



## Parents' & Family Handbook

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### A Detailed Discussion of the Parents' Bill of Rights

#### Please see the online Parents' Bill of Rights

The Parents' Bill of Rights is TYC's promise to take care of your child, an invitation to you to be involved and vocal, and a guarantee that the time your child spends in TYC will be meaningful. Your involvement in your child's care is critical to his or her success. We need your help and ask that you partner with correctional staff, educators, and treatment providers in your child's rehabilitation. We will encourage you and assist you to actively participate in the design and implementation of your child's treatment, from intake through discharge.

As parents of children<sup>1</sup> who have been committed to the care, custody, or control of the Texas Youth Commission you have the following rights:

1. **As a parent, you have the right to know that you and your child will be treated fairly regardless of race, religion, national origin, language, economic status, disability, gender, sexual orientation, or age and that each child will be treated as an individual.**

*You and your child will be treated fairly by TYC staff, without regard to your age, gender, religion, sexual orientation, the color of your skin, the language you speak, the amount of money you have, the country you come from, or disabilities you may have. You and your child should always be treated with professionalism, respect, and dignity.*

2. **As a parent, you have the right to expect TYC to provide a safe, secure, and sanitary environment for your child.**

*As a parent, you have a right to expect that the environment your child is in will be safe, secure, and clean. Some ways that you may be able to exercise those rights include attending an orientation and/or a tour of the facility in which your child is placed. You should be able to see your child's environment, including a dorm, the school, and cafeteria at scheduled opportunities.*

3. **As a parent, you have the right not to be judged, blamed or labeled because of your child's incarceration.**

*We recognize that there are many factors that contribute to a child being committed to TYC. Your child's incarceration is not an indicator of your worth as a parent. TYC staff will not judge you because your child has been committed to TYC.*

4. **As a parent, you have the right to be a vocal and active advocate on behalf of your child.**

*It is more important than ever before to be a vocal and active advocate on behalf of your child. Your rights as your child's parent do not end simply because your child has been committed to TYC. Some of your rights may include:*

- The right to attend any open meetings hosted by TYC.
- The right to prohibit identifiable pictures or videos of your child from being disseminated for public use.
- The right to direct the religious training of your child.
- The right to file a complaint with the expectation that it will be tracked, investigated, and resolved in a timely manner in accordance with law, policies, or administrative directives.
- The right to appeal decisions on behalf of your child, in accordance with TYC policy, concerning grievances or allegations of mistreatment.
- The right to access any policy or directive upon request.
- The right to express your concern and have it taken seriously without the threat or fear of retaliation against you or your child.

**5. As a parent, you have the right to be an active participant when decisions are made about your child.**

*As a parent, you also still have the right to actively participate when decisions are made about your child. Your rights include:*

- The right to participate in writing, in person, or over the telephone within the guidelines stated in the policies included in the appendix of this handbook.
- The right, as allowed by law, policy, or directive, to attend meetings related to your child, and to be accompanied by your advocate, attorney, or interpreter.
- The right to provide input or feedback on TYC policies and directives.
- The right to expect a timely response to your requests regarding your child.

**6. As a parent, you have the right to be informed about matters related to your child's welfare.**

*Parents need information about their children. That need is especially critical when your child is away from you for long periods of time. While your son or daughter is in TYC, you have the right to be informed about different aspects of his or her welfare. Some of these rights include:*

- The right to monthly notification of your child's behavior, including any consequences for rule violations.
- The right to timely notifications of special events at your child's facility, including due process hearings or graduations.
- The right to be provided contact information for the Office of the Inspector General and the Office of the Independent Ombudsman.
- The right to timely notification if your child is sprayed with oleoresin capsicum (pepper spray), placed in a manual restraint, assaulted, injured, hospitalized, transferred to another facility, escapes or is discharged.
- The right to be informed of your child's progress and treatment, including medical, psychological, psychiatric, and educational progress, unless otherwise prohibited by law.
- The right to make a written request for a summary of grievances filed by your child.
- The right to comprehensive, easy to understand information about your child's stay at TYC, provided in your preferred language whenever possible.
- The right to be informed of serious or persistent medical conditions related to your child.
- The right to know the process, timelines, and decisions which affect your child's stay, including the dates related to minimum length of stay, special services committee meetings, and meetings of the release review panel.

**7. As a parent, you have the right to access your child's records.**

*To be an active participant in your child's education and treatment, you need access to your child's records. Some of your specific rights include:*

- The right to access, upon written request, any records concerning your child, including test scores, grades, disciplinary records, psychological evaluations, health, dental, and immunization records, and grievances and allegations filed on your child's behalf, unless otherwise prohibited by law.
- The right to receive (upon request) financial reports related to your child's student trust funds.
- The right to receive copies of any TYC document to facilitate your child's successful reintegration back into the community.

**8. As a parent, you have the right to meaningful participation in your child's treatment, including medical treatment, behavioral health treatment, and education.**

*Meaningful and active participation in your child's treatment and education would also mean that you have the following rights:*

- The right to contribute to his or her individual case plan.
- The right, upon request, to parent/teacher communication and meetings.
- The right to attend a family orientation.
- The right to attend an open house to see your child's school and meet his or her teachers.

- The right to receive quarterly academic progress reports.
- The right to discuss your child's health condition with a licensed healthcare professional and to be informed if there are significant medication changes.
- The right to discuss medical questions or concerns with the facility's nurse manager.
- The right to be present if your child has to be hospitalized.
- The right to be present and participate in a monthly review of your child's treatment progress.
- The right to have the location of your home taken into account when your child is placed in a TYC facility, depending on his or her treatment needs.
- The right to meet in person or by telephone with staff involved in your child's care or programming needs.
- The right to know that your child is receiving adequate treatment, programming and recreational activities.
- The right, upon request, to review all teaching materials, textbooks, and other teaching aids used in the classroom for your information.
- The right to know the names and contact information for the facility's superintendent, assistant superintendent, youth rights specialist, family liaison, principal, and your child's caseworker and psychologist.
- The right to receive a second medical or psychiatric opinion, if appropriate, as determined by the TYC medical director.

**9. As a parent, you have the right to communicate with your child, including visitation, telephone, and mail.**

*Continued communication with your child is essential. You have the right to visit your child, talk to him or her on the telephone, and to send and receive letters from your child within the guidelines listed in the policies linked from the table of contents in this online handbook. Specifically, those rights include:*

- The right to a timely visit with your child after properly checking in.
- The right to have your child's mail and telephone calls handled in a respectful, timely fashion.
- The right to communicate privately with your child, including visitation, telephone, and mail.
- The right to face-to-face contact visits with your child on the weekends and by appointment on weekdays when reasonable.
- The right to have reasonable accommodations during visitation. Please contact the facility's superintendent in advance of your visit to make arrangements for any special accommodations.
- The right to be informed, in a timely manner, of current policies and procedures that affect visiting with your child.
- The right to private, in-person communication with your child.
- The right to have special visitation requests accommodated, including but not limited to special family holidays or meetings, long-distance travel requirements, parent work schedules that preclude visiting during normal hours, or bereavement.
- The right to furnish your child with approved reading material that will supplement his or her education.
- The right to have accurate information about current visitation rules.

**10. As a parent, you have the right to be assured that all TYC staff are professional, courteous, and respectful.**

*You have the right to expect that TYC staff will treat you and your child in a professional, courteous, and respectful manner. TYC staff will be professionals in their field. You have the right to know that they have been properly trained and credentialed for their job responsibilities. Furthermore, you should expect TYC staff to keep accurate records, from the time of your child's intake to his or her eventual discharge.*

**11. As a parent, you have the right to know that TYC will take immediate corrective action to protect the rights of parents and youth.**

*This bill of rights is our promise to you that we will treat you and your child fairly and that the time he or she spends away from home will be meaningful. If you feel that your or your child's rights have been violated, please contact the superintendent of your facility who will make sure that your complaint is investigated.*

**12. As a parent, you have the right to meaningful participation in your child's transition planning – from intake through community reentry and eventual discharge.**

*Few things are as important as good planning for your son's or daughter's eventual return home. As a parent, you have the right to participate in that planning, beginning at your child's initial commitment to TYC and continuing through the parole process all the way to his or her eventual discharge. Your rights include:*

- The right to know that effective transition planning for your child, including early identification of youth and family needs and referral to appropriate services and resources, begins at intake and continues through reentry until discharge.
- The right to be informed of the services, support, and resources available to you and your child in your home community, including possible medical coverage and other government benefits.
- You have the right to expect full support in effective planning for your child for all transitions including from facility to facility, facility to home, and youth services to adult services.
- The right to be informed of your rights and responsibilities while your child is on parole.
- The right to provide input in the development of your child's conditions of parole.

## **Committee Member Acknowledgments**

The Texas Youth Commission is indebted to all of the committee members who participated in the creation of the Parents' Bill of Rights.

*Note: Initials are used in lieu of the names of TYC youth and parents to protect their privacy.*

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*Parent*

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<sup>1</sup> Children who are under the age of 18 years or are over 18 years **and** have signed a release of confidentiality authorizing TYC to share confidential information with their parents. This includes guardians ad litem and Child Protective Service conservators.

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