

# State Responds with Behavioral Restraint Use Reforms After 16-yr-old's Death

*CCHR says Michigan paves the way to nationwide need for ban on restraints in psychiatric youth facilities following African American teen's death from restraint*

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/EINPresswire.com/ -- The state of Michigan announced it is working to end the use of restraints in the child welfare system. This is in response to the May 2020 restraint death of 16-year-old Cornelius Frederick at the now closed Lakeside Academy owned by Sequel Youth & Family Services. In June, the restraint was ruled a wrongful death and several employees were charged with manslaughter.[1] Mental health industry watchdog, Citizens Commission on Human Rights

International, which made submissions to legislators in Michigan and across the country about restraint abuse, sees Michigan as paving the way to protect children, but wants their plans extended to a complete ban on physical and chemical restraints for behavioral control. CCHR also acknowledged Michigan for pursuing a criminal investigation into a restraint death, which it said should be the level of accountability nationwide when there is a restraint death in psychiatric-behavioral facilities.

CCHR's parents' information website FightForKids established a section warning about restraints following Cornelius's death. The African American teen went into cardiac arrest after yelling, "I can't breathe!" A witness said, "[T]his kid threw a sandwich. He was being unruly and they couldn't control him. So, four guys...the size of rugby players tackled him." [2]

According to one attorney assisting a family whose son died in a behavioral facility, the company



CCHR says Michigan paves the way to a nationwide need for a ban on restraints in psychiatric youth facilities following African American teen's violent death from a restraint used for unruly behavior: throwing a sandwich on the floor

that owns it “must be held accountable” for the “countless other children who were abused under their care.”[3]

“No one should be dying in a behavioral hospital. Until there is a ban on violent restraint use, criminal protections need to be in place. This also includes financial penalties against facilities found to abuse children and youths with restraints and hospital closures for flagrant violations,” said Jan Eastgate, international president of CCHR.

In September 2020, a steering committee led by Michigan’s Children’s Services Agency announced it would also investigate foster care and juvenile justice placement practices in the state. Hundreds of youths, including those in foster care, are sent by various states to psychiatric hospitals owned by the for-profit behavioral industry. In December, California announced it would no longer send children interstate to such facilities. Several other states have also implemented this in light of atrocities reported committed against children and teenagers.[4]

An [online petition](#) that the National Juvenile Justice Network started in the wake of the Cornelius’s death, calls for a closure of a for-profit psychiatric hospital chain and has almost 330,000 signatures to date.[5] CCHR encourages more people to support this.

Among Michigan’s proposed changes would be eliminating restraints “unless absolutely necessary” — that is, during emergencies or life-saving intervention. The reforms would mean that restraints could not be used as an intervention to control behavior or because a youth refuses to follow the rules.[6] CCHR wants to see a total ban.

CCHR believes that keeping legislative language such as restraints being necessary for a “life-saving intervention,” opens the door to misinterpretation and doesn’t close the door on putting youths and others at risk of such life-threatening interventions. It’s submission to legislators also calls for stronger penalties against facilities using abusive restraints.

The FightForKids site documents at least 32 adverse incidents of child and youth residents in one behavioral hospital chain alone, including 18 involving seclusion rooms or restraints use in children as young as six, three deaths and at least six suicides that may have been prevented.[7] Another page references more than 60 cases of abuse and warns: “Parents are often misled about a child’s troubled behavior and can be coerced into believing or otherwise convinced that putting the child into a psychiatric or behavioral facility is the right thing to do.” The advice “neglects to mention the potential harm the child or teen can be subjected to. Whether through punitive actions such as solitary confinement and seclusion rooms or torturous treatments, including debilitating drugs, behavioral modification or electric shock and chemical or physical restraints, parents should know of the risks to their child. Too many have found out too late.”[8]

Attorney Tommy James, whose client, a teenage patient that was living at a for-profit behavioral facility in Alabama, alleged the boy suffered “multiple traumas to his head causing concussions, lacerations that required stitches, hematomas [blood clots] and other injuries.” James warned of

“systemic violence” in such facilities throughout the country. “The level of abuse is staggering and very disturbing. No informed parent would ever allow their child to spend even one hour” in the hospital chain’s facilities that he named. “It is disgusting when our most vulnerable children are placed in these facilities and then treated like animals,” James said.[9]

CCHR said it will continue to document and expose abuses in the youth behavioral industry. Parents or family members can [report an abuse here](#).

[Read the full article here](#).

CCHR is responsible for more than 180 laws that protect patients from damaging psychiatric practices. DONATE to support its work <https://www.cchrnt.org/cchrnt-donate/>

[1] Lynsey Mukomel, “Committee eyes 2022 for restraint reform at state youth homes,” Wood TV, 14 Jan 2021, <https://www.woodtv.com/news/kzoo-and-bc/committee-eyes-2022-for-restraint-reform-at-state-youth-homes/>

[2] <https://www.fightforkids.org/restraints>

[3] Chelsea Retherford, “Lawsuit claims abuse at Courtland Sequel youth facility,” The Moulton Advertiser, 7 Jan 2021, [https://www.moultonadvertiser.com/news/article\\_8affb2d2-5035-11eb-a4d8-f3037059f4ae.html](https://www.moultonadvertiser.com/news/article_8affb2d2-5035-11eb-a4d8-f3037059f4ae.html)

[4] Op. cit., Lynsey Mukomel, Wood TV

[5] <https://www.change.org/p/gretchen-whitmer-justice-for-cornelius-shut-sequel-down>

[6] Op. cit., Lynsey Mukomel, Wood TV

[7] <https://www.fightforkids.org/universal-health-service>

[8] <https://www.fightforkids.org/psychiatric-behavioral-facilities>

[9] Op. cit., Chelsea Retherford, The Moulton Advertiser

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