



# **Arizona Department of Child Safety's Youth Empowerment Council: Educating our Youth in Group Home/Foster Care**



# What does normalcy mean to YOU?

Obtaining a Driver's License/Transportation

Having Sleepovers

Attending Extracurricular Activities

Working an After-School Job

Hanging out with Friends

Volunteering at a Food Bank

Attending Prom

Participating in Sports

Learning important life skills such as cooking, doing laundry, managing money

Having a Cell Phone to Communicate with Family & Friends

Going to the Movies

And more....



## Tips on Normalcy


- **Discuss what “normalcy” means to you and your peers.** Having an understanding what normalcy means to you better helps you to advocate for yourself and being more involved in the things you like to do.
- **Discuss what normalcy means to your Group Home.** Your group home is able to approve passes or outings. Discuss Reasonable And Prudent Parenting Standards (RPPS).
- **Communicate with your DCS Specialist/Case Worker.** Let them know which activities you'd like to be involved in and it's more likely they can make it happen.
- **Check out the Normalcy section on the Fostering Advocates Arizona website at: [fosteringadvocatesarizona.org](http://fosteringadvocatesarizona.org)** and hear from the child welfare professionals, young adults who've experienced foster care, on what normalcy means to them.



# Did you know you have Rights in Foster Care?

On July 13, 2009, then AZ State Governor Janet Napolitano signed into law (Ariz. Rev. Stat. § 8-529; 2009 Ariz. Sess. Laws, SB 1209, Chap. 159) that Foster Care youth have the right to:

- Live in a place that provides the amount of direction and help that you need. You should also be able to do normal activities.
- Live in a safe, healthy and comfortable placement. Your caregivers can speak the same language as you, show respect for you, and protect you from harm. They give you personal privacy, as well as good food and clothing. They also allow you to have personal possessions and enough space to store all of your things.
- Know why you are in foster care and what will happen to you and your family. You have the right to help with planning for your “case”. You have the right to visits with your family while you are away from home, with any restrictions explained to you in a way you can understand.

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- Be disciplined in a manner that makes sense for you and allows you to understand when a behavior is not acceptable. It gives you a chance to change that behavior, in a good way.
  - Go to community, school and religious activities of your choice. You have the right to receive an education that fits you best.
  - Learn how to take care of your personal hygiene and grooming.
  - Have contact information for your caseworker, attorney or advocate and to speak with them in private if needed. You have the right to attend court hearings and speak to the judge.
  - Have your records and personal information kept private. It should only be given to people who need the information in order to take care of you.
  - Have necessary medical, mental health or drug treatment. To be free of excessive medication. To have information on who to call if you have a disability and need help.
  - Receive a copy of these rights, and to report a violation of these rights.



## **AND... If you are at least 16 years of age, or older you also have the right to:**

- Attend life skills classes and join in activities that allow you to practice these skills.
- A transition plan that includes career planning and help with enrolling in an educational or vocational job training program.
- Be informed of school prospects before you leave foster care.
- Help in getting a place to live when you are ready to leave foster care.
- Request a court hearing to decide if you can consent to your own medical care.
- Have help with getting a social security number, birth certificate or state ID card.
- Get personal information within thirty days after leaving foster care. This includes your birth certificate, shot records, and education and health records.

**Did you know?**

**You also have the  
right to voice your  
concern over your  
—placement.**

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## Steps to Resolve a Complaint or Disagreement

Step 1 - Attempt to Resolve Disputes with your DCS Specialist/Case Worker

Step 2 - Elevate your Concern with his/her DCS Supervisor

Step 3 - Contact the Ombudsman's Office @ (602) 277-7292

To learn more go to: [dcs.az.gov/resources/resolve-complaint-or-disagreement](https://dcs.az.gov/resources/resolve-complaint-or-disagreement)







# 7 Ways You Can Advocate For Your Rights





## **Know How to Effectively Get Your Message Across.**

### **01**

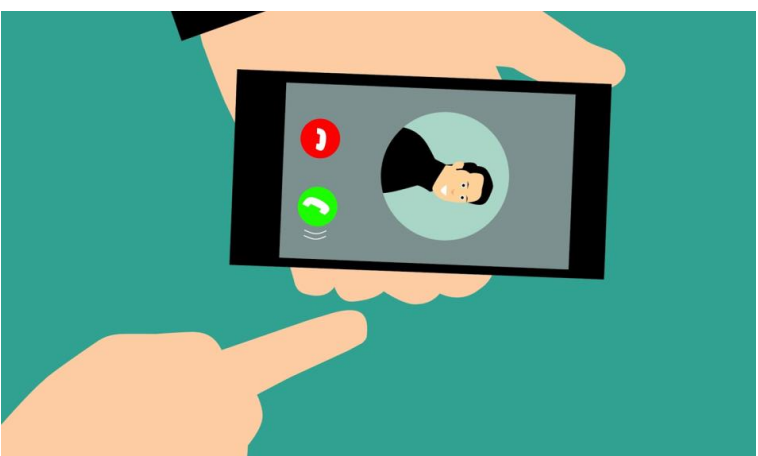
To make your message effective, it is not just about what you say, but how you say it. As angry as you might be about your situation, you are more likely to succeed in getting your message across if you are calm and clear when you speak to your Department of Child Safety (DCS) Case Specialist, lawyer, GAL or judge. The calm presentation of your complaint or request will help show your maturity.



## Call your DCS Specialist/Case Worker.

### 02

If you are unable to get through, leave a voicemail sharing your concern(s). It's important to keep records of the calls you made, the day(s) time(s) and outcome of the conversation if you spoke.

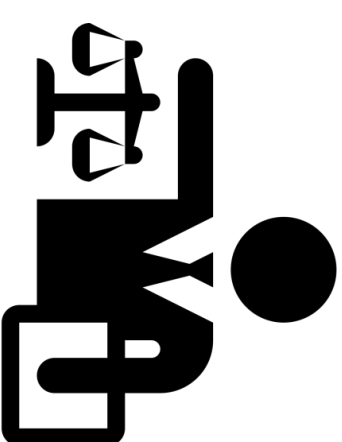
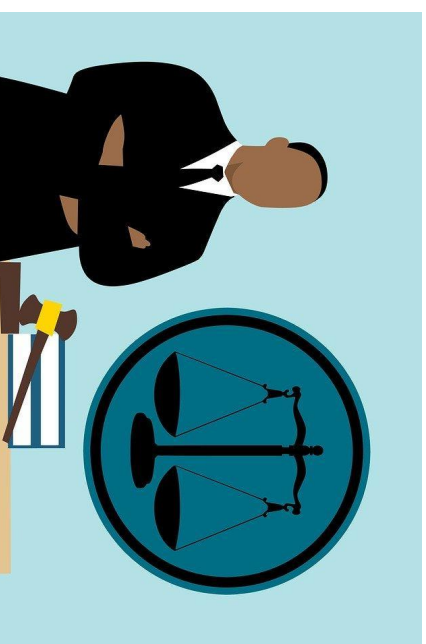




## Call Your Lawyer or Guardian Ad Litem (GAL).

# 03

The job of your lawyer/ GAL is to make sure you are safe and that your needs are being met.





# Go Up The Chain of Command. 04

If you make several attempts to call and leave messages for your DCS Specialist/Case Worker and no one calls you back, you can go up the chain of command to reach someone. Chain of Command at the Arizona Department of Child Safety— Your DCS Specialist/Case Worker—Your DCS Specialist/Case Worker’s Supervisor — Area Program Manager—DCS Deputy Director—DCS Director.





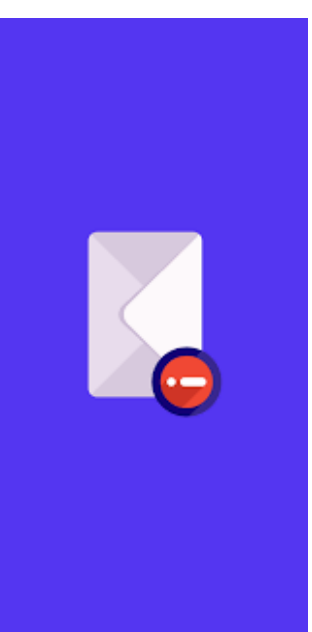
## Write a Letter or Email.

### 05

It is important to always make a record of your concerns and what you want to achieve. Writing letters or emailing your DCS Specialist/Case Worker and lawyer/GAL shows you are serious and taking time to explain what is important to you. You can also write a letter to the judge and give it to him or her before or during a hearing. However, you should know other people involved in your case may have the right to also see it.

Ever need an answer quickly?

Contact the DCS Ombudsman office  
@ 877-527-0765, 602-277-7292 or [Ombudsman@azdcs.gov](mailto:Ombudsman@azdcs.gov)



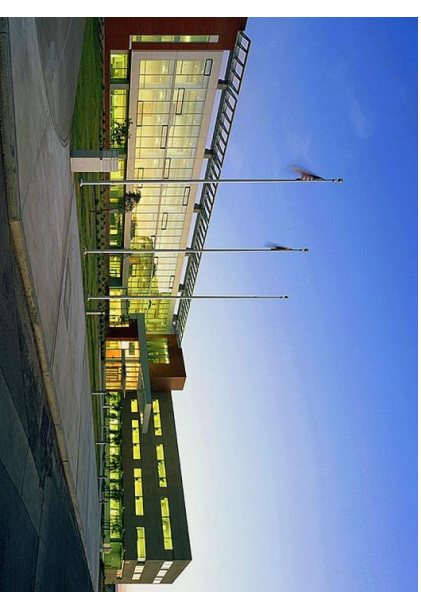
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using "F"  
your ow



## **Plan For Court & Attend.**

# 06

best places you can go to make sure you are heard. You can go with a statement or outline to read to the judge if that makes it easier. You can call your lawyer to help you prepare. You should take the opportunity to let the judge know how you feel. Remember you always have the option to attend your court hearing by phone as long as you let your DCS Specialist/Case Worker and Attorney know beforehand.





## File a Complaint/Grievance. 07

A complaint (or grievance) is a written or verbal expression of dissatisfaction about services, actions or lack of actions or manner of treatment by the Arizona Department of Child Safety or its staff affecting you or your case. You can file a grievance with the Arizona Department Of Child Safety Family Advocacy Office at 1-877-527-0765 or 602-364-0777.

Visit <https://dcs.az.gov/resources/resolve-complaint-or-disagreement>







**13,411**

youth (under the age of 18) and

**969**

youth (18

and over) are in foster care in our state.

Get Involved... Advocate for **YOURSELF** and other **FOSTER CARE YOUTH**. You can do so by joining the **AZDCS Youth Empowerment Council**.

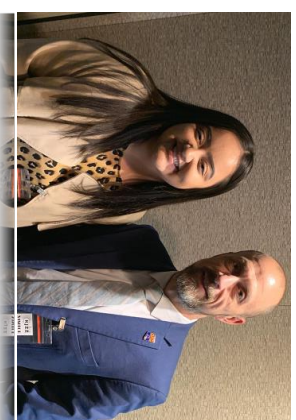


**What Is The Arizona  
Department of Child Safety's  
Youth Empowerment Council  
(YEC)?**



# About Us/What We Do

- 01** | We are committed to providing a representative voice to youth who've experienced foster care to discuss the challenges facing youth as they prepare to enter adulthood.
- 02** | We participate in Youth Leadership panels at conferences and community events.
- 03** | We pledge ourselves to serve as role models for youth in foster care .
- 04** | We aim to provide an input on the program goals and objectives of the state plan on independent living.
- 05** | We advocate for systemic improvements of DCS by examining policies, procedures and practices, recommending adjustments that will result in positive outcomes for youth in foster care.



# The Application Process to Join DCS YEC Board



## Qualifications

You must be a young adult who is at least 14 years of age, but no older than 23 residing in the State of Arizona and have experienced foster care.

Youth must be able to commit to serve on the DCS Youth Empowerment Council for at least consecutive 12 months (1 year).



## Attend a Board Meeting about your Application

Don't stress. This is an opportunity for current council members to get to know you and your background before they vote on your appointment on the Council. Transportation is provided; if necessary, just let your case worker or a YEC advisor know.



## Voting by Members of the Council

After the meeting, you'll be notified if you were accepted onto the Board. If not, we're always accepting applicants year round.

# Contact the DCS (YEC) Youth Empowerment Council



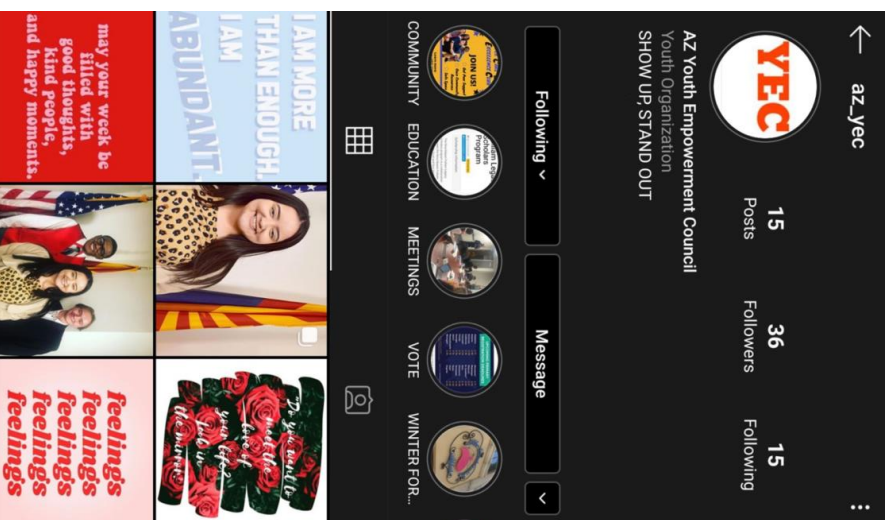
Have any **SUGGESTIONS** or **QUESTIONS**? Feel free to contact us at:

[YouthAdvisoryBoard@AZDCS.gov](mailto:YouthAdvisoryBoard@AZDCS.gov)



**@az\_yec**

**Stay Connected.** Follow us on Instagram to get updates, event posting, and more info.



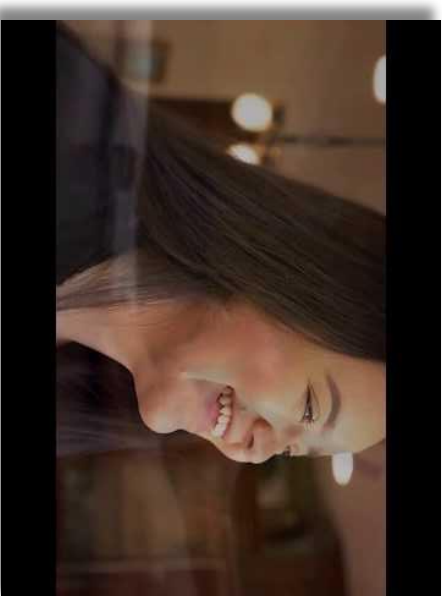
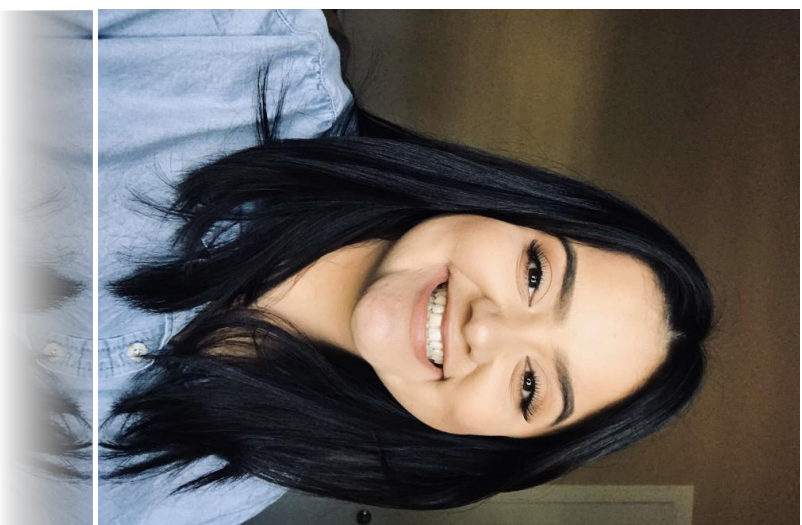
**YEC Leadership (Left to Right):**  
Sergeant-at-Arms: Chancellor Marshall  
President: Faith Sexton  
Vice-President: Ryan Young



AZ DCS YEC President

# Faith Sexton

When the opportunity arose to join the council, I took it. Not because it was “something to do” ... but because I told myself I'll fight for those who couldn't fight for themselves. I'll be the voice when everyone else is silent. That's why I am dedicated to changing this flawed system, one experience at a time.

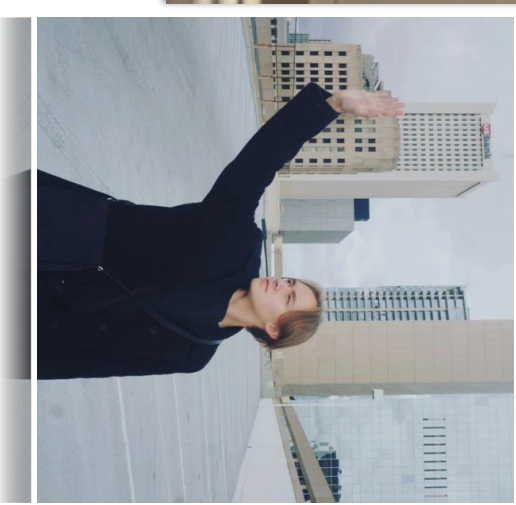
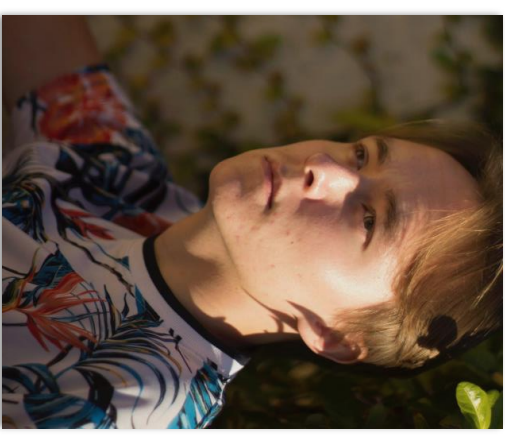
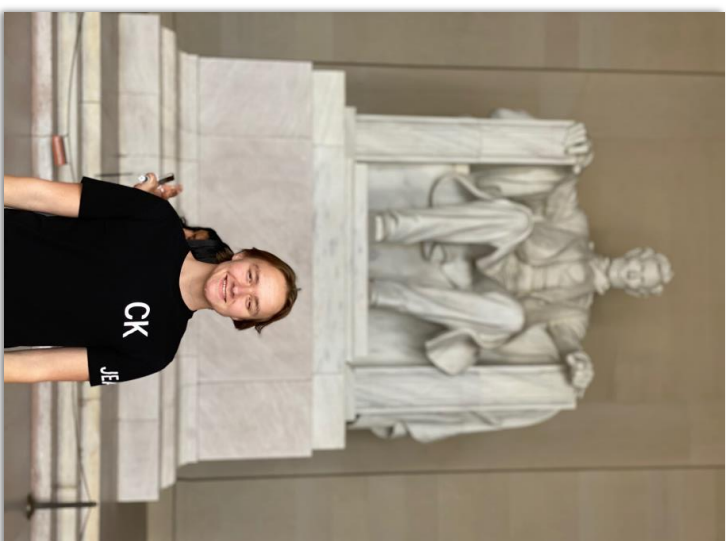




AZ DCS YEC Vice-President

# Ryan Young

I joined the AZDCS Youth Empowerment Council because I wanted to be part of the solution of the many problems in the state's child welfare system. I made a commitment to myself and my peers when I aged out that I would advocate and be their voice. I hope to change one policy at a time to make life better for all foster kids.





*Thank You* 