

Are their Conflicts of Interest with Hillsboro DHS, DA's Office and Cares NW?

Two weeks ago a good friend of mine approached and told me about a horror story involving her son and his daughter. She detailed the story and I almost cried and the trauma the daughter is now sustaining as a result of this DHS case.

Most eye opening to me was when I asked my friend who 1. Who was the caseworker 2. Who was the Assistant DA and 3. Was Cares NW involved?

Guess what, the answers were the same for 6 other families that have come forward stating they feel they have been targeted by Hillsboro DHS, Assistant DA and Cares NW due to their race or low income.

I then started to ask questions, why is Cares NW so involved? Why is this Assistant DA so involved and why has it been in the same area? Why all in Hillsboro and all connected to the same DHS office?

Turns out that Washington County DA is on the Board of Cares NW. Turns out that Cares NW gets 52 % of it's referrals and revenue from Oregon Department of Human Services. Turns out that of those people targeted all but 1 were low income and many of them Hispanic, African American or Asian background.

In 2001 it was found that the very person who founded Cares NW had to step down for submitting false testimony in court against parents and putting away innocent people and that there are possibly hundreds of wrongfully accused parents. <https://www.wweek.com/portland/article-550-questionable-stand.html>

But worst part of this is that the court appointed attorneys that represent the parents are barely paid, if they are it's max \$750 and that's only if they close the case fast. Attorneys, not fully trained on dependency law, to make any money on these cases get the parents to "enter a plea deal" even if they are not guilty to get their kids back faster and sadly most of these parents are either ending up in jail, losing their kids, given no contact orders or have their background report marked for life.

So not only are the families being targeted unable to defend themselves, the judicial system has possible conflicts of interest in believing the DHS employees and of course in my opinion the DA's Office possibly takes advantage of DHS and Cares NW because of their own "friendly" relationships with both.

More work should be done to protect minority families from being wrongfully targeted and better more trained counsel should be afforded these parents as is afforded DHS and the DA's office.

More importantly, it's my opinion that DHS and the DA's Office should not take the sole word of Cares NW, they should be more critical of their findings based on financial conflicts of interest. And a further proper investigation with all interrogations recorded with reports given to parent's counsel immediately upon completion, not 3-6 months later.

Has your family been wrongly targeted?

Brittany Ruiz
Parental Rights Advocate