

In 1990, at 15 years-old, I was acting out, and was subsequently expelled from my private school. My family lived overseas at the time, and my mother returned to Portland where I was living with my grandparents to figure out "what to do with me". She took me to an educational consultant who set up my enrollment in the now-defunct Cascade School in Whitmore, CA. What ensued was a complete loss of freedom and two and a half years of emotional abuse at the hands of unlicensed staff with no mental or behavioral health training. Thirty plus years later I, and my fellow Cascade survivors, are still working to heal the damage we experienced in this unregulated and toxic environment.

I believe that DHS oversight of the educational consulting field in Oregon is absolutely necessary. Often times troubled teens are the canary in their family's coal mine, acting out because of issues in the family, usually beyond their control. We must have safety nets for these children.

What I learned from my experience as a teen was this:

1) If you have enough money, you can pay to get rid of any problem, including your teenager. The educational consultant was the "best money could buy." I learned later that the majority of the families of the children at my school from the PNW had employed the services of this particular consultant.

2) Where there is desperation, there are people willing to take advantage. The educational consultant and the school both took advantage of my mother's desperation to find a solution for me. They normalized the idea of sending your child away for 2 years to a year-round school with limited contact with family, attack therapy, closed group control, exposure to active predators, and no access to the outside world. The conditions I was subjected to were of no concern to the consultant who had gotten paid before I even arrived at the school.

3) I had no rights, no advocates, and while what happened to me was horrific, there was no regulation and no one I could report this to. To require that an educational consultant be held accountable for their placements is an important step to make our state a safer place for children and their families.

Thank you so much for your time and consideration of my story. I truly hope that you will require residential care referral agents to be registered with Department of Human Services. I deeply believe it is a crucial step in doing all we can to make sure that children remain safe and protected.