N O R M A L C Y B I L L O F R I G H T S

Approved by NEYC & NEACWCD 2016

***Preamble*:** "Normal" refers to standards or usual activities regularly experienced by youth not in out-of-home care. 'Out-of-home care' includes residential treatment facilities, foster homes, group homes, and placements with relatives or kin. In addition to 'standard or usual activities', normalcy for youth in out-of-home care includes opportunities for input and participation in decision-making for their cases and day-to-day lives.

In our definition we focus on six major areas of "Normalcy":

1. Families
2. Cultural Awareness
3. Social and Peer Inclusion
4. Age-Related Milestones
5. Community Inclusion
6. Decision-Making

Along with defining what "Normalcy" looks like in these areas, the New England Youth Coalition hopes this document will raise awareness of the unique experiences of:

- Youth in secure facilities,
- Youth from varying ethnic, religious, and cultural backgrounds - including Native youth,
- Youth with non-conforming gender identification and sexual orientations, and,
- Youth with physical and mental disabilities (IEP, learning disabilities, physical handicaps).

***Whereas*:** The right to maintain regular contact with our families as we define them and support for those relationships during our time in out of home care, taking into account the safety of the youth.
***Whereas*:** The right to build and maintain relationships with peers during our time in out-of-home care.
***Whereas*:** The right to independently participate in activities in our communities to build skills, network of social relationships, and a sense of belonging.
***Whereas*:** The right to express ourselves and our personal and cultural identities.
***Whereas*:** The right to experience and celebrate the developmental events and milestones of adolescence and young adulthood.
***Whereas*:** The right to take the central role in decisions about our lives with the support of caring adults

Every foster child:

1. Shall have regular visits with their families and siblings regardless of "good" behavior. (see: Sibling Bill of Rights)
2. Shall be educated on the components of healthy romantic relationships through guidance from a supportive adult.
3. Shall be able to participate in activities that build a supportive social network, and have a curfew that allows for such activities.
4. Shall be allowed to build relationships with peers regardless of gender or sex.
5. Shall have opportunities to build relationships within their home and school communities equal to their peers not in care.
6. Shall be taught how to use tools such as personal e-mail, social media, and cell phones in a safe and healthy way that promotes an inclusivity with their communities, peers, and family.
7. Shall be able to express their identity as they choose, with guidance from supportive adults, because all people have the right to safety regardless of their circumstances.
8. Shall not be restricted in practicing religious or cultural customs, listening to their choice of music, wearing their preferred style of clothing etc.
9. Shall be showed respect for their religious and cultural beliefs and shall be able to participate in any activities associated with their religious beliefs.
10. Shall be allowed to discover and express their gender and sexual identity regardless of placement, and shall not be subjected to discrimination or fear for their safety because of their gender or sexual identity.
11. Shall be supported to reach age-related milestones including but not limited to obtaining a driver's license, opening a bank account, celebrating birthdays, graduations, etc.