



LB 941: The Nebraska Youth in Care Bill of Rights

The Strengthening Families Act:

In 2016, the Nebraska Strengthening Families Act became law requiring youth in foster family homes and child care institutions be notified of their rights pertaining to a number of services, beginning at the age of 14

Through a number of surveys and focus groups with young people formerly in the foster care system, we learned in practice, youth in the system have not been notified of their rights or do not feel they understand them well enough to advocate for themselves or seek assistance.



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LB 941, introduced by Sen. Hunt, creates the Nebraska Youth in Care Bill of Rights to educate young people in out-of-home care in the foster care and juvenile justice systems on their rights. LB 941 will strengthen their knowledge & power to advocate for themselves and seek support when their rights are not being met.

- LR 127: Over 50 advocates with experience in Nebraska's foster care and juvenile justice systems shared their input in the creation of this Youth in Care Bill of Rights through focus groups, surveys and conversations as part of LR 127 and the previous work of the Strengthening Families Committee. They shared concerns about their lack of awareness of their rights in these complex systems, and the difficulty in seeking support when these rights are not being met.

What is the Youth in Care Bill of Rights?

The Youth in Care Bill of Rights is a list of rights, most rights already existing in state and federal law, that apply to youth in out-of-home care in the foster care and juvenile justice systems (youth in foster family homes, group homes, YRTC, etc.). The rights include:

- constitutional rights
- rights related to accessing services & supports
- rights related to equity for all youth
- rights of pregnant and parenting youth
- rights specific to youth & their foster care cases

How will this benefit young people in the foster care and juvenile justice systems?

LB 941 not only lists these rights, but outlines the process for how youth will be educated on their rights and what they can do if they feel their rights are being infringed. To ensure youth are informed on their rights, LB 941:

- Requires caseworkers and probation officers to be trained on the Youth in Care Bill of Rights and to more regularly discuss these rights with the young people. Beginning at age 14, youth will be informed on the Youth in Care Bill of Rights.
- Strengthens the grievance process through the Department of Health and Human Services & Probation to better ensure youth are aware of this process and are able to receive follow up information about their grievance.
- Further ensures these rights are being met, LB941 outlines the role of the youths' guardian ad litem or attorney in supporting a youth in understanding these rights, as well as raising any issues in court.

The foster care and juvenile justice systems are complex systems and young people should have knowledge of their rights. LB 941 & the Youth in Care Bill of Rights will empower these youth by equipping them with knowledge on their rights.