

Foster Care Bill of Rights Facilitation Guide

Strengthening Families Act (SFA), Youth Bill of Rights Focus Groups Facilitator's Guide

Overview

Here is the guide to lead the focus group on the foster care bill of rights. This guide includes a step-by-step process for you to get input from the youth and young adults you work with. Thank you for leading a focus group.

Background

Strengthening Families Act (SFA):

- What SFA is:
 - A new federal law
 - The main focus of the SFA is normalcy
 - It includes other topics like human trafficking prevention and data collection
- What SFA does:
 - Implements the Reasonable and Prudent Parent Standard to allow foster parents and designated staff at group homes to use their best judgment in making decisions as to what activities that youth can participate in.
 - Limits the use of Independent Living as a court-ordered permanency goal,
 - Involves youth ages 14 and older in their case planning and provides them with a foster care “bill of rights”
 - Provides young adults with important documents (birth certificate, social security card etc.) before they “age out” of foster care

Focus group purpose

The purpose of the focus group is to get the input of youth and young adults who currently are or were in the foster care system to assist in the development of the Nebraska's Youth Bill of Rights.

What can a Bill of Rights (BOR) actually do?

*Handout #1 – What is a RIGHT?

This document summarizes this question. You will give a copy to each participant and will read it out loud with them. You may want to familiarize yourself with it first. Take home points are:

1. There are some things that are clear rights (like the freedom of speech).
2. But other things probably can't be a right, like ensuring total respect from everyone, a spot on the varsity team and unlimited access to a cell phone. They can make suggestions, but not everything will be included in the final document. The goal is for young people to know their options!

*Handout #2 – Nebraska Foster Youth Bill of Rights (BOR) Ideas

This is a resource for discussion only! This document is not intended to be restrictive of other ideas or narrow the focus of the group, but to act as a list of options you can use as the facilitator during discussion as needed. Anything underlined and red is language required by LB 746. **Bold** is language from current DHHS BOR.

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Focus Group Basics

Attendees:

- Works best in groups of 12 youth/young adults or less
- A facilitator - adult
- A note-taker – not involved in the process

Materials Needed:

- A chair for each participant
- SFA Prezi and computer / projector to play for all participants
- Handout #1: “What is a Right (print 1 for each person or project on wall)
- Handout #2: “Nebraska Foster Youth Bill of Rights (BOR) Ideas (print 1 double-sided for each person or project on wall)
- Blank paper / pencils

Set-up:

- Arrange chairs in a circle or around a table
- Identify one facilitator to lead the discussion (adult)
- Identify one person who will take notes
- Pull up SFA Prezi and make sure it will play. Located at:
http://prezi.com/dihybcajbinr/?utm_campaign=share&utm_medium=copy&rc=ex0share
- Have the facilitated survey pulled up and available for the note-taker:
<https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/ZDBR8G3>

******Dear Facilitator: We tried to make it easier for you and after each step we bolded and underlined what we thought you could say to start the conversation....**

(it will look just like this above in the rest of the document)

Tips and Tricks

- Try to keep participant number around 12
- Plan on 1 hour to complete questions
- Review the facilitated survey questions before hand to assist in the flow of the focus group
- Ensure the space allows for confidential conversations
- Minimize nonparticipating (Facilitator or Note Taker) adults/staff in the room
- Encourage all participants to speak up
- Allow silence
- Minimize talk on other subjects or side conversations
- Get through as many questions as possible, but don't rush.
- Allow the youth to give in-depth answers which may require prompting or questions to draw them out
- Allow them to write down responses they do not feel comfortable sharing in group

Contacts if you have Questions:

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Facilitation Steps

Welcome: **READ THIS TO THE GROUP:** “Welcome and THANK YOU for being here today. The work we do here today will have a positive impact on youth in care for many years to come. This is an opportunity for you to tell the people that make the rules – what you think. Adults need your help through your voice so they can be good advocates. I will be reading some things from this book to you, because I don’t want to miss anything.”

1. **Introductions:** I would like everyone to state their name and [ice breaker].....
 - Go around the room and have them state their name and answer icebreaker? like:
 - Ex: Name the weirdest thing they have ever eaten
 - Try to think of something that is strength based & personal. You don't want the ice breaker to sabotage your success!
2. **Session Overview:** Just so you know, the reason we are here is to gather the voice of young people in creating recommendations for a Foster Care Bill of Rights for Nebraska as the state implements a new law called the Strengthening Families Act or SFA. We will watch a video about this in a minute
 - Inform them that many of these focus groups are taking place across the state
 - It will take about 1 hour & there will be in-depth discussion for each question
3. **Review Confidentiality:** We want you to know your input today helps adult “get” what the youth and young adults in Nebraska are saying. But you need to know that ABSOLUTELY NO names will be shared. The information will be given in a private meeting and will just focus on the themes that were common across the state. They will NOT share personal stories.
4. **Ground Rules:** We want you to feel safe to share, so ground rules are.....
 - Ensure the space is safe and confidential.
 - Create expectations or respect for the group
 - Ask the group what ground rules to use and write on board
 - Offer pre-set ground rules (use ‘I’ statements, be honest, no judging)
5. **Complete Info Sheets:** The only information given about you will be: the number that attended, your gender, age, and the area if the state you are from.
6. **Handouts:** You should have the following in front of you....
 1. Handout #1: “What is a Right” (print 1 for each person or project on wall)
 2. Handout #2: “Nebraska Foster Youth Bill of Rights (BOR) Suggested List”
 3. Blank paper & pencil for things you want to write down and not say out loud
7. **Questions:** Now I am going to start the questions and we’ll watch a video.....
 - Walk through each of the questions, allow time for everyone to respond.
 - Ask prompting questions / open ended questions.
 - Can flow as a conversation so it is less formal.
 - Complete survey once conversation is complete.

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Opening Question: Please name one right you feel ALL youth in care should be given?

Start the Prezi

Slide 1: I am going to play Georgia's video on SFA (say Strengthening Families Act instead of SFA until youth are familiar with term) even though it isn't 100% true for Nebraska - it is about 95% correct....

- This is to give them a general overview of what Strengthening Families Act is.

Slide 2: Let's look at Handout #1 -to help clarify what all this "rights stuff" means....

- Provide Handout #1 "What is a Right" document.
- Go around the room and have each of them read a paragraph.
 - Let all participants know that if they would rather not read their part they can simply say "pass."

Slide 3 & 4: These items HAVE TO BE included in our policy....

- These items must be included in the Nebraska's Youth Bill of Rights per policy.

Slide 5: Let's look at Handout #2 to help us with these questions....

- Provide Handout #2 and on slide review DHHS's first draft of the Foster Youth BOR (Bill of Rights).
 - a. What rights should stay?
 - b. What should be changed?
 - c. What's missing?

Slide 6 & 7: So the current BOR has a list of responsibilities attached to it.....

- They did this to help youth understand what's expected of them. Do you think:
 - d. That the responsibilities should be included with the bill of rights?
 - e. Should the responsibilities be a separate document?
 - f. Why or why not?
 - g. Is there anything you would change about the responsibilities?

Slide 8 & 9: Let's look at what other states are doing, what do you think?.....

- We need the young peoples' voices to develop the Nebraska's Youth Bill of Rights.
- Take a look at examples on Slide 9 of what other states have put in their Youth Bill of Rights to gather inspiration during the creation of the Nebraska's Bill of Rights!

Slide 10: So after you think about it for a while, if you want to provide more information privately, you can go online and answer these questions....

- Enter all the suggestions into the survey to be considered.
- Young people also have the ability to enter any suggestions on another survey if they would like to complete this on their own.
 - The web address to do so is: <https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/Z2R69ZG>
 - It is also available on the Nebraska Children's Website at: <http://www.childrens.nebraska.gov/News/BORSurvey.html>
 - If possible, share the link to the survey on your website or through social media and direct youth to find the link at that location.

Wrap-Up: Thank you again for participating....

- Thank participants for their openness and time,
- Answer any questions they may have,

Post-session Steps:

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- Survey can be completed after compiling all of the information.