



DHR FOSTER YOUTH  
**OMBUDSMAN**  
(om-buds-muhn)

*Youth in Foster Care Have Rights*

The Maryland Department of Human Resources (DHR) helps protect your rights and this year hired a Foster Youth Ombudsman to be your personal advocate

**Angela Neal**, your new **Foster Youth Ombudsman**, is **your go-to person for help** with any issues. **For Example:** Any issues concerning your care, placement, or services.

Her mission is to ensure you are **safe, comfortable** and **healthy**, that **your voice** is heard, your **needs** are **met**. And to improve the quality of services that you receive while in foster care. **Confidential!** Report concerns without fear of retaliation. Angela will always keep your identity confidential, except when required by law (such as reports of child abuse, neglect or threats to harm oneself or others).

Go to MyLife at : <http://mdconnectmylife.org>

Learn more about your rights and other useful topics by visiting [www.dhr.state.md.us](http://www.dhr.state.md.us), clicking on Foster Care and selecting Foster Youth Rights



If at any time you feel your rights are being violated, don't hesitate to call DHR at

**1-800-332-6347**

and say "**young person in foster care feeling unfairly treated**"  
ask to speak to **Angela Neal**.

You can also email **Angela Neal** at: [fco.dhr@maryland.gov](mailto:fco.dhr@maryland.gov)



Maryland's Human Services Agency



## What are **my rights** as a child or youth in foster care?

While in foster care, you have certain rights, including the ones listed here. If you feel your rights are not being protected, talk to your caseworker and/or your lawyer about your concerns.

### As a child or youth in foster care, you have the right:

- To be free from abuse, neglect and exploitation.
- To fair treatment, whatever your gender, gender identity, race, ethnicity, religion, national origin, disability, medical problems, or sexual orientation.
- To visit and have regular contact with your parents, siblings, and other family members (unless a court order limits your contact) and to have your caseworker explain any restrictions to you and write them in your case record.
- To know:
  - *Why you are in foster care?*
  - *What will happen to you?*
  - *What is happening to your family (including siblings) and how the local department of social services is planning for your future?*
- To attend court hearings, speak with the Judge and/or Master, and receive a copy of the court documents for your records.
- To actively participate in your case planning process.
- To be placed in school within five (5) days of entering an out-of-home placement.
- To be involved in your educational planning.
- To request a meeting with your caseworker and foster parents if there are concerns about your current living arrangement.
- To have your own bed while in foster care.
- To speak and be spoken to in your own language when possible.
- NOT to share a room with an adult.
- To receive meals in your foster care placement.
- To store your belongings in a safe place.
- To have privacy when you take a bath, shower, and get dressed.
- To contact your caseworker, attorney, and/or CASA worker (when appropriate).
- To receive medical, dental, vision care, and developmental & mental health services that are paid for through the Medical Assistance Program. *These services include a yearly physical and eye and dental examinations twice a year.*
- To tell your caseworker that you are no longer interested in foster care after your 18th birthday.
- To remain in foster care until your 21st birthday if you are not prepared to exit care.
- To return to foster care if you leave foster care after you are 18 years old up until 20.6 years old and meet the criteria for Enhanced After Care.
- To receive an annual credit report, and assistance in fixing inaccuracies (if you are at least 14 years old or older).
- To participate in age or developmentally appropriate activities.
- To receive an "Annual Notice of Benefits" brochure every year.