



Jay & Campbell

The Florida Foster Parent Rights Checklist



Know your rights before your next hearing.

You may have the most day-to-day knowledge of the child in that courtroom ; walk in knowing your role as well as you know the child.



What You Can Ask For



Notice of every hearing. If a child in your care has a hearing, you are entitled to know about it; in advance, not after the fact.



To be heard by the judge. You don't have to be a "party" to have a voice. You can address the court in person or in writing at any hearing involving the child.



To submit caregiver input before each judicial review. A written caregiver report puts your observations in the record ; where they can't be summarized away.



Information you need to care for the child. Medical, educational, and behavioral information relevant to the child's daily care should be shared with you, not kept from you.



To make everyday parenting decisions. Under Florida's reasonable and prudent parent standard, normal childhood activities: sleepovers, sports, school trips, don't require agency sign-off one event at a time.



To participate in case planning and staffings. Meetings about a child living in your home should include the person the child lives with.



Your own attorney. At any time, for any reason, chosen by you, not assigned, suggested, or screened by anyone else.



What Agencies Can't Do



Keep you out of the loop. Hearings, placement decisions, and case changes affecting the child in your care aren't need-to-know — you are the need-to-know.



Silence you in court. “You’re not a party” is not the same as “you may not speak.” The court can and should hear from caregivers.



Punish you for advocating. Requesting records, asking questions, or hiring an attorney is not grounds for retaliation, and retaliation is worth documenting the moment it starts.



Enforce “rules” with no legal basis. Not every instruction is backed by statute or rule. You can ask: what is the legal authority for this? And you can ask for it in writing.



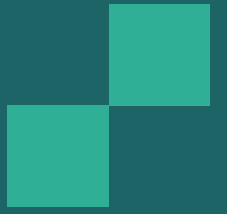
Substitute verbal promises for paperwork. If you’re entitled to sign or receive a document, a reassuring phone call is not that document.



Move a child without process. Placement changes have required procedures. “It’s been decided” is not a procedure.



Questions to Bring to Court...



What is the current permanency goal — and has anything changed since the last review?



Which case plan tasks and services are incomplete — and whose responsibility are they? Case plans assign tasks to everyone, not just parents.



What deadlines fall before the next hearing?



How do I get my input into the record, caregiver report, letter, or testimony?



What decisions am I authorized to make for the child under the reasonable and prudent parent standard?



Is there anything the court needs from me as the caregiver before the next review?

Florida Family Formation · flfamilyformation.com



NOTES — NOT FOR PUBLICATION

Educational only; not legal advice. Your rights depend on your specific circumstances and placement type. For questions about your situation, consult a licensed Florida attorney.