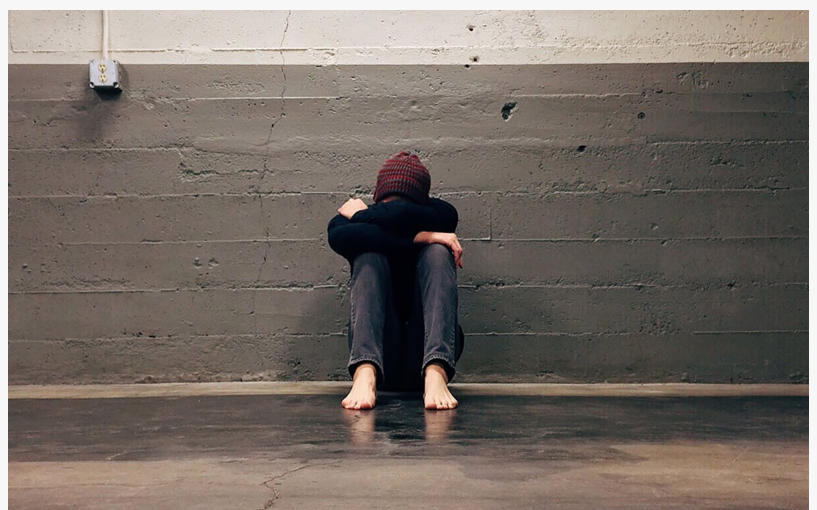


# CCHR Applauds Mother Jones Story on Behavioral Facility Abuse of Foster Children

*Mental health industry watchdog says media exposure of child abuse in the \$23 billion behavioral industry is vital for reform.*

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The mental health industry watchdog [Citizens Commission on Human Rights \(CCHR\) International](#) applauds the recent year-long investigation that Mother Jones journalist, Julia Lurie, conducted into one of the country's largest for-profit psychiatric hospital chains, finding abuse of foster care children. The results of Lurie's compelling investigation reveal a culture of abuse, including staffers in one facility allegedly repeatedly beat and dragged young patients, and a 10-year-old placed there by Child Protective Services in 2021, received a broken collarbone and black eye.[1]



These children provide a lucrative patient base because they're vulnerable: There's rarely an adult on the outside clamoring to get them out, and often, they don't have anywhere else to go. Medicaid typically foots the bill.

Mother Jones reported that the company brought in \$13.4 billion in 2022 and profits from foster kids.[2] These children provide a lucrative patient base because they're vulnerable: There's rarely an adult on the outside clamoring to get them out, and often, they don't have anywhere else to go. Medicaid typically foots the bill.[3]

"They profit from a \$23 billion a year 'child abuse' industry," says Jan Eastgate, president of CCHR International.

The company has more than 21,000 inpatient psychiatric beds—or one in six across the country.[4] Mother Jones obtained data from 38 states on UHS placement of foster care children; 31 provided Medicaid data. The number of times that foster children were sent to UHS facilities was 36,000, but the numbers likely reflect the minimum possible admissions; \$611 million of

Medicaid funds was spent on the care of foster kids at the facilities.[5]

One of the behavioral facilities in Utah was where celebrity heiress Paris Hilton experienced physical and sexual abuse at the facility as a teenager before it was under its current ownership. Mother Jones reports Hilton “has taken aim at the facility in her work advocating against the so-called ‘troubled teen industry.’” Under new ownership, “damning allegations about the use of physical restraints and sedative injections at the facility have continued.”[6]

Since 2010, CCHR has investigated the company’s behavioral sector and other for-profit companies with facilities providing behavioral and psychiatric treatment. CCHR has sent tens of thousands of letters to state and federal legislators about the abuses it has documented. A review of allegations against about 20 of the company’s facilities between April 2017 and October 2018 revealed, for example:

- Internal surveillance videos show foster children being tackled, dragged, and choked by staff members.[6a]
- The rape of two girls aged 13 and 16; a 12-year-old boy sexually assaulted; a sexual abuse patient roomed with a known sex offender; assault and battery of an 11-year-old girl; and the restraint death of a 15-year-old boy.[6b]

Mother Jones tells the story of abuse through the experiences of five former foster care teens. Katrina Edwards, “spent more than three years during her adolescence at facilities owned by the company, including 891 nights” at a behavioral facility in Anchorage, Alaska. “Medical and court records show that she was repeatedly physically restrained, forcibly injected with a sedative, held in seclusion, and put on potent psychiatric medications.” For this, Alaska’s Medicaid program paid more than half a million dollars for Edwards’ care.[7]

Lurie’s [“Inside the Psychiatric Hospitals Where Foster Kids Are a ‘Gold Mine’](#): How a scandal-plagued health care giant profits off a failing child welfare system,” raises concerns that CCHR and other organizations have brought to the attention of legislators and law enforcement agencies for many years. CCHR says there’s a nationwide need to investigate treatment practices in these facilities and to eliminate restraint use and other coercive practices. This extends to all for-profit-owned behavioral and psychiatric residential facilities and their owners, including the former Sequel Youth & Family Services (now Vivant). In Sequel’s Lakeside Academy in Michigan, 16-year-old African American foster care teen, Cornelius Frederick, was restrained, leading to his death in 2020. The coroner ruled the death a homicide.[8]

In 2016, BuzzFeed News did a blistering series about the company Mother Jones exposed, which has also been the subject of high-profile lawsuits[9]; numerous federal and state legislators from both sides of the aisle have voiced concerns, and a Department of Justice probe resulted in \$122 million in settlements in 2020.[10]

This year, its UK operation was fined \$1.2 million after it pleaded guilty to a criminal prosecution

brought by the UK Care Quality Commission (CQC), over the death of a young girl. The behavioral facility failed to provide a safe ward environment to reduce the risk of people being able to use a ligature to kill themselves.[11] However, these are conditions that CCHR and others, including attorneys, have exposed in the U.S. since 2015, revealing a severe lack of oversight and accountability by government agencies and the Joint Commission, which in the U.S., gives accreditation to such facilities.

CCHR is sending another round of letters asking state policymakers to review laws and regulations governing these facilities to strengthen and enforce accountability. The group supports the federal Stop Institutional Child Abuse Act, introduced in Congress in April this year, spearheaded by Paris Hilton and three Congressmen, to help curb abuse and safeguard the lives of “troubled teens.”

[Click here](#) for more information on CCHR’s exposure of the company and other profiteers in the behavioral industry.

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[2] <https://www.motherjones.com/crime-justice/2023/10/universal-health-services-foster-kids-uhs-investigation-takeaways/>

[3] Julia Lurie, “Inside the Psychiatric Hospitals Where Foster Kids Are a “Gold Mine”: How a scandal-plagued health care giant profits off a failing child welfare system,” Mother Jones, Sept.-Oct. 2023 issue, <https://www.motherjones.com/crime-justice/2023/10/foster-kids-psychiatric-hospitals-universal-health-services-uhs-alaska-cps/>

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[5] <https://www.motherjones.com/crime-justice/2023/10/foster-kids-psychiatric-hospitals-universal-health-services-uhs-alaska-cps/>

[6] <https://www.motherjones.com/crime-justice/2023/10/universal-health-services-foster-kids-uhs-investigation-takeaways/>

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[7] Julia Laurie, "They Would Throw Me Into a Cage and Treat Me Like an Animal," Mother Jones, 19 Oct. 2023, <https://www.motherjones.com/crime-justice/2023/10/universal-health-services-uhs-foster-kids-investigation-photoessay/>

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