

Anthony

My name is Anthony. I am 18 years old and currently living in a group home in a very small community. I entered foster care directly after entering this world. My birth-mother had a substance abuse addiction and my older siblings were already in foster care. I say my story is different than most youth in foster care.

I was immediately placed in a foster home where I considered my foster mother my mother. I lived there until I was 15 years old and have moved four times since then. I have five siblings and I have maintained contact with all of them as I was growing up. Initially three of us were placed together but then we were separated when I was still a baby. However I was lucky because they were placed in a home that was nearby.

I started my family court experience when I was 12 years old. Looking back, I feel I was old enough to understand what was going on in the court and I feel the judge listened to what I was saying. The judge would ask me how I was doing, how is school going and how was I doing in my current placement. By doing this the judge developed a relationship with me so that I actually felt comfortable going to court. This gave me the motivation to attend all of my court hearings. I was also fortunate enough to have the same caseworker, judge and law guardian.

A CASA worker was appointed to me who also checked up on me and attended my court hearings. By attending my hearings I knew when my next hearing would occur and my social worker would consistently keep me posted on my court dates.

During my years in foster care, my permanency plan changed from adoption to independent living. My judge and my social worker stood by my decision to pursue independent living. My foster mother wanted to adopt me but at this point I didn't want to be adopted because she was moving to a different state. I wanted to stay close to my friends and family.

My foster mother had a friend that was training to be a foster parent so it was decided that I could live with this woman but I found I really did not get along with her. It only lasted for about 6 months. She felt that I was too much so I was placed in a children's shelter until they found a higher level of care for me.

Eventually I was moved to an out of state boys home. It was hard when I first got there because my original foster mother stopped communicating with me. She later said she needed to give me time to mature. I was in this boys home for a year and got to know a lot of people and became close with a lot of staff. During that time, I did a lot of thinking about who I was and who I wanted to be.

With the encouragement of the staff, I started believing in myself! When I left, I was placed in a group home where I've been living for the past three years. With the structure and guidance I received, I've done well in school and will graduate in June. I continue to attend all of my court hearings every 6 months to review my progress. I'm opting to stay in foster care and plan to attend college in the fall and will be majoring in criminal justice.

In the next ten years, I hope to become a police officer and start a family. I was fortunate enough to have a foster mother who loves me and stands by my decisions to this day. I feel like I can give another child that opportunity and plan to adopt in the future.