

Approved _____

Date

1/31/90

MINUTES OF THE SENATE COMMITTEE ON PUBLIC HEALTH AND WELFARE

The meeting was called to order by SENATOR ROY M. EHRLICH at _____
Chairperson

10:00 a.m./~~p.m.~~ on January 24, 1990 in room 526 of the Capitol.

All members were present except:

Committee staff present:

Emalene Correll, Legislative Research
Bill Wolff, Legislataive Research
Norman Furse, Revisors Office
Sandra Nash, Committee Secretary

Conferees appearing before the committee:

The meeting was called to order by Chairman Sentaor Roy M. Ehrlich. Senator Ehrlich pointed out the letter from Barbara Jordon which has been distributed all committee members concerning her concerns on foster care. (Attachment 1)

Sen. Ehrlich stated the hearing today is the result of testimony we have heard through the Interim Committee Study on Public Health and Welfare. Senator Kanan was very active in voicing of the voices of some of the foster parents in Kansas. This is why we are having this special hearing today, for proponents or opponents or any issue that you would like to discuss before the Public Health and Welfare Committee. Sen. Ehrlich asked Sen. Kanan make a statement and his concern he shared with the Interim Committee the past summer.

Sen. Kanan stated that the members of the Committee may recall that Sen. Strick read a letter from a family in Wichita where their 13 year old daughter was taken from them by S.R.S. and are having a problem getting the daughter back. In the meantime, in 1986, on the campaign trail, I met the Mike Moreno family. And he ran for state representative, didn't win his election tho. And during this time my family and his family became pretty well acquainted because we are both family people. In 1986 Mr. Moreno came to Sen. Kanan's office where his company is located and discussed the situation which had developed in Mr. Moreno's family. The S.R.S. took Mr. Moreno's daughter from him, and in the meantime, his daughter under foster care became pregnant. The Moreno family didn't know anything about this until it happened. And in the wee hours of night about 7:00p.m. the police come to their house, took their other boy and daughter and, it has been a regular nightmare for the Moreno family.

Sen. Kanan stated what upset him more than anything else was that one night Mr. Moreno called him and said their 5-year-old daughter was in the hospital in critical condition and S.R.S. refused to let the natural mother and father go see this 5 year-old child. He thought the committee should hear the Moreno family, they have been trying for four years to get their kids and they still don't have them back. Another thing that impressed Sen. Kanan was they couldn't see their 13 year old boy and we all know, all of us men know, that when you are 13 you can be embarrassed real easy.

Sen. Kanan said that S.R.S. humiliated me, especially their attorney. The court service officer now, said that these kids would never go back into the home if she has anything to do with it. Sen. Kanan set up a meeting with S.R.S. people and there were about 35 people in it and this 13 year old boy, when he saw his dad, run across this room and kissed him. That boy belongs in the home. I thought this committee should hear the Moreno situation.

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The Chairman called for Mike Moreno and his wife Alizandrina.

Mr. Moreno stated he was 38 years old, I'm a former Vietnam veteran and the reason I'm testifying on my service is that I was crucified by S.R.S. because of my military service. I have been awarded various awards for various functions I participate in. I try to bring ethnic enrichment back to the community of Kansas city, Kansas, Wyandotte County. He has worked in other projects pertaining to youth orientative programs but because of my actions, it means nothing to S.R.S. or the juvenile system.

In 1986 when Mr. Moreno's daughter was taken, he freely admitted and he never denied, he struck her because she went to a drinking and substance abuse party that was going on that we had no knowledge of. In tradition we are taught that when you become 15 years old, if anyone is familiar with the Mexican community, we give a "Sweet Sixteen." It's an introduction from a young girl to a young woman. We at that point start allowing our children to go out with a suitor, a gentleman, a young man or boyfried, but we have a controlled situation. We like to know where our children are at. Mr. Moreno said he did not deny that his children aren't perfect, nor does he say that they are perfect. It's just one of those things, that unfortunately, was taken away from us.

Mr. Moreno stated his other two children were taken away by hearsay. S.R.S. has worked on the Flick of the Bic. He was referring to the pen. A little pen with hearsay is admissible in court. What we have to say or request of an investigation, we are instigating or being vindictive and that is not true. We are human beings. My human rights, my civil rights have been violated. I strongly urge that the Committee take this into consideration and help us, helping not only us but people of Kansas who have lost their children.

You have about 90% out of 100% that have been physically, deep physical abuse and then 10% that have been abused by the system itself. And that 10% is pretty obvious that it becomes a throw-away society. And that is not right for our children. Mr. Moreno passed around to the Committee awards which he has received from the county and the City of Kansas City, Kansas.

Mr. Moreno said his children have been wanting to come home. His son is 14 now. He has put in Atchison, he's been in Caulview. In Caulview he spent a year and a half which is like a holding detention unit. And Atchison, he was there for about a year and a month. All because he ran away and kept trying to come home.

At one time we were in Contempt of Court because of my son's injury. He was hit-and-run in Ft. Scott, Kansas, when he left the facilities of Pittsburg. He ran away to come home. His leg was severely mangled, but because they could not find the guardian or S.R.S. would acknowledge their responsibility to my son, the Sheriff's Department of Ft. Scott called us at home at ten o'clock at night to inform us of the accident and request our permission, if possible, to fly him in Flight For Life to K.U. Medical Center. We, of course, we said yes.

They flew my son to K.U. We spent the whole night there. The next morning, the guardian finally showed up and we were ejected from K.U. after he was stablized, by the K.U. police department. The police officers were very angry at the guardian and S.R.S. because of the actions they took. They never came up and knocked on the door to ask us to leave. They just brought the police in

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there. Took away manpower and security away from other sections of the hospital. They went up and made accusations that we were throwing hospital beds all over the place, and all we were doing was sitting there. But that's one instance.

My youngest daughter, 6 years old now, has been put in the hospital various times. Once she was taken in for an examination on sexual penetration. Mr. Moreno said he has been accused of kiddy porno, indecent liberties with his children and endangering his children for trying to make them sell dope. Nothing has ever been done, except the police department has come to investigate the allegations. The police department has gotten frustrated with S.R.S. because of these allegations. Not only have they done it to me, but to various other parents. There is no foundation to even constitute an accusation, but once I'm cleared, vindicated, they continue on with these allegations. "We know you did it, we just can't prove it."

I have been willing to take a polygraph, I've been willing to do whatever it takes to clear myself completely. But to S.R.S., that is not good enough. We have gone to court. I have a letter from Mr. Winston Barton, I have a letter from the District S.R.S. Officer, who is suppose to be the supervisor. Very unfortunate that the letter says that they from day one are infavor of the children coming home. But, ever since we have started this situation, it is not true. It is not true. The agency or the S.R.S. worker who has gone to court has always taken the position that these children are not to go home. And I was told by an S.R.S. worker and the guardian and the juvenile service officer, after I started talking to Senator Kanan and he took and interest on it, what can senators do about it. Senators can't do anything about this. We are the law, we can justify any action we take.

The Chair asked for questions.

Senator Kanan asked if S.R.S. offered to make a deal if you and your wife get a divorce, would they give the kids back?

Mr. Moreno said at the beginning the juvenile service officer and the S.R.S. worker with the guardian, stated if me and my wife would be sure to get a divorce in 30 days, the children would be placed in her custody. But we could never live together or get remarried at any point. Because S.R.S. would come in and take the children again.

Mrs. Alizandrian Moreno stated her children were taken from her. It started with her oldest daughter because, like her husband said, he had struck her. And she knew she was not allowed at parties and she went behind our back. Her friend's parents came to the house and told us that she left the house, her friend's house, and went to this party. This is how we got involved with S.R.S. Then in February 1987, our other two children were taken. But that night, our car was down and we had to get to the grocery store to get some groceries for two smaller ones. Mike had asked little Mike if he wanted to go to the grocery store. And he did not want to. He said, "No Dad, the baby's sick. It's raining. I want to stay." So I walked with Mike because we knew we would have two bags full of groceries. And by the time we came back home, my kids were gone. There was a letter on the door from the police department, saying that they had taken the kids because they had been left alone. When we went to the police department, the police department said that S.R.S. had already picked them up. We would have to go to court on Monday or call S.R.S. Monday and they would return the kids home. We called Monday and they said we would have a court hearing within 24 hours, so we had a temporary

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order custody hearing and that's when they came up with alleged abuses. That the two minor children had been abused and they had not been abused. They came up with all sorts of accusations. Under their care, my daughter has a child from her friend she had been seeing that we had been trying to avoid her dating. Well, she dated and she got a child. My son was in Atchison, since then they have moved him to a foster care home. We have not been allowed to see my son. The last time I have seen my son was a couple days before Christmas in S.R.S. custody. He has had a broken leg while in their custody. He's ran away from placement. I don't see how S.R.S. is helping to put the family back together because their not. If anything, they're costing the tax-payers a lot more money instead of keeping families together like they should be together.

All families have their ups and downs, but they have been able to work them out. I've had to go through numerous psychological evaluations, drug testing and they still said that was not enough, they still felt there was a problem there and that came from the juvenile officer, Judy Kennedy, which is now Richardson as she has since remarried. When Mrs. Richardson was a social worker, she was the first social worker that came into our home. She had said, point blank, that my children were never coming home. She would see to it and it would be in her power that my kids would never come home.

All I ask is to bring my kids home. I've even asked them to come in and do house visits. They could do house visits. When they go to foster care homes, they check on the children there, why can't they do visits in the home also. My husband has been accused of being a traditionalist. In this day and age we're not suppose to be traditional parents. You're suppose to let them run and go as they please. I don't think a child should do that because there's just too much out there already.

The Chair called J.R. Russell to present testimony.

Mr. J.R. Russell passed out a hand-out to the Committee (Attachment 2) The document was prepared at the requests of Senators Kanan and Strick. It is basically an outline and attached to it is an affidavit of Earl Chastain (Attachment 3) who couldn't be present today. But it would be in the best interest of the people of Wyandotte County if the Senate Committee could come to Wyandotte County after the session and holds some hearings on these types of things. We listed six things we think are abuses and result and complaints by citizens the Kansas Department of S.R.S. Probably the most startling one is Statement #1, that the Kansas Department of S.R.S. is the largest source of drug money in Wyandotte County.

I have brought today, at the request of Senator Kanan, Mrs. Watson whose a real estate investor and a large landlord in Wyandotte County, and she can give you details. But, basically what we are saying, if you take the roles and the number of families that receive public assistance from S.R.S. in Wyandotte County, and she can give you some details, and you go to the district court and count up the number of evictions that are filed to evict these people from their homes for non-payment of rent, you will see that you run into thousands and thousands of dollars and it is our contention that this is the money these people have in public housing, the S.R.S. money they receive each month that they use to purchase drugs instead of paying their rent. And we think this and Mrs. Watson will elaborate on that more for you.

With regard to Mr. Moreno, I want to tell the committee that in December Senator Kanan had a meeting at the S.R.S. Office in Wyandotte

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County, which resulted in two phone calls to my law office. One from an employee of S.R.S. and one from Juvenile Court. The tone of the conversation was she wanted to know who B.D. Kanan and why he was butting into this and this was an S.R.S. matter. And I replied to both her and the woman from Juvenile Court. I said "Let me explain it to you. As I understand it, both the Senate and the House of the State of Kansas puts together a budget for you people and approves it and I think he does have an interest to see whether or not you're performing the statutory duties and spending the money that they budget to you." And she said, "Well, we don't think it's any of his business. And if you want to do something, you file the pleas in court. This is strickly a court matter."

At that time Senator Kanan was at the office of S.R.S. with Mr. and Mrs. Moreno, trying to arrange Christmas visitation with the two Moreno children. That case is in the courts and its pending but I have been in contact with the first lawyer that represented the Moreno's and he was present when the people from S.R.S. told Mr. Moreno that he was conduct a traditional Mexican family to where the man made all the decisions and controlled the family, the wife and the children. They advised him they weren't going to put up with that. And that was one of the reasons they weren't returning these children to him because of the lifestyle he was imposing upon his children.

The youngest child that they have in their custody is merely four years old and has been in the custody over a year. From my experience as a trial lawyer in Wyandotte County I think that S.R.S. handles child abuse cases that it's a growth industry. At a future date and hearings, I could bring in numerous people who will tell you that they have been forced, by S.R.S., to attend counseling sessions. They tell the people at S.R.S. that they can't afford it, and numerous counselors at S.R.S. says to not worry about, S.R.S. will pay for it.

I've run into another abuse with S.R.S. with regard to the collection of unpaid child support. In 1989 someone from S.R.S. went and got the list of the people who were paying money into the Clerk of the District Court of Wyandotte County, sent them all a form solicitation letter and said if you're not getting your child support, and you're not getting it on time, you don't think you're getting the right amount, you should contact S.R.S. I have a couple of those letters from my private clients in my files at the office.

I've got down here 3A. persons who own over \$25,000 a year. I have three cases in my files from the last two years, that S.R.S. has taken legal action against the man or the woman and both parties were earning over \$25,000 a year and the child support that S.R.S. sought to collect was about 2% of what was due. And I submit to you that I think they are almost like a state funded life management organization in Wyandotte County.

Again, if you check into the welfare fraud cases in Wyandotte County, I think that you will discover the people who commit welfare fraud. That criminal charges are filed against them, but very few of these people end up incarcerated. I think most of them are placed on diversion. I think most of them get reinstated and collecting benefits again. I'm not aware of any regulation or statute that excludes these people from their eligibility to collect monies and I think that something the Committee should look into.

In addition, Mr. Russell said, the Committee could be well served to look into the number of Child Abuse Cases filed by S.R.S. Some of them

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are very questionable. The evidence is very thin but they proceed with the charges. If you look at the affidavit Mr. Chastain filed, with regard to his son, his son was charged with an abuse of a step-daughter. And S.R.S. stepped in and took away his two natural children. In the last year S.R.S. has prevented Mr. Chastain and his wife and the grandchildren's maternal grandmother, they've stopped all grandparents from having any contact with the grandchildren and they say that they have to go to the Wyandotte Mental Health Center and have a evaluation because they have a bad attitude.

As Mr. Chastain said, in his affidavit which is verbatim as he dictated to Mr. Russell's secretary, I've never had any conversation with anybody at S.R.S. Why do I have to be psychologically evaluated just to see my grandkids. Mr. Chastain would be available to testify if the Committee would come to Kansas City.

Often times, when the parents are charged with this, S.R.S. takes the position like Mr. Chastain says, S.R.S. owns the Juvenile Court Judges in Wyandotte County. That S.R.S.'s testimony is given preference, it's given priority and that the citizens come up and talk to the judges, their pleas fall on deaf ears.

As Mr. Moreno. Mr. Moreno was widely known in Kansas City and Wyandotte County as an Activist. He supports many civic groups and he collects food for the poor, he politically active, he's civically active. I can't see him as some kind of bad person that S.R.S. should keep his children away from him.

Item No. 6, Mrs. Watson is going to speak to you about, as a landlord that owns over 70 rental units. She'll tell you that in Wyandotte County, we see two and three generations of people on public assistance. And that their contact with S.R.S., is that S.R.S. manages their life, their children's lives and their grandchildren's lives. And we think that the policy and the philosophy of this agency is such that its fostering generations of people who are dependent upon the state for their living. And this a cursory outline of complaints that I run into as a lawyer and Senator Kanan and Senator Strick have asked me to bring to you but, I think, the Committee would be well-served if they would come to Wyandotte County after the session, and schedule two or three days of hearings and see how many complaints people have and the nature of their complaints against the present administration, the policies and the philosophy of the Department of Social and Rehabilitative Services. I find a lot of dissatisfaction with them and I was just amazed at the attitude and the posture the S.R.S. people took against Senator Kanan. "Who is B.D. Kanan? What business does a state senator have in looking into this?" And the conversation ended with the woman dropping the phone on my ear. And it was the same thing I got from the juvenile court worker, who was a former S.R.S. employee. There is a real symbiotic relationship in Wyandotte County between S.R.S. and the Juvenile Court Department and I think Mr. Chastain's affidavit sets it out much better than I could. He's never committed a crime. Why does he have to be evaluated? Why can they keep his grandchildren? They wouldn't let him give them Christmas presents, nor tell him where they are. There's been no contact by the grandparents in that particular case for over 14 months. And I think it's an abuse that needs to be looked into. Maybe they need to be educated as to what role the Senate and the House does play in the operation of the Department of Social and Rehabilitative Services.

Senator Kanan elaborated further. He said that during this time he had contacted the Secretary of S.R.S. and he appointed a lady by the name of Mrs. David to be a personal liaison officer between

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his office and the Kansas City office. She was going into the Kansas City office and straighten it up because they were getting too many complaints.

Like Mr. Russell said, if you had a hearing in Kansas City, you would probably have to get the National Guard Army to get rid of this many complaints.

Mike Moreno's boy was supposed to be released January 11. Mr. Russell files and appeal in the District Court of the State of Kansas and Mr. Moreno brought a copy of the appeal to Senator Kanan, and for some reason or other, the judge of the District Court didn't get this appeal. Senator Kanan called Mrs. David and asked what was going on. She said S.R.S. wasn't going to let the judge see the appeal.

Here's the S.R.S. people running the court in Wyandotte County. Senator asked why? Mrs. David said in the first place he didn't file an appeal. Senator said, "Yes, he did, I'm sitting here looking at it." Mrs. David told Senator Kanan the only way an attorney can file an appeal in the court in Kansas was for the attorney to personally deliver the appeal to the judge. Senator Kanan acknowledged he wasn't a lawyer so he didn't know if that was true or not, but he thought the mail worked in the city.

The Chair called Sandra Watson, landlord in Kansas City, Kansas.

Sandra Watson stated she lived in Kansas City, Kansas, and she has 70 intercity properties. I rent primarily to low-income individuals, I have some section 8. I do not have what are called slum properties. I do not have problems with the city. I take care of my properties. I expect to be paid my rent and furnish the services that are required and are expected of me. In return, I've got approximately 60% of my tenants are on welfare due to the areas that I own property. It's a high concentration of welfare. These 60%, I lose some 50 to 60% a year in income that I can from items found in their houses at their sudden departure, directly attribute to drugs. They leave needles, paraphenlia, coke residue, crack residue, they leave the spoons where they melt it down, they leave the bombs, the water, things they smoke it with. I don't know all the proper terminology but I know enough that we bag this stuff up with hot dog tongs which are standard for all my men to carry so they don't touch anything. They use plastic gloves. We found intravenous kits that had Bethany Hospital labels on them. I called a nurse over there. She informed me that when they come into the emergency room, the minute the doctor is outside, they steal all the IV stuff they can get their hands on out of the emergency kit for IV and drug use.

We have a problem with supporting the drug trade. We have no control over how these people spend their money. They are judgment free. They stay longer. Your working tenant will move after he's giving notice. Very rarely do you have to go through the actual eviction procedure. Your welfare tenant knows the rope. They will sit there and tell you, "Fine, I've got six to eight weeks that I can live here free and then you can't do a thing to me when you get a judgment. So I'm going to sit here till you take me to court. You get two weeks later, you get the sheriff to evict me. I'm going to keep on spending my money on my drugs and not paying you. And I'm going to move to the next place and I'm going to do the same thing." We have no recourse against them, or no recourse on the damages they do to our property, we have no recourse on the rents they don't pay, we

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support and they are very many. I've got some find tenants on welfare that I would eat in their homes. They are that clean and that well kept and they need to be. Some of my tenants cannot read and write. I have others who have college degrees and are drug addicts and are getting subsidized housing. I would like to show you a few pictures (Attachment 4) of damages done to my property that were directly related to drug paraphenalia found on the property. I've had one woman and her friends took an axe to five rooms of sheetrock because Section 8 disqualified her for suspected crack selling and for having her gas turned off in July. She could not pay a \$25 gas bill because she had spent it on drugs. This is an expense to the community and to the taxpayers. S.R.S. has no control over these things. And this is not right.

It's not all of them, I'm not saying that. But there's a large majority out there that are using, abusing and they are not getting any help. The next generation are **being born addicted**. It's a cronic problem. Children of the mothers born. I have three generations of one family on welfare and they rent from me and they're all on welfare. Now these people are not on drugs to my knowledge. They're all neat and clean, but this is another problem we have. They cannot get on welfare without our signature, our authorization that they live there. Yet, try to find out an answer, Has a check been mailed? Is it really, truly late? so that we can be fair with them. I don't want to start eviction proceedings on someone if indeed S.R.S. has made the mistake and has got the check out. And it's like pulling teeth to get any information, yet, they have to have all the information from us for them to get on welfare, from the landlord, from the job if they have one or from the job that they lost. There need to be some controls on the system. It's out of control dollar wise. It's become inhumane. It doesn't help those that are on drugs. I have a girl that lost her nine children because she was a crack user. She left owing rent and \$1800 damages. Her rent was \$46 a month. She could not pay that and she had a welfare check for her and nine children which I am sure was quite substantial. But she was addicted to crack. Her nine children were taken in December. She was put through a four week drug rehab. She is out. She's already called and threatened P.H.A. officials and myself and anyone that caused her all sorts of trouble. It's not necessary. She relinquished her house and her kids by dealing crack. I didn't take her hand and make her do it. None of us did but we have to get some help for this people in the system. It's not working.

The Chair called Sarah E. White of VOCAL--Eldorado Grandparent

Sarah E. White reviewed for the Committee the circumstances which she and her family went through as the result of S.R.S. removing their granddaughter from the family home. (Attachment 5)

The Chair called Vivian Hendrick from Newton, who stated as a mother of 10 children. She become involved with S.R.S. when they placed a child in foster care to give a cool off period to try and to help this child. They later found the child had married, the foster mother signed for her, which she wasn't suppose to be able to do. Mrs. Hendrick pointed out that there are 8,000 childrens in foster care. Mrs. Hendrick wrote out suggestions for changes in the laws which are attached. (Attachment 6)

The meeting adjourned at 11:05a.m. The next meeting is January 25, 1990, at 10:00a.m. in Room 526S.

SENATE
PUBLIC HEALTH AND WELFARE COMMITTEE

DATE 1/24/90

(PLEASE PRINT)

NAME AND ADDRESS

ORGANIZATION

NAME AND ADDRESS	ORGANIZATION
Ren Howard	WDAF-TV, Kansas City
Jan Waide	Youth Services
Bruce Linkes	KALPCCA
Ron Hedrick	Newton Vocal
Jelly Waldo	KCA
Urban Hedrick	Newton parent
Sarah E. White	Vocal - Edwards Management
Betty Roman 5111 Garfield KCK's	Sister
Elizabeth Leroux 3947 N. 74 KCK's	X Foster Parent
William Watson 1001 Central KCK's	W Watson Central
JR Russell 813 ANN KCK's	SRS Complaints
ALAN COBIZ	KS RESP CARE Society
Ken Baker	KALPCCA
Kara Richey	Sen. Langworthy's Office
M. Hauwer	Tereka Capital-Journal
Senator Edw Reilly	Leasworth -

Please sign on next page if this page is full.

Kansas State Association of Foster Parents, Inc.

TO: Senator Roy Ehrlich and other interested lawmakers.

FROM: Barbara Jordan, foster parent

DATE: January 20, 1990

With the advent of Public Law 96-272 in 1982 and increased Federal monies, it seemed to me there was an immediate improvement in the quality and delivery of foster care.

In the past three or four years, however, my impression is that both quality and delivery have rapidly deteriorated until at this date, foster care in Kansas is in a situation almost as bad it was ten years ago.

Many social workers and supervisors are 'burned out' through overload, lack of support and poor or no training in foster care skills. 'Burned out' workers make poor decisions for themselves and others. Several new programs have been implemented to assist children and families. One example is the "Family Preservation Project". It is an excellent program, when properly utilized. However, it takes many hours of social work time. In rural areas especially, where one worker may be traveling many miles and covering a variety of cases, there is no time to do family preservation. Yet, the worker is required to spend many days in that training, loses time for all the other cases she takes care of, and then does not have time to implement a good program.

Foster parents are also rapidly becoming 'burned out' because of a lack of training, lack of support, poor social worker-foster parent relationships and overload. Burned out foster parents make poor decisions, too. Foster parents are leaving the system faster than they are recruited. Meanwhile, the number of children and youth coming into care is increasing. Their behaviors and emotional trauma is increasingly severe so that foster parents find caring for these children is exceedingly difficult. All the above, plus the influx of drug addicted babies, HIV positive children and youth and the devastation from allegations of abuse (whether proven or not) against foster parents causes many families to reassess their commitment to foster care.

A terrible dilemma is presented for social workers who have an increasing number of children with increasingly difficult behaviors to place in a decreasing number of homes where parents are not remaining in the system long enough to learn to cope with those more difficult behaviors.

Social workers are reluctant to provide full information to foster parents about the behavior of the children because then the foster parents are less likely to accept the child. The law requires that no child in need of care, 'CINC', is to be placed in jail and no juvenile offender, 'JO', will remain in jail more than 48 hours. When a judge orders a child or youth into SRS custody at a time when all licensed homes are full (and maybe overfull), the detention facility (if there is one) is full, what options are left for the social worker?

SP # 820
attm. #1
1-23-90

When there is a space available or a foster parent is found that is willing to be overloaded and further stressed by taking another child, the foster family needs all the information possible for protection of themselves, the agency and the child.

Foster families are open to great risks every time they take a sexually or physically abused, angry, damaged, resentful, hurting child into their household.

The agency takes great risks if they do not inform foster parents of all available information about when, where and how abuse occurred, behaviors a child has exhibited, possible health problems, parental problems and possible effects on the child, school and social problems.

The child and his/her parents are placed at risk if the foster family is not provided all possible information. Only by fore-warning can the foster parents provide protection for themselves and the child. Knowledge enables the foster parents to avoid accidentally "setting the stage" for an abuse or behaviors that may have occurred in the child's own home. Knowledge is necessary in order for the foster parents to help the child and his/her parents to change old behaviors and develop new ones. The child has to be helped to understand the family problems or his/her own behaviors that were the reasons for coming into care and then learn how to cope with these problems. That can only be accomplished by full disclosure of all information to the foster parents.

Foster parents are just as capable of handling confidential information as social workers. Private agency professional foster parents, group home foster parents and CASA volunteers are entrusted with the same information social workers have. SRS foster homes that have been properly trained must be provided the same information.

The more foster parents know, the better they can serve. Knowledge is power. All personal, social, medical, educational and legal information is crucial to the role of the foster parent.

Kansas State Association of Foster Parents, Inc.

TO: The Kansas Legislators

FROM: The Kansas State Association of Foster Parents Board

DATE: January 23, 1990

At a recent legislative hearing, we learned that many legislators did not know that a Kansas State Association of Foster Parents even existed. We are taking this means of letting you know that we are indeed alive and well.

We are an organization of approximately 1600 foster families and family foster care providers that strongly advocates for foster families and for children in foster care.

We feel quality foster care for children will be provided when:

1. Foster parents are recognized and treated as professional care givers.
2. Foster parents are provided the education, training and reimbursement appropriate to professional status.
3. Foster parents are accepted as full team partners with social workers in the planning and delivery of service to children in foster care.
4. Social workers have case loads low enough that they have time to work adequately with children and families.

The Kansas State Association of Foster Parents was formed in 1971 and Incorporated in 1974. The purpose is establishment of a state-wide organization bringing together all foster parents, agency personel and citizens interested in promoting the welfare of children needing protective care.

KSAFP currently publishes a 12 page newsletter bi-monthly which is mailed to all licensed or approved foster homes in Kansas and to other interested citizens. Printing and postage is paid by SRS. Assembling and mailing is by volunteers and foster parents.

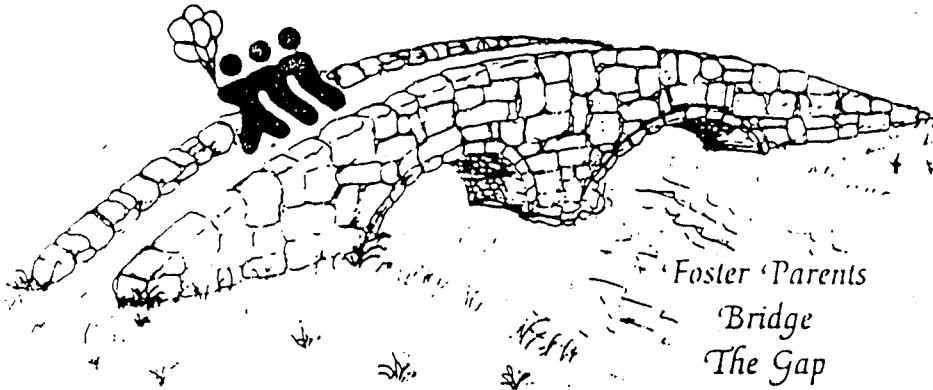
In cooperation with SRS, KSAFP sponsors an annual spring training conference for all foster parents and foster care providers. The conference this year is April 6 and 7 at the Emporia Holidome with the theme, "Foster Parents Bridge the Gap Through United Efforts."

KSAFP offers a variety of other informational, educational and training opportunities for foster care providers.

Y O U, THE LAWMAKERS AND FINANCIAL DISTRIBUTORS leave a great deal to be desired as 'parents' of the States' children who have to be in out-of-home placement. Much more needs to be done in order for Kansas children to grow up physically and emotionally healthy.

For more information, contact any of the KSAFP officers listed on the reverse side.

Kansas State Association of Foster Parents, Inc.



Association of Foster Parents, Inc.

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CITIZEN'S COMPLAINTS

against

KANSAS Dept. S.R.S.

1

S.R.S. AS THE LARGEST SOURCE OF DRUG MONEY IN WYANDOTTE COUNTY, KANS.

A. NUMBER OF FAMILIES RECEIVING MONEY

B. NUMBER OF EVICTIONS IN DISTRICT FOR NON-PAYMENT OF RENTS

2

S.R.S. AND CHILD ABUSE CASES IN EASTERN KANSAS (A GROWTH INDUSTRY)

A. NUMBER OF FOSTER HOMES

B. COUNSELING BY ASSOCIATED AGENCIES

3

S.R.S. AND COLLECTION OF CHILD SUPPORT MONIES DUE

A. PERSONS WHO EARN OVER \$ 25,000 per year.

B. SOLICITATION LETTERS OF 1989

4

S.R.S. AND CRIMINAL FRAUD, PUNISHMENT & PENALTIES & DISQUALIFICATION

5

S.R.S. AND CHILD ABUSE CHARGES AND CASES

6

S,R,S, PAYMENTS AS A WAY OF LIFE (2 or 3 GENERATIONS ON ASSISTANCE)

*SPH + W
Attachment #2
1/24/90*

COPY

AFFIDAVIT

STATE OF KANSAS)
) SS:
COUNTY OF WYANDOTTE)

EARL CHASTAIN being first duly sworn, on oath
deposes and states:

I reside at 2532 South 74th Street, Kansas City,
Wyandotte County, Kansas.

I have a conflict with my work schedule and
cannot be personally present at Topeka, However, I
do want to meet with you and tell you about this S.R.S.
at some future date.

Last year my son was charged with abusing his
step daughter. After this case was filed the SRS people
took his own 2 daughters away from him in his home in
January, 1989.

My wife and I have asked SRS about our 2 grand-
daughters for almost 1 year, without getting any answers.

I went to Court with my son and Judge Mahoney
Ordered SRS to let us see our 2 granddaughters and they
refused to let us see them above a Court Order.

From February, 1989, until January, 1990, my
wife and I have not seen or talked to our grandchildren.
We have missed their birthdays, Christmas and all holidays.

SPH + W
Attachment #3
1/24/90

Last October these women from SRS said to Judge Burdette, that my wife and I have a "bad attitude" and we should be pschologically evaluated before we get to see our granddaughters again. We deeply resent this.

I have never spoken to anyone at SRS. My wife has called over 50 times trying to get visitation with our 2 granddaughters.

SRS just about owns all the Judges in Wyandotte County. If you don't bow down to the SRS people they tell these Judges you are bad and have a bad attituded, and the judges won't let you see your own Grandkids.

SRS controls every Judge in the Wyandotte County Juvenile Court. Whatever SRS says the Judges in Juvenile Court bow to at every word.

My son is 29, has been married over 10 years. My wife and I are not criminals and have led a law abiding life, pay our taxes and don't deserve to be treated like this by a government agency.

I think SRS operates this child abuse program as a money maker for themselves and their friends.

We could have taken our 2 grandchildren into our home one year ago and saved the State \$25,000.00.

Please do what you can to break up the monopolistic family breaking gang paid by our tax dollars.

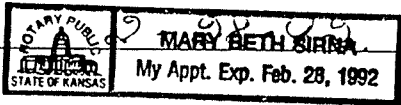
FURTHER AFFIANT SAITH NAUGHT

Earl Chastain
Earl Chastain
2532 South 74th
Kansas City, Kansas 66111
(913) 375-9105

SUBSCRIBED AND SWORN BEFORE ME this 3rd day of
January, 1990.

Mary Beth Sierra
Notary Public

MY APPOINTMENT EXPIRES:





SPH+W
Attachment #4
1/24/90

I want to thank the committee for holding these hearings and giving us this opportunity to testify.

My name is Sarah E. White, and I live in El Dorado, and have been a lifelong resident of Kansas as were my parents and grandparents. On February 12, 1988, our granddaughter, Emily, was placed in a foster home by the SRS. She was there from February 17, 1988 to May 30, 1988 after which she was placed in our home until September 6, 1988, the date of the disposition hearing in which the case was dismissed by the state and full custody was rightfully returned to her parents who were fully exonerated of the allegations brought against them. While Emily was in the rural foster home, she was subjected to humiliation, endangerment of morals and of person, harassment, degradation and embarrassment. The foster mother had a man living in her home to whom she was not married, but whom we thought for several weeks was her husband. Two other teen-aged girls were in the home, one who had been there since infancy, and one who had been there but a few months. There were other children, both male and female who came and went while our granddaughter was there.

The foster mother openly displayed intense overt hostility toward Emily's family and was particularly venomous toward her parents. After the first few days of placement, Emily called a relative collect to keep some contact with her family and that relative learned the number of the foster home by tracing where the collect call originated. The foster mother was furious about this claiming that no one in the family was supposed to know where Emily was. Thereafter she monitored every call Emily received or made to or from the foster home, and became so annoyed by the phone calls that she complained to the SRS who then limited the calls to one call per week from a relative on a designated evening. No other visitation was allowed. On March 9, 1988 at a re-hearing, we saw Emily for the first time since her placement. She had a generally unkempt appearance, and it looked as though her hair had not been washed for several days. Emily did not at all seem herself. She was frightened and trying hard to cover it up. In the courtroom, the foster mother made frequent ostentatious and solicitous displays of affection toward Emily to the extent that it became obvious that it was meant to be an affront to Emily's family. We knew from that time, that intentional efforts were being made to alienate Emily from her family. The foster mother quite obviously had been told about the allegations and must have believed them to be true. At one point during the hearing, when she disagreed with the judge's order, she shook her head negatively and emphatically to indicate her disagreement, saying "no, she doesn't need that." She was objecting to the judge's order that Emily be examined by the family's physician who might then possibly recommend a psychiatric evaluation. Emily's family had medical insurance and wanted to pursue medical and psychological counseling under their own auspices, and it was so ordered by the court. The appointment with the doctor was made by the family and they notified the SRS, but the foster mother did not take Emily for

SPHW
Attachment # 5
1/24/90

the appointment. She told Emily's father that she would take her to the counselor in Andover, but would not take her to any medical doctor. The parents had to go to court again to get a specific order directing the foster mother to take Emily to the doctor. Again the appointment was made for March 22, 1988 and Emily was taken to the doctor's office by the foster mother who then refused to leave the examining room so that the doctor could privately examine Emily. He had to call the SRS office in El Dorado and ask them to direct the foster mother to leave the room so that he could examine Emily. She did then leave the room, but Emily refused to answer any questions which the doctor asked her. He reported afterward to Emily's parents that it was obvious that the foster mother was exerting undue influence and control over her, and she that she was actively undermining Emily's relationship with her parents. The doctor did recommend that she be evaluated by a child psychiatrist in Wichita and made arrangements to have that done. The foster mother refused altogether to take her for that appointment, but the SRS did send out a worker who took her to the psychiatrist's office in Wichita.

On May 9, there was a court hearing requested by the guardian ad litem for the purpose of hearing a motion that Emily be returned to her parents as she had indicated to her counselor that she wanted to go home. The hearing time was set for 4 p.m. The foster mother picked her up from school at 11 a.m. and took her to the school counselor in Andover who had been responsible for bringing her to the attention of the SRS. Emily, of course, was not attending school any more in that district, so the foster mother's action was totally inappropriate. In the counselor's office, Emily was told that her parents were sick people and that they were not ready for her to come home and that she should stay in the home of the foster mother. They succeeded in talking her out of testifying that she wanted to go home. As she later related to her own mother, she was so intimidated by the foster mother that she just could not say she wanted to go home with the foster mother sitting there in the courtroom. It had been at that point that Emily's mother's control had faltered and she had broken into deep wrenching sobs in the courtroom. Later Emily said that she then felt like killing herself for what she had done to her own mother. My husband, knew from that time that our daughter had been hurt and humiliated, beyond recovery--with that coming on top of the grieving she had done for many weeks over the loss of her daughter. Our daughter, Emily's mother had been accused of being a hopeless alcoholic, yet she had given birth on April 29 to a beautiful, healthy baby boy. She had also supported the family over the previous year by holding down two jobs as an RN.

The weekend following the disastrous court hearing of may 9, Emily called her Dad crying and begging for him to come and get her. She told about the intimidation she felt from the foster mother, and she asked if a hearing could be arranged so that she could go to court again without the foster mother present,

because she just couldn't withstand the intimidation. She also arranged a meeting with her paternal aunt who was visiting relatives in Wichita. The foster mother allowed Emily to go with her aunt to the home of the relatives, and for the first time the family got a fuller picture of what conditions were like in the foster placement. We learned that almost every weekend, the foster mother and her cohabitant stayed at his place which was in a deteriorated neighborhood of south Wichita, and consisted of two buildings. One was a small house at the back of the lot, a shack really, and a building at the front of the lot which was once used as a plumbing shop. These two places were unconnected and the small shack had a phone, but the building did not. The three foster girls stayed in the shop building while the foster mother and her friend stayed in the old shack at the back of the lot. This was obviously a very unsafe situation for the girls, especially in that neighborhood, because they had no immediate access to the foster mother except to go outside which would have put them at considerable risk. They complained at length about having to sleep in the old plumbing shop every weekend. As soon as my husband and I found out about it through a phone call from our daughter, we made arrangements to check out the truth of the situation and found it to be exactly as told. We took pictures of this place and I submit them now for your review. Emily also told her family that the foster mother and the friend were planning to take the girls to Texas to visit relatives, particularly Mr. _____'s son who was a major in Texas. Our granddaughter was very apprehensive about leaving the state and being away from her family that far and for an extended period of time. We learned later that the major in Texas had corresponded with Emily and was apparently looking forward to meeting her. We felt that it was inappropriate for an older man to be corresponding with a 14 year old girl.

The family immediately requested that she be removed from the foster home forthwith and placed with us. There was a new social worker by this time and she did make arrangements to place her in our home on May 30, 1988.

We were unable to get her belongings from the foster home until the middle of the summer because the social worker (the third one) couldn't get in touch with the foster mother to make arrangements to pick up the things. When he did finally make contact with the foster mother, she told the social worker that the clothes were not necessarily Emily's because they had been bought by the state. Upon hearing that, Emily said that that was not true--that she had bought a lot of the things with her own money. She said that she had \$40.00 when she was placed there. I asked her, "where did you get \$40.00 Emily?" She said that the counselors from the school at Andover gave it to her at the courthouse before the first hearing. Needless, to say I was shocked and astounded by this news! The social worker finally prevailed upon the foster mother to let him pick up Emily's clothes and a stereo which had been given to her by her aunt, and had a value of about \$100.00. The clothes were in the boxes which

the social worker brought, but the stereo was not. When the social worker contacted the foster mother about the stereo, he was told that she could not find it. When contacted about it again later, she told him that she would not return it to Emily because she had stolen some make-up when she left. After that we went to the sheriff and told him that charges would be brought if her stereo was not returned. Thereupon, the sheriff's office convinced the foster mother to allow them to return the stereo to Emily, which was done.

On September 6, 1988 at the disposition hearing, the state's case against Emily's parents was dismissed and she was returned to her parent's rightful custody. She is now a vibrant, lovely 16 year old who makes above average grades, participates in many extra-curricular activities, and has made a remarkable adjustment considering what she and her family went through.

Emily's parents, her grandfather and I, and other members of the family will never forget, nor will we forgive what the state did to our family. Her parents were hurt and stigmatized beyond repair. We all have survived in some fashion, but no one of us will ever be the same again. We are thankful that we found support among people who had also been victims of child abuse laws, and we have turned our energies toward helping and supporting others who have been falsely or unfairly accused of child abuse. We have and will continue to advocate for family rights, and for laws which are passed to address the issue of child abuse by the state as well as by others and for social services, which, when needed, will be delivered without stigma, but with compassion and with justice and due regard for the rights of both children and parents. Thank you.

*My granddaughter's name is not "Emily,"
but I have used it to protect her privacy.*



Statutes and regulations governing investigations and determination of child abuse and the subsequent foster care are vaguely worded. Words like properly, unlikely, foreseeable, cruel, excessive, and effort, child's-best-interest, appropriate, reasonable, etc. must be clearly defined. We do not put signs on a highway that say "No speeding". Signs say 65 mph speed limit. Drivers know exactly when they have overstepped the limit. Likewise, parents have a right to know just exactly what is child abuse. Drivers are fined in accordance to the severity of the excess speed. Child neglect may also be very minor or massively cruel, avoidable or not avoidable and the law must differentiate. A murder has not been committed unless someone died at the hands of another. No one is tried for murder if all he did was punch another. We must not be allowed to dissect a family (even temporarily) unless the abuse is dastardly and is proven so. A dissected family can never be fully restored.

Anonymous reporting allows malicious persons to cause much anguish, embarrassment and expense to innocent persons with no repercussions suffered by the reporter. It has even endangered non reporters from persons who think a non-reporter was the reporter. SRS, judges, foster care providers, county attorneys, etc. are not held accountable for negligent, prejudiced or malicious actions. Mandated professional reporting causes fear of seeking professional help. These problems must be addressed.

Education in child development^{ment} and family dynamics and communication skills must be more intense. Experience qualification must be raised for persons working in child abuse and juvenile delinquency.

Police officers cannot remove the garbage from your kitchen or the trash from the school principal's office without a court order. He can remove your child because he thinks s/he "may be harmed". We can't arrest a driver because we think he might get drunk and still try to drive tonight. We can terrorize a small child by removal from his family by strangers because in the personal opinion of a police officer the child might be harmed. The assumption of guilt until the proving of innocence must be outlawed.

Despite ^{year} millions of dollars poured into foster care placement and the millions more into supportive services for these placement; around 70% of incarcerated criminals come from foster care; foster children, especially girls, are in grave danger of being sexually molested; a child is 10 times more likely to die in foster care than in his own home. No one has counted, that I know of, how many teens have become pregnant, turned to drugs, dropped out of high school or tangled with the law while in foster care. Families, however, can name a lot of them. The success record for foster care seems clouded. Some states pour their effort and money into keeping families intact and have lowered their rate as well.

Crime

SPH+W
Attachment 6
1/24/90

Until we quit declaring our parents as unfit and start declaring them as families in need of support, qualifications for foster parent status must be raised. Present qualifications for raising supposedly troubled children from supposedly troubled families: — you must be 18 years of age and have a drivers license. Foster ^{parents} must be held accountable for alienating children from their parents, ignoring family religious beliefs, disregarding medical information and contaminating evidence by discussing events leading to the placement *with possible* leading questioning. Their role should be restricted to caring for the foster child. They are not qualified to make reports or recommendations that affect the outcome of the case.

Something like 11% of reported child abuse in Kansas is confirmed and SRS its self finds many confirmed cases confirmed erroneously. Could it that child abuse in Kansas is like the Emperor's New Clothes? And that Foster care is only an illusion of caring? If we really cared for our children, want them to live a happy childhood and successful adulthood, we'd support the family circle, encourage members to work out their differences, support parents in their efforts to provide the physical, educational, mental and spritual needs of all members of the family, support parental authority to protect children from their own inexperience.

Children are people, Parents are people. Grandparents are people. Abuse of people is frowned upon by Kansans. The State has no more right to abuse people than individuals have.

Thank you

Vivian Hedrick
R. R. #2
Newton, Kansas 67114
316-283-1785 or 3579

OBJECT!

The present Code for Care of Children (38-1523 (g)) mandates "Cooperation between school personnel and investigative agencies" to provide agencies "access to a child in a setting on school premises determined by school personnel for the purpose of the investigation of a report of suspected child abuse and neglect." In effect, uniformed police can question very small children, in the school, about anonymously reported and as yet unsubstantiated child abuse. This is often followed by removal of the child from school and placement in a strange foster home. Parents may not be notified for 24 hours, 72 hours if it is a weekend. Can you remember when you were 8 years old? Can you imagine how you would have felt? NO CHILD SHOULD EVER BE REMOVED FROM HOME WITHOUT INDISPUTABLE EVIDENCE OF ABUSE UNLESS THERE ARE NO ALTERNATIVES! Remove the adult perpetrator instead.

THE ACCUSED MUST ALWAYS BE PROVIDED DUE PROCESS. ALLEGED CHILD VICTIMS NEED TO BE ALLOWED PARENTAL PROTECTION. Second medical and psychological evaluations of children and adults by professionals of the families choice must be allowed and encouraged. We cannot afford to "err on the side of the child". A normal child removed from a normal home is "erred against".

VIDEO TAPES OF ALL INTERVIEWS, WITH ALL PARTICIPANTS IN FULL VIEW OF THE CAMERA AT ALL TIMES SHOULD BE USED ONLY IN THEIR ENTIRETY. Interviewers should be trained so that children, especially, are not led or coached from the sidelines. Interviews should be used to shed light on the truth, not to support as yet unproven allegations.

ANATOMICALLY CORRECT DOLLS HAVE NOT BEEN PROVEN EFFECTIVE AND SHOULD NOT BE USED IN A COURT OF LAW UNLESS THEY ARE. Indeed, they may be so different and fascinating that children are led to imagining about what might be done with them. Many are not correct at all. Crude genitals have been added but eyes may be missing.

SNOOPY DOLLS WITH HIDDEN MICROPHONES MUST BE OUTLAWED. A child's remarks often cannot be correctly interpreted by anyone, especially not by someone who does not know the child and who cannot see the child's body language.

EMPHASIS SHOULD BE PLACED ON REPORTING SERIOUS DANGER RATHER THAN SINGLE BRUISES AND SHORT LIVED EMOTIONAL UPSETS. This would eliminate much of the 80% over reporting and would free workers to concentrate on "real" cases.

PERSONS REPORTING WITHOUT MALICE SHOULD BE PROVIDED IMMUNITY BUT NOT ANONYMITY. Anonymity provides cover for vindictive and spiteful people and allows much harrassment of workers and families alike.

CONFIDENTIALITY SHOULD BE USED ONLY TO PROTECT THE FAMILY, not to keep them in the dark about what they have been accused of by who. The truth cannot be ascertained when people cannot reply intelligently because they are not allowed to know what they are replying to.

HEARINGS SHOULD BE HELD AT TIMES WHEN THE FAMILY WILL NOT BE PENALIZED BY LOSS OF WAGES, ETC. This should include interviews. Many families have been financially devastated because hearings, interviews etc. have dragged on forever, all during hours in which the family would otherwise be earning a living.

INVESTIGATIONS SHOULD BE THOROUGH AND HONEST. Family problems do exist but forcing unneeded and unwanted "services" on a family under the guise of helping is only harrassment.

MANDATED REPORTING OF ALL SUSPECTED CHILD ABUSE BY PROFESSIONALS KEEPS PEOPLE WITH REAL PROBLEMS FROM GOING FOR HELP. It turns our helping professions into a Gestapo. SRS personnel are no better trained than our other professionals and may well have much less time to check out the possibilities of abuse.

MANY WORDS IN THE LAW NEED TO BE BETTER DEFINED: "Suspected should mean "well founded reason to believe that abuse is happening", not "There is a vague possibility abuse is happening" Abuse must mean "danger of severe injury or death".

SOCIAL RECORDS, BECAUSE THEY ARE LARGELY HEARSAY, SHOULD NOT BE ADMITTED AS EVIDENCE IN COURT NOR USED IN DETERMINING DEPOSITION. The accused or the child's parent should have access to all records and be given an opportunity to rebutt. False allegations should be removed immediately.

NO ONE'S NAME SHOULD BE ENTERED IN THE CENTRAL REGISTRY OF CHILD ABUSERS UNTIL HE HAS BEEN FOUND IN A COURT OF LAW TO BE AN ABUSER.

SRS WORKERS BACKGROUNDS, EDUCATION AND PERSONAL PREJUDICES SHOULD BE CAREFULLY SCRUTINIZED AND EVALUATED PERIODICALLY FOR THEIR OWN WELLBEING AND THAT OF THE PEOPLE THEY WORK WITH.

SRS WORKERS MUST EXHIBIT MATURE COMMUNICATIONS SKILLS AND THE WILLINGNESS TO USE THEM AT ALL TIMES.

SRS WORKERS MUST BE HELD RESPONSIBLE FOR THE EFFECT OF THEIR DECISIONS ON FAMILY MEMBERS just as any other professional is.

KEEPING THE FAMILY TOGETHER MUST BE GIVEN MORE THAN TIP SERVICE. Parental authority must be kept in tact. Foster care should be utilized only in extreme cases. Placements must be within 50 miles and parental visitation encouraged even at the inconvenience of foster parents and state workers. Foster care providers must be mandated to work closely with parents in the areas of medicine, education and religion. Cosmetic alterations such as hair styles and piercing ears must be done only with the permission of the parent. Foster parents should be thoroughly screened, licensed and trained in the positive regard for the family unit. They should not be allowed to question the child in regard to alleged accusations where the child may later be required to testify in court or where the child may be further injured by reliving the incident.

When children have been removed and the parent is later found to be a fit parent, CHILDREN MUST BE RETURNED IMMEDIATELY TO THE PARENT. The family has already been done too much injustice!

The above objections are not necessarily endorsed by VOCAL but VOCAL does find them worth serious consideration.

Dear Vivian,

After reading your piece in the Hutchinson News, I cried again for the millionth time and when my eyes were still blurry, I decided to write to you. I want to tell you a story, whether you will believe it or not, I don't know; but maybe in some way, it will help me.

My oldest daughter, who is 19 now and a mother, was 13½ when my life of torment started. To anyone living outside our home, she truly appeared to be God's gift to motherhood. And I didn't tell anyone that she was different as soon as she walked through the door. Who wants "outsiders" to know the bad things about a loved one? She's my child. I wanted people to think well of her.

At home, she was rebellious, obnoxious and disrespectful, a teenager. I'd ask her to do dishes and she'd tell people she had to do dishes all day. I'd ask her to bathe her 3 year old sister and she'd tell people she had to do all the child care. I'd ask her to boil hotdogs for lunch and she'd tell people I made her do all the cooking.

She chose her allies very well: family friends, relatives, school counselors, our preacher, the law and, yes, SRS. She was a good little actress, one of her good qualities, and everyone believed her. When she ran away the first of seven times, everyone, including the good people at SRS took her word as gospel. There was no amount of talking my husband and I could do to change the minds of those who now believed I was a child abuser.

My daughter was given a lawyer, my husband and I a court appointed attorney. Our attorney believed the stories our daughter told, including the stories of being beaten til she was bruised and sometimes bleeding. Her 4th or 5th time to runaway, she gave the sheriff's office 5 names of people who saw the bruises from the beatings I had given her, two of whom had never met my daughter and the rest said she told them of the beatings but never saw any marks. If tar and feathering were legal, our court appointed attorney would have headed up the party. We were going to fight it in court, but since our family friends (I family) and neighboring relatives signed affidavits

to the effect our daughter was telling the truth, we were told there was no way we would win. So we went to court. I was declared an unfit mother and my child was taken from me. One other side effect from this is that my children, my oldest daughter and my children at home, learned an unforgettable lesson. That if they can lie convincingly and to the right people, then they can get away with it.

The story only gets worse. SRS said we could have her back only if we met their requirements. We went through family counseling we couldn't afford. We had to remodel an unused upstairs room so our daughter could have an area off to herself. (At the time she ran away, she was the only one in our home who had a room by herself.)

Our oldest boy got a motorcycle for Christmas that year because if he didn't, he would run away, too. I could no longer ask my children to take out the trash or other chores or my oldest would "tell on me". I was told, (threatened) that if I wasn't "nice" that I could lose all my children and after what I had already been through, I believed it. A year ago, 4 years after this nightmare started, my youngest boy (10) told me he wished he was old enough to run away. A week ago, after he hit me with his fist, I told him never to hit me again, and he said, "Oh yea, and what are you going to do about it?" I told him I'd explain to his backside his mistake and he informed me I couldn't. That it's illegal to hit kids.

I have only one of my original friends left. Without her, I don't think I would have made it. More than once, I thought about suicide. I used to teach in 4-H, but haven't since this started. I can't face people, knowing they think I beat my children. I go to the local grocery I've gone to for years and years. People see me and start to whisper to each other. My mother-in-law went to a meeting and overheard a "well meaning" lady telling her friends the terrible things I had done. My mother-in-law, the world's greatest, tried to set them straight. My husband gets upset with me because I won't go to social functions with him. He tries to understand, but can't. At my funeral, there will be 2 nice ladies sitting in the back

of the church and one will say, "She was a very sweet lady, but did you know ---?"

I could write pages and pages about all the things that have happened over the past 5½ years, but it would not accomplish anything. I truly believe that if anyone had listened and believed me and my husband years ago when this started our lives would not be as miserable as they are now. I still cry, knowing I was robbed of seeing my daughter grow up. I will go to my grave tormented by the fact that I was publicly labeled an unfit mother and child abuser. I am crying now as I'm writing. My heart won't stop crying until God wraps me in his love and I'm ready for that needed peace. I pray to God that I'm the only mother who has to suffer like this, but I know better. As long as there are well meaning neighbors and unlistening officials, there will be mothers tormented. I'm sorry for burdening you with this story. I thought writing some of it down might help, but it hasn't.

Thank you,

The foregoing letter was sent to me via the Hutchinson News in response to a letter of mine published in the Western Front section of that newspaper in Sept. of 1986. It was written in long hand and left unsigned. I have typed it verbatim. I have read it, shed my own tears on it and worried about this mother and the 1000's of others like her that I have since learned exist.

In the United States, 1,000,000 families are investigated each year because some one "suspected" child abuse. Of that 1,000,000 families, only 20% are "confirmed" abusive by child protection personnel. Of the 1,000 or so children who die under circumstances suggestive of parental maltreatment in our nation each year, 35% to 50% had already come to the attention of Child Protection. Of 1,000,000 maltreated children, 85% are victims of forms of emotional or developmental harm that pose no physical danger.

In Kansas, in the last half of 1986 (the statistics I have closest to the typewriter) 14,234 intrafamilial reports involving 5,943 families were investigated by SRS. Of those, 2,814 reports were confirmed. Our first probings for statistics would indicate that half of the confirmed cases taken to SRS for hearings are overturned or dismissed by SRS themselves. How many confirmed cases not tried by SRS would withstand closer SRS scrutiny is anyone's guess.

It seems that my anonymous friend and her family have not paid in full for being reported child abusers. God only knows what the final tally will be. (See Is Counseling Harmful to Children?, next page.) It sets me to wondering. Is the price worth it? If we can't save the abused children anyway, is our present reporting frenzy wise? Are we doing more harm than good to our nation's children? Since counseling didn't seem to keep this family intact, would they have been better off without interference?

The following material is the flip side of the popular child abuse coin. It must be time to take a second look.

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IS COUNSELING HARMFUL TO CHILDREN?

One comprehensive study concludes that counseling can have a MARKED DELETERIOUS EFFECT. A 30 year follow-up study of a classic, highly respected study on juvenile delinquency (the Cambridge-Sommerville Youth Study) of 253 high-risk problem boys that were given extensive counseling, and a control group matched as to behavior history and family background that received no counseling. The stunning conclusion, after reanalyzing the data: "Those who had more frequent contact with their counselors were more likely to be failures." The experimental subjects were found to be more likely to commit criminal acts, be alcoholic, suffer from mental illness, die younger and have less prestigious jobs than the control group. A psychologist told VOCAL people that there is NO research showing psychological counseling to be beneficial to children.