

Twelve States including Pennsylvania have adopted a bill of rights for foster parents.

Increasing Foster Parents role in decision making improves the recruitment and retention of foster parents.



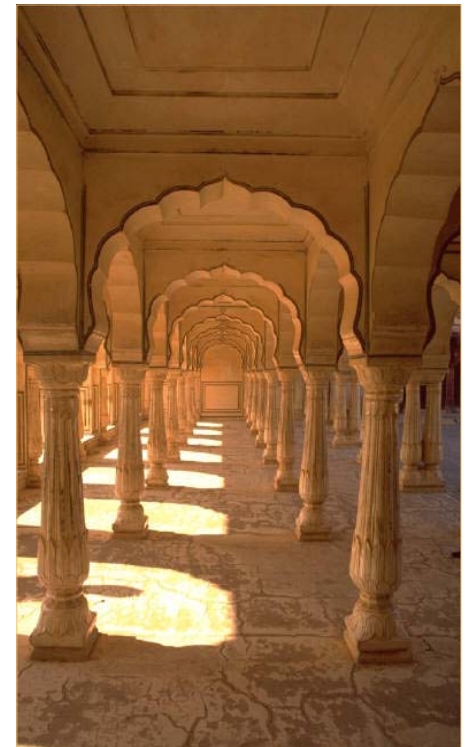
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A SECOND CHANCE INC.

**FOSTER PARENTS
BILL OF RIGHTS**



Bill of Rights

Foster Parents have the *right* to:

1. Be treated with consideration, respect for personal dignity, and privacy.
2. Be included as a valued member of the service team.
3. Receive support services which assist in the care of the child in their home including an open and timely response from agency personnel.
4. Be informed of all information regarding the child that will impact their home or family during the care of the foster child.
5. Have input into the permanency plan for the child in their home.
6. Assurance of safety for their family members.
7. Assistance in dealing with family loss and separation when a child leaves their home.
8. Be informed of all agency policies and procedures that is related to their role as a foster caregiver.
9. Receive training that will enhance their skills and ability to cope as foster caregivers.
10. Be informed of how to receive services and reach personnel on a 24 hour a day 7 day a week basis.
11. Be granted a reasonable plan for relief from the role of foster caregiver.
12. Confidentiality regarding issues that arise in their foster family home.
13. Not to be discriminated against on the basis of religion, race, color, creed, sex, national origin, age or physical handicap.
14. Receive evaluation and feedback on their role of foster caregiver.

PENNSYLVANIA

On November 22, 2005, Pennsylvania Governor Ed Rendell signed a Bill entitled Act 73 of 2005. **The Resource Family Care Act.** This Act became effective January 21, 2006. The Resource Family Care Act is intended to provide **resource parents** fair treatment, consideration and respect, and to ensure collaboration among all parties involved in protecting the safety and well-being of children and youth within the foster care system (a Pennsylvania Foster Parents Bill of Rights).

“Resource family is a family which provides temporary foster or kinship care for children who need out-of-home placement and which may eventually provide permanency for those children, including as an adoptive family.”

The Act established responsibilities for county and private Children and Youth Agencies regarding information and services to be made available to resource families. The information that is to be provided to resource families by the agencies includes:

- A timely response that is open and complete when contacted by a resource family regarding the family’s role and the care of the child.
- All policies and procedures relating to the role of the resource family.
- Information regarding accessing services and how to reach the agency on a 24 hour-a-day, 7 day a week basis.
- The child’s medical history, behavior and relationship with their parent (s) shall be provided as soon as this information is made available to the agency. Also, information regarding the child’s educational history, life experiences, and previous and prospective placement circumstances are to be provided within a reasonable period of time.
- Notification of scheduled meetings in order for a resource family to actively participate in the service and permanency planning process regarding the child.
- The opportunity to be heard regarding practices and decisions of the agency involving the child that resides in the home. The agency shall not discharge, threaten, or otherwise discriminate or retaliate against a resource family for an appropriate inquiry regarding this.

- Consultation when a decision is made regarding the release of the resource family’s address to child’s parent. This information is released only after informing the resource family.
- Confidentiality is to be maintained by the agency when a report of suspected child abuse is made involving a member of the resource family. This provision will not be applicable if it interferes with the safety of the child.

The services that are to be available to resource families by the county and private agencies include:

- Support service to assist in the care of the child which is consistent with the child’s approved permanency plan.
- Appropriate training to enhance the skills and performance of the resource Family.
- Coordination of services that may be necessary due to family loss and separation when a child departs from a home and isn’t the result of an immediate threat to the health and safety of the child caused by the resource family.

CONCLUSION

While legislation varies from state to state, it seems clear that an increasing number of states including Pennsylvania are establishing more formal protection of foster parents’ rights.

REFERENCES

Child Welfare Report, May 2006

Youth Law News, Journal of the National Center for Youth Law , April—June 2004

National Foster parent Association, www.nfpa.org

Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, Department of Public Welfare

