

Testimony Submitted by  
Elizabeth A. Tapester, Mom  
170 Flood Bridge Road  
Southbury, CT 06488

December 18, 2008

SUMMARY:

In September of '07 I had my husband arrested for hitting me in front of the children and threatening to get his gun and blow my brains out. At his hearing he told Family Services and the Court that he hit me to protect the children from me. He then went on to say that I had been abusing them for years and that he was willing to file a DCF report against me. DCF's anger was fueled by the fact that we were terminating our parental rights for our youngest daughter who had been adopted at almost age four and who had behavioral issues that we were not able to deal with. With my husband's escalating anger management problem and our increasing inability to communicate, we felt it was in our youngest daughter's best interest to TPR and have her be re-adopted by another loving family. We had begun the process with his niece's family going to adopt her. The story he told DCF, however, was much different.

My older daughter was torn from me on November 9, 2007. The Social Worker's Affidavit was full of lies, partial truths blown way out of proportion, and testimony from people in agencies that were barely involved with my family.

From the beginning I was treated with total disrespect. My husband, on the other hand, was awarded daily visits with my daughter by his niece. And DCF supervisor, Anthony Gay, even allowed him to have her on Christmas Day, despite the fact that we were not supposed to have visits without the other parent being present.

I was not permitted to visit with my daughter for weeks. Eventually we did have visits, but of course after each visit DCF would then take my daughter away from me again. In the beginning, Mei-Li would cry when it was time to leave and so would I. What normal mother and child wouldn't cry at having to be separated again and again? DCF reported to my daughter's attorney that I was the cause of Mei-Li's tears. I was informed that if I didn't stop making my daughter cry, DCF would not allow me to visit with her anymore. So after that I had to pretend that I was happy each time they took her away. I consider this to be the biggest tragedy of the situation. This is what DCF is doing to our children.

This information from service providers who will not testify themselves for fear of losing their jobs: The DCF system is full of bias and prejudice and inexperienced workers who have not been able to deal with their own issues. DCF workers are not properly trained for their jobs and come in to their positions with their own agendas having not been dealt

with. They are not psychologically evaluated prior to beginning at the Department. They are given the 'power' to decide who is right and who is wrong in any given situation and the freedom to print stories as if they are truths. They have neither the sense nor the ability to not become enmeshed.

DCF should not be allowed to remove children from their parents' care without their first attempting other avenues. Even if the allegations against me were true, there was no immediacy to my family's situation, yet the children were removed.

Foster mothers should not be permitted to take bribes from parents.

The judicial system surrounding DCF files also needs to be addressed. No one seems to know what they are doing - from the judges to the court clerks. Even the AAG, Attorney Bumpus, didn't even have the decency to have our file with him for the first TWO hearings.

The system is corrupt because DCF is accountable to no one and because the Court is tied to DCF. There is no place for someone like me to go when an injustice has been done to me or to my daughter.

Thank you.

Testimony Submitted by  
Elizabeth A. Tapester, Mom  
170 Flood Bridge Road  
Southbury, CT 06488

December 18, 2008

My name is Elizabeth Tapester, and my daughter, Mei-Li has been in DCF custody for over a year.

Mine is a complicated situation, with my ex-husband and I having adopted two children from China and having terminated our parental rights for one of them, with a major custody battle still raging for the other. This is not a situation which DCF has seen before, or so they tell us.

My experience with DCF has been nothing short of horror. I have been falsely accused of things that I have never done and of things that were partial truths but were misrepresented or blown out of proportion.

At no time in the process was I able to respond to the State regarding the allegations against me. The trial was set for almost a year after the children's removal. It is only at a trial where one can prove the allegations false. Yet the system does not support a trial, but instead to plead nolo and commit in order to speed your child's return.

Would someone please explain to me how a State judge can be impartial in a trial when DCF is a State department?

Bias. As we all know, DCF is supposed to be unbiased in their investigations and how they treat the members of their families. I am here to tell you this does not happen. The bias against me from the very onset of the investigation has been apparent.

DCF is not supposed to give one parent more visit time than the other. Over the first few weeks after my children's removal, foster mother (FM) allowed father visits on a daily basis with the children, but I was not allowed any. FM is father's niece.

Anthony Gay, DCF supervisor, approved a visit with my husband on Christmas last year. What do you think my daughter thought of spending Christmas Day with her dad but without her mama? **DCF makes it very clear to my daughter that they do not like me and that they believe I am abusive and not good for her to be with.**

The investigation itself was biased against me from the very beginning. My husband told DCF that I was going to nab him on sexual abuse and for them to be wary of me. So when I tried to tell them of his lack of boundaries with my daughter, the SW pounded her fists on my counter, pointed her finger in my face, and stated, "How dare you! This is a

father that loves his daughter. How dare you try to do this to him!" and then walked out of the room, leaving me with the other DCF worker, Mary Robinson. I then told Mary Robinson about my husband's leaving pornographic magazines and materials in the bathroom drawer where my daughter kept her shower cap. Mary informed me that this was sexualizing a minor, and then left with the investigative SW. My report to Mary was never acknowledged by DCF, nor were most of the other issues regarding my husband and the children that I reported to the investigative social worker that day.

When DCF service providers won't mention any of DCF shortcomings or how they have hurt the families that they provide services to - there is a problem! I was told repeatedly, by every service provider that I contacted, that they would lose their jobs if they gave testimony today of DCF shortcomings or issues. HOW are you going to get anyplace with this Committee if the folks who need to speak out cannot?

So why is everyone afraid of DCF? Because they are given this massive amount of power. And they are accountable to no one. No one oversees what they are doing. But you know this already.

Many times in my case, DCF has said they were going to do one thing, then they do another. For instance, we were told if both parents plead nolo and committed Mei-Li to DCF custody, she would be reunified with both of us at our home in a certain number of weeks. We both plead and allowed the commitment. She was never returned because they simply changed their mind.

Back in March of 07 we were given trial dates of October 6, 7, and 9. That's over six months away. At the end of September, the Judge decided that if the trial was going to take more than one day, he didn't want it in his court. So instead, he was moving it to Middletown. That meant a new request for trial dates and possibly another six month wait, not to mention the trouble with having to travel all the way to Middletown from our home base. How can this be allowed? This is not in any child's best interest to keep extending and extending.

Per court order psychological evaluations were done on both my ex-husband and me. Because the evaluation come out in my favor, DCF has ignored it and refuses to follow Dr. Balducci's advice that the "child should be returned to her mother's primary care as soon as feasible". They then buried the evaluation, and have never referred to it in any report or referral.

In March or April of 07 it was decided that Superior Court Family Relations would do a custody study to determine custody. The process was begun, and two weeks later it was decided by the Superior Court that as long as Mei-Li was in DCF custody, they could not provide the study. It was canceled. As of October 24<sup>th</sup>, the custody study was re-implemented. So what could have been completed last July will not now be completed until mid-February. This is ridiculous judicial idiocy, and my daughter sits in DCF custody even longer.

At a hearing in March or April of '07 it was approved that I should get family counseling with my daughter. DCF never implemented it despite my attorney's repeated requests. When the AAG was finally contacted in May, the SW called me and actually berated me for not having begun family therapy after it had been approved months before. She then told me to find a therapist and get it set up. So I did. Then at the ACR a few days later, I was reprimanded that I shouldn't have set the therapist up or had a visit with her because father was now going to attend family therapy and so I have biased the family therapist. It turns out that the delay was because DCF didn't want me starting family therapy. They had to clear father from his two sexual abuse substantiations so that he could begin family therapy at the same time. So they ignored me until the AAG became involved. Speaking of the AAG, Attorney Bumpus didn't even have the decency to have our file for the first TWO hearings.

At an ACR (family planning meeting), FM asked the SW and the supervisor if she could bring my daughter to church. I sat there watching them as they told her as long as it was okay with Mei-Li, that it was fine. Never did they ask me. When I later told my attorney what they did, he contacted them. He was told that I gave my permission at the ACR. My attorney had been on the telephone with us at that meeting, yet he never heard them ask me. The SW then contacted me and told me that I had approved ML's going to church at the ACR and asked me if I was going to change my mind. I tried to explain to her that I wasn't asked because if I was asked I would have requested the religion of the church she was going to be brought to. Her response was to again ask if I was going to change my mind.

On top of the money DCF is paying her to foster my daughter, FM is receiving my daughter's social security - that's approximately \$850 per month. This was set up by my ex-husband despite my request for him to have Social Security put it into a trust account for Mei-Li. I feel that he would prefer to pay off his niece so that he can continue to be in her good favor, as DCF believes much of what she has to say. Despite the additional income, FM refuses to pay for my daughter's flute rental, her school pictures, her sport equipment, etc. FM, however, has been to Massachusetts to look at time shares within the past two months.

Since my daughter's removal, she has been alienated from all her friends. Despite my daughter's requests to see many of them, DCF has brushed it aside.

Because my daughter is living with my husband's niece, she is constantly participating in events with his family. Yet DCF refuses to allow her to see anyone from my side of the family or any of OUR friends. Because I home schooled her, my daughter and I spent most of our time together and much of it in the home school community. We had a very active community life with our home school groups. Also, Mei-Li has been Irish dancing since she was three and a half years old and achieved Preliminary Champion status. Her best friend, Kiera, also Irish dances. Along with extra curricular activities like home school group classes, her dancing, participating in the Nutcracker, etc., we had a very busy and happy life. Since being in DCF custody Mei-Li is being denied any contact

with these individuals and groups of people who have been her friends and supporters for her entire life. Her life with me has been severed from her.

I was told when we went to unsupervised visits that I would be able to have others present at those visits. This was a part of the reunification process. Prior to this, we were not permitted visitors unless DCF approved of them with a DCF check and police check. After having Kiera, my daughter's best friend, at a visit (I think she's 12), I was informed that it was totally inappropriate and would not be tolerated. They then threatened to take away my unsupervised visits. My attorney says that I have no recourse but to not bring anyone else to visits anymore. So again, my daughter is not able to have contact with any of her friends or prior support groups.

These are just a few examples of my personal problems with DCF. There is so much more to this situation than I have time to put into words. If you would like more information, I am available if you should so choose.

Thank you.