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HANDBOOKS  
GATHERING  
RESOURCES

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The importance of a handbook, guidelines to producing a handbook, and a sample.

# Producing a Handbook for Youth in Foster Care

A handbook for youth in care is important because it empowers youth by giving them information. It provides a resource for youth to find answers to the questions they face in the uncertainty of foster care. The process of producing a handbook is also a valuable opportunity for youth involvement. In nearly all cases, a handbook that is written for youth, by youth, will get more respect and attention from the intended audience.

*“Youth in foster care need access to the information that affects their lives. Handbooks are an effective way to distribute the information that young people should have.”*



**Debbie Dominick, Former Foster Youth**

## *This section will cover:*

- Handbook* Analysis of handbooks for youth in care
- Handbook* Getting it to print: guidelines for production of a handbook.
- Handbook* Printing estimate worksheet.
- Handbook* Sample handbook which can be used as a foundation for building your own handbook.
- Handbook* Glossary of foster care terms you can use in producing a handbook.



## Why Produce a Handbook?

Producing a handbook provides an excellent opportunity for youth in care to contribute to other youth in care. Youth should be included from the start, including the planning and budgeting process if possible. Many different talents are required to produce a handbook, including organizational skills, writing, artistic, computer, and research.

Initially, it's important to get permission and support (financial, if possible!) from your state's DHS or governing foster care agency because once you produce the handbook, you must be sure you have a way to get printed handbooks into the hands of youth. Establish your target audience from the start and plan the handbook to speak to your audience: all ages or just teens, new to foster care or transitioning out of care, local or statewide, etc.

## The Process

The process of producing a handbook can take time, so it's important to have a strong group leader who is able to keep a group engaged for a longer duration. Plan deadlines and progress reports to keep everyone involved. Allow sufficient time for each phase of producing a handbook:

- \* Budgeting and planning
- \* Research and writing
- \* Handbook design (layout)
- \* Art and photography
- \* Page production
- \* Printing
- \* Distribution

In addition, plan time for review and proofreading along the way. Allow adequate time for feedback from the members of your group.

A handbook for youth in foster care is an important tool that scores twice for youth involvement: first, for those involved in the process of producing it; and second, for the recipients of the finished handbook (who will become more involved in their own futures once armed with such a valuable resource).

**Happy publishing!**



# Components of Effective Handbooks for youth in Foster Care



## Part One: Introduction

The introduction of the handbook should contain the following sections:

1. An introductory paragraph that includes information about how the handbook could be used and who is responsible for its development.
2. A mission statement developed by the organization/group responsible for the handbook.
3. A table of contents that provides a quick overview of the handbook's contents.
4. An overview of foster care and a generic explanation for a child's placement in foster care.



## Part Two: Knowing Your Rights

This part should contain the following sections:

1. An overview of rights, including the rights of youth, birthfamily, foster and adoptive parents, and care providers. If possible, the Bill of Rights for Foster Children should be included in this section. An overview of visitation policies and procedures, as well as implications for visitation with the youth's family should also be addressed in this section.
2. An overview of responsibilities, including the responsibilities of youth, birthfamily, care providers, foster and adoptive parents.
3. Information about the grievance procedure for the organization/agency that has custody of the young person, including names, addresses, and phone numbers for the personnel specific to one's state. This section should assist the young person who feels his/her rights have been violated with filing a formal complaint.
4. Information about the chain of command so that youth have a sense of how the system is structured.
5. Information about how to advocate for oneself and a listing of advocacy resources, including the names, addresses, and telephone numbers of local, state, and national child advocacy organizations.



## Part Three: General Information

This part should provide:

1. An overview of confidentiality and what it means for youth in foster care.
2. Definitions of "system" and legal terminology.
3. An overview of placement options for youth in foster care.
4. An overview of independent living services for youth in foster care.
5. An overview of court procedures.



## Part Four: Real Life Stories

This section should include:

1. A variety of inspirational quotes and anecdotes written by other young people in foster care for the purpose of letting other foster youth know that they are not alone.
2. An overview of opportunities for youth to become involved at the local, state, and national levels. Contact information should be provided.



## Part Five: Frequently Asked Questions

In developing a handbook specific to one's state, it might be helpful to ask a group of foster youth to identify some questions that they had when they entered care. Check out the sample list of foster care Questions and Answers (on the CD included with the Toolkit). You should consider including a list of foster care terms as well (also included on the enclosed CD).



glossary of terms for a handbook



question and answers for a handbook



## Part Six: Independent Living Supplement

This section is designed to assist the youth making the transition to adulthood. For each of the six challenges of transition, an overview of services specific to one's state should be provided. The six challenges of transition are: education, employment, housing, health care, financial preparedness, and support network.

For example, in the education section, the handbook should provide information regarding tuition waivers, funding to cover college applications and related expenses, and scholarships and stipends that are available to foster youth. Additionally, the handbook might include a transition checklist aimed at assisting foster youth with acquiring necessary documents and developing a timeline for obtaining insurance and employment.

You may also want to familiarize youth with the John H. Chafee Independence Program, established by the Foster Care Independence Act of 1999.



## Section Seven: Personal Information and Notes

In this section, youth should have space to document pertinent information, including the names, addresses, and phone numbers of family, friends, and other members of one's support network.

Space for notes should also be included.

# Choosing a Printer

## Copy Center

Best for quantities of: 100 to 250  
Quality: Fair

Pros and cons: Although you can copy pages in full color, it would not be cost effective to produce a whole handbook this way. Copying a book should be used if you plan to produce an entire book in black & white. The quality of a photo will be marginal when copied. Producing the art for a copied publication is easy. Turnaround time is fast.

## Quick Printer

Best for quantities of: 100 to 1000  
Quality: Good

Pros and cons: Adding some color to your handbook is possible by printing using black ink plus one or two additional colors. Quick printers are often accustomed to helping customers through the design and production process. Quality of photos can be quite high if metal plates are used in the printing process (which is an additional cost -- ask your printer about this).

## Offset or Web Printer

Best for quantities of: 1000+  
Quality: Best

Pros and cons: Generally, the largest cost associated with producing a handbook is the printing (which usually includes the prepress costs, but confirm this with the printer). When it comes to printing a publication, it's best to get 4 or 5 estimates from different printers. Although this is the best printing method, it is also the most expensive.



# Getting It to Print: Producing your own Handbook

Producing a budget is the first step in producing the handbook. Even if you or your group will be writing the handbook, you'll still need to take into consideration the following costs: graphic design, production (preparing the pages for print), art and photography, prepress (not needed for copying or quick print), printing, and distribution.

Below, we've detailed some of the choices you'll need to make regarding the production of the handbook. You'll also find a project estimate worksheet. Fill in the blanks and make copies, then provide the worksheet to various printers.

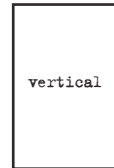
## Size & Quantity

When deciding how many books to produce, you may want to ask the printer to quote prices for three different quantities (for example: 100 books, 500 books, and 1000 books). You may be surprised to find out how much the cost per book goes down as the quantity increases.

When calculating total pages, count each side of the sheet as a page. If you took a regular sheet of paper and folded it in half, you would have four pages. Most publications are estimated in multiples of 4 (for example: 12 pages, 24 pages, 96 pages).



Two common finished sizes for books are 8.5" x 11" (the size of a standard piece of paper) or 5.5" x 8.5" (a half-sheet). If your size varies from this, special trimming costs may be incurred. Indicate if the book will have a horizontal or vertical orientation. Remember, the finished size of the handbook will affect the cost of postage, if that's your chosen method to distribute the handbooks.



## Cover

In some cases, the cover of a publication is printed on different (usually thicker) paper than the body of the publication. If you don't want a different type of paper, it is often referred to as a "self-cover" publication. Decide if you want to print on both sides of the paper (which means you would have printing on the inside of the front or back cover). Printing a one-sided cover can be a good cost-cutting strategy.

Look at some paper samples at a local printer to determine the type of stock (paper) you want to use. The weight of the paper is shown like this: 65# text (say this as "65 pound text") or 80# cover

This number determines the thickness (or weight) of the paper. "Text" papers are lighter weight than "cover" papers. You may choose to print onto white paper or colored paper.

Ink refers to the number of colors that will be used in the printing process. A black & white publication uses just one color (black). Black plus one (Black+1) would use black ink, plus one additional color (like red, for instance). If you want to have color pictures, specify four-color process (which uses a special process using cyan, magenta,



yellow, and black to create any color in the rainbow). Four-color printing is much more expensive than other printing because it usually requires an intermediate step before printing, referred to as prepress.



The term *bleed* refers to whether or not the ink runs off the edge of the paper. This can be more costly because the printer will need to print onto a larger sheet of paper, then trim the page down to your final size to achieve the bleed effect.

## Body

Continue with the same decisions you made with the cover for the inside pages of the handbook.

## Bind

Binding refers to the way the handbook's pages are held together, which can be as simple as a staple in the corner. Here are some of the choices for binding:

- Saddle stitch – folded pages are stapled together along the spine of the book
- Perfect bind – creates a flat spine that can be printed on (like a novel)
- Coil – wire or plastic spiral binding (with holes punched in the paper)
- Staple – a corner staple or 2-3 staples down the side
- 3-hole punch – for insertion into a 3-ring binder

## Art Preparation

*Camera ready artwork* (CRA) refers to art that needs no further preparation prior to printing. If the book will be produced by photocopying, you may print the art on a standard laser printer (inkjet printers generally do not have high resolution or the correct dot-pattern for quality reproduction). Otherwise, you may need to provide a digital file (on computer disk or by e-mail) to

your printer, who will then print the files out at a higher resolution (be sure to ask if there is an additional charge for this). If you will be printing any part of the book using four-color process, you will need to ask your printer for assistance.

Ask your printer about assistance for design or typesetting if you don't have the skill or equipment to produce the art yourself. If you plan to use photos, they should be scanned and screened (or they will turn out very blotchy and may not even be recognizable), which a printer can help you with. If you screen the photos yourself, you will need to ask the printer what DPI to print at, which refers to how tiny the dots that make up a photo are (look at a photo in the newspaper – if you look closely, you will see the dots).

Although this planning and budgeting phase isn't nearly as fun as actually creating the handbook, it's absolutely necessary. By planning and budgeting first, you'll have established the framework for your handbook.



## Write the Content

Before you start to write the content of your handbook, research other handbooks. Read the CWLA analysis of Foster Youth Handbooks found on the CD provided with this Toolkit. Have your group produce a list of “must haves” for a handbook and hold a review session of other publications and determine what the group likes and dislikes.

A sample handbook and glossary have been provided from FosterClub.com (on the CD provided with this Toolkit), which you have permission to use and copy as you please. This can create a good foundation on which

to build your handbook. FosterClub.com also encourages using information from its website and simply asks that credit is given (i.e. “courtesy of FosterClub.com”).

Decide what style the handbook will be written in, whether it should be “question and answer” format, narrative, workbook style, etc.

If a group will be producing the handbook, define roles for research and writing. One idea is to divide roles up by chapter or topic.

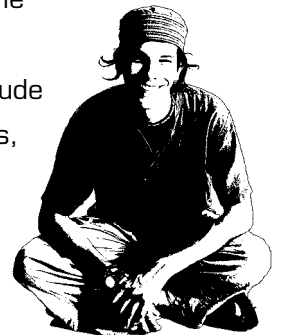
“Be sure to include information about youth rights in foster care. I was absolutely clueless because I always assumed that foster parents were telling the truth.”



Jennifer Thomas, Former Foster Youth

## Design and Produce

If you decide to produce the art for the handbook yourself, you may use a computer page layout program. It is also possible to produce the pages using word processing software. These programs include standard page layout templates, which can provide you with a head start in designing the pages.





# PROJECT ESTIMATE WORKSHEET

Project Name:

Contact person:

Agency:

Phone:

Fax:

E-mail:

## 1. Size & Quantity:

Number of books to be produced:

Total pages (including cover):

Finished size: ( \_\_\_ horizontal \_\_\_ vertical)

## 2. Cover

\_\_\_ Front Cover only \_\_\_ Front & Back

Print: \_\_\_ one-sided \_\_\_ two-sided

Stock:

Ink:

Bleed: \_\_\_ yes \_\_\_ no

## 3. Body

Number of pages:

Stock:

Ink:

Print: \_\_\_ one-sided \_\_\_ two-sided

Bleed: \_\_\_ yes \_\_\_ no

## 4. Bind

Bindery: \_\_\_ Saddle stitch

\_\_\_ Perfect

\_\_\_ Coil

\_\_\_ Staple

\_\_\_ 3-hole punch

\_\_\_ other: \_\_\_\_\_

## 5. Art Preparation

\_\_\_ Camera-ready art provided

\_\_\_ Digital Files provided

## 6. Production assistance required:

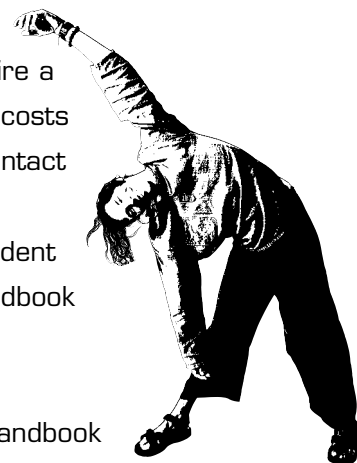
\_\_\_ typesetting

\_\_\_ photos (scanning and/or halftones)

\_\_\_ design

Fill in the blanks and make copies, then provide the worksheet to various printers.

If you need assistance in producing the art for the handbook, you'll need to hire a graphic designer. To keep costs down, you may want to contact a local college's art department and find a student or class to design the handbook as a project.



A great way to design a handbook is to collect examples of other publications that are well designed. In producing your document, try to copy the way they set up their pages, paying close attention to font selection (the style and size of the type used), margin setups (good design usually has a lot of "white space" or empty areas), and the use of graphics.

If you wish to include artwork or text produced by someone else, you need to take into consideration copyright law. You cannot use text or imagery from a source unless you first receive permission. You can purchase "clip-art" or royalty-free art at software stores or on the Internet, which includes permission to reproduce. You have been granted permission by the NFYAC, CWLA, and FosterClub to reproduce the contents of any or all of this document, including the sample handbook text.

"Equipping youth with knowledge is an investment in their future. When youth in foster care have an understanding about the system, it enables better participation and encourages better communication."



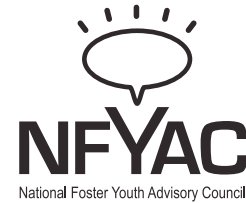
Darrell Locke, Former Foster Youth

Using photographs of youth in foster care is not advised. Unless permissions are received from caseworkers, birthparents and foster parents, confidentiality may be broken by publishing the photo. For this reason, consider purchasing royalty-free images (a good source is [www.gettyimages.com](http://www.gettyimages.com)).

To protect confidentiality, only the first letter of a youth's last name should be shown: John Smith would be listed only as John S.

Once you've produced the pages, talk to your printer about the format they need to receive them in. Higher end printing requires a process called prepress, where the pages are printed to or photographed onto film negatives. Photo copying requires that you print the pages out on a laser printer. Most printers are now willing to receive your artwork electronically (on disk or by e-mail). Talk to the printer you select and ask for assistance on how artwork should be delivered.

Ask your printer what the proofing process is—many times you will receive a final proof before the entire document is printed. Be sure to review the final proof carefully. Any mistakes that are found after the document is printed will be considered your responsibility if you have okayed the final proof.



The Child Welfare League of America is the nation's oldest and largest membership-based child welfare organization. We are committed to engaging people everywhere in promoting the well-being of children, youth, and their families, and protecting every child from harm.

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