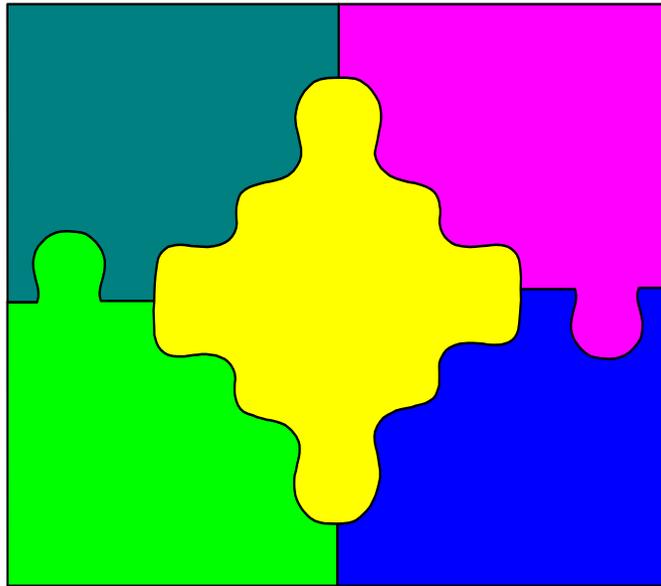


YOUR RIGHTS IN FOSTER CARE: THE SPR/UCR PROCESS



The Door's Legal Services Center

121 Avenue of the Americas
New York, NY 10013
(entrance on 555 Broome Street)
(212) 941-9090, ext. 3280

Q. Why are the SPR and the UCR the key to making foster care better?

The SPR and the UCR plan your current life in foster care and shapes your future.

What they mean:

The SPR a.k.a.: Service Plan Review determines what happens to you while you are in foster care. The SPR is a meeting for you and your case worker to talk about how foster care is going for you, what goals you have in foster care, and whether your goals are being met. **If there is an official meeting about your life, shouldn't you be there?**

The UCR a.k.a. Uniform Case record, part of which is called a "family service plan", is the record of the SPR and talks about the services you and your family are supposed to get and goals the foster care agency hopes to accomplish for you. **Shouldn't you know what goals foster care has set for you?**

Q. What are the possible GOALS for young people in foster care?

- (1) To reunite the young person in foster care with his/her family Or
- (2) To end foster care by the adoption of the young person by a new family Or
- (3) To release the young person in foster care to independent living i.e. living on your own.

Your UCR describes which goal is set for you and how it will be reached. If you don't go to you SPR, you UCR will be written without your suggestions. If you don't read your UCR, you won't know what your official plan and goals are and what type of services you are supposed to get while in foster care. **If you don't know what changes to ask for and what you should already be receiving?**

Q. How can asking for a copy of my UCR and going to my SPR meeting make your life and future in and after foster care better?

Easy. Just by being there, you can tell your caseworker what you need and what your problems are. If you read the UCR and don't like the goals, then say so at the SPR and get the new UCR to include the changes you want.

Q. How do I get a copy of the UCR?

You should get a copy automatically. If you don't ask your case worker and he or she should give it to you. If your caseworker is unhelpful, come see us at The Door.

Q. How does the law help me?

The law guarantees your right to have your views heard at the SPR meeting and get a copy of the family services plan portion of the UCR, which is a write up of what happened at the

meeting. However, the law is not always followed by agencies. If this happens to you, come see us at the Door. Your right to speak at your SPR cannot be taken away.

Q. Does everybody in foster care get an SPR?

Yes. The law requires SPRs. First, there is a discussion at the foster care agency within 30 days after you enter foster care. Then, there is a meeting again every six months. These meetings may occur more often in a time of emergency or big changes. Since you only have two each year, you need to attend and make use of the meetings to express your needs and concerns.

Q. Who is supposed to go to the SPR meeting?

Most importantly, you, if you are at least 10 years old. And, **you have the right to bring anyone who you think might help you.** You may want to bring a friend, teacher, relative, lawyer, or an advocate from The Door's Legal Services Center. The person you choose can help make sure that you get a chance to speak and that your concerns are answered. Your case worker, a case planner, your parents, and a third person who is not involved in the case (a third party reviewer a.k.a. TPR) also must be there. It is important to bring someone with you because it is easy to feel intimidated and forget what you want to say when there are so many people from the agency and you are all alone.

Q. How do I know when to go to a SPR?

You and your mom/dad (if they are a part of the plan) must receive an invitation in writing at least 2 weeks in advance of the meeting. Sometimes people don't actually receive these invitations, but they are required to law.

Q. What does the caseworker do at the SPR?

The case worker of the agency where you are placed should **discuss** with you and your family how things are going and whether progress is being made toward your foster care goal. If things could be going better, the caseworker should help plan changes.

Q. What specific kinds of things could I ask for at the SPR?

- I want to see my family outside of the agency.
- I would like a quiet place where I could study.
- I would like to attend classes on parenting and independent living.
- I need help finding a job or getting job skills.

- I would like help applying to college.

The foster care agency can provide different kinds of assistance, like independent living skills, help with visitation (the law says you should get **at least** two visits with family members per month), and childcare, among other things. These are things you can ask for in your SPR. You might ask for smaller things too.

You get the idea. You can bring up anything that has to do with your life in foster care and the services your agency provides or should provide. But, SPRs will not be run this way unless you get involved and make yourself heard.

Q. What is the result of the SPR?

Hopefully, the SPR creates a new plan (UCR) that you like. The UCR is the guide that is followed by your agency for the next six months until the next SPR.

Q. What is written on the report (UCR)?

Everything that is discussed at the SPR. Most importantly, the UCR will identify what goal has been set for you, how it will be reached, and what services will be provided for you.

Your foster care goals are being decided at the Service Plan Review (SPR). You are supposed to be there to contribute your thoughts about what is best for you. The UCR is a written record of the meeting. If you attend your SPR and later, you feel that your concerns are not being addressed, you can use the UCR to prove that something, which was promised, is not happening. This is why you need to make sure that everything at the SPR is put down in writing and included in the UCCR. If you do not like the UCR, you should ask for changes to be added. **You need a copy of the UCR so you can know and enforce your rights.**

Q. What happens if what is in my UCR is not happening?

If your requests are not being addressed, you should tell it to your caseworker. If your caseworker still does not do anything about the problem, go to his/her supervisor and use your copy of the UCR to help prove your point. If caseworkers are not helpful, you should come to The Door's Legal Services Center and we will help you.

Q. What if I just missed my SPR or can't get a copy of my UCR?

If you missed your SPR and want to get involved, contact The Door and we will try to help you arrange another SPR. If you are having problems getting a copy of your UCR or want us to go with you to your SPR, contact **The Door's Legal Service Center at (212) 942-9090, ext. 3280.**