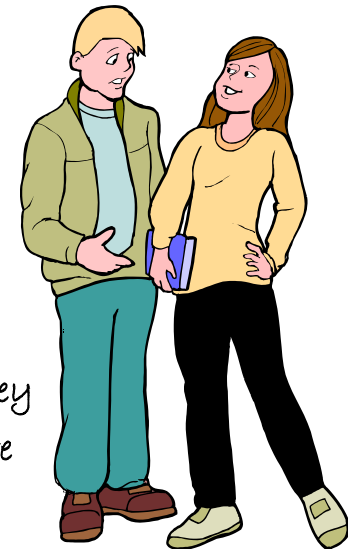


A GUIDE FOR
CHILDREN & YOUTH
IN FOSTER CARE



Written for Boys and Girls to Help Them Understand



"Now we're 'Casey Kids'! What are our rights and responsibilities?"

Designed by
Casey's Youth
Advisory
Board,
Vermont
Division

Casey Family Services



Drawn by
Sara M., age 18

*"Our horizon is as distant as
our mind's eye wishes it to
be... let us get a clear
understanding of our
objectives. Only then will we
be able to map out the
highways, and skyways,
and byways that will take
us there."*

Jim Casey

Leah Abrahamsen, MSW Intern

Administrative Project, 2003

Springfield College School of Social Work



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INTRODUCTION

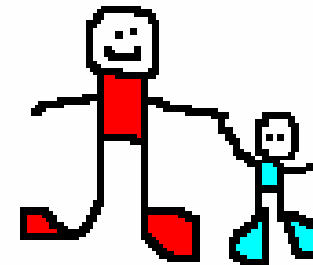
Children come into foster care for many different reasons. Your experiences in foster care in the past may be very different from the relationship you will develop with Casey Family Services.

Casey provides opportunities for children to grow up in safe, loving and resourceful families. The staff and foster families at Casey Family Services are committed to helping you achieve healthy interdependence and self-sufficiency as adults. But we can't do it without your help. We need you to be actively involved in the planning and decision-making about your life and your future.

This booklet shows you some of the issues that involve you when you come into Casey foster care. We hope you will use this as a tool for discussion with your foster parents and social worker.



WELCOME TO

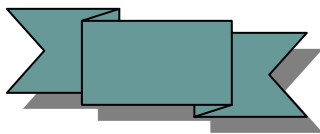


Casey Family Services

Service Plan: A written plan of action based on your needs and strengths that identifies problems, sets goals, describes how those goals will be achieved and plans for support services for you and your family. This plan is reviewed at least every 6 months. You and your family are involved in creating your Service Plan.

SRS or DCYF Worker: a State social worker assigned to you once you come into the state system of foster care. The State system is called SRS (Social and Rehabilitative Services) in Vermont and DCYF (Division for Children, Youth and Families) in New Hampshire.

Treatment Team: The team of people that helps to make sure your needs are met and develop your Service Plan. The team may include you, members of your birth family, your foster family, an SRS or DCYF worker, a lawyer, a Guardian ad Litem, a therapist, a teacher and others who may be able to help provide the best plan and services for your future.



YOUR RIGHTS



You have rights when working with Casey Family Services. Here's what they are -

You have a right to be treated with respect and dignity.

You have a right to feel safe and to be protected from physical, emotional and sexual abuse or neglect.

You have a right to be listened to, respected and heard when important decisions are made concerning you and to receive honest information about those decisions.

You have the right to know who the people are that are helping to make decisions about you and your future.

Along with your Casey social worker and your foster parent(s), you may have one or more of these people on your treatment team:

- *your birth parent(s)
- *a relative
- *an SRS or DCYF worker
- *a lawyer
- *a Guardian ad Litem
- *a therapist
- *a teacher



You have the right to visit regularly with your family, unless a judge or your treatment team recommends supervised or no visits.

You also have the right to express any concerns you have about visitation with your family.

You have the right to a plan of care (or service plan) and a right to participate and make changes in it.

If you're 12 years old or older, you have the right to be notified of court hearings and to attend them, unless the court says it's not in your best interest.

GLOSSARY

Advocacy (advocating): Actions you can take to empower or represent yourself to others. You can also ask others to help (advocate) on your behalf.

Birth or Biological Parents: The person(s) who gave birth to or fathered you.

Foster Care: Care provided to youth when they and no longer remain in their birth family's custody. Foster care includes placement with relatives, foster families, group homes and other placements for children.

Guardian Ad Litem: A volunteer appointed by the court who must decide and present to the court what he or she thinks is in your best interests. Their decision may be different from what you want.

Lawyer: A professional appointed by the court or hired by your family to represent what you want.

Respite: A planned "break" or "vacation" from your family to help reduce problems and stress within the family. Respite is also a chance to add more supportive people to your life, with whom you are comfortable.





CONTACT INFORMATION SHEET

Fill this out with your social worker if you would like some assistance.

Social Worker's Name _____

Address _____

Phone Number _____

E-mail _____

Social Worker's Supervisor _____

Address _____

Phone Number _____

SRS Worker's Name _____

Address _____

Phone Number _____

Therapist's Name _____

Address _____

Phone Number _____

Somebody You Trust _____

Address _____

Phone Number _____

E-mail _____

Casey office, White River Jct. 1-800-607-1400

Casey office, Waterbury 1-800-244-1408



You have the right to personal privacy and your own possessions.

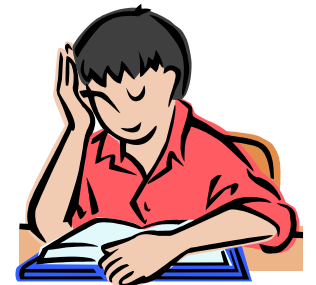
You have the right to wholesome well-balanced meals.

You have the right to appropriate clothing—for your age and activities.

You have the right to receive an education according to your aptitude and ability.

You have the right to regular medical and dental care.

You have the right to participate in recreational and athletic activities that are suited to your interest and ability.



You have the right to send and receive mail that has not been read by others (except in rare cases when mail can be read and examined in your presence).

You have the right to service and care that respects your cultural, religious and regional differences.

You have the right to worship and receive religious instruction, or to choose not to.**

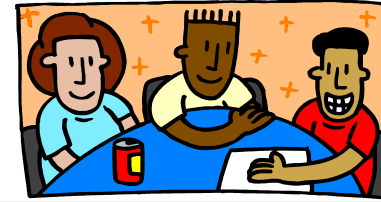
You have the right to appropriate discipline—this means no spanking or slapping.

You have the right to confidentiality regarding all the information about you that is held by Casey Family Services.



** (Unorthodox religions, such as Satanism, may not be acceptable to your foster family and/or social worker.)

HOW TO GET INVOLVED




Casey Family Services has opportunities for you to come together with other Casey youth, to get involved and have fun.

***Youth Advisory Board**—meets monthly to discuss planning of activities and youth involvement in Casey happenings. (open to youth age 15 and older, or 14 year-olds in 9th grade)

***Casey Youth events**—activities, events and gatherings of Casey youth (for example, the Casey-sponsored Teen Conference). There are opportunities to get involved in the planning of these events as well as attend them.

***Diversity Committee**—monthly meetings of Casey staff, foster parents and youth to discuss and plan events related to issues of diversity.

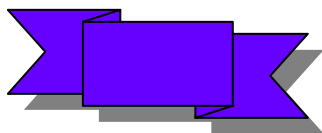
***Life Skills groups**—focused groups for teens on such things as cooking, money-management and other topics; or one-time skill-building classes (for example, changing a tire or car maintenance).



Jim Casey had a dream of wanting to provide good homes for children who needed them. At the age of 77, Jim developed a long-term family-based foster care program to help children who were unable to live with their birth parents—giving them stability and an opportunity to grow into responsible, self-sufficient adults. This program became The Casey Family Program on the west coast in 1966 and Casey Family Services on the east coast in 1976.

"Within each of us there is a mysterious innate force that drives us onward. It wants us to do better and be better. Call that force conscience, ambition, determination, power of will, or whatever you choose, it constantly whispers in our ears words of advice, stimulation and encouragement. If you will heed the voice and utilize that inner power to the limit of its potentialities, nothing on earth can stop you progress."

Jim Casey



CONFIDENTIALITY



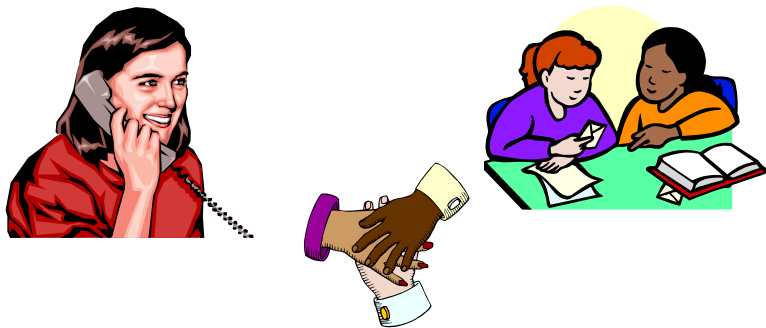
Confidentiality means that information about you and your situation is private. When you come into foster care at Casey Family Services, we learn about you, your family and your history. We put this information in a record and keep adding to the record during your time with Casey. There is an understanding and a promise between you and the agency that Casey Family Services will respect your privacy and not share information about you from your record without your permission, unless it is to meet your needs.

Some confidential information may be shared with professionals and members of your treatment team, but they must also agree to keep the information that is given to them confidential. An example of this might be if you are in danger of harming yourself or someone else or have reported to Casey that someone has hurt you.

Friends or other people may ask why you are no longer living with your family. It is your right to tell or not to tell them about your situation. It may help to talk with your social worker or other adult you trust so you can answer them in a way that lets you feel comfortable.

(Parts of this definition have been adapted from the Maine Department of Human Services' "Answers... A handbook for youth by youth in foster care".)

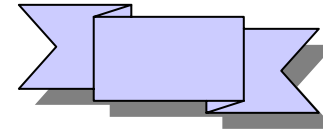
YOUR RESPONSIBILITIES



You have the responsibility to -

- *Follow the rules set by your foster family.
- *Attend school regularly.
- *Keep in touch with your social worker.
- *Respect the property of the home, other children and neighbors.
- *Respect the privacy of others.
- *Notify foster parents of where you are and who you are with.
- *Notify foster parents if you will be late.
- *Accept the consequences set out if any rules are broken.
- *Observe the responsibilities listed in this guide.

JIM CASEY'S VISION



Jim Casey was the founder of United Parcel Service, otherwise known as UPS. In 1907, at the age of 19, Jim borrowed \$100 from a friend and started his delivery company in Seattle, Washington. With a handful of other teenagers, including his brother George, Jim ran his service from a humble office located under the sidewalk. Eventually, Jim's company revolutionized package delivery around the world, and he became a very wealthy man.

Jim never forgot the support that his strong mother provided the family after the death of Jim's father when Jim was young. Jim wanted all children to have that kind of support. As successful adults, Jim and his siblings (George, Harry and Marguerite) combined their wealth and established the Annie E. Casey Foundation in 1948. They named the foundation in honor of their mother. The foundation gave money to organizations that were already set up to help children and families in need.

Casey Family Services will keep its relationship with you over time. We are committed to staying involved in your life until age 23 (unless, after age 18, you don't want us to or you refuse to cooperate with services being provided to you).



REMEMBER...

If you have any questions or problems, you can contact your social worker and get some help or advice.

"Determined people working together can do anything."

Jim Casey

You also have the responsibility to -

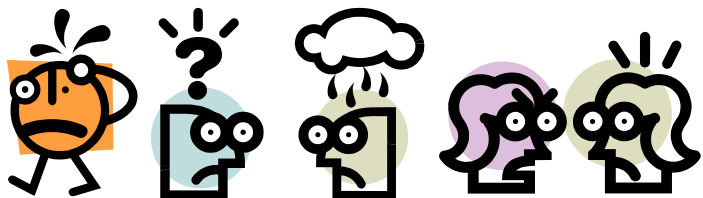
- *Be helpful to others in the home.
- *Maintain personal cleanliness and tidiness.
- *Maintain open communication with your foster family.
- *Cooperate with decisions made about respite.
- *Respect the differences of race, culture, religion, and disabilities of others.
- *Keep scheduled appointments or if you need to cancel, call ahead of time.



"You can't be a big person until you have shown competence as a small one. You can't expect to handle big responsibilities unless you have handled small ones."

Jim Casey

WHO WILL LISTEN?



Life in foster care can be challenging. If you have questions, problems, concerns or just need to talk, you can -

- *call your Casey or SRS social worker
- *talk to your foster parent
- *talk to an adult you trust
 - a teacher
 - your Guardian ad Litem
 - your lawyer
 - a mentor or friend
- *talk to another Casey youth
 - Big Brother/Sister

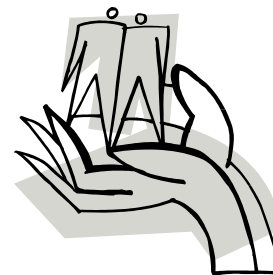
Use the Contact Information Sheet in the back of this guide to keep track of important phone numbers and contact people.



CASEY'S RESPONSIBILITIES

Casey Family Services has the responsibility to ensure your rights by

- *providing a safe, secure place to live
- *making sure your basic care needs are met (for example, clothing, food, medical care)
- *providing access to supportive services such as counseling
- *meeting with you to talk face-to-face at least once a month (You can still call and/or e-mail as often as needed.)
- *reviewing your case and service plan at least once every 6 months
- *keeping information about you and your family confidential, unless sharing the information helps to meet your or your family's needs. For example, giving background information to a therapist may be important.



Some of your legal responsibilities as an adult include the following:

***Voting**—You can register at the Department of Motor Vehicles, your city or town hall or by mail once you turn eighteen.



***Selective Service**—All males between the ages of 18 and 25 are legally required to register for the selective service (the draft). You can do this at your local post office. You cannot receive financial aid for college unless you register.



***Personal Records**—You can and should obtain your own copies of these items: (1) your birth certificate (from the town hall where you were born or the state Department of Public Records), (2) your Social Security card (at the Social Security office), and (3) a picture ID (from the Department of Motor Vehicles), as well as other important records.



ADVOCATING FOR YOURSELF



DO know that you have the right to ask for help.

DO ask for help from an adult that you trust.

DO know that you have control over:

- who you ask for help
- speaking your truths

DO be clear about:

- what's happening
- what you need
- how you feel.

DO be straightforward and truthful.

DO be ready to negotiate.

DO brainstorm different solutions and backup plans.

DON'T feel like you are bothering people.

DON'T hesitate to ask for help.

DON'T think that you have no control.

DON'T think that you have to go through this by yourself.

DON'T think it's too late.

DON'T start without thinking things through.

DON'T use sarcasm or degrading language.

DON'T swear or namecall.

DON'T prejudge others.

DON'T give up.

*adapted from Maine Dept. of Human Svcs. "Answers... a handbook for youth by youth in foster care"

HOW TO MAKE A COMPLAINT



You have the right to present disagreements or complaints to Casey Family Services if you think your rights have been violated or you object to any of the care or treatment you are receiving.

**First*, meet with your social worker to discuss your complaint and try to resolve the problem.

**Then*, if you don't feel satisfied that the issue has been resolved, you can present your complaint to your social worker's supervisor.

**If* there is still no resolution, you can go to the Division Director. The meetings with both the supervisor and/or the Division Director will each be set within 10 days of your request.

Use the Contact Information Sheet at the end of this handbook to keep track of who each of these people are and how to contact them.

WHAT HAPPENS WHEN I TURN 18?

At eighteen everyone becomes a legal adult. You then have all of the legal responsibilities of an adult, including making your own decisions and being responsible for them.

You have the right to see your agency record after the age of 18. Your social worker will be with you as you view your file, in case you need some support.

You can remain in care with Casey after age 18. If you are in school and would like some assistance, your social worker will talk with you about your options before your 18th birthday. You will be asked to create and sign a written agreement identifying your responsibilities and the kinds of support you will receive from Casey Family Services.

