

Living with other children at a child welfare institution can be fun, friendly, inspiring, boring, annoying and more besides. It's not always easy! Sometimes you and those who work at the institution may not see things the same way. That can easily happen when many people live together. You can't always do as you like. But there are also limits to what the adults at the institution can decide and what they can do towards you.

When you are in care at a child welfare institution, you have rights and also duties. This brochure is mostly about your rights, but also tells you a bit about your duties. It gives you information about how far the adults at the institution can go in giving you care, treatment or education. You can also read about whose job it is to make sure (supervise) that those who work at the institution follow laws and rules. The booklet also tells you about where to complain if you are unhappy about something. The information about rights and duties applies to all children and youth at child welfare institutions.

If you are in care because of serious behavioural problems, such as problems with drugs or crime, the institution may be allowed to restrict your rights. It might, for example, restrict the visits you can receive, phone calls you can make and your right to go anywhere outside the institution.

If you find some of what is written here difficult to understand, then talk to those who work at the institution, to your child welfare officer, or to staff at the county governor's office. The adults at the institution will write down in this booklet the name, address and telephone number of your child welfare officer and of the county governor.

CARE

You have the right to safety, well-being and care

You have the right to feel safe and sound at the child welfare institution.

Those who work at the institution must look after you and take good care of you. They must be willing to help you when you need help. They must do what they can to make sure you do well and develop in a positive direction.

You have the right to know why you are here

The adults at the institution must explain to you why you are at the child welfare institution. They must tell you how long you will be staying here and what will happen next.

You also have the right to see, and have explained to you, what is written about you in your records.

You have the right to have your say and you have the right to help make decisions

You always have the right to say how you feel about things.

Those who work at the institution must listen to what you have to say.

You must be kept informed and given the chance to say what you feel before decisions are made about things to do with you. Your opinion will be taken into account, depending on how old you are and how mature you are.

FREEDOM

You have the right to go where you want to

As long as it is safe, you can go wherever you want to.

You and those who work at the institution have to have a chat about where it is safe for you to go. The older and more mature you become, the more freedom you will be given to go where you want. If you have left the institution without telling the staff first, or if you don't come back by the agreed time, there are rules about who the institution has to notify and who has to get involved to bring you back safely.

You have the right to spend time with your family

Those who work at the institution must make arrangements for you to stay in contact with and receive visits from your family.

How and how often, will have been decided at the same time it was decided that you were to be taken into care at a child welfare institution.

You have the right to spend time with your friends

The adults at the institution must make arrangements for you to spend time with friends while you are here.

The general rule is that you are allowed to have visitors at the institution, but sometimes a decision may have been made that it is not good for you to spend time with one or more of your friends. If that is the case, the adults must do what they can to help you make new friends.

You have the right to do things you enjoy

The adults must organise things and help you to keep up your interests and leisure activities.

The adults must also help you to find new interests, and do what they can to allow you to use local facilities. They must make arrangements for, and help you get safely to and from your leisure activities.

You have the right to write letters to whoever you want

You can write about whatever you like and send the letter wherever you want to.

You can receive as much post as you like, but if the adults at the institution suspect (have reasons to believe) that the post addressed to you contains drugs or anything that might be dangerous, they are allowed to check the contents of your post. The post must then be opened with you there or the person who sent you the post. If the institution wants to open your post, it must give reasons why, and record them in writing. The reasons must be written down in your records, which you have the right to read. The records will be shown to those whose job it is to make sure you are doing well and that the institution is following the rules (the county governor's office).

You have the right to make phone calls

You can phone almost whenever you want to, whoever you want to.

You may use the phone where you live or you can use your own mobile phone if you have one. Sometimes it will have been decided that there are some people you are not allowed to make contact with. This means you will not be allowed to phone them either. There may also be times of day when you are not allowed to phone anyone other than your contact from the child welfare service, or those whose job it is to make sure that your rights are respected (the county governor's office).

A BIT LESS FREEDOM – rules for those who have been placed in care under Sections 4-24 or 4-26 of the Norwegian Child Welfare Act

If you are here because of serious behavioural problems, such as drugs or crime, the institution may be able to restrict your rights.

The rules set out under "A bit less freedom" only apply to you if you have been placed in care at the institution under the rules of Sections 4-24 or 4-26 of the Child Welfare Act. If you are not sure which of these rules apply to you, ask those who work at the institution.

Visits to the institution

The institution may deny you visits from people who might have a bad influence on you.

Visits can only be denied for a short period of time, and only if necessary because of the treatment programme you are on. Any denial of visits must not be unreasonable. No one can deny you visits from your legal representative, the child welfare service, the county governor (the supervisory authority), a church minister or other spiritual adviser.

Use of phones

The institution may deny you contact with others by phone or other forms of communication such as MSN, e-mail, SMS or the like.

You can only be denied this kind of contact out of regard for your treatment programme, and only on reasonable grounds. No one can deny you contact with your legal representative, the child welfare service, the county governor's office (the supervisory authority), a church minister or other spiritual adviser.

Freedom of movement

The institution can refuse you permission to go outside the institution if those who work there think this is necessary because of the reasons for you being in care at the institution.

Urine testing

If decided by the County Committee, the institution can require a urine sample to be taken from you to check if you have been taking drugs.

You can also consent (say yes) of your own accord to urine testing. If you are under 15, your parents also have to give their consent. For the consent to count, it has to be in writing.

Any reasons for restricting your freedom must be put in writing

If the institution feels that your freedom of movement or your right to visits or phone calls should be restricted, or that a urine sample is to be taken from you, they must give their reasons in writing.

The reasons must be written down in your records, which you have the right to read. The records will be shown to those whose job it is to make sure you are doing well and that the institution is following the rules (the county governor's office).

PRIVACY

You have the right to have your own room

You have the right to have your own room. You can do up your room as you like (put posters and photos up and so on).

You have the right to help in looking after your money and personal possessions

The institution must make sure that you can store your money and personal possessions securely.

If you are not able to look after your own things, the institution has a duty to store them securely. The institution must make a list of the things kept in storage for you.

You have the right to feel safe and secure

If the adults have good reason for suspecting that you have drugs or dangerous objects in your room, they are allowed to check the room and look through your things.

You have the right to be there when the adults search your room and your things.

If the adults have good reason for suspecting that you are keeping drugs or dangerous objects in your

clothing, they are allowed to check. But they must ask you first. If you are a girl, the adult who checks (frisks you) must be a woman, and if you are a boy, the adult must be a man. There are rules on what the adults must do with any drugs and dangerous objects they find. If the adults at the institution want to search you, your room or your things, they have to give reasons and write them down. The reasons must be written down in your records, which you have the right to read. The records will be shown to those whose job it is to make sure you are doing well and that the institution is following the rules (the county governor's office).

You have the right to be treated properly and decently by the adults

They must not insult, abuse or humiliate you while you are in care at the institution. You must be treated with respect.

If you are doing something wrong or have done something wrong, the adults at the institution must talk to you and tell you why it is wrong. If necessary, in order to protect you, the adults can restrain you physically for a short while or take you out of the room you are in. No one is allowed to punish young people physically, lock them in, bully them or talk to them using bad language.

RESPECT

You have the right to respect for what you and your family believe in.

Those who work at the institution must show respect for what you and your family believe and what you and your family think is important.

The adults at the institution cannot decide what you should believe in. You can think and believe what you like. The adults at the institution must do what they can so you can take part in any religious festivals or customs that are important to you.

You have the right to education

Schooling and training are important for your future.

You have both the right and a legal obligation to receive an education. The adults must help you with homework and other school-related matters.

You have the right to see a doctor

You have the right to essential medical supervision and treatment while you are in care at a child welfare institution.

If you feel ill, you must tell those who work at the institution. They must help you and summon a doctor in if you need one. An adult must accompany you and stay with you if you go to the doctor's or to hospital.

PROTECTION

Prohibitions (ban) against restricting (limiting) your rights

The adults at the institution are not allowed to get you to agree to restrictions on the rights mentioned in this booklet.

The adults are also not allowed to make or follow house rules or routines which restrict your rights.

You have the right to complain to others

If there is anything you are not happy with or feel dissatisfied about, you can say so.

You can complain to the adults at the institution.

They must listen to what you have to say. You can also complain to the county governor's office or your contact from the child welfare services. You can call them, talk to them when they visit, or write a letter. If you want them to, the adults at the institution must help you to make the phone call or write the letter.

You can complain to the county governor's office if, say, the institution wants to open your post, search your room, check the clothes you are wearing (frisk you), or restrict your rights.

What does the county governor's office do?

The job of the county governor's office is to make sure that everyone working at child welfare institutions is doing their job properly and in accordance with the law and rules.

Those who work at the county governor's office are interested in everything that happens to you and how you are doing at the institution. They have to make sure that people working at the institution do not do anything towards you they are not allowed to.

They have to make sure there are enough adults to look after you and the others.

You can talk to the county governor's office about anything you feel is important. If you think those who work at the institution are doing something they are not allowed to, the county governor's office wants to know about it. You can phone, write or talk to the staff from the county governor's office when they visit the institution.

Visits from the county governor's office

At least twice a year, two or more of the staff from the county governor's office will visit (inspect) the institution you are staying at. Sometimes staff at the county governor's office will tell the institution before they visit. Other times, they want to see what it's like at the institution you are staying at when no one knows they are coming.

If you have complained to people at the county governor's office, then someone will have to visit.

For those of you who will soon be 18

This booklet is based on the Norwegian regulations concerning rights. These regulations do not apply to you once you turn 18. However, if you have behavioural problems and have been placed in care at the institution against your will (Section 4-24 of the Child Welfare Act), the rules regarding rights and coercion apply regardless.

NOTE! Remember that well before you turn 18, the child welfare service will be making an assessment, along with you, as to whether you are going to stay at the institution or receive a different kind of care. With your consent, the child welfare service will draw up a plan for future kinds of care for you.

WANT TO KNOW MORE?

Many of the rules that apply to the rights of children and young people while they are in care at an institution are set out in things called regulations.

If you ask to see the rules, those who work at the institution or at the county governor's office must give you them.

You can also find the formal regulations on rights and the use of coercion (force) during a stay at a child welfare institution on this website: www.ung.no/barnevern

The County Governor's Office

Name:

Address:

E-mail:

Telephone:

The child welfare officer in your municipality

Name:
Address:
E-mail:
Telephone: