

# RIGHTS & RESPONSIBILITIES



## A Handbook

for Youth in Care  
& Youth Connected  
to Child & Family  
Programs

The *Rights and Responsibilities: A Handbook for Youth in Care and Youth Connected to Child and Family Programs* was created in collaboration with youth in care, alumni of care, youth with Child and Family Programs involvement, and the youth and alumni members of the SYICCN from across Saskatchewan. Driven by a shared purpose, youth in care and alumni from across Saskatchewan came together to share their experiences and insights, to update and edit this resource to support other youth in care and/or involved with Child and Family Programs. Our hope is that you feel empowered and with a deeper understanding of your rights and responsibilities as a young person with involvement with Child and Family Programs.

The SYICCN would like to extend our heartfelt thanks to everyone who contributed to this project — especially our youth and alumni collaborators! Your insights and input are truly valued. We hope you can see yourselves, your voices, and your input in this booklet. Thank you.

The latest updates and reprints of this booklet were made possible with the support of the Ministry of Social Services, Child and Family Programs.

Please note that a PDF version of this handbook is available for download from our website at [www.syiccn.ca](http://www.syiccn.ca).

### **Disclaimer**

This booklet is provided for informational purposes only and is not intended to offer legal advice.

Information contained within may have changed since publication and should be used solely as a supportive informational resource.

The Saskatchewan Youth in Care and Custody Network assumes no liability for any outcomes resulting from reliance on this manual.

Users are responsible for verifying any information or resources.

# Welcome to Your Rights Handbook!

This handbook was designed, written, and edited by young people from care, for young people who are in care or who have been in care. Our goal is to give you a single resource where you can understand your rights and responsibilities while you are in care.

Your caseworker should sit down with you to explain:

- Your legal status in care
- Your case plan
- Any other important information you need to know

If this hasn't happened yet, you have every right to ask your caseworker to go through this handbook with you. It's your life and your right to be informed — let this handbook be your guide! Ask for copies for your friends in care, make sure your group home has copies around. Use your voice, exercise your rights — if you are unsure of how, call SYICCN.

To help you better understand the legal words and terms in this handbook, we have added a *Definitions* page at the end of the book. Remember to ask your caseworker if there is anything you don't **understand**.



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# Hi,

We know that everything is really confusing right now. Life may have been flipped upside down and you may be feeling lost and upset. You likely are not at home and are away from your parents / caregivers, maybe even your siblings. We are sorry you're going through this. We want you to know that you're not alone; the people who wrote this book are all either still in care or have aged out of care. We have been where you are.

We know what you are going through, how hard it is, and we wanted you to have some answers, from us to you, about what is happening in your life right now.

We also want to acknowledge that a lot of the legal terms used are uncomfortable, can feel dehumanizing, and can feel like we are reduced to a paper file — words like “case plan,” “ward / wardship,” “status,” “client,” etc. We know these words aren't great, but we include them as they are the legal terms that you will read and hear over and over again, and we want you to have full understanding of their meaning. Because knowledge is power, so is understanding these terms, your rights, and responsibilities. We want you to understand what is happening in your life fully so that you can take part and stand up for yourself every step of the way.

~the Network, SYICCN



This handbook is a guide for young people in care or receiving services from Child and Family Programs. It was originally written for young people entering care for the first time, as well as youth already in care. We hope that you will find the information helpful.

The handbook is intended to briefly answer some of the questions commonly asked by young people in care. Every situation is unique and there is no right or wrong way to feel about being in care. As a young person in care, we encourage you to talk with your caseworker about your own personal situation. This handbook also outlines the rights and responsibilities you have while in care.

We are grateful to the many youth around the province who volunteered to read the original drafts and early editions of the handbook and send us their comments and suggestions.

Thanks also to all of the young people across Saskatchewan who reviewed this version of the book. We hope you see yourself and your input reflected in this book.

## **What does it mean to be “in care?”**

In care means you are living away from home in a place arranged by your caseworker, under some kind of relationship with Child and Family Programs. In care generally refers to child welfare services involvement for young people in need of “protection.”

This means that you are in the care of the Minister of Social Services and have been placed in “out of home” care as authorized by *The Child and Family Services Act*.

Your caseworker and either your parents or a judge determined that you needed to live apart from your family for a period of time.

You will see the word “caseworker” frequently in this handbook. When you are in the care of the Minister, the Ministry of Social Services is responsible for your basic, developmental, cultural, and special needs. This responsibility includes not only meeting immediate needs such as your safety, food, clothing and a safe place to live, but also planning for your future. Every effort should be made to involve you and your caregivers / family / parents in planning during your time in care.

Think of your caseworker as the ministry staff-person assigned to work with you. Your caseworker is responsible for carrying out these many tasks and activities, and for making sure that your time in care is centred on your specific needs and desires.

## What is legal status?

There are many different types of relationships that you can have with Child and Family Programs, but being in care usually has to do with your legal status, or the rule of law, that describes what your status is in care. Legal status is the authority under which you are in care. There are several different kinds of legal status. *The Child and Family Services Act* is the legislation, or law, that defines and outlines if and how children and young people come into care in Saskatchewan.

The legal statuses of care, or kinds of involvement with Child and Family Programs, are: apprehended, Section 9, Section 10 (16/17 Program), short term order, long term wardship order, Indefinite- & Definite-Persons of Sufficient Interest, permanent wardship order, and Section 56 (extension of supports).

# How do I find out what my legal status is?

Your caseworker should explain what your legal status is and what it means to you. Never be afraid to ask what your legal status is and what that means for you, and don't hesitate to ask again later if you still aren't sure. Knowing your legal status and your rights under that status is very important, so you can advocate for yourself and make sure your voice is heard.

## Who makes the decisions about my legal status?

In order for a young person to be involved with Child and Family Programs, you must first be identified as a child / youth "in need of protection" under Section 11 of *The Child and Family Services Act*.

Sometimes young people are "apprehended," which allows the ministry to remove you from your current living situation. This happens when it is decided that you are in immediate danger and a plan to keep you safe cannot be developed with your caregiver / parent. Safety concerns means there is evidence that not all of your environmental, physical, emotional, and healthcare needs are being met.

When you are apprehended, or taken into care, you won't be at home. While the ministry assesses, or determines, whether or not it is safe for you to return home, you will likely stay in a temporary "place of safety," extended family care, foster care, or a group home. A "place of safety" can be a family member, community member, neighbour, friend, or someone else in your life who is important, safe and willing to care for you.

The ministry will make every effort to have you placed with your other parent, extended family, or with someone who you have a



close connection with. This can take some time and you may be placed in a foster home or group home for a short time. If your caregiver / parent agrees to a safety plan, you have the option to remain at home during the investigation process.

After the ministry has finished their investigation, you will either be able to return home, or you will be placed under the care of the Minister of Social Services and live with a foster family or in a group home. **When it is possible to live with a trusted extended family member or family friend, the ministry will make every effort to support this option.**



## What is my legal status? continued

Your caseworker may sign an agreement with your parent(s) / caregiver, or apply to Court for an order if an agreement can't be made. This agreement or order will describe your legal status in care.

There are several different agreements, or orders, that can be put in place depending on your needs and your family's needs. In those situations, when a caseworker applies to Court, legal status is decided in a Child Protection Court hearing. This means that a judge will decide if you will stay in care, for how long, and your caseworker will then decide where you will be while in care.

Your caseworker can explain what a Child Protection Court hearing is and how the decision about your status is made. Make sure to ask questions along the way. Ultimately, a judge will decide whether you should be in care or not, what legal status is in your best interest, and for the length of time you will remain in care.

Your caseworker and your parents may make an agreement for you to be in care under Section 9 of *The Child and Family Services Act*. This status is often referred to as a “Section 9,” or a Residential Services Agreement.

## **Do I get a chance to say what I think should happen to me?**

You can expect to have your wishes listened to and considered by those making the decisions. If you want to tell the judge what you think would be best for you, tell your caseworker you want to speak in court. You can ask for help from the Counsel for Children to have a lawyer to support you and make sure your voice and what you want is heard.

The Counsel for Children is a program where you, your caseworker, or anyone else that knows and supports you can apply to have a lawyer who is there just for you. The Counsel for Children lawyer is your own lawyer and will ensure your voice is heard during court.

The Counsel for Children is specifically there to assist any young person with involvement under *The Child and Family Services Act*, including any court proceedings for apprehension, existing child protections orders, investigations, etc.

You can call the following number, toll-free, to reach the office of the Counsel for Children: 1-877-787-5424 or [www.saskatchewan.ca/residents/justice-crime-and-the-law/courts-and-sentencing/counsel-for-children](http://www.saskatchewan.ca/residents/justice-crime-and-the-law/courts-and-sentencing/counsel-for-children).

# What kinds of decisions can the judge make about me?

The judge has many different options/orders to ensure your safety needs are being met, including: supervision, temporary, long term, permanent, and Definite or Indefinite Person of Sufficient Interest (PSI or IPSI) orders.

The judge can decide it is safe for you to return to your parent, or to your parent who has the right of custody. The judge can also decide if it is ok for you to return to your parent with a supervision order. A supervision order is when you are able to be back with your parent, but the ministry is still involved to make sure you are safe and your needs are met.

The judge may decide that you will need to remain in the care of the ministry for a little longer, through a temporary wardship order. There are other orders under which you would remain in care of the ministry until you are 18. These are called long term and permanent orders.

If you are in care and living with an extended family member, a judge may decide on a Definite or an Indefinite Person of Sufficient Interest (IPSI) order.



# Temporary Wardship or Temporary Care

Temporary wardship, or temporary care, is when the child protection court judge decides that a child or youth needs to live away from home for up to six months.

Temporary wardship, or temporary care, can be extended. However, your caseworker needs to know that this is in your best interests.

Ideally, while you are under temporary wardship, your parents will receive the support they need to provide a safe and stable environment for you to come home to.

You need to know where you are going to be living and with whom you are going to be living. Although your caseworker has responsibility to plan for your immediate needs, your caseworker must also plan for your longer term needs while you are in care.

Permanency means long term, long lasting, and unchanged — from the word permanent. Permanence is a word you may hear often because it is important that you know what your future looks like.

## Definite and Indefinite Person of Sufficient Interest (PSI and IPSI)

There are two kinds of Person of Sufficient Interest orders, which are called Definite (PSI) and Indefinite (IPSI). A person of sufficient interest is an extended family member who can care for you. This type of placement ensures you have a close connection to your family and culture. It is important to know that you may have a Person of Sufficient Interest and not be placed in their care, rather they are a 'party' to any legal matters regarding your custody.

A Definite PSI Order means you're staying with a Person of Sufficient Interest (PSI) while plans are made for you to return to your parents. The ministry is still involved with you and your parents to make sure everyone receives the support and services they need.

An Indefinite PSI Order means you will remain with your Person of Sufficient Interest (PSI). This is a legal order that gives custody and guardianship of a young person in care to an extended family member. If you are a young person with an IPSI legal status you are no longer in care of the Minister and planning for you will include continued placement with your IPSI caregiver typically until the age of 18. Your IPSI caregiver will be the decision-maker when it comes to your care. A caseworker will stay involved and assist with providing supports and services as needed, and you are also eligible to receive special needs funding from the ministry if needed. The caseworker should meet with you and your caregiver to see how it's going and to make sure your needs are met.

## **Long Term Wardship or Long Term Care**

Long term wardship, or long term care, care may be ordered when a parent is able to remain involved in some ways in planning for your future, but is not able to provide the care and supervision you need to be safe and healthy.

This means that you will be in the care of the ministry, and may live with extended family, in foster care, or a group home, but your parent(s) can still be involved in your life and planning.

Young people in care through a long term care order cannot be registered for adoption.

# Permanent Wardship or Permanent Care

Permanent wardship is when the child protection court judge decides that you should permanently remain in care of the ministry, because your parents are unable or unwilling to provide the care you need. You will be in care until the age of 18, or 21 years old if you sign an Extension of Support (also called Section 56).

Permanent wardship orders end parental rights and ties. These orders are becoming uncommon, as this does not follow traditional indigenous practices. Once a permanent wardship order is made, you are eligible to be registered for adoption. There are situations when young people may want to be adopted by someone they know or have a connection with.

## Support services to 16 and 17 year olds – Section 10

If you are 16 or 17 years old, and unable to stay with your parents / guardian, you may be able to sign up for the Section 10 Program. Section 10 is offered through Child and Family Programs, where youth can enter into an agreement for care and supervision with the ministry. To qualify for the program, you must meet certain requirements and be willing to work on a case plan. You must also be able to accept care, supervision, and guidance which may include attending school, room and board, and participating in approved treatment or support programs.

On June 12, 2024, *The Child and Family Services Act* was amended / updated, which raised the age of a child from 16 to 18. While Section 10 services remain the same, if your caseworker sees that your needs are greater than what the Section 10 Program can offer, you may be referred to child protection services. In certain cases,

you may be able to extend your Section 10 support past your 18<sup>th</sup> birthday, if you turn 18 before the end of your school/program year. Please speak with your caseworker about your options, before your 18<sup>th</sup> birthday.

## Where will I live while in care?

There are a few different places where you might live while you are in care. Your caseworker will discuss with you and your family, what type of home is best for you.

While you are in care you may live in:

- A **place of safety** (or extended family care), which is an approved living situation with a family member, community member, neighbour, friend, or someone else in your life who is important, safe, and willing to care for you. If you are Indigenous, there may be someone you know from your Band, Nation, or home community. Ask your caseworker to connect with your Band / Nation and the person / people you are interested in staying with. All efforts should be made to explore this possibility.
- A **foster home**, which is an approved home / house in the community that provides care for children and youth who must be away from their own families.
- A **group home**, which is a staffed home where several youth live together. Group home staff provides supervision, guidance, support, and care. Some group homes offer specialized support to fit any special needs youth may have including mental health or addictions.
- Depending on where you live in Saskatchewan, there are **peer homes**, where young people have some input into the rules, and are supported and guided by a mentor in the home.



All of these homes, also known as placements, are meant to be like home. They should be happy, supportive, caring, and nurturing environments where you should be able to thrive.

As you near 16 years of age (Section 10) or 18 years of age, you may want to consider other kinds of living arrangements — like leaving your foster home for a group home, independent living arrangement, or peer home. Discuss this with your caseworker, since they can tell you what all the options are.

## How long will I be in care?

This depends upon the circumstances in your family and the reason you are in care. Your caseworker is the best person to explain the situation and how long you will be in the care of the ministry.

Being in long term or permanent care can mean that you are in care until you are either 18 years old, adopted, or until a Child Protection Court judge orders differently.



## Section 56 (Extension of Supports)

If you are a long term or permanent ward and are attending school or programming beyond age 18, or are in need of or want training / education, or need further support and the assistance from Child and Family Programs, you can sign an agreement called Section 56. A Section 56 agreement, commonly called an Extension of Supports, is available to you between the ages of 18 to 21.

**All youth in long term or permanent care that approach their 18<sup>th</sup> birthday should be informed, both verbally and in writing, of the extended care agreement. Section 56, or an extension of supports, should be explained to you in clear detail, so you have full understanding of what your options are.**

A Section 56 can help support you to complete high school, go to university or trade school, receive supports / courses for entering into the work force, etc. **Make sure to talk to your caseworker to find out what can be covered and what is available under a Section 56 agreement.** Remember, you can sign on to a Section 56 at any time until your 21<sup>st</sup> birthday. You can change your mind at any time! Call your caseworker and ask to sign.

If you decide this is right for you, you will be required to work with your caseworker to develop a plan together to achieve the goals you set out to accomplish while on a Section 56. This agreement does not mean you are in care, but will allow the ministry to continue to provide services until you turn 21 years old. These services include housing support, financial support, cell phone, school supplies, tuition, medication, counselling, etc.

If you are 18 years of age, and are a registered First Nations person, you may be eligible for Post-majority support services, offered through the Government of Canada ([www.sac-isc.gc.ca/eng/1650377737799/1650377806807](http://www.sac-isc.gc.ca/eng/1650377737799/1650377806807)).

# Aging out of care

Starting around age 15, your caseworker and caregivers should help you gear up for aging out of care. Your legal status will determine when this happens — usually at 18 or, if you are eligible for a Section 56, at 21 (if you're under a temporary or short term agreement, you might leave care before turning 18).

Transition planning should start early. Before aging out, you should be supported in learning important life skills like grocery shopping, cooking, budgeting, banking, cleaning, personal hygiene, writing a resume, applying for jobs or school, doing your taxes, booking appointments, managing prescriptions, paying bills, finding housing, replacing IDs, using public transit, and accessing family planning support.

To set yourself up for success, you and your caseworker should create a plan that covers the essentials — like housing, food, income, and anything else you need to feel secure. A big part of this is making sure you have all your personal documents before you leave care. This includes your ID, health card, treaty number or card, information for your family doctor, any prescriptions, and more.

It's also a smart idea to get your learner's license — and if possible, your full driver's license — while you're still in care, since it can be much harder to get once you've aged out. Talk to your caseworker about the goals you want to reach before leaving care.

SYCCN youth members created a transition manual and app, *Youth in Transit: Growing Out of Care* to help you get ready to age out! These tools are here to help you feel confident and prepared for life after care. For copies of the Transition Manual, please contact SYCCN directly. You can also download the PDF version from our website, or scan the QR codes at the back of this handbook to access the App — available on both Apple and Android devices.

# Important information for you to have

**The names and telephone numbers for people that you may need to call are:**

Caseworker Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Caseworker Phone Number: \_\_\_\_\_

Caseworker Email: \_\_\_\_\_

**\*\*Ask your caseworker to fill out the following information:**

Supervisor Phone Number: \_\_\_\_\_

Supervisor Email: \_\_\_\_\_

Manager Phone Number: \_\_\_\_\_

Manager Email: \_\_\_\_\_

Director, Service Delivery Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

Director, Service Delivery Email: \_\_\_\_\_

## Helpers

- Sask Advocate for Children and Youth: 1.800.322.7221  
[www.saskadvocate.ca](http://www.saskadvocate.ca)
- Saskatchewan Youth in Care and Custody Network:  
1.888.528.8061, [www.syiccn.ca](http://www.syiccn.ca)
- Kid's Help Phone Line: 1.800.668.6868  
<https://kidshelpphone.ca>
- UN Convention on the Rights of the Child:  
[www.unicef.org/child-rights-convention](http://www.unicef.org/child-rights-convention)
- Post-Majority Support Services for First Nations  
Youth and Young Adults: [www.sac-isc.gc.ca/eng](http://www.sac-isc.gc.ca/eng)
- An Act Respecting First Nations, Inuit and Métis Children, Youth and  
Families: <https://laws.justice.gc.ca/eng/acts/f-11.73/FullText.html>

**For a quick reference, pull out this section and keep it with you!**

# Important contacts

## **Minister of Social Services**

Legislative Building  
2405 Legislative Drive  
Regina, SK S4S 0B3

Phone: 306.787.3661

Toll Free: 1.866.221.5200

[www.saskatchewan.ca/government/government-structure/  
ministries/social-services](http://www.saskatchewan.ca/government/government-structure/ministries/social-services)

**If you want a lawyer to ensure your wants and your voice is heard contact the Counsel for Children.**

Call toll free: 1.877.787.5424

[www.saskatchewan.ca/residents/justice-crime-and-the-law/courts-  
and-sentencing/counsel-for-children](http://www.saskatchewan.ca/residents/justice-crime-and-the-law/courts-and-sentencing/counsel-for-children)

**Another good place to contact with any concerns is the Saskatchewan Advocate for Children and Youth**

201 – 446 2nd Avenue North  
Saskatoon, SK S7K 2C3

[www.saskadvocate.ca](http://www.saskadvocate.ca)

Call toll free: 1.800.322.7221

[contact@saskadvocate.ca](mailto:contact@saskadvocate.ca)

**You may also want to discuss your situation with the Saskatchewan Youth in Care and Custody Network.**

[www.syiccn.ca](http://www.syiccn.ca)

[info@syiccn.ca](mailto:info@syiccn.ca)

Call the toll-free Youth Line at: 1.888.528.8061

## My notes

**Use these pages to write down any questions or concerns that you want to talk to your supports, caseworker, etc. about.**

[illegible]

This image shows a single sheet of white paper with horizontal green ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page. There are no margins, text, or other markings on the paper.

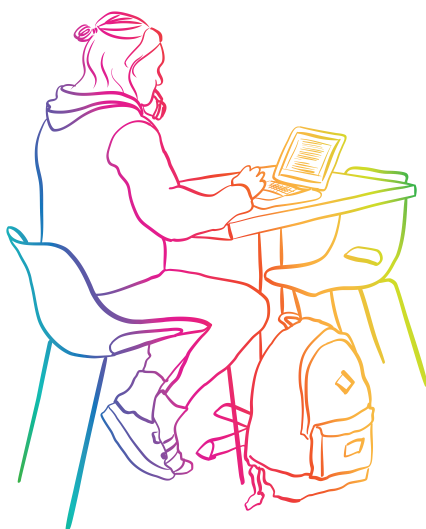
# Can I talk to my parents? How about my siblings?

Contact with all your family members is encouraged unless there is a safety concern. Your caregiver, foster family, or group home staff, as well as your caseworker, should support you and help you get in contact with family (if it is safe). If you are not being allowed contact with your family, talk to your caseworker.

## What if calling my family is long distance?

The ministry will pay for some long distance calls. Ask your caseworker how often you can phone your family. If your parents agree to pay for the calls, check with them to find out the best time to call.

If it is safe, you may also choose to talk with your family members online. Whether by email, phone, social media, texts, etc., please make sure that you are communicating safely.



## **What if I don't want to have contact with my family?**

If you don't want to have contact with your family, be sure to tell your caseworker. Your wishes will be respected. If you change your mind later, contact can begin at that time. Remember, it's ok to change your mind. Unless it is unsafe for you, contact with your family is encouraged.

Generally, contact with family members is important so that you can see how everyone is doing, and to let your family know how you're doing. It's good to keep in touch.

Visits with family members are a chance for you to see what changes your parents and others are making, and to talk about how your life is going.

## **What about contact with other relatives and friends?**

Contact with friends and other family members is okay unless there is a reason not to have contact with a certain person. Talk with your caseworker about the people you want to have contact with, and make a list of them.

Remember! Unless the person you are want to talk to is "unsafe," which your caseworker should clearly explain why that is the case, your foster parents, guardians, caregivers, and / or group home staff should not stop you from calling them. Talk to your caseworker if this is happening. You can also call the Saskatchewan Advocate for Children and Youth if you aren't being allowed to call your family.



It is your right to have connections and communication with your family, but if it is really late or if there's another reasonable excuse for why you can't call right now, ask when you can call and make a plan so that you know when you are able to call.

## **What is a plan of care, case plan, or care plan?**

Shortly after, or just before you come into the care of the ministry, you, your parents, your caseworker, and other people important in your life meet to discuss a plan of care, also known as your "case plan."

If your caseworker does not bring up this topic soon after you come into care, feel free to ask about it. The plan of care should include what is expected of everyone important in your life. It should also include some time to make any changes that might be necessary.

In other words, your case plan should include: who is going to do what, when they have to do it by (a date), and what are the signs that the changes or progress has been made.

## **What is in my file?**

There is private and sensitive information in your file about you and your family.

You can ask your caseworker to go over your file with you. You have the right to your own information when your case is open and after it has been closed. Your file also has your case planning in it. You should know your case plan, and you should be part of deciding your case plan.

Tell your caseworker if or when you do not agree with the information in your file. Ask your caseworker to put a note in your file describing what you do not agree with and why you disagree. You can also write a note and ask that it be added to your file.

Include celebrations in your file! You can give your caseworker important items to add copies of to your file like: certificates and awards you've achieved, report-cards, school pictures, artwork, letters, and pictures of happy moments. Your file tells the story of you while you are in care, let it reflect all of you.

## **How to request and receive your file?**

You have the right to request a copy of your own personal record and information once you are 18. Please speak with your caseworker about the information you would like to receive.

Once you are 18 years of age, you can make what's called an "Access to Information Request." Information requests are handled in the order that they are received, there might be a large number of requests that are ahead of yours and this may take some time. You will be contacted when a consultant is assigned to your file. There may be some information you can access without making a formal request. Contact your caseworker or nearest service centre to discuss your options.

If you feel that you did not receive all your records, or that there is missing information, you can request a Review. This means an independent reviewer would look at the records given to you and will make sure you were given what you are entitled to see under legislation, or by law.



## What kinds of things can I discuss with my caseworker?

If you have questions about any of the following topics, talk with your caseworker. They can help with:

- school
- accessibility
- birth control
- pregnancy
- drugs and alcohol
- spending money
- privacy
- sexuality
- sexual health
- special activities (hockey, music, gymnastics, etc.)
- getting a driver's licence
- getting a part-time job
- getting a social insurance number
- getting a treaty card / number
- issues in your foster home, group home, or placement
- mental health
- gender identity
- any special needs

# What is the Saskatchewan Youth in Care and Custody Network?

The SYICCN is a non-profit peer-to-peer organization that advocates and supports youth, aged 14-24, in or from foster care/ young offender systems in Saskatchewan. While our office is in Regina, we work with young people and set up Youth in Care and Custody Networks across Saskatchewan.

The SYICCN is mandated to help set up local “networks” throughout Saskatchewan and develop strategies that empower youth in and from the system.

At a deeper level, the SYICCN mandate sees to it that youth in care and / or custody are able to know their rights, to find their voices within the system(s), and to encourage them to speak out on issues and services in the system based on their own experiences.

The SYICCN strives to offer services to all of Saskatchewan’s youth in care and / or custody by working closely with service area offices and other youth serving and youth friendly organizations across the province.

Many of our adult supports come from these professions. Most of all we are a “by youth, for youth” peer-to-peer organization. All of our members, staff, and some of our volunteers are people who are currently in or have had experience with child welfare, foster care, and / or the young offender system.

Local Networks are groups of young people from care that get together and have fun, connect, and share stories about life in care. Being from and in government care is a unique experience and it helps to know and talk to others who are in care, or who have aged out.

Local Networks meet up throughout the year to connect, share, and support each other. This could be as often as once a month, to a few times a year, depending on what the youth participants decide and how much support is offered through their area. Local networks are youth-run, with the help of excellent adult support people! Each Network's activities vary as it is up to the participants to decide what they want to do.

For more information on local Youth in Care and Custody Networks in Saskatchewan or how to start one in your area, please contact the SYICCN office 1-888-528-8061.

## Rights and responsibilities of young people in care

You have the **right** to know what your rights and responsibilities are.

It's your **responsibility** to learn about these rights, and to be sure you understand them. If you are not certain what your rights are, how will you know if they are being violated or met?

You have the **right** to expect to be treated with dignity and respect.

It is your **responsibility** to treat others with dignity and respect.

You have the **right** to be heard.

It is your **responsibility** to listen to others.

You have the **right** to participate in your local Youth in Care and Custody Network.

You have the **right** to be included and involved in all decisions that affect your life.

You have the **right** to a plan of care that meets your needs.

## **The Ministry of Social Services must have a plan for your care.**

### **This means:**

- You have the **right** to be involved in the planning process; you have the **right** to know the plan and to see it.
- You have the **right** to express your opinions and ideas about your care and treatment.
- You have the **right** to be informed of, and involved in, decisions about your guardianship, custody and legal status.

You are **responsible** for talking with your caseworker about your needs and concerns, or if there is something you are having a problem with, or disagree with, in your care plan.

You are **responsible** for telling your caseworker what you would like to do after you turn 18. You may receive financial support, allowing you to continue your education or train for a job (Section 56 Agreement).

You have the **right** to as much stability as possible, and to express your opinion about where you live and for all efforts to be made to achieve these goals.

You are **responsible** for respecting the rules of your placement (where you are living), provided they don't violate your rights. This might mean sharing household duties, or telling your foster parents or caregivers when you are going to be late.

If you feel the rules of your foster or group home violate your rights, you are **responsible** for speaking to your caseworker about it.

You have the **right** to reasonable privacy and possession of personal property. Specifically you have the right to:

- speak in private with family, extended family (kin) and friends (if you wish to, and it is safe)
- speak in private with your caseworker

- speak in private with a lawyer, the police, the Sask Advocate for Children and Youth, etc.
- receive and send mail privately
- have a personal place for your belongings

You are **responsible** for respecting the rights, privacy, property and special needs of other residents, staff, foster parents and neighbours.

You are **responsible** to ensure that your belongings do not include anything illegal, and do not violate the safety of yourself or others.

You are **responsible** to make sure that your relationships and friendships do not threaten your own safety, or the safety of others.

You have the **right** to discuss your rights and choices with your caseworker.

You are **responsible** for asking questions if you are unsure of something or need advice.

You have the **right** to live in a safe, caring, secure, nurturing environment, with adequate food, clothing, shelter, spending allowance, and, medical and dental treatment.

You are **responsible** for showing up for, and taking part in, meetings that are necessary to fulfill your plan of care.

These can include medical and dental appointments, or meetings with your caseworker or community youth officer.

You have the **right** to know why you came into care and to personal information about yourself that is in your file. This includes the right to comment about what is in your file, and have your comments / corrections written down in your file.

You are **responsible** for ensuring that you understand why you came into care and knowing what personal information about yourself and your family is in your file. Your caseworker is responsible for sharing that information.

You have the **right** to be free from and protected from mental, physical, financial, and sexual abuse. This includes the **right** not to be spanked, hit, locked up, verbally abused, or deprived of your basic needs (food, shelter, privacy, education, bathroom, etc.).

If you have experienced abuse, you have the **right** to be given the support you need.

You are **responsible** for telling someone if you have been abused.

You are also **responsible** for ensuring that your behaviour does not violate the rights of others.

You have the **right** to express who you are; including: your name, gender identity, cultural background, and beliefs.

You have the **right** to stay connected to your family, community, and cultural traditions, including access to language, ceremonies, and spiritual practices that are meaningful to you.

You have the **right** to have your religious, cultural and linguistic heritage respected.

You are **responsible** for respecting differences of ethnicity, culture, religion, beliefs, disabilities, gender, and sexuality of other residents, staff, caregivers, foster families, and neighbours.

You have the **right** to legal representation through the Counsel for Children program for any Child Protection Court matters.

It is your **caseworker's responsibility** to:

- treat you with respect
- make sure you know your rights
- listen when you have concerns
- make sure you are aware of choices and options
- involve you in your plan of care



- provide you with information on services available from the Ministry of Social Services and in the community
- make sure you know how to call an emergency caseworker 24 hours a day (note that it won't necessarily be your own caseworker and that some communities have emergency duty caseworkers or Mobile Crisis agencies)
- make sure you know you can ask for a different caseworker (note that this isn't always possible, if this is the case, it must be explained clearly and respectfully to you)
- make sure you know you can ask to be moved from where you are living (note that this isn't always possible)
- make sure you know you can contact the caseworker's supervisor and others if you have a complaint or disagreement
- make sure you know the Ministry of Social Services appeal and conflict resolution processes, so that if you disagree with your treatment or case plan, you know the next steps to take
- make sure that you are aware of your right to legal representation through the Counsel for Children program for any Child Protection Court matters
- make sure you are informed about and know how to call the Children's Help Line, the Saskatchewan Advocate for Children and Youth, your local MLA or MP, other people who can help, and the Saskatchewan Youth in Care and Custody Network
- make sure you are ready to age or transition out of care. Your caseworker should make a transition plan with you to make sure that when you age out you are supported and prepared for life as an adult
- make sure to go through this handbook with you so you understand your rights while in care

## What if I disagree with my caseworker?

Chances are you will disagree at some point, especially as you grow older and want to make decisions that affect and reflect on your growing independence.

As a first option, always discuss the matter with your caseworker so you understand each other's concerns. Sometimes by simply talking, you can solve a disagreement.

You should always be heard and respected.

## Is there anybody else I can go to for help?

Yes, there is. You have what is called the **Right to Appeal**. This outlines the steps you can take to try and have the conflict resolved if you can not come to an agreement with your caseworker. This may involve speaking with your caseworker's Supervisor, and / or Manager / Director regarding your disagreement, and can be escalated, or taken further, from there if needed. Please ask your caseworker, or the SYICCN for a copy of the 'Your Right to Appeal' information sheet.

Being in care means that you are not living at home. The ministry may be responsible for your well-being or may share that responsibility with your parents or other persons important to you. The situation could last for a short time or a long time, depending upon your family's circumstances.

Sometimes the answers in this handbook might seem like they don't fit what is happening to you. If you don't understand something in this book or anything about your plan or care, please discuss it with

your caseworker, your caregiver, or someone else you trust — you can also call us, the SYICCN for more info.

If you are still not satisfied, you can write to the office of the Minister of Social Services. The Minister is in charge of the whole ministry. The address is:

Minister of Social Services  
Legislative Building  
2405 Legislative Drive  
Regina, SK S4S 0B3

Phone: 306-787-3661

On the Web: Ministry of Social Services  
[www.saskatchewan.ca](http://www.saskatchewan.ca)

Another good place to contact with any concerns is the Saskatchewan Advocate for Children and Youth

Call toll-free: 1-800-322-7221

Or Visit: [www.saskadvocate.ca](http://www.saskadvocate.ca)

Or email: [contact@saskadvocate.ca](mailto:contact@saskadvocate.ca)

You may also want to discuss your situation with the Saskatchewan Youth in Care and Custody Network office. We can support you and attend meetings with you and your caseworker.

Call our toll-free Youth Line: 1-888-528-8061

Or visit: [www.syiccn.ca](http://www.syiccn.ca)

Or email: [info@syiccn.ca](mailto:info@syiccn.ca)

We hope this guide helped you understand your **rights** and **responsibilities** while you are in care a little more than you did before. We know you may be experiencing information overload, like your life has been flipped upside down. Please remember: you are not alone. We have been where you are, and **we're here to help**.

# Definitions

**Advocate:** To speak out against or in support of something.

**Aging Out /Transitioning:** This is the term used to describe the process of leaving the care of the ministry and entering into independent-adulthood.

**Apprehend(ed):** This is the word that the ministry uses to describe removing you from your home / parent's care.

**Care / Government Care:** In this book we say care and government care to describe your relationship to the Ministry of Social Services regardless whether you are under a short term, long term, permanent , IPSI, or any other out of home care agreement.

**Caregiver:** This is the word used to describe whoever is taking care of you at the place you are currently living. Depending on your care status this could mean: your parents, a family member, foster parent(s), a guardian, group home staff, etc.

**Emergency Placement / Emergency receiving home:** This is where anyone who is apprehended from care goes to stay and /or sleep, until a longer term placement is made. Your stay here should be short term. This can either be a foster home or group home.

**File:** When you are in care, there is a file (paper and electronic) opened where all of the details, both legal and case planning, surrounding your status and time in care are described. A file allows the ministry to have all the information in one place, so they can ensure that whoever you are working with has full understanding of your situation. When you are in care, the ministry is required to retain your file / records for 100 years, so you can request and have access to your records at anytime should you wish to learn more about your time in care.

**Foster Home:** A home with one or more caregivers (often called foster parents) who are approved and have training to meet the diverse needs of children who come into care of the ministry.



**Government Ward:** This word is used to describe the person in need of protection; this means any person who is under the care of the Government of Saskatchewan — in this book, we specifically mean the Ministry of Social Services.

**Group Home:** Provide specialized care to children and youth who may need more therapeutic interventions that are beyond a family style setting or for those older youth who are moving towards independence and where foster care is unlikely to meet their needs.

**Legal Status:** This is the term used to describe the Minister's role as parent and their authority to provide care pursuant to, or under *The Child and Family Services Act*. Supports and services available to you may differ based on your legal status.

**Legislation:** A written law that was created by government.

**Ministry:** In this book, when we use the term ministry we are specifically talking about the Ministry of Social Services.

**Peer Home:** These placements offer a 24 hour staffed youth centred home, guided by the principle of adolescents being in control of, and responsible for, their own lifestyle choices. Typically this placement type houses youth aged 12-15.

**Peer-to-Peer:** People from the same background or history working together to support, educate, etc.

**Permanency / Permanence:** Means long term, long lasting, and unchanged. This word is often used when talking about your living situation, making sure you remain connected with important people in your life, like family, friends, and community. From the word permanent.

**Placement:** The word used to describe where you will be, or are, staying while you are in care. Placement can be a foster home, group home, extended family member's home, etc.

**Responsibility:** It is what you are accountable for.

**Right:** A right is an inextricable (permanent and unchanging) legal entitlement that must be met.

**Social Worker / Caseworker:** The professional caseworker assigned to your file. The Minister of Social Services has parental rights and responsibilities for a person under the care of Child Protection.

As the designate of the Minister, the role of the caseworker is to carry out those parental responsibilities. The primary focus is the best interests of the child / youth. The caseworker must ensure that quality care is provided to children who are in the care of the Minister of Social Services.

The caseworker is to ensure that all services to children and youth, their families and caregivers are provided in accordance with *The Child and Family Services Act*, ministry policy, standards, and philosophy.

The caseworker must work in a co-operative partnership with families and caregivers toward the goal of meeting the total needs of children in out of home care (Children Services Manual).

# ***Youth in Transit: Growing Out of Care***

In 2014, the SYICCN launched a youth-led research project in response to feedback from young people across Saskatchewan who identified major gaps in supports for those ageing out of care. In partnership with Dr. Marie Lovrod, the University of Saskatchewan, and with funding from the Community Initiatives Fund (CIF) and the Ministry of Social Services, we created *Youth in Transit: Growing Out of Care* — a transitioning from care manual written by youth, for youth.

The manual was so well received that youth directed us to develop an app version, which was later funded by the Canada Internet Registration Authority (CIRA). Over 300 young people helped shape both the manual and the app, now available on the Apple Store and Google Play.





# **syiccn**

for youth by youth

Please feel free to contact us for more information on  
the Saskatchewan Youth in Care and Custody  
Network Inc. (or SYICCN):

Tel: 306-522-1533

Fax: 306-522-1507

Toll Free Youth Line: 1-888-528-8061

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