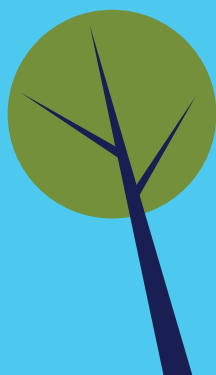


FOSTER CARE

handbook for youth



LUTHERAN SOCIAL SERVICE OF MINNESOTA

An illustration of a yellow house with a blue roof and a blue window with six panes. To the right of the house is a blue tree with a green circular canopy. The background is a solid orange color. A white curved line starts from the top right and curves down to the left, framing the scene. A white path with blue dashed lines leads from the bottom left towards the house.

**We are honored
to be here for you.**

We coordinate services, help you **set goals** for your future and find resources to help you **reach your goals.**

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THIS GUIDE is designed to answer questions about what you will experience, outline rights and expectations, and provide a place for you to record important contact information.

LUTHERAN SOCIAL SERVICE OF MN FOSTER CARE FAMILIES AND STAFF

are dedicated to supporting you as you experience foster care and out-of-home placement. It is our job to ensure you are well cared for and safe.

WHAT IS FOSTER CARE?

Foster care exists so you can **be safe** until your parents or caregivers are able to provide a safe home again. Where you are placed depends on your needs.

Your caseworker tries to find a placement that can be a home for you and your siblings close to your neighborhood. It is important that you tell your case worker about family or friends who may provide a good home or **be a support for you.**



Relative & Kinship Care

A relative/kinship placement is a home where you live with a relative, such as a grandparent, aunt, uncle or cousin.

This is the preferred type of placement care your caseworker will try to find for you.



Supervised Independent Living Arrangement

Living on your own with supportive services.



*The most common
types of placements are:*

Foster Home

A foster home is a family home licensed by the State of Minnesota.

A licensed home means foster parents have attended foster parent training, and their home is considered safe and appropriate for you. A foster home may be headed by an individual or a couple.

It is usually the next type of placement your caseworker will try to find for you if a relative/kinship placement is not available.

Residential Care

A residential placement is where multiple youth live together and are cared for by a staff of trained professionals.

Residential placement is available for youth with behavioral concerns who need specific treatment.

The goal of residential care is to provide treatment so you can move back to kinship or foster home placement.

Pre-Adoptive Placement

A pre-adoptive placement is a home where the parents are committed to adopting you. Children and youth are sometimes adopted by other family members, friends or foster parents.

Adoption does not mean you have to change your name or lose contact with your siblings and family. It means you have a lifelong committed family.

YOUR TEAM

All the people involved in your care are part of your team.

They will work together with you to make decisions about your living situation, your needs, your health care and your education. A team may consist of your birth parents, relatives, a lawyer, your Guardian ad Litem (a guardian appointed by the court), a mental health professional, your case worker, teachers, or others.



Confidentiality



The information LSS learns about you and your family will remain private. LSS will only share this information with your permission or as necessary to coordinate your care and safety.

Team Meetings

Your team will meet at least every three months and will be facilitated by an LSS mental health worker. The purpose of the meeting is to ensure that your placement is a safe and supportive environment and that all of the people involved in making decisions about your care are part of the team.

Goals for your support and care will be reviewed and discussed at this meeting.



You have the right...

- To know who is on your team helping make decisions about you and your future.
- To know what decisions are made.
- To have the opportunity to give your feedback and input about those decisions.

YOUR RIGHTS



You have the right to...

- Know what your rights are and how to file a complaint if you feel your rights are being violated.
- Be told why you are in foster care and why you remain in foster care.
- Live in a safe, healthy home where you are treated with respect, have a place to keep your things, receive healthy food, adequate clothing, and appropriate personal hygiene products.
- Have personal belongings secure and transported with you.
- Have caring foster parents and caregivers who are properly trained, have received background checks, screenings, and adequate support from LSS to help ensure stability in your placement.
- Be placed in a home with your brothers and sisters when possible, and to maintain regular contact with your siblings, when separated (including help with transportation), unless otherwise ordered by the court.
- Attend school and participate in extracurricular, cultural, and personal enrichment activities.
- Expect confidentiality from the adults involved in your case.
- Be protected from physical, sexual, emotional or other abuse, including corporal punishment (hitting or spanking as a punishment), or being locked in a room.
- Make and receive phone calls and to receive mail unless prohibited by caseworker or the court.



- Have visits with biological parents or other relatives, unless prohibited by the court. You may also speak to your foster care worker or Guardian ad Litem about unwanted visits. Visitations may not be canceled, postponed or denied as a disciplinary measure.
- Have regular contact with caseworkers, attorneys, and advocates, and be allowed to have confidential conversations with them.
- Be told by your caseworker and your attorney about any changes in your case plan and your placement and receive honest information about the decisions that affect your life.
- Attend religious services of your choice, and to preserve your cultural heritage.
- Be represented by an attorney with access to fair hearings and court reviews of decisions, so your best interests are safeguarded.
- Be involved in the development of your plan and to express your objections during reviews.
- Have a plan for your future, including a 90-day transitional plan and annual transition plan (for leaving foster care when your case closes), and to be provided services to help you prepare to become a successful adult.
- Adequate medical care, including dental and mental health care.
- Know what and why your doctor prescribed medications and to refuse to take medications, herbs, and vitamins.

YOUR RESPONSIBILITIES

You have the responsibility to...

- Accurately report any violations to your caseworker and to not be involved in the physical, sexual or emotional abuse toward others.
- Speak up if you have questions or concerns about your situation, your plan or your care.
- Treat your caregiver(s) and other household members fairly and with respect.
- Treat others' personal belongings with respect.
- Be understanding toward other people and speak up if something is wrong.
- Develop and maintain healthy sibling relationships, and to respect healthy boundaries.
- Reach your full academic ability.
- Respect the confidentiality of others, unless it pertains to abuse.
- Be on time and ready for visits and to treat family members with respect.
- Treat caseworkers, attorneys, advocates and all officers of the court with respect.
- Respect caregivers' rights to their religious beliefs and their cultural background.
- Attend court and speak to a judge about what you want to have happen in your case.
- Be actively involved in your plan and to advocate for your needs.
- Be actively involved in using these services for your own benefit.
- Refrain from using illegal substances or substances that are detrimental to your health.

GRIEVANCE PROCESS

If you feel you have been unfairly or inappropriately treated in your foster home or by your mental health practitioner, you have the right to complain to your foster parent, the mental health practitioner or the foster care coordinator. Complaints will be given prompt and careful attention and, when needed, corrective action will be taken. Your foster parents have a process for dealing with your concerns. Ask them for their procedure.

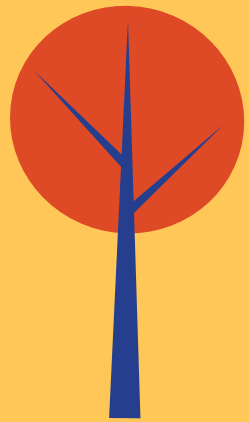
The following steps need to be followed.

- You will put your complaint in writing, including what happened, when and why it is viewed as a violation of foster care rights.
- Your foster care coordinator will receive and review the complaint.
- Your foster care coordinator will set up an in person meeting with you to review the complaint and discuss what actions can be taken to correct the situation.



PLANNING YOUR FUTURE

When you turn 18...



If you'll be turning 18 in the next couple years,

adulthood is just around the corner. As you transition to adulthood, you may have the option to remain in LSS foster care until age 21. This option may give you more financial and emotional support than closing your foster care relationship. Every person is different, and you will need to determine what is right for you.

You will need to consider many things as you transition out of foster care to independence. Having trusted adults who can support you will help ensure your success. They can be a resource for asking questions, can help you celebrate your victories, and be someone to lean on when life is stressful.

If you decide not to extend your foster care relationship with Lutheran Social Service of Minnesota, other supportive services are available to you. Your case worker will discuss your options with you before you turn 18.

Lutheran Social Service can help you learn life skills necessary to transition to successful independence.

You will need to know

- How to do laundry
- Basic house cleaning and safety
- Money management, budgeting and banking
- Grocery shopping on a budget, cooking and good nutrition
- How to organize information and files for taxes, paying your bills and keeping medical records
- How to find medical care and health insurance
- How to find a job and maintain your employment successfully.



PLANNING YOUR FUTURE

Continued...

Housing

If you are not living with a committed family when your foster case closes, you will need to find a place to live. Think about what kind of living situation might work for you and create a plan.

Your plan should include such things as:

- A budget to cover housing costs, utilities and food
- Whether there is anyone you trust to share housing with – having a roommate can be a great way to save on expenses
- Is it near to your job or school or near public transportation that can get you to your job or school
- Is the neighborhood safe

Employment

You will need a job to pay for rent, food, bills and other needs. Think about what career you want to have and the post-secondary education you need to achieve it. Explore internships and volunteer experiences – these will help build your résumé and networking connections. Your school counselor or caseworker can guide you through how to write a résumé.





Education

A high school diploma is critical for any job opportunity and is necessary if you want to go to college. You should know if you are on track to graduate on time. If you are not, work with your school counselor and/or caseworker to make sure you have a plan to graduate.

In addition to having a plan to graduate high school, you should also have a plan for post-secondary school, such as vocational training, community college, or a four-year university. Extracurricular activities such as volunteer work, sports, creative arts, theatre, or student council, are also good ways to increase your chances of acceptance into post-secondary education. Financial resources are available to help you further your education. Ask your case worker and school counselor to help you locate financial resources for post-secondary education.

Health

You will need health insurance and health care providers, including someone you can go to for help with mental and emotional needs. Your caseworker can help you identify health insurance providers. Know what it covers and what you will have to pay for yourself. If you can, work with your case worker before leaving foster care to identify doctors, dentists, therapists and emergency care.

Community Resources

There are many organizations, as well as Lutheran Social Service, who provide services that can be a support to you, such as after school programs, community centers, food banks, donation centers, child care agencies, and many more. Spend some time before you leave foster care identifying community resources that may be of interest in the future. Compile a list of them with contact information. Knowing what resources are in your community will help you know where to turn as you encounter the need for support during your transition and in the future.

LEGAL DOCUMENTS

Legal Documents & Case History Records

You have the right to see your records when you turn 18. Your case worker will be with you when you see them for the first time to lend support and answer questions as needed.

You will also want to have your own personal copies of the following legal documents:

- Your Social Security card. You can apply online for one or for a replacement card: www.ssa.gov
- Your birth certificate. You can get an authorized copy of your birth certificate from the town hall or county services office where you were born.
- A legal photo ID. A driver's license will act as a legal photo ID. If you do not have a drivers license, you can obtain a MN Identification card from the Minnesota Department of Motor Vehicles: www.minnesotadriversLicense.org





Our goal is to help you gain healthy independence and self-sufficiency as you become a legal adult. Respect and safety are key to our successful partnership – we need and expect your active involvement in planning and decision making for your future.

We want to hear from you...

Our success in supporting you is dependent on two-way communication.

If you do not find the answers to your questions here, please ask your case worker, foster parent or other trusted adults.





CONTACT INFORMATION & RESOURCES

Track important individuals and their contact information by filling in this chart.



Contact Title	Contact Name
Case Worker	
Guardian Ad Litem	
Lawyer	
Mental Health Practitioner	
LSS Foster Care Coordinator	
Organization / Name	Services Provided

Notes...



Weekday Phone #	Weekend Phone #	Email Address

Weekday Phone #	Weekend Phone #	Email Address



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