

**TESTIMONY OF NANCY ANDREWS BEFORE THE HUMAN SERVICES
COMMITTEE & SELECT COMMITTEE ON CHILDREN PUBLIC HEARING
Re: Department of Children & Families
Dec. 18, 2008**

My name is Nancy Andrews

I am a public relations manager at a Hartford based organization.

I worked for the State of Connecticut - Department of Public Utility Control.

I also worked for the Department of Children & families.

And prior to that I was the assistant news director and producer at NBC-TV 30- WVIT.

I tell you this because Nancy Andrews is a common name. I know of at least 4 women with the same name right here in Connecticut. However, DCF failed to realize that fact and labeled me as a criminal with a history of child abuse.

I have never been arrested and the worst thing I've done is get a speeding ticket when I was a teenager--and that was a long time ago.

Yet despite this fact, and the fact that I told DCF I did not have a criminal record or history of abuse, which they confirmed by checking my date of birth and address, (something they should have done in the first place) they still libeled me in an official state document and then told me it couldn't be changed.

Let me get into some background here. My sister and her husband adopted two children from Lithuania 14 years ago. The children were fine and well adjusted, until my niece became involved with the wrong crowd. She was an out of control teenager, drinking, doing drugs and staying out til all hours of the night. She was arrested twice for shoplifting and then tried to overdose on over the counter medicine. Things were bad, but the family was getting her help and things took a turn for the worst when DCF got involved. Instead of trying to help the family, they tried to break it apart. They took the word of a manipulative, smart and mentally ill teenager who didn't like her parent's rules and alienated her from the family.

DCF wanted to remove my niece from her home. She went to live temporarily with a high school coach. Then, DCF held a meeting to decide where to place her permanently. I agreed to take her into my home. I met with six DCF workers, my sister and her husband at my sister's home to discuss the arrangements. That's when the social worker supervisor, Ruth Brown, said my niece could not come live with me because, I had a "criminal history and a history of child abuse with DCF." I thought she was kidding, but she wasn't. So I was deemed unfit to take my niece into my home. Instead they decided the best place for her was not with family members but with the school coach.

Later that same day and then again several days later, I called Ruth Brown and she told me DCF made an error and that it had been cleared up--she confirmed with me that I was not the Nancy Andrews (who lived in East Hampton) with the criminal record and history

of abuse. She told me she would clear the file. But what about taking my niece now. Oh no, I was told. We don't want to move her again because it would be too disruptive and she would be going back with the family in a few weeks anyway. Sounded reasonable, except I didn't know then that DCF was never planning on reuniting the family. Instead, that was the last time my niece was with her family--she was taken and never to be brought back to the family again. I believe it was their plan all along not to keep my niece with the family. If they had done due diligence and checked my name with my date of birth or address—something they should do as standard operating procedure— they would have immediately known that I was not the Nancy Andrews with the criminal history, and today, my niece would be with her family.

So, months after Ruth Brown, the DCF supervisor, told me they had cleared up the mistaken identity, my sister received an official report from DCF regarding her daughter.

In the report it said--

"Link search completed on maternal aunt and there is DCF hx with this family. There is also a substantiation for physical abuse. Criminal checks were received on the Andrew family and there is criminal hx with these parents." (the report is attached to this document)

Months after the situation had allegedly been straightened out, it was clear that DCF had no intention of setting the record straight or in doing the right thing. So, I took matters into my own hands.

1) I called Ruth Brown to ask why this was still in the report.

Her answer, she didn't know and there was nothing she could do about it now because it was an "official" document in Hartford and "can't be changed."

2) I called DCF in Hartford and got a major run around.

The Ombudsperson said there was nothing they could do because it is an "official document" and "can't be changed." If this official document is blatantly wrong and they have libeled me because they knew up front before the report was printed that I was not a criminal, then the document must be changed.

3) I left a voice mail message for the commissioner.

I am still waiting for a call back.

4) I finally contacted Barbara Claire, the agency's attorney.

At first she gave me the same story—official document, can't be changed. When I threatened a libel suit, her tone changed very quickly. I asked for three things:

- 1) Correction in the "official document" and my name cleared
- 2) An explanation and assurance of what changes would be made to prevent this from happening again to other families
- 3) An apology

The day after speaking with Barbara Claire, I received an email from her:

Nancy,

Pursuant to our phone conversation yesterday, I requested that our Information Services staff remove three sentences in an investigations protocol that erroneously stated that you have a CPS and criminal history. Below is the IS communications to me showing that this was accomplished.

*Barbara J. Claire, Esq.
Agency Legal Director
Department of Children and Families
505 Hudson Street
Hartford, CT 06106
860-550-6557*

I have attached the entire email Ms. Claire sent me.


Her response is very cold and formal. She dealt with only one of the three things I requested. I was expecting an apology and explanation of what happened and why it wouldn't happen again.

I have no assurances that my name has indeed been cleared. I am convinced that if a search was done on my name today that this file would come up again and it would still list me as a criminal and child abuser, hampering any future plans I might have to work with children.

I ask you to please look into the actions at DCF. Please consider putting a monitor in place to oversee the operations.

Families like mine should not have to suffer for the agencies misguided policies and incompetence of DCF workers. Having been a former DCF employee I can tell you that the social workers are over worked--they have way too many cases. They are also used to dealing with really bad situations, so when they get an out of control teen, and the family has never been in trouble with the law or have a history of abuse, they don't know how to deal with it. So they fabricate information in order to do whatever they want. And they are not held accountable to anyone. Whatever they say is fact--why because they are DCF. They need to be held accountable for their actions...to legislators, the public and the families and children they are suppose to serve. This can not continue. I hope you will take actions to rectify the situation sooner than later so that no other families are put through what we went through.

Thank you.


Nancy Andrews
21 Stonegate Drive
Wethersfield, CT 06109

----- Original Message -----

From: Andrews, Nancy
To: nandrews13@cox.net ; Andrews, Nancy
Sent: Tuesday, December 09, 2008 7:37 AM
Subject: FW: CORRECTED PROTOCOL

"Link search completed on maternal aunt and there is DCF hx with this family. There is also a substantiation for physical abuse. Criminal checks were received on the Andrew family and there is criminal hx with these parents."

----- Original Message -----

From: CLAIRE, BARBARA
To: nandrews13@cox.net
Cc: LACOMB, ELAINE ; BROWN, RUTH
Sent: Tuesday, October 23, 2007 3:56 PM
Subject: CORRECTED PROTOCOL

Nancy,

Pursuant to our phone conversation yesterday, I requested that our Information Services staff remove three sentences in an investigations protocol that erroneously stated that you have a CPS and criminal history. Below is the IS communications to me showing that this was accomplished.

Barbara J. Claire, Esq.
Agency Legal Director
Department of Children and Families
505 Hudson Street
Hartford, CT 06106
860-550-6557

----- THIS IS A SYSTEM GENERATED MESSAGE. PLEASE DO NOT REPLY TO THIS EMAIL ---

Dear Barbara J. Claire,

Please be advised that your request 01CH050659, with the original description of "Maria Zappulla LINK 234058" regarding "AWorkstation / Access" has been completed by Help Desk.

If you wish to follow up on this request, please quote your Ticket Number (01CH050659) when contacting the DCF Helpdesk. As always, it is has been our pleasure to assist you.

Regards,

DCF Helpdesk

===== ORIGINAL REQUEST
=====

*** 23-Oct-2007 08:13:25 Tyrone Stewart ***

Thank you very much.

Barbara J. Claire, Esq.

Agency Legal Director

Department of Children and Families

505 Hudson Street

Hartford, CT 06106

office: 860-550-6557

fax: 860-566-7947

barbara.claire@ct.gov

-----Original Message-----

From: REESE, BARBARA

Sent: Monday, October 22, 2007 6:21 PM

To: CLAIRE, BARBARA; HELP DESK, DCF

Cc: LAU, CHRISTINE ; BROWN, RUTH ; SMITH, LEN

Subject: Re: Maria Zappulla LINK 234058

It will be done within an 8 business hour timeframe.

B.

----- Original Message -----

From: CLAIRE, BARBARA

To: HELP DESK, DCF

Cc: LAU, CHRISTINE ; BROWN, RUTH ; REESE, BARBARA

Sent: Mon Oct 22 17:54:18 2007

Subject: Maria Zappulla LINK 234058

Please consider this a formal request to remove three sentences from the Investigations Protocol for Maria Zappulla LINK 234058.

The sentences appear on page 11, third full paragraph beginning "6/18/07 - criminal checks...".

The sentences to be removed are the three at the end of the paragraph:

"Link search completed on maternal aunt and there is DCF hx with this family. There is also a substantiation for physical abuse. Criminal checks were received on the Andrew family and there is criminal hx with these parents."

The reason for this request is that the LINK and criminal checks were done on a person with the same name. It has been confirmed that the maternal aunt has no DCF or criminal history.

Can you please notify me when this request is completed so I can tell the aunt?

Thank you.

Barbara J. Claire, Esq.

Agency Legal Director

Department of Children and Families

505 Hudson Street

Hartford, CT 06106

office: 860-550-6557

fax: 860-566-7947

barbara.claire@ct.gov
