

More Media Urged to Expose Youth Behavioral “Houses of Horror” & “Death traps”

CCHR says more media exposing youth restraint deaths and assaults in for-profit behavioral facilities could prompt legislative action and save children's lives.

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/EINPresswire.com/ -- Capping off a year of exposing horrific abuse of youths in the behavioral health industry, including restraint deaths, NBC Nightly News recently ran the tragic story of up to 9,000 youths being treated and potentially put at risk in a for-profit behavioral facility chain.[1] Reaping \$200 million in revenue in 2017,[2] largely from government funding, the “return” has been children who allege being sexually and physically assaulted and “slapped” and “choked” by staff.[3] The mental health industry watchdog, [Citizens Commission on Human Rights International \(CCHR\)](#), which has filed thousands of complaints with legislators about the same and similar chains of private psychiatric hospitals, said more media exposés like NBC’s, WTVR-CBS 6 and others can influence legislators to take action. They’ve played a major role in raising awareness of what NBC reported were “hospitals of horror” and “death traps” for children.



Mental health watchdog, CCHR, says more media exposing youth restraint deaths, sexual and physical assaults in for-profit psychiatric-behavioral facilities could prompt legislative action and save children’s lives

The call by CCHR and other advocacy and disability groups for tougher accountability has been well publicized, but while there have been dozens of hospital closures, lawsuits and settlements, the abuses remain rife and children need better protection, Jan Eastgate, international president of CCHR said.

Representative of this was 16-year-old, Cornelius Frederick, an African American foster child who died in April 2020 after several staff members restrained him at a behavioral facility in Michigan. Involuntary manslaughter charges were filed against several staff.[4]



The whole psychiatric-behavioral hospital industry is a house of horrors. More accountability with severe financial and criminal accountability is needed to clean this system up.”

Jan Eastgate, President CCHR International

Eastgate urged state and federal legislators to study the NBC story to confront the level of abuse of youths in psychiatric/behavioral facilities, requiring legislative protection. In Alabama alone since 2016, the youth services company that NBC exposed had secured contracts worth more than \$68 million.

Yet, the Alabama Disabilities Advocacy Program, a federally funded watchdog group that has the authority to monitor treatment facilities, conducted inspections of the youth centers in Alabama, and reported “photographic proof of the Dickensian conditions that the state’s most vulnerable

children were forced to live in: broken doors, missing floor tiles, blood smeared on the walls and thin mattresses laid on top of concrete platforms,” according to NBC. Children said staff encouraged them to kill themselves. One teen with a bloody gash just beneath his hairline said that staff members had shoved him headfirst into a wall.[5] A lawsuit was recently filed over claims staff abused and neglected a 14-year-old boy and that the pattern of repeated abuse of him led to a suicide attempt. “My client lived a house of horrors,” the attorney, Tommy James, said.[6]

Yet the facilities “passed regular inspections and public dollars continued to flow,” NBC reported.

At Kingston Academy in Tennessee, state inspectors found mold infestations, overflowing toilets and children sleeping on mattresses on the floor. The facility subsequently closed.[7]

K. Ricky Watson Jr., head of the National Juvenile Justice Network, told NBC: “When you think about the amount of money that these facilities” are receiving, “it makes you wonder: Where exactly is that money going?” He answered this himself: “Tax dollars are being used ultimately to abuse and mistreat children.”[8]

The San Francisco Chronicle also reported that California, now confronted by “detailed allegations of violent abuse,” ordered 116 kids to be brought home from out-of-state behavioral facilities.[9] Hours after that decision was announced, the for-profit company lost its license to run a lucrative residential behavioral treatment center in Ohio.[10]

“The whole psychiatric-behavioral hospital industry is a house of horrors,” Eastgate says. “More accountability with severe financial and criminal accountability is needed to clean this system up.”

CCHR is a mental health watchdog responsible for more than 180 laws that protect patients from damaging psychiatric practices. DONATE to support its work here:

<https://www.cchrnt.org/cchrnt-donate/>

[1] Hannah Rappleye, Tyler Kingkade and Kate Snow, "A profitable 'death trap': Sequel youth facilities raked in millions while accused of abusing children: Sequel Youth & Family Services collected hundreds of millions in tax dollars to care for vulnerable children, despite abuse and negligence allegations," NBC News, 16 Dec. 2020, <https://www.nbcnews.com/news/us-news/profitable-death-trap-sequel-youth-facilities-raked-millions-while-accused-n1251319>

[2] Curtis Gilbert and Lauren Dake, "'Youth were abused here': More than 40 states have sent their most vulnerable kids to facilities run by a for-profit company named Sequel. Many of those kids were abused there," APM Reports, 28 Sept. 2020, <https://www.apmreports.org/story/2020/09/28/for-profit-sequel-facilities-children-abused>

[3] Op. cit., NBC News

[4] Taylor Romine and Anna Sturla, "Three staff members charged in death of 16-year-old who went into cardiac arrest after being restrained at facility," CNN, 25 June 2020, <https://www.cnn.com/2020/06/25/us/teen-restraint-death-staff-charged-michigan-trnd/index.html>

[5] Op. cit., NBC News

[6] Caroline Klapp, "Attorney: Abuse at Sequel Courtland led child to attempt suicide," WAFF News, 17 Dec. 2020, <https://www.waff.com/2020/12/17/attorney-abuse-sequel-courtland-led-child-attempt-suicide/>

[7] Op. cit., NBC News

[8] Ibid.

[9] Jessica Christian, "Confronted over abuse, California is bringing 116 kids home from faraway programs. Counties are scrambling," San Francisco Chronicle, 18 Dec. 2020, <https://www.sfchronicle.com/bayarea/article/Counties-scramble-to-place-116-kids-after-15812798.php>

[10] Bennett Haeberle, "More states sever ties with for-profit Sequel Youth and Family Services after reports of abuse," WBNS (CBS - Columbus, OH), 17 Dec. 2020, <https://www.10tv.com/article/news/investigations/10-investigates-more-states-sever-ties-with-sequel-youth-and-family-services-after-reports-of-abuse/530-b6f995b7-13c3-40a5-8893-5326af948a19>

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