



Substitute House Bill No. 6403

Public Act No. 19-44

**AN ACT CONCERNING A CHILDREN IN CARE BILL OF RIGHTS
AND EXPECTATIONS AND THE SIBLING BILL OF RIGHTS.**

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives in General Assembly convened:

Section 1. (NEW) (*Effective July 1, 2019*) (a) There is created a Children in Care Bill of Rights and Expectations, which shall pertain to each child placed in out-of-home care by the Commissioner of Children and Families pursuant to an order of temporary custody or commitment.

(b) The Children in Care Bill of Rights and Expectations ensures that, absent extraordinary circumstances related to a child's health or safety or unless otherwise indicated in a case plan prepared pursuant to section 17a-15 of the general statutes for a child, any child placed in out-of-home care by the Commissioner of Children and Families pursuant to an order of temporary custody or commitment has the right to:

(1) Develop and maintain the child's own values, hopes, goals, religion, spirituality and identity, including, but not limited to, racial, sexual and gender identity, in a safe and caring environment;

(2) Visitation or ongoing contact with the child's parents, siblings, extended family and friends, and assistance in connecting or

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reconnecting with the child's birth family if desired;

(3) Be placed in a safe environment in the child's home community and preplacement visits to such placement when possible;

(4) Meaningful participation in the development of the child's case plan pursuant to section 17a-15 of the general statutes and permanency plan pursuant to sections 17a-11, 17a-111b and 46b-129 of the general statutes, including, but not limited to, the ability to participate in and select individuals of the child's choice to participate in meetings concerning such plans;

(5) Meaningful and regular in-person contact with the child's caseworker, who shall respond to the child's telephone calls and correspondence in a timely manner; and

(6) Stability and support in all aspects of the child's education.

(c) The Children in Care Bill of Rights and Expectations ensures that, absent extraordinary circumstances related to a child's health or safety or unless otherwise indicated in a child's case plan, the guardian or guardians of each child placed in out-of-home care by the Commissioner of Children and Families pursuant to an order of temporary custody or commitment shall:

(1) Maintain a healthy relationship with the child by emphasizing trust, understanding, empathy and communication;

(2) Set appropriate boundaries with respect to curfews, homework and household responsibilities in order to provide a stable living environment;

(3) Assist the child in building life skills, including, but not limited to, grocery shopping and cooking meals, personal financial management and washing laundry;

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(4) Assist the child in obtaining legal documents and licenses, including, but not limited to, a birth certificate, Social Security card, state identification card and motor vehicle operator's license;

(5) Assist the child in participating in extracurricular and personal enrichment activities and obtaining networking and employment skills;

(6) Apply the same age-appropriate household rules and provide the same opportunities to all children residing in the home, including, but not limited to, participation in family activities and vacations;

(7) Participate in therapy sessions with the child upon request or when appropriate;

(8) Participate in additional foster parent training programs when possible; and

(9) Permit the child to have age-appropriate personal privacy and privacy with respect to personal items and communications, including, but not limited to, journals, diaries, letters, electronic mail, telephone calls and text messages.

(d) The caseworker of any child placed in an out-of-home placement by the Commissioner of Children and Families pursuant to an order of temporary custody or commitment shall meet in private with the child annually and any time the child is placed in a new out-of-home placement, provided the child is of an appropriate age. At such meeting, the caseworker shall: (1) Provide the child with a copy of the Children in Care Bill of Rights and Expectations, (2) review the Children in Care Bill of Rights and Expectations with the child, (3) explain to the child that the child may contact the caseworker, the child's attorney, the Department of Children and Families regional office, the Department of Children and Families Office of the Ombudsman or the Office of the Child Advocate if the child feels that

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his or her rights have been violated or expectations have not been met under the Children in Care Bill of Rights and Expectations, and provide the child with contact information for such caseworker, such regional office, the Department of Children and Families Office of the Ombudsman and the Office of the Child Advocate, and (4) explain to the child that if the child is in physical danger or experiences a medical emergency, the child may dial or send a text message to 9-1-1. The caseworker shall certify to the commissioner on a form prescribed by the commissioner that such caseworker has complied with the provisions of this subsection. Such form shall include (A) an acknowledgment, for signature by the child, if appropriate, that such caseworker provided a copy of the Children in Care Bill of Rights and Expectations to the child and reviewed the Children in Care Bill of Rights and Expectations with the child, and (B) notice that, if the child refuses to sign such acknowledgment, such caseworker shall indicate on the form that the child refused to sign such acknowledgment.

Sec. 2. Section 17a-10c of the general statutes is repealed and the following is substituted in lieu thereof (*Effective July 1, 2019*):

(a) For purposes of this section, "Youth Advisory Board" means a board established by each Department of Children and Families regional office that is comprised of youth in out-of-home care.

(b) The Commissioner of Children and Families shall meet with the members of each Youth Advisory Board to gather recommendations for and to draft a "Sibling Bill of Rights", which may include, but not be limited to, ways to protect the relationships of siblings separated as a result of said commissioner's intervention and an affirmation by the department of its commitment to preserve the relationships between siblings who have been separated from each other while under department care. On or before October 1, 2013, the commissioner and members of the Youth Advisory Boards shall submit the Sibling Bill of Rights to the joint standing committee of the General Assembly having

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cognizance of matters relating to children for consideration of possible legislative action.

(c) The Commissioner of Children and Families shall incorporate the final version of the Sibling Bill of Rights into department policy. [and share such policy with each child placed in the care and custody of the commissioner pursuant to an order of temporary custody or an order of commitment.]

(d) On and after January 1, 2020, the caseworker of any child placed in an out-of-home placement by the Commissioner of Children and Families pursuant to an order of temporary custody or commitment shall meet in private with the child annually and any time the child is placed in a new out-of-home placement, provided the child is of an appropriate age. At such meeting, the caseworker shall, if applicable and appropriate: (1) Provide the child with a copy of the Sibling Bill of Rights, (2) review the Sibling Bill of Rights with the child, and (3) explain to the child that the child may contact the caseworker, the child's attorney, the Department of Children and Families regional office, the Department of Children and Families Office of the Ombudsman or the Office of the Child Advocate if the child feels that his or her rights under the Sibling Bill of Rights have been violated, and provide the child with contact information for such caseworker, such regional office, the Department of Children and Families Office of the Ombudsman and the Office of the Child Advocate. The caseworker shall certify to the commissioner on a form prescribed by the commissioner that such caseworker has complied with the provisions of this subsection. Such form shall include (A) an acknowledgment, for signature by the child, if appropriate, that such caseworker provided a copy of the Sibling Bill of Rights to the child and reviewed the Sibling Bill of Rights with the child, and (B) notice that, if the child refuses to sign such acknowledgment, such caseworker shall indicate on the form that the child refused to sign such acknowledgment.

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Approved June 21, 2019