



Protecting Youth in Care

H.B. 6403: An Act Concerning a Children in Care Bill of Rights

During adolescence, youth should have experiences that contribute to their development into successful adults. These experiences allow youth to explore their personal identity and answer the questions "Who am I?" and "What is my place in the world?" The process of identity development and self-exploration requires a safe and supportive environment and can happen in a child's school, extracurricular activities, religious groups, relationships with friends, and more.

Some experiences in foster care -- such as placement moves that result in changing schools -- can disrupt a youth's life and impact their sense of self. **H.B. 6403: An Act Concerning A Children in Care Bill of Rights and Expectations and the Sibling Bill of Rights supports healthy identity development in foster care.**

A majority of youth experience **three or more** placement changes while in foster care.

As part of our annual Youth at the Capitol Day research report and forum, Connecticut Voices for Children spoke to foster youth who participate in Connecticut's Youth Advisory Boards.

Connecticut Youth in Care Reported:

- **Feeling disconnected from their schools and community.** Youth revealed that they did not feel connected to their schools and communities -- especially when they had three or more placement changes.
- **The importance of having the freedom to be oneself.** Like most adolescents, youth wished to have the freedom to participate in the activities they enjoyed and wear the clothes that expressed their identities.
- **The need for support in identity exploration.** Youth highlighted the importance of having caregiver support when exploring different facets of their identity including spirituality, sexual orientation, gender identity, and cultural identity.

H.B. 6403 asserts that children in care have the right to healthy identity development that is supported by the Department of Children and Families and appointed guardians and foster parents. ***The act includes multiple provisions that directly address the concerns of youth in Connecticut.***

H.B. 6403 Codifies the Right for Youth in Care to:

- "Develop and maintain [their] own values, hopes, goals, religion, spirituality and identity, including, but not limited to, sexual and gender identity, in a safe and caring environment"
- "Visitation or ongoing contact with the child's parents, siblings, extended family and friends"
- Be supported by their foster parent(s) or guardian(s) in "participating in extracurricular and personal enrichment activities."

1,500

Adolescent youth in care

4,300

Total youth in care



The New England Youth Coalition, an advocacy group composed of former and current youth in care from Connecticut, Maine, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, Rhode Island, and Vermont, has developed a Normalcy Bill of Rights with similar provisions to the ones proposed in H.B. 6403. If H.B. 6403 is signed into law, CT youth in care will be afforded the rights and expectations that are considered necessary for normalcy and healthy development by youth across New England.

For more information on youth identity development in foster care, read our full report at: www.ctvoices.org/youthatcapitol8