

Testimony of Paul Norton before Human Services and Select Committee on Children, Ct Legislature on December 18, 2008. Contact phone - 860-402-4791, pjnorton2004@yahoo.com

This is a not only a story of a 15 month ordeal of injustice, it is one citizen's observation of the operations of Connecticut DCF and their supportive and legal apparatus. My role as advocate and advisor to my sister, who was found neglectful of her children, witnessed DCF tactical cover-up of investigation and allegation flaws. DCF action gave my sister, Linda's children to a jealous, interfering family member, a Foster Parent connected to the local DCF office.

The DCF support comes from, at this moment, 6 attorneys, one who is court-appointed to represent my sister. Father's, child's, Foster, DCF, Mother's and Mother's Guardian ad Litem attorneys, all but one paid for by the State of Connecticut.

Operationally, the attorney players have propped up the allegations of charges of emotional neglect lodged within Juvenile Matters (JM) of the Judicial Branch, absent any criminal charges of abuse or neglect.

The areas of DCF involvement is not limited to going into JM Court with false claims of immediate harm to children prompting removal. DCF has sabotaged Linda's attempts at maintaining contact, visitation, and reunification in the following: asserting abandonment to children, school, and others; corercing service provider counselors to pressure Linda to sign children over to DCF; non-recognition and alienation of community and family support. In addition to carrying the unfounded assertions of mental illness by Foster Parent and children, DCF has engaged in an attempt to criminalize Linda's contact with her children by colluding with Foster Parent to lodge a Restraining Order Complaint in Family Matters (FA).

The attempts by DCF to prove after-the-fact the alledged incidents by proving Linda psychologically unfit, is an operational tactic used to prevent Visitation and Reunification based on Linda's refusal to sign children over and give up her community support. When Linda complied with the agreements for Counseling, and other specifics, DCF falsely stated in Permanency Plan that she has not. Her court-appointed Attorneys refuse to correct the record.

The bureacratic structure that allows and collude with CT DCF in maintaining false charges criminalizes the conduct of parents. The complicity of DCF with Foster Parents to remove Parental Rights outside of legal proceedings falls outside of stated regulations and law. In Linda's case, she was met with false charges and accusations echoed by school officials made by the Foster Parent with DCF support. Police intervention was enlisted to remove her from public events.

The government structure that is supportive of Ct DCF's legal claims of abuse and neglectively impacts parents due-process rights. They include a citizen's redress of wrongs, equality under the law, unbiased legal representation, and being able to face your accuser before a tribunal.

The bureacratic structure cuts across both executive and judicial. With the advent of a Ct 2008 Act Concerning the Commission of Child of Child Protection, these players have been empowered with a "multidiplinary" approach. Attorneys and service providers now determine the worthiness of restoring Parental Rights. Watch-dogs are made criminal if they disclose facts in a JM case. Court-appointed attorney lack the due-diligence and professional conduct of legal representation.

1. Chief Child Protection Attorney's Office mets out contract attorneys to represent indigent parents. This office also oversees and hires the attorneys for children as well. A potential conflict of interest arises because of the mission of the agency in advocating for children. Another issue is in enforcing Contractual Obligations of the attorneys. An apparent conflict-of-interest exists because the Ct Attorney General's (AG) Office represents Ct DCF in legal proceeding in JM Court against Parents. Any breach of contract by a parent's or child's court-appointed attorney has no ethical oversight by Ct AG because they are involved in legal proceedings in JM.

2. Attorney General's Office represents DCF with AAG attorneys in JM. It would appear the AG has a conflict in overseeing and prosecuting contractual violations by court-appointed attorneys of parents, who are legal adversaries of thier office

3. Judicial Department that includes JM and FA with clerks who communicate with government parties and disadvantage other legal players in process and substance in proceedings. In Linda's case, Judges conspired with Foster Parent and DCF to remove parental rights outside of the jurisdiction of JM Court. In the FA Restraining Order (RO) initiative, DCF and court officials colluded to criminalize Linda's conduct, then to transfer to JM to insure secrecy in the proceedings. The Juvenile Matters are closed to the public and supportive family memebers. The attorney palyers can practice without public scrutiny. Documentation is available! The RO has been removed because of a Grievance Complaint filed against an Attorney, but only after two criminal arrest warrants were issued against Linda. She now faces criminal charges. Her 7th attorney, Public Defender Mark Johnson in Bristol has "gauranteed" that the matter will be dropped on Jan 21, 2009.

4. The thousand pound gorilla in the room, Ct DCF is an agency more concerned with pre-determined outcomes for the family, Laws of the state, DCF regulations, and professional standards are cast aside to cover-up agency wrong-doing and favor connected Foster Parents and children's wishes over due-process Parental Rights. When DCF does not get an agreement from a parent charged in thier civil complaint, they attempt post-facto to prove the individual insane or criminal. One single injustice however, is not out-weighed by the tragic case of child abuse. In Linda's case, the professional misconduct by the social worker is well documented, but with no redress possible. The present safegaurds are not receptive to widespread abuse of power demonstrated. The CT DCF Ombudsman's Office is uneffectual in oversite and should be disbanded. The administrative appeal process afforded parents, determined by DCF to have been neglectful, should be assessed. A judicial court needs to be provided for individual parents, such as small-claims, to legally address DCF cases absent rudimentary cause and factual proof.

In Linda's case, DCF took false allegations by an interested third party, added a false allegation of immediate harm to remove the children, then placed the children in the same community as the parent. When the parent wanted to maintain contact with the children, DCF went after the parent criminally. Only four visits, all obstructed by DCF, encouraging the teen-aged children to further disruption. Linda's past domestic abuse was not recognized becasue she chose to take action and remove herself and the children and seek help. Her Social Security disability of stress has been ignored in favor of insinuation and mis-diagnosis by DCF service providers. In propping up an interferring family Foster Parent, DCF did not conduct proper Home Assessment and Study. A teen-age boy lived in the same Foster Home for 6 moths. Linda's attempts to recieve information has not been forthcoming. Cuurently, DCF has a neglect Petition in front of a Child Protection Court. A fair trial is unlikely with her current attorney who has not filed Objections to DCF ceasing Visitation, nor has he fought an Incompetency for Trial determination made by a prior incompetent cout-appointed Attorney.

In addition to the above reccommendations above in DCF bureacratc paragraph, my observation of the attorney involvement in DCF matters, has led me to believe there is a thriving contractual business by attorneys provided they go along with the operations of DCF. In order to prevent collusion and professional misconduct by these attorneys, it is neccessary to limit the amount of suck work conducted by contract attorneys working for the Chief Child Protection Attorney Office. It would be suggested that a percentage under 40%. In addition, no Attorney who represents children should be able to represent parents out of the same office.