

Baby taken without cause

TONI MCMICHAEL
Staff Writer

How is it in the state of Oregon that parents are guilty of neglect or abuse without proper evidence? All it takes is one statement from a child, teacher, neighbor or even a family member and the police and Children and Family Services (formerly known as CSD) will be knocking at your door in just a few hours.

Many parents don't realize how easy it is for them to lose custody of their children. A caseworker can come to your home and physically remove them without any physical evidence of neglect or abuse. All they have to say is they believe

the child or children to be in immediate danger. And you lose your child or children until you can prove that you did not harm them in any way.

There's a case in Milwaukie where a 29-year-old mother just had this happen. She has three children: two girls, ages nine and four, and a one and a half month-old son.

The little boy has been having trouble gaining weight. She has taken him to the doctor many times. One evening about two and a half weeks ago he began wheezing. His mother had his grandmother go with her to take him to the emergency room. While there, grandma told the doctor she was concerned for her grandson's health because he was not gaining weight.

After they left, the doctor turned the baby's mother in for abuse. He accused her of not feeding her son. A few days later police and CFS came to her home and ordered her to place the baby in a foster home or with his dad's parents. If she tried to argue with them they would make the decision themselves. She relinquished custody to his grandparents.

The state caseworker did not have the baby taken to a doctor for a physical. If they really believed that he was being starved he should have gone directly to the hospital to be cared for.

Obviously they did not totally believe the allegations because the lack of an immediate physical would have proven (or disproven in this case) that they had no right to remove this baby from his home and his mother's arms.

The problem is that Children and Family Services has no evidence. They have legally abducted this child from his mother and the only way she can get him back is to play their games.

She must go through a psychological evaluation and take parenting classes to prove she is a fit parent and she is mentally stable enough to know when her child is hungry.

After she does all of this they might allow her to begin having visits with him. After a few months she might get partial custody, and then eventually full.

The big word here is might. They could decide not to allow her any visits and force her to go to court. She does not have the money for court and the state-appointed lawyer has not been an advocate. Her current lawyer refuses to go public with this case: she seems to think her client is already guilty, so why fight back? What this mother needs is a lawyer who will fight for her and the welfare of her son. She needs one that will not kiss the states behind, but instead make them kiss hers.

CFS believes they are doing this in the best interest of the baby. Bull! They don't care about him. All they care about is the money. As long as they keep custody of this child, they are receiving money from the taxpayers to help pay for the care and the upkeep of this baby. The more children they remove unnecessarily from their homes, the more secure their jobs are.

This department needs to learn they are not above the law. They too must have hard physical evidence before they remove a child from their parents' custody. To do this they must get off their behinds and investigate the allegations before they rip a family apart. If they have proof that abuse is occurring, then by all means remove the child from harm.

CFS has too much power. As citizens and parents, we all must insist that new regulations be implemented to prevent this state from abducting children from their parents. New guidelines of how to legally remove them from their homes when necessary.

Nobody is immune to the wrath of

CFS. They can go into any home, any time to take away your children. They do not need a court order. All they have to say is they felt the child was in immediate danger. As parents this automatically revokes any say in what happens to your child. CFS automatically receives custody of them until they decide you are a fit parent. If they decide you are not, they can keep your child for months or even years. It is then your responsibility to prove that you are innocent of any of the accusations of abuse or neglect.

It is not the state's job to prove their case. Law enforcement officers must have evidence to arrest a criminal. The "innocent before proven guilty" rule does not exist for Children and Family Services. For them, you are guilty until you are proven innocent.

Some people might think that social status plays a role here, but it does not. The economically challenged are targeted more than the upper classes, but this does not mean the rich are immune. All it would take for someone like Governor Kitzhaber and his wife to lose custody of their son Morgan is a false accusation of abuse. Children and Family Services would step in; Morgan's parents would have no say in what happens to him. The Kitzhabers would have to prove they did not abuse their son. At least they have the money to fight the courts, unlike some people who have no money for a lawyer.

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one who will supervise them and keep their noses clean.

The most important thing they need to do first is to return the children that they have abducted to their loving parents before something worse happens to them.

News Briefs

Student government will host a week of activities devoted to raising awareness about issues that are often overlooked. Events such as CPR classes and a forum on rape will be just a few of the issues covered from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. Mon. Feb. 23 through Wed. Feb. 25. For additional information contact Becky Biggs, public relations senator of ASG, at ext. 2247.

The deadline for the writers' club contest is today. Students may submit up to three poems, one essay, and one piece of fiction. Submit four copies of each entry. Include a cover page for each. Specifically, manuscripts should be prepared as follows: A cover page with the title, category, student's name, social security number, address and phone number. The first page of the story should only include the student's social security number and the title. Do not put your name on the first page of the entry. All entries will be considered for the literary magazine *Synesthesia*. Submit entries to Allen Widerburg in M233 or call ext. 2359.

The following recruiters are scheduled to be on campus in the Community Center: Thurs. Feb. 19, Olsten Staffing Services; Mon. Feb. 23, Norrell Staffing Services; Tues. Feb. 24, Airport Terminal Services; Wed. Feb. 25, UPS; and Thurs. Feb. 26, Work Opportunity Fair in the Randall Gym from 9 a.m.-1 p.m.

Ushers are needed in exchange for free admission to "Cat on a Hot Tin Roof," playing in the McLoughlin Hall Theater the evenings of Feb. 26-28, March 6-7, and the afternoon of March 8. For more information contact Alice Nelson in M112 or call ext. 2356.

Need money for childcare expenses? Grant applications to help pay for childcare during Spring term are now available. See Lela or Ann in the ASG offices, ext. 2245.

Volunteers are needed to tutor adults in reading and writing approximately two hours a week. Contact Joe VanZutphen.

The Native American Students Club, Coyote Circle, invites all those interested in Native American culture and crafts to come join their circle each Thursday (except Feb. 26), in M251. The meetings are held from 12:30 to 1:20 p.m. They are in the planning stages for their Spring Powwow and their next Indian Taco feed. They will be researching Native American plants indigenous to this area with the hope of restoring the Native American garden at the ELC. If you have any questions, please call ext. 2813.

Day classes will be canceled Thurs. Feb. 26 to make way for the High School Skills Contest. High school students from the area will come to Clackamas to compete in many different subject areas by taking tests. Evening classes will follow their usual schedule.

ASG: Making valuable contacts

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know much about that, I haven't got to that' . . . and we really came to task on that and said "This is why we're here, and why we supported you, if we did, is to support education," Berney added.

Clackamas students must always meet high expectations while in DC.

"Many of the advisors have told me that ours is one of the most well-organized groups back there," Berney added.

While the students get their chance to mingle with students from community colleges all over the country some topics that are discussed include Bookmart, child care, environmental issues, transferability from a two- to four-year school and funding.

"We gain a lot of knowledge and give a lot of our knowledge back to other community colleges," Berney said.

There are many opportunities for Berney to meet with other ASG advisors at the conference to discuss a number of issues: for example, how individual ASG groups are run.

Overall the trip to DC proves to be educational every time.

Currently, ASG is conducting a number of fundraisers. Every Wednesday from now until March 4 and on Thursday Feb. 26 (during the skills contest) the group will host a barbecue at the Community Center. ASG is also selling raffle tickets, for gift certificates and prizes, at \$1 each or six for \$5. The drawing will be held March 4. If you would like to purchase a raffle ticket call ext. 2245.

The Clackamas Print Staff

19600 S. Molalla Ave. Oregon City, OR 97045

(503) 657-6958 ext. 2309

cccprint@clackamas.cc.or.us

Co-Editors-in-Chief: Christina Mueller (ext. 2576)	Copy Editor: Mike Garcia	Advisor: Linda Vogt
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