



## Empowering Foster Youth as Health Care Consumers

Most families gradually give youth control of their health care over time. Youth are allowed to make appointments, change physicians and attend appointments alone when appropriate. Here are some ideas for empowering foster youth and normalizing the transition experience to health care self management.

Areas of care	Ways to empower elementary age foster youth as patients
<b>Medication</b>	Help youth understand why they are being prescribed medication, what it is for and how it may make them feel. Check in with them and ask them and allow them to describe any side effects or ways the medication may make them feel. Listen to their feelings about their medication.
<b>Mental Health / Counseling</b>	Explain to youth that their counselor is there for them. Allow them to share their feelings about the counselor and if the counselor is working for them or not and why. Try to honor their feelings or find a new counselor if necessary.
<b>Reproductive Health</b>	Teach youth about their right to control the private areas of their body. Ask physicians to explain to youth why they may need to touch them during an exam and to explain what they are doing as the exam progresses. Allow youth to stop or start exams depending on their comfort level if it is possible or not an emergency situation. Have a conversation letting youth know they are safe to come to you with questions or just to talk about reproductive health and their needs.
<b>Record Keeping &amp; information release</b>	Create a binder or folder for your youth that they can look at with you. Teach them about immunization records. Let them help you compile a list of emergency numbers or special medical information that they can keep in their backpack, cell phone or wallet.
<b>Nutrition</b>	Educate youth. Teach them about the nutritional value of different foods. Allow them to be a part of menu planning with a focus on healthy foods. Let them have the power to choose what you have for one evening meal a week and help you prepare it. Give them a budget and let them a grocery list and do the shopping with a focus on buying healthy foods.

Areas of care	Ways to empower middle school age foster youth as patients
<b>Medication</b>	Encourage youth to be a part of discussions about medication with their providers. Help youth understand why they are being prescribed medication, what it is for and how it may make them feel.
<b>Mental Health / Counseling</b>	Allow youth to have input when choosing a counselor. Ask if they need a counselor who will affirm LGBTQ youth needs. Allow them to help choose appointment times or schedule appointments around sports or other important activities that build educational and social connections. Support them if they would like to directly communicate a need or desire to a provider. Clearly explain confidentiality and their rights.

<b>Reproductive Health</b>	Make sure youth have someone they can speak to confidentially or who is available to ask questions or listen. Give youth options and let them choose whether or not they want to use birth control.
<b>Record Keeping &amp; information release</b>	Help youth create a binder, folder or FosterClub FYI BINDER FosterClub KOPI Keeper or Organizational system.
<b>Nutrition</b>	Educate youth about the importance of nutrition. Give them the ability to make decisions around diet and access to healthy foods. If youth wish, provide culturally appropriate foods and the ability to choose foods based on personal preference. Allow youth to choose to follow dietary religious restrictions or not to follow religious restrictions.

<b>Areas of care</b>	<b>Ways to empower high school age foster youth as patients</b>
<b>Medication</b>	Allow youth to keep their own medication log and records. Encourage youth to be a part of the discussion with mental health or physical caregivers. Allow them to ask questions and have input as decisions about medication are being made. Check in with them and ask them and allow them to describe any side effects or ways the medication may make them feel. Listen to their feelings about their medication.
<b>Mental Health / Counseling</b>	Allow youth to pick their own counselor. Respect youth's wishes to see a male or female counselor, someone who affirms LGBTQ youth or someone who respects their religious or personal beliefs.
<b>Reproductive Health</b>	Make sure youth have a trusted adult they can talk to as needed. Explain confidentiality and their rights in your state. Give them the right to make decisions about their own body and respect those decisions, including whether to take birth control or not take birth control.
<b>Record Keeping &amp; information release</b>	Assist youth with the creation of a binder, file or organization system for their medical and mental health information. Help youth create an emergency checklist for their cell phone or wallet. Give youth all the information they need to make their own appointments. Teach youth to understand insurance statements, medical bills, and find local resources.
<b>Nutrition</b>	Teach youth to shop for groceries, make meal plans and cook for the family. Give youth a budget and allow them to meal plan, shop and cook for themselves for a day a week. Teach youth to cook nutritious meals. Ensure dietary, religious and cultural preferences are respected by adults in the home.

<b>Areas of care</b>	<b>Ways to empower young adult foster youth as patients</b>
<b>Medication</b>	Support young adults as they consult with providers on what meds they will take and the side effects of their medications. Teach young adults how to fill prescriptions, store medicines and keep records. Help young adults learn to file insurance forms and budget for medications. share alternate funding options with young adults.
<b>Mental Health / Counseling</b>	Encourage young adults to choose a provider they prefer and who respects their lifestyle choices. Discuss what your young adult wants from their care provider, and decide if the care they are receiving meets their needs. Let young adults schedule, make and track their own appointments and bills.
<b>Reproductive Health</b>	Encourage young adults to make a reproductive life plan. Help young adults location education about their options. Support young adults by helping them locate birth control and decide whether to use it or not to use it. Help young adults know their health insurance and other funding options.

<b>Record Keeping &amp; information release</b>	Allow young adults to take possession and control of their record keeping. Teach young adults new skills. For example, how to scan and make electronic copies of their medical records. Provide a variety of record organizational ideas, like KOPI, and let young adults choose what works best for them.
<b>Nutrition</b>	Make nutritional education available. Encourage young adults to examine how past trauma may impact their nutritional choices.