

CCHR: “The Kids Are Not Alright” Report Confirms Profit Put Before Teen Safety

A \$23 billion behavioral treatment industry has put thousands of foster care kids and troubled teens at risk; new report recognizes how profit takes precedence

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/EINPresswire.com/ -- The mental health industry watchdog, [Citizens Commission on Human Rights International](#), says a Private Equity Stakeholder Project’s report, “The Kids Are Not Alright: How Private Equity Profits Off of Behavioral Health Services for Vulnerable and At-Risk Youth” is a must-read for regulators. The report vindicates the work of many community groups—CCHR among them—that for years have been exposing the abuse and harm prevalent in behavioral and psychiatric facilities throughout the U.S. Such facilities have become a gravy train for investors in what has become a \$23 billion a year “child abuse” industry, CCHR says.



A \$23 billion behavioral treatment industry has put thousands of foster care children and troubled teens at risk; a new report recognizes how profit takes precedence over safe care, leading to massive psychiatric harm and child abuse

The Private Equity Stakeholder (PES) Project report, released on 17 February, concluded: “Private equity’s track record for investing in youth behavioral services is troubling” as “despite horrific conditions at some youth behavioral health companies, their private equity owners have in some cases reaped massive profits.”[1]

The \$23 billion refers to congregate care facilities that include wilderness and boot camps (for youths with behavioral issues), residential treatment programs, centers or facilities (hospitals); “therapeutic” boarding schools (aka “academies”); behavior modification programs; and youth justice facilities.[2]

Jan Eastgate, president of CCHR International, says: “Fueling this is a psychiatric diagnostic

system that defines nearly every aspect of childhood as a mental disorder, although there are no physical tests that can confirm these. This has led to nefarious labeling of vulnerable children and adolescents that has made this industry a lucrative investment for psychiatry and private companies.”

Since 2015, CCHR has filed more than 70,000 which complaints to state and federal legislators providing evidence of child abuse uncovered in behavioral hospitals. Media such as BuzzFeed News, NBC News, ABC affiliates, Dallas Morning News, ProPublica, The Chicago Tribune, and more, have done extensive investigative reports.

Since the early nineties, when CCHR began investigating for-profit psychiatric facilities, it identified the lack of oversight, transparency and accountability in child and adolescent psychiatric facilities as problematic. The stakeholder report addresses similar issues, stating: “For-profit youth behavioral health facilities and for-profit foster care have garnered criticism from youth justice and disability rights advocates.” In residential facilities, criticism has included “physical, sexual, and emotional abuse; forced isolation; use of physical and chemical restraints; and squalid living conditions.”

The report names various chains of facilities, including those owned by Sequel Youth and Family Services. Foster youth make up about a quarter of the population at Sequel’s residential facilities.[3] The reports of abuse and neglect “as well as pressure and investigations by state and local governments have led to over a dozen facility closures” since 2019.

One of them was Sequel’s Lakeside Academy in Kalamazoo, Michigan following the tragic death of Cornelius Frederick, an African American 16-year-old, who was pinned to the ground by staff and restrained for having thrown a sandwich in the cafeteria. Two days later, on May 1, 2020, he died. The “horrific video” of Frederick’s death reveals a “culture of fear and abuse,” said Geoffrey Fieger, the lawyer for Frederick’s family.[4]

This death and other abuses in the troubled teen/behavioral industry has generated support from many vectors, including the National Juvenile Justice Network, Paris Hilton and #Breaking Code Silence. Hilton testified before Utah and Oregon legislatures in 2021 in support of bills that now protect children and teens from punitive restraints.

In October, Hilton held a press conference in Washington DC with Rep. Ro Khanna and Sen. Jeff Merkley where a plan was announced to introduce federal legislation to regulate youth residential treatment centers.[5] The proposed Accountability for Congregate Care Act would address how “The industry’s lack of transparency and quality care has led to youth experiencing maltreatment including sexual assault, physical and medical neglect, and bodily assault that has resulted in civil rights violations, hospitalizations, and death.”[6]

Oregon State Senator Sara Gelser has also been a leader in the campaign for reform, after discovering that Oregon’s Child Welfare Department had increasingly relied on out-of-state

facilities such as Sequel to house youth placed in foster care.[7] Gelser was instrumental in putting an end to this.

She spearheaded legislation enacted in 2021 to protect children from brutal restraint use. “Whether or not this is a state or federal responsibility, it is unconscionable that we’ve left this industry unregulated,” she said.[8] “I believe that is criminal, or at least it should be.”[9]

CCHR International’s [Model Law Against Restraint Use](#) demands just that: prohibition and criminal culpability for restraint or other child abuse in the troubled teen and child behavioral industry—not just for the psychiatric-behavioral facilities allowing this, but also for those psychiatrists or doctors “prescribing” restraint use and the staff that carry this out, when it leads to physical damage or death.

Eastgate added, “More reports such as those from PES Project are vital to help turn this abusive industry around and to put patient protection before profit. Until then, children are definitely not alright, as the PES Project indicates.”

[Read full article here.](#)

[1] “The Kids Are Not Alright: How Private Equity Profits Off of Behavioral Health Services for Vulnerable and At-Risk Youth,” Private Equity Stakeholder Project, 17 Feb. 2022, https://pestakeholder.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/02/PESP_Youth_BH_Report_2022.pdf, p. 21

[2] <https://www.breakingcodesilence.org/federal-legislation/>

[3] Op. cit., Private Equity Stakeholder Project, p. 14

[4] Tyler Kincaid, “Video shows fatal restraint of Cornelius Frederick, 16, in Michigan foster facility: Newly released video shows staff members holding the teen down after he threw a sandwich. He died two days later,” NBC News, 7 July 2020, <https://www.nbcnews.com/news/us-news/video-shows-fatal-restraint-cornelius-fredericks-16-michigan-foster-facility-n1233122>

[5] Op. cit., Private Equity Stakeholder Project, p. 5

[6] <https://trappedintreatment.com/federal-legislation>

[7] “Oregon Brings Back All Foster Children Placed Out Of State,” OPB, 30 June 2020, <https://www.opb.org/news/article/oregon-brings-back-all-foster-children-placed-out-of-state/>

[8] Kenneth R. Rosen, “Lawmakers, federal investigators target teen facilities billed as therapeutic but accused of abuse,” Youth Today, 18 Feb. 2022, <https://youthtoday.org/2022/02/lawmakers-federal-investigators-target-teen-facilities-billed-as-therapeutic-but-accused-of-abuse/>

[9] "Far from Home, Far from Safe California sent more than 1,000 vulnerable children to out-of-state facilities run by a for-profit company. Reports of rampant abuse followed. Now, confronted with a Chronicle and Imprint investigation, the state is bringing every child home," San Francisco Chronicle, 11 Dec. 2020, <https://www.sfchronicle.com/projects/2020/california-youth-sequel/>

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