



State of Florida
Department of Children and Families

Rick Scott
Governor

David E. Wilkins
Secretary

February 29, 2012

An Open Letter to Foster Parents and Residential Group Care Providers:

I am writing this letter directly to you because it concerns a subject very dear to my heart – the chance for children and youth to have the most normal childhood possible while in your care. Last month, I issued a memo about my unwavering commitment to allowing foster children of all ages to have normal childhoods, including full participation in activities in their schools, neighborhoods, and communities. This is a top priority for our administration and I pledge our full and complete support to caregivers, providers, and CBC Lead Agencies in their efforts to achieve this goal.

In response to input by foster youth, CBCs, child welfare staff, foster parents and others, the administrative rules governing normalcy are being revised. The formal rule revision process is expected to begin within the next few weeks when we file our notice of intended rulemaking with the Secretary of State's Office. Once this is done, you can follow the rule revision progress at this website: <https://www.flrules.org/>

Even without rule changes, we can **all do much more** to make sure that foster children have every opportunity to live normal lives. The first step is to dispel the myths that interfere with normalcy. Attached is a document that lists examples of the more common myths, along with **the facts** about these myths and the law or rules that apply to these situations. The document is titled "Don't say "No" before you "Know".

If we are going to change the culture around this issue, there must be frequent discussion among foster parents, the children in their care, and the community based care agencies responsible for the children. I hope you will continue to raise the issue of normalcy often and share any questions or concerns that arise with me and the Office of Child Welfare so that we may promptly address them. Our goal is to support the Community Based Care Lead Agencies in any way we can, so they can support your best decision-making.

These children have already lost so many things through no fault of their own. Let's be sure that they do not lose their childhood. Thank you for your commitment to this very meaningful work.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "David E. Wilkins". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

David E. Wilkins
Secretary

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