman Office (free from retaliation from my foster parents or anyone else) if my rights are violated or my needs are not being met

TO BE IN A PLACE THAT MEETS MY NEEDS:

- * To be in a foster care placement close to my family so that I can visit and maintain relationships important to me, if it is safe and in my best interest, and as determined by my case plan, visitation plan, or the court
- * To have reasonable input in my bedroom in the house or residence where I am living
- * To have a choice and have rules that are clear and fair with the children assigned to me from the beginning

TO MAKE DECISIONS FOR MYSELF:

- * To tell the court where I want to live and whether or not I want to be adopted
- * To receive respect, be nurtured, and attend activities in accordance with my background, religious heritage, race, and culture within reasonable guidelines. To be allowed to buy and groom myself according to my identity and within good boundaries for my health
- * To determine and express my social identity for myself
- * To make major decisions that are in accordance with the law, my maturity, and my best interests

TO BE INFORMED:

- * About financial support areas including allowance, obtaining account and getting a job
- * About services and programs of the Department of Human Services that can provide me with support
- * About where I can go for help
- * About how to access my case no charge
- * About documents I will receive in foster care regarding my education and employment such as my Social Security card (or mail license or other form of state ID)

UNDERSTAND THAT THE MY LIFE AND RIGHTS ARE TO PROTECT ME AND HELP ME MAKE GOOD DECISIONS. WHEN I CAN CONTACT MY ATTORNEY TO ADVOCATE TO HELP ME IN THEM PRIVATELY. IF I DON'T SO, I CAN CONTACT THE OMBUDSMAN AT YOUTH AND SAFETY (Y.E.S.) OR FCO.INFO@STATE.OREGON.GOV TO TALK ABOUT MY PROBLEMS.

This document can be provided upon request in an alternate format for individuals with disabilities or in a language other than English for people with limited English skills. To request this publication in another format or language, contact 503-378-3486 or 503-378-3523 for TTY.

DHS 9014 – BoR Poster

**OREGON FOSTER CHILDREN'S BILL OF RIGHTS
I HAVE THE RIGHT TO:**

S SAFE HOME WHERE I FEEL PROTECTED

A ATTEND SCHOOL, SPORTS, CLUBS AND ACTIVITIES

F FAMILY — LIVE WITH A FAMILY THAT CARES ABOUT ME AND PROTECTS ME

E EAT AND HAVE HEALTHY FOOD AT EVERY MEAL

T THINGS — TO HAVE MY OWN THINGS (TOYS, CLOTHES, BLANKET...)

Y YES, I CAN ALWAYS CONTACT MY ATTORNEY, CASEWORKER, CASA OR FOSTER CARE OMBUDSMAN IF I HAVE QUESTIONS OR PROBLEMS

WHO CAN I CALL?

If you wish to make a call and need an adult to help, you can ask a foster parent or caregiver at the home, a teacher, a church member or another adult friend that you trust.

Call or email the Foster Care Ombudsman at the Youth, Empowerment and Safety (Y.E.S.) Line at 1-855-840-6036 or FCO.info@state.oreg.gov.

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DHS
Oregon Department of Human Services
DHS 9020 (04/2023)

DHS 9020 –
"Younger Child" BoR Poster


Oregon Foster Children's Bill of Rights...continued

Current and updated contact information for adults responsible for the care of the youth and involved in the Child Welfare case, including but not limited to:

- Caseworker
- Caseworker's Supervisor
- Child's Attorney
- CASA
- Tribal Worker
- ILP Provider

OREGON FOSTER CHILDREN'S BILL OF RIGHTS IMPORTANT CONTACT INFORMATION		
Child's or youth's name: _____		
Case number/OR-Kids number: _____		
Caseworker _____	Email _____	Phone _____
Supervisor _____	Email _____	Phone _____
Certifier _____	Email _____	Phone _____
Certifier's supervisor _____	Email _____	Phone _____
Branch manager _____	Email _____	Phone _____
After-hours phone number in case of an emergency (optional): _____		
Attorney _____	Phone/email _____	
* Court Appointed Special Advocate (CASA) _____	Phone/email _____	
* Independent Living Program (ILP) provider _____	Phone/email _____	
Local Citizen Review Board (CRB) Coordinator _____	Phone/email _____	
Y.E.S. (Youth, Empowerment & Safety) line Foster Care Ombudsman	1-855-840-6036 FCO.info@state.or.us Phone/email _____	
IF IN A FOSTER CARE AGENCY OR RESIDENTIAL PROGRAM		
Licensing staff _____	Phone/email _____	
IF AN ICWA CASE		
Tribal affiliation _____	Tribal worker _____	Phone/email _____
OTHER SUPPORTIVE ADULTS AND ADVOCATES		
_____	Phone/email _____	
_____	Phone/email _____	
Date provided to child/youth _____	DHS staff providing/explaining list to youth _____	Role _____

WWW.OREGON.GOV/DHS/CHILDREN/FOSTERCARE/PAGES/IND_LIVING/ILP.ASPX
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 **DHS**
Oregon Department of Human Services
DHS 9015 (07/2017)

**DHS 9015 -
Important Contact Information Sheet**

Oregon Foster Children's Bill of Rights....continued

14+ acknowledge the document was received and rights explained.

“How do I” information includes:

- Establishing a bank account
- Acquiring a driver's license
- How to remain in care after turning 18 years old
- College tuition and fee waivers
- Obtaining a credit report
- Medical care without parental consent
- Comprehensive Transition Plan

TO HAVE MY RIGHTS PROTECTED:

- ★ To have an attorney if I want one, and to request the judge appoint a CASA to my case
- ★ To talk to my attorney in private
- ★ To talk to my CASA in private
- ★ To be notified of court hearings, reviews by the Citizen Review Board, and what is being decided about me and my family, taking into account my age and developmental stage
- ★ To be invited to and provided transportation to court, taking into account my age and developmental stage, and to be able to talk to the judge in court about what I want and need
- ★ To decide whether or not I want my attorney and/or CASA to speak for me
- ★ To call the Foster Care Ombudsman Office (free from retaliation from my foster parents or anyone else) if my rights are violated or my needs are not being met

TO BE IN A PLACE THAT MEETS MY NEEDS:

- ★ To be in a foster care placement close to my family so that I can visit and maintain relationships important to me, if it's safe and in my best interest, and as deemed by my case plan, visitation plan, or the court
- ★ To have reasonable access to my bedroom in the house or residence where I am living
- ★ To have a curfew and house rules that are clear and fair and to have them explained to me from the beginning

TO MAKE DECISIONS FOR MYSELF:

- ★ To tell the court where I want to live and whether or not I want to be adopted
- ★ To receive respect, be nurtured, and attend activities in accordance with my background, religious heritage, race, and culture within reasonable guidelines. To be allowed to dress and groom myself according to my culture, identity and within good hygiene standards for my health
- ★ To determine and express my gender and sexual identity for myself
- ★ To make major decisions that affect my life, in accordance with the law, my age and ability

TO BE INFORMED:

- ★ About financial support available to me, including allowance, obtaining a bank account and getting a job
- ★ About services and programs within or outside of the Department of Human Services that can provide me with support
- ★ About where I can go for help
- ★ About how the child welfare system works
- ★ About how to access my case records at no charge
- ★ About documents I will receive upon leaving foster care regarding my education, health and employment such as my birth certificate, Social Security card (or number) driver's license or other form of state photo ID

I UNDERSTAND THAT THE ADULTS IN MY LIFE MAKE RULES AND SET LIMITS TO PROTECT ME AND HELP ME MAKE GOOD DECISIONS. WHEN I NEED TO, I CAN CONTACT MY ATTORNEY OR CASA TO HELP ME AND TALK TO THEM PRIVATELY. IF I EVER NEED TO DO SO, I CAN TALK TO THE FOSTER CARE OMBUDSMAN ON THE YOUTH, EMPOWERMENT AND SAFETY (Y.E.S.) LINE BY 1-855-940-6036 OR FCO.INFO@STATE.OR.US ABOUT MY PROBLEM.

Foster Child/Youth's Name

ORKIDS Case Number & Person ID

Child/Youth's Signature or Acknowledgement Rights Have Been Explained

DHS Caseworker or Supportive Adult's Name

DHS Caseworker or Supportive Adult's Signature

Date Rights Explained to Foster Child/Youth

DHS 9018 (07/2017)



OREGON FOSTER CHILDREN'S BILL OF RIGHTS

AS A CHILD OR YOUTH IN FOSTER CARE, HOW DO I...?



DHS 9018 - “How Do I...?”
brochure

Oregon Foster Children's Sibling Bill of Rights

Foster Children's Sibling Bill of Rights

**OREGON FOSTER CHILDREN'S
SIBLING BILL OF RIGHTS
I HAVE THE RIGHT:**

- ★ To live in the same home as my siblings if possible
- ★ To see and talk to my siblings in person, through letters, by phone, email or in other electronic ways
- ★ To help make a plan that lists how my siblings and I will see and talk to each other
- ★ To be able to talk and visit with my siblings in a natural setting with privacy
- ★ To be told why I cannot live with, talk to or see my siblings if I am not able to
- ★ To have help with transportation so that I can see and talk to my siblings
- ★ To live with foster parents who are trained on the importance of sibling relationships
- ★ To work with caseworkers who are trained on the importance of sibling relationships
- ★ To have continued sibling contact and visits encouraged whenever my siblings or I are going to be in a guardianship or adoption
- ★ To be told when my siblings who are in foster care experience life events including emergencies or changes in their living situations
- ★ To request that my attorney advocate for me and represent my wishes for seeing and talking with my siblings

THERE ARE ADULTS IN MY LIFE WHO MAKE RULES AND SET LIMITS TO MAKE SURE MY ACTIVITIES AND THE PEOPLE IN MY LIFE ARE SAFE AND APPROPRIATE.



IF I HAVE QUESTIONS OR NEED HELP, I CAN ASK AN ADULT I TRUST OR CALL THE FOSTER CARE OMBUDSMAN AT YOUTH, EMPOWERMENT AND SAFETY (Y.E.S.), 1-855-840-6036 OR FCO.INFO@STATE.OR.US.

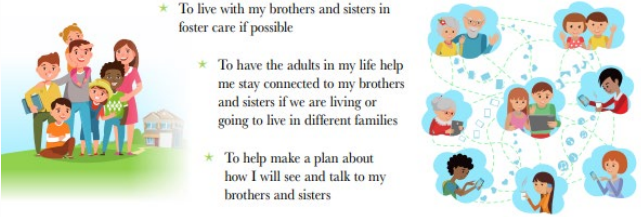


DHS
Oregon Department of Human Services

You can get this document in other languages, large print, braille or a format you prefer. Contact 503-378-3486. We accept all relay calls or you can dial 711.

CF 0262 (12/2017)

**OREGON FOSTER CHILDREN'S
SIBLING BILL OF RIGHTS
I HAVE THE RIGHT:**

- ★ To live with my brothers and sisters in foster care if possible
- ★ To have the adults in my life help me stay connected to my brothers and sisters if we are living or going to live in different families
- ★ To help make a plan about how I will see and talk to my brothers and sisters
- ★ To be told why I cannot live with, talk to or see my brothers and sisters if I am not able to
- ★ To have foster parents and caseworkers who know how important my brothers and sisters are to me
- ★ To be told if something changes with my brothers and sisters
- ★ To have my attorney tell the other adults in my life how I want to talk to and see my brothers and sisters

IF I HAVE QUESTIONS OR NEED HELP, I CAN ASK AN ADULT I TRUST OR CALL THE FOSTER CARE OMBUDSMAN AT YOUTH, EMPOWERMENT AND SAFETY (Y.E.S.), 1-855-840-6036 OR FCO.INFO@STATE.OR.US.

DHS
Oregon Department of Human Services

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CF 0262 (12/2017)



Quarterly and Annual Reports

Foster Care Ombudsman quarterly and annual reports are available on the **FCO web page**:

www.oregon.gov/odhs/about/Pages/foster-care-ombuds.aspx

Thank you! Questions?
