

Health Impact News

Medical Kidnapping Children in the United States: Tennessee

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Tennessee



Baby Found with Broken Bones - Parents Assumed Guilty of Abuse and Lose Custody



Source: [Justice for Braydenn Facebook page](#)

by **Health Impact News/MedicalKidnap.com Staff**

Keshia Turner understands why authorities wanted an investigation. She and her husband Chris, from Tennessee, want answers, too. They desperately want to know what is wrong with their baby boy Brayden, because something is clearly wrong. She believed that the investigation would lead to a medical explanation being found for her baby's medical and developmental issues, an explanation that would demonstrate that they are loving, dedicated parents, and would lead to proper treatment for their child.

However, after a child abuse doctor at Vanderbilt Children's Hospital accused Keshia of abuse, the investigators and doctors stopped looking for any other explanation for Brayden's condition. He is now 9 months old, and cannot even sit up by himself, but doctors at Vanderbilt tell the Turners that there is no need for any testing.



Brayden cannot sit up by himself. [Video here.](#)

Keisha recently shared her family's story on a blogtalk radio program "In Defense of America's Children," hosted by Tennessee attorney and family advocate Connie Reguli. Her story may be heard [here](#).

Young Couple Thrilled to Be Pregnant

When Keshia, now 22, learned that she and Chris were expecting Brayden, she couldn't have been happier. She says being a mommy was all she ever wanted, recounting a sweet story of saving up money as a little girl in the hopes that her parents would adopt a baby for her.

"I never wanted to be a doctor or a lawyer. I wanted to be a mom."

Her husband Chris shares her love of children. He has a 3 year old daughter that he has adopted from a previous relationship. He adores her, and the adoration is mutual.



Source: The Turner family.

High Risk Pregnancy and Birth

Keshia's pregnancy moved into a high-risk category when her water broke at just 23 weeks. She was placed on bed rest until Brayden was born at just under 31 weeks, on September 1, 2014. Her tiny bundle weighed just 3 lbs 3 oz, and his parents fell in love immediately with him.



Mommy in love with her baby. Source: Turner family

Brayden was born with club feet. His left leg was splinted while he was in the NICU because it was so crooked. Keshia pumped her breastmilk for him, did skin-to-skin care, and did everything that she knew to do to help her baby. On October 10, after 5 weeks, Brayden was strong enough to

come home.

Family and friends often dropped by their east Tennessee home unannounced, and Keshia welcomed them in. She loved her role as a stay-at-home mom.

She reports that Brayden often had a stuffy nose and congestion, which she now knows was an allergic response to the wood heat in the home. There was one incident when he choked because of the drainage and stopped breathing. They called 911, but he was breathing fine by the time the ambulance arrived. Because of his congestion, she took him to her pediatrician frequently, often weekly. Her doctor had been Keshia's own pediatrician who watched her grow up.

Something Is Wrong With Brayden's Leg After Vaccination

It was just a few weeks after Brayden received several vaccines that Keshia describes noticing a red, swollen place on Brayden's leg, the same leg that had been splinted in the NICU. On Oct. 30, Brayden received 5 vaccines in one doctor visit: DTap (3 combo shot), Hib, and IPV. On this day, December 11, Brayden showed no signs of being in pain, but the area was tight and warm to the touch. At first, she thought it was a bug bite, but she saw no signs of a bite, so she rushed him to the emergency room.

There, she was horrified when an x-ray showed that his leg was broken. The doctor in the ER assured her that, because Brayden was a fragile preemie, the break could easily have happened from a diaper change. He told her,

"It happens all the time."

A social worker came in to talk to her a few minutes, and reportedly told her that there was nothing to worry about. Doctors put an ace bandage on his leg, recommended follow-up with his pediatrician the next day, and sent them home.

Keshia says that she was heart-broken over that fracture, and felt like a failure, questioning herself: “HOW could this happen?” But this was only the beginning of her nightmare.

Bad News at the Pediatrician’s Office

While Keshia and her grandmother were on their way to the pediatrician’s office the next day, Keshia received a phone call from the sheriff’s office asking her to come in. The young mother “didn’t think anything of it,” assuming this was a routine follow-up after her son’s injury. She told them that she would come in after the pediatrician’s appointment.

When they arrived at the pediatrician’s office, they found the doctor in tears. She asked Keshia what had happened. The young mother explained about his leg, but the doctor asked,

“What about the others?”

Keshia was confused and asked what she meant. The pediatrician replied that Brayden had 15 fractured ribs. Keshia reports that she was devastated and heartbroken. She couldn’t understand this at all. She says that he was never even fussy, unless he had a dirty diaper or was hungry.

“I fell apart. From that moment on, I didn’t hear another word she said. I was crying hysterically.”

She says that she knew immediately that something was wrong and wanted to take her son back to East Tennessee Hospital where he was born and in the NICU, to see if they could figure out what was going on. Her pediatrician wrote a letter for her stating that there was no abuse suspected, based on her experience with the family and numerous visits, with no bruising or other signs of abuse noted, and that the parents wished to take Brayden to East Tennessee Children's Hospital in Knoxville.

Interrogated, Then Forced to go to “Child Abuse” Expert

At that point, Chris left work to meet his family, and they all went to the sheriff's department, where both parents were interrogated. The sheriff directed the couple to take Brayden to Dr. Deborah Lowen at Vanderbilt Hospital in Nashville, a 2 and a half hour drive away, instead of the Knoxville hospital where doctors knew Brayden and his history. The Turners were told that they could choose to go to Vanderbilt, or they would be forced to go.

“We of course agreed to take him.”

Unbeknownst to the family at the time, Dr. Deborah Lowen is a Child Abuse Specialist, and the head of the Child Abuse team at Vanderbilt.



Dr. Deborah Lowen. Source: [Vanderbilt University](#)

Over the next 3 days, Dr. Lowen and DCF investigators informed the family that both of Brayden's arms and legs had been broken as well, and there were a total of 33 fractures. They later learned that there was also a spinal compression fracture.

Keshia says that all she could do was cry.

Dr. Lowen and the team reportedly told the Turners that:

“the only way these fractures could have happened was for an adult to have violently squeezed and shaken him on numerous occasions.”

She told them that there was force used, that the baby had to have been jerked, twisted, and slammed down, in order for the injuries to occur. The Turners deny that any of those behaviors took place, and want to know why the doctors looked no further for the cause of their son's condition.

Dr. Lowen, in [an article published AAP News](#) titled “*Pediatricians have a duty to recognize, respond to potential child abuse,*” wrote in 2011:

Bruises on an infant who is not yet cruising indicate that a force has acted upon that child – the baby didn’t cause the bruise on him or herself.

However, it is now well-known that this is an untrue medical statement. There are many medical causes for brittle bones in infants leading to bruising and fractures that do not involve parental abuse. Doctors and medical professionals have spoken out against quick diagnosis of “Shaken Baby Syndrome” where parents are assumed to have abused their children simply based on evidence of bruises and broken bones. For more information on this topic see:

[**Mainstream Media Finally Exposing Shaken Baby Syndrome as False Diagnosis**](#)

[**New Film Exposes Shaken Baby Syndrome Myth – Opponents Want to Silence it at Film Festivals**](#)

[**Are Parents Going to Jail for Vaccine Injuries?**](#)

Dr. Deborah Lowen has publicly stated that parents today are not equipped to raise their children without interference of medical experts like herself:

“Sadly, our society seems to believe that primary caregivers should be able to parent as they see fit, without interference.” ([Source.](#))

When a pediatrician becomes a “Child Abuse Specialist” who presumably no longer sees children in well-baby visits like most pediatricians, but now only is called in to review cases where child abuse is suspected, is society best being served in protecting children from legitimate abuse, or have we become so specialized in medical care that the diagnosis is *necessary* to retain the job of the specialist?



Dr. Deborah Lowen giving a lecture in a “Child Abuse Diagnosis Seminar.” Image from videos at [Tennessee State Courts website](#).

Dr. Lowen, and presumably other “Child Abuse Specialists” like her, seem to start out with a belief that most parents in society today are not fit to be parents, and are abusing their children.

Furthermore, research shows us that our nation’s leading social problems, mental health issues and even physical diseases are often rooted in childhoods riddled with abuse, neglect and family dysfunction. ([Source](#).)

DCF Steps In and Seizes Custody of Brayden

Based on Dr. Lowen's expert testimony, DCF allegedly informed the Turners that they would not be able to take their son home. Now, the former stay-at-home mom and her husband are only permitted a 1 hour visit with their baby per week, and are required to pay \$650 per month for child support, as well as supply 50% of his needs. Keshia, now pregnant with her second child, has been forced to go back to work.

Parents Want to Know What Is Wrong With Their Baby

Keshia reports that Dr. Lowen told the family that it was a "classic case of shaken baby." However, most of the classic symptoms of shaken baby syndrome – neck injuries, retinal hemorrhaging, and brain swelling – were not present. Later, Keshia's attorney asked Dr. Lowen if she said this, but she reportedly denied ever saying anything about shaken baby.

Knowing her own family history of several relatives being told that they had weak bones, Keshia asked for the doctors to test her son. Keshia, her grandmother, and other family members have scoliosis, and degenerative disk and joint diseases run in both Keshia's and Chris's families. She also reports that both Brayden and she had low levels of Vitamin D, but the doctors called the levels normal.



Brayden with his Daddy. Source: Turner family.

Dr. Lowen told Keshia that they had tested him, but Keshia later learned that only minimal testing had been done, and none for many of the conditions that could actually be the culprit.

Vanderbilt: No Need for Testing

Keshia spends many hours online, researching and digging to find answers. Osteogenesis imperfecta (OI), or brittle bone disease, is one possibility, as is Ehlers Danlos syndrome, which is a connective tissue disorder, affecting the joints, and often causing broken bones in infants.

Expert Dr. Eugene Wilson, chairman of the [Center for Ehlers Danlos Syndrome Alliance](#) (Facebook page [here](#)), met with Keshia when he was in Tennessee allegedly to testify in another case refuting an accusation of another family by Dr. Deborah Lowen. When he looked at all of Brayden's medical records and his x-rays, Keshia reports that he told her:

“most of the fractures, so-called fractures, aren't even fractures.”

To date, there have been no tests for osteogenesis imperfecta or Ehlers Danlos syndrome performed on Brayden. Nor have there been any genetic tests done to check for genetic markers. The Turners report that doctors at Vanderbilt refused to do the testing, citing that there was no need for it.

Determined to Find Answers and Get Their Son Back

Instead, a baby has been forcibly taken from his parents, and only sees them once a week. The formerly breastfed baby was abruptly weaned and given formula. Their family has been torn apart, and needed medical testing and treatment has allegedly not been done.

The Turners were recently told by DCF that Brayden is developing normally, and can sit up by himself. However, the parents do not see that. Brayden is always happy to see them and appears on track in his mental development, but, at 9 months, he cannot sit up without support, and is still somewhat floppy. He isn't crawling, and his head control is still not what it should be.

Video no longer available.

His mother firmly believes something is wrong with her baby, but she believes the accusation of abuse has stopped the authorities from figuring out what is truly going on with him.

"I'll never give up till the day I die. I'll get him back. He'll be home."

There have been no charges filed against the couple, although the allegations focus on Keshia, because she was with Brayden 24/7. Keshia says that she understands why the authorities had to investigate, and that her son's injuries truly do look bad. However, she believed in the American justice system, that they would investigate fully and find out that she was innocent.



Keshia with Brayden at a visit. Source: Turner family

What she has learned, however, is that things work differently in the child protective system. She, like many other parents, has found that it is opposite from the way she was taught in school, that parents in the system are guilty until proven innocent, and that there seems to be no interest in investigating to prove parents innocent.

People ask Keshia how she is still sane through all that she is going through. She says that her faith in God has been her rock, and points to [Romans 8:28](#):

“My answer is: I know God’s doing this for a reason. Something good will come of this.”

When all of this is over, she is determined to make it her life’s mission:

“to make sure that no innocent parents go through what I have gone through.”

How You Can Help

There is a Facebook page set up for the family called [Justice for Braydenn](#), for supporters to follow the Turners’ story and help.



Their preliminary hearing is set for August 4, 2015. According to attorney Connie Reguli, Tennessee state law requires that the preliminary hearing occur within 3 days of a child’s removal. Brayden was 3 months old when he was taken from his parents. By the time the very first hearing takes place, he will be 11 months old.

Supporters are asked to contact legislators on behalf of the

family.

Tennessee Governor Bill Haslam may be reached at (615) 741-2001 or contacted [here](#). His Facebook page is [here](#), and [here](#) is a link to his Twitter page.

The Representative for the Turners' district is Rep. Cameron Sexton. He may be reached at (615) 741-2343, or contacted [here](#).

Senator Paul Bailey is the Senator for their district. He may be reached at (615) 741-3978, or contacted [here](#).

Accusations of Shaken Baby Syndrome in Tennessee Destroys Family - Lands Parents in Jail



The Whitaker family, happy on vacation shortly before their nightmare began. Source: Whitaker family

by **Health Impact News/MedicalKidnap.com Staff**

On August 15, 2013, in Jonesborough, Tennessee, Joe Whitaker frantically spoke to 911 as he tried to save his seven month old son, Jaden. According to Joe, the ambulance raced into their driveway. A female Emergency Medical Technician (EMT) jumped out, grabbed Jaden from his arms, slammed the ambulance doors, and sped away. Joe stood in the driveway watching the ambulance pull away, confused with the events that just occurred. What happened? Where were

they taking his son? Why did they leave without him?

Seconds later, Charlotte Whitaker reached her house and saw Joe standing in the driveway; her heart jumped into her throat. Where was her son? Luckily, the second rescue truck was still in front of her house, and the driver told the terrified parents that their son was being taken to Johnson City Medical Center (JCMC) in Johnson City, Tennessee. Why would the ambulance leave the parents in the driveway?

According to Charlotte, this is one of many incidences that would be twisted by CPS to aid them in falsely accusing the Whitakers of child abuse and taking their baby. This question became “Why didn’t Joe Whitaker get into the ambulance with his son?” rather than “Why did the rescue personnel leave the parents behind?” Is this normal procedure when 911 is contacted for an emergency with a child?

Nine-Year-Olds Left for School One Morning, and Have Not Been Allowed Home Since

Joe and Charlotte Whitaker had just moved to a new home in Jonesborough, Tennessee, with their family of five on August 14, 2013. They had three children between them, Cameron, Joe’s son from a previous marriage, and Lexy (Alexis), Charlotte’s daughter from a previous marriage, who were both 9 years old, and baby Jaden, who was 7 ½ months old, born on December 27, 2012. Before Jaden was born, Joe and Charlotte made the decision for Joe to be a stay-at-home parent. The older children were very active in sports and school activities, and their son, Jaden, would require lots of attention.

On that fateful day of August 15, 2013, the Whitaker family

was busy as usual. Joe began unpacking the family's belongings as Charlotte got ready for work and fed Jaden. Cameron and Lexy left for school, not realizing that they would never be allowed to go home again.

The time was 12:43 pm when Charlotte received a phone call at work that would set in motion a chain of events leading the Whitaker family into a never-ending nightmare, changing their lives forever. Charlotte recalls the call from her husband Joe as if it were yesterday:

As soon as I heard his [Joe's] voice, I picked up my purse and ran towards the door while he frantically told me that Jaden's arm was twisted and he wasn't breathing right.

Heartbroken Father Not Allowed to See His Son in the Emergency Room

Joe and Charlotte rushed to JCMC, which was approximately 20 minutes from their new home. Charlotte states:

We ran into the E.R. and said our son was just brought in, where is our son? Please, where is our son?

The medical staff told her that the doctors were working on their son, and led the family to a private family waiting room. As family, friends, and their pastor crowded into the hospital room to wait for news of Jaden, a hospital chaplain was sent in to speak with them. Charlotte remembers the chaplain telling her that someone would be out to give them an update shortly.

When the chaplain opened the waiting room door to leave, Charlotte saw four or five police officers standing in the hallway. During all of this confusion of people in and out of the room, Charlotte and Joe remember hearing a nurse state the words, “child abuse.” Charlotte and Joe just looked at each other in bewilderment. Suddenly, a hospital employee entered the room and told Charlotte that she and Joe’s mother, Kathy Miller, would be allowed to see Jaden.

Joe was completely distraught that something was wrong with his baby and wanted to be there to love and comfort him, just like any normal parent. Joe asked, heartbroken,

“Why can’t I see my son?”



Jaden and his daddy. Source: Whitaker family

Charlotte reports,

“Our family and friends did not understand why Joe was

being kept away from his son, it didn't make sense."

Joe pleaded for hours to be able to see his son. According to hospital staff, Joe was not allowed to see his son because he was the last adult to be with Jaden. Joe remained in the waiting room and answered a few questions from the Washington County Sheriff's Office. Charlotte and Kathy were led to Jaden's room. Although the Whitakers were incredibly upset by this, Charlotte states that, at that moment in time, their only concern was for Jaden. They were sure that any misunderstandings or false information would be cleared up shortly.

Mother Not Allowed to Go with Her Baby on Medical Helicopter

Charlotte followed the nurse to her son's hospital room. She was overcome with grief when she saw her small baby lying in a "big person bed" hooked up to an IV, with a breathing tube down his little throat. Charlotte recalls five or six hospital personnel bustling around Jaden's bed, yet not one person acknowledged that she was in the room. A woman in plain clothing entered the room with a camera, began taking pictures of Jaden and in a very accusatory manner, she asked Charlotte:

"Do you have any other children? Where are they? Because something terrible has happened to this child and we need to know where the other children are now."

Charlotte was taken aback by the implications of what this stranger was saying to her. Charlotte would later find out

that this woman was Sarah Powell, a Washington County Child Protective Services (CPS) investigator. To Charlotte's dismay, the hospital staff treated them like criminals from the moment they walked in the hospital doors.

After what felt like hours, the treating physician finally acknowledged Charlotte's presence and said that Jaden was going to be transported to The University of Tennessee Medical Center (UTMC) in Knoxville, Tennessee, to be seen by a pediatric neurologist. Charlotte pleaded with the doctors to allow her to accompany her baby on the medical transport helicopter, but she was denied the right to be with her critically ill baby. Charlotte would later find out that it was a Washington County Sheriff's Office Deputy pulling the strings behind the scene at the hospital.

Charlotte watched as the medical staff readied her baby for transport and begged the transport personnel,

"Please take care of my baby."

The leader of the transport team sympathetically assured her, "I will take care of your son, Ma'am." Charlotte remembers this being the only human being involved with her son's care at JCMC who treated her with the kindness one would expect towards a parent with a baby in critical condition.



Mommy and Jaden before CPS. Source: Whitaker family.

Accused of Shaken Baby Syndrome

Initially, the E.R. treating physician, Dr. Melinda Lucas, diagnosed Jaden with head trauma of unknown etiology, but by the time Jaden was discharged from JCMC, the diagnosis had changed to Shaken Baby Syndrome (SBS) and severe, traumatic brain injury.

Charlotte was so stunned by what the doctor was saying, it didn't seem real.

Her mind was racing, trying to recall any possible minor injuries that had occurred in the last week while Jaden was learning to crawl and becoming very mobile. Charlotte stated that Jaden had just begun to pull himself up to standing position by holding onto objects, and he was very active crawling around. Charlotte told Dr. Lucas that Jaden had two minor falls recently. One fall was at her parent's home where Jaden fell off of the couch, and the second was a fall from their son Cameron's bed.

The doctor was very adamant that this injury could not have been from either of these incidents. Charlotte and Joe were at a loss about what was wrong with their son, and it didn't seem as if the doctors were trying to figure it out. Joe and Charlotte asked the doctors to check for other health reasons for Jaden's condition. Certain medical conditions could easily account for simple falls causing the injury. To date, this testing has never happened. An expert who reviewed the case has since told the family that the doctors have put Jaden at risk by refusing to test for suspected medical disorders.

Parents Coerced Into Signing Paperwork – Constitutional Rights Denied

Out of the corner of her eye, Charlotte noticed a man leaning against the hallway wall outside of Jaden's hospital room. He was staring at her so intensely that she felt very uncomfortable. The man introduced himself as Deputy Jared Taylor with the Washington County Sheriff's Office. From the beginning, Deputy Taylor tried to convince Charlotte that her husband Joe had hurt her son.

It was Taylor who had denied Charlotte and Joe their parental right to be with their son at the hospital and in the transport helicopter. Taylor reportedly implied that the Whitakers could not be with Jaden unless they first consented to formal questioning at the sheriff's office.

They did not know that they had a choice and were not advised of any of their rights, including Miranda. Charlotte remembers Taylor demanding that the Whitakers sign paperwork. Joe and Charlotte knew they had not done anything wrong and were simply trying desperately to see their son. She recalls signing papers, but she is not sure what the paperwork was about. They believe that Deputy Taylor took advantage of their confusion in time of grief and their desperation to be with their son.

They arrived at the sheriff's office at 7:00 pm. Charlotte was led to a waiting room and, to her surprise and dismay, was locked in. Taylor left her in this room, unable to use the restroom or get food and water for two hours.

Taylor demanded that both Joe and Charlotte take a voice analysis, and again, they complied, not knowing they had a choice. They were determined to do whatever it took to be with Jaden when he needed them the most. Charlotte could not stop thinking about Jaden lying in a hospital room sick and alone. Taylor kept Joe and Charlotte separate at all times during questioning, and they reportedly cooperated fully.

Taylor allegedly lied and stated that Joe did not pass his voice analysis. According to Charlotte, the truth is that Taylor made Joe take the voice analysis several times attempting to change the final outcome that has shown that he has been honest from the beginning.

Unlike the two hours of Joe's questioning, Charlotte's lasted approximately 10 minutes, after which Taylor finally told her that she could go be with her son. Once Charlotte walked outside into the parking lot, she saw another man shaking Joe's hand and apologizing. She also saw DCS Investigator, Sarah Powell, in the parking lot and realized that Powell had watched the entire interview behind the glass in the interrogation room. Powell apologized to Charlotte, telling her that they passed their voice analysis and did great in the interview. She continued that she was obligated to interview their other children, Lexy and Cameron.

At this time, Joe and Charlotte were led to believe that the investigation was over and they could now spend their time and energy on helping Jaden. Unfortunately for the Whitakers, this was far from the truth.



Source: Whitaker family

Unwelcome in the Ronald McDonald House

Finally, at approximately 9:00 pm, they were allowed to leave the sheriff's office to make the two hour drive to UTMC in Knoxville. When they arrived, they were both allowed to be with Jaden in the pediatric ICU. Jaden was completely sedated. Charlotte noticed that the hospital staff had put a neck brace on Jaden, even though the CT scan showed that there were no neck injuries. Joe and Charlotte were exhausted and had not eaten all day. The hospital staff informed Charlotte that they usually let the family stay in the Ronald McDonald House, but the Whitaker's would not

be welcome there. Instead, they slept in the waiting room.

According to Charlotte, early in the morning on August 16, at approximately 4:00 am, a doctor told them there was minimal swelling in Jaden's head and things looked very positive.

Child Abuse Specialist Dr. Mary Palmer Assumes Abuse, Refuses to Look Further

Later that day, Dr. Mary Palmer, Child Abuse Specialist, walked into the room, straight to Jaden's bedside and began to talk as if the Whitakers were not in the room. According to Joe, Palmer said to Jaden as she took photographs:

Oh, the trauma you have experienced Jaden, if you could only tell me what happened.

Dr. Palmer began accusing and tersely questioning Joe about what occurred on August 15 prior to the 911 call. Charlotte said that Dr. Palmer began to argue with Joe regarding how many times he fed his son the day before. Joe and Charlotte were exhausted and hungry at this time and just wanted to love on their child. According to Charlotte, Dr. Mary Palmer jumped to conclusions prior to any medical investigation of Jaden's past and present health conditions. This is consistent with what other parents are reporting to us about the new pediatric sub-specialty of Child Abuse Specialists.

Child Abuse Specialists are gaining a lot of negative attention due to the increase in medical kidnappings. According to a recent article in Health Impact News, the new pediatric sub-specialty appears to correlate with the recent

epidemic of medical kidnappings.

The rise in aggressive uses of CPS by doctors and hospitals in diagnosing “child abuse,” extensively documented by MedicalKidnap.com appears to parallel several new developments in the world of pediatric medicine. In 2010, the American Academy of Pediatrics certified a new subspecialty in child abuse pediatrics, which requires a fellowship with a teaching hospital’s child protection unit and a separate board exam.

Are New Pediatric “Child Abuse Specialists” Causing an Increase in Medical Kidnappings?

Jaden Taken From Charlotte’s Arms, Parents Escorted Out of Hospital

On August 17, 2013, Joe’s birthday, the Whitakers were at UTMC with Jaden. A nurse called Joe and Charlotte into Jaden’s room. Deputy Jared Taylor and DCS Investigator Sarah Powell were in the room waiting for them. According to Charlotte, Taylor took Joe for more questioning and continued to grill him privately. When the story did not change and Joe continued to tell the truth, Taylor got angry and started yelling at Sarah Powell:

Get your damn paperwork, tell them to sign this [paper] so we can get out of here!!!

He looked angrily at Charlotte and stated, “You have to sign this paper,” and shoved what she later realized was an

Emergency Protective Order (EPO) at her to sign. Joe and Charlotte did not understand what an EPO was and that they did have a choice. The Whitakers were not advised that they had any rights, and no one explained it was not mandatory they sign this paperwork. Taylor and Powell told them they had no choice but to sign the order.

Powell commented to Charlotte:

I will have to ask my supervisor if you will be allowed to see your other two children.

Without any further discussion and showing no emotion, the hospital nurse took Jaden out of Charlotte's arms. Deputy Taylor walked the Whitakers out of the hospital and away from their sick baby. Joe and Charlotte were completely crushed and heartbroken.

When Joe and Charlotte spoke to each other later about the interrogation in the hospital, Joe said, "Taylor tried to make me say that I was covering for our daughter, Lexy, who had dropped Jaden." Joe continued to tell Taylor that no one hurt or dropped Jaden. According to Joe, after over an hour of Taylor trying to manipulate the details of August 15, he became very angry and began ranting and raving in the hospital.

Sarah Powell interrogated Charlotte at the same time and according to Charlotte, Powell was attempting to tell Charlotte that her husband hurt their baby.

The Whitakers report that Taylor and Powell became angry because neither of the parents wavered from the truth. Taylor and Powell were attempting to turn the Whitakers

against each other, but, according to the Whitakers' testimony, no matter how long they were interrogated or how much Taylor yelled, the truth was never going to change.

Joe's lawyer, Christina Stapleton, contacted Washington County DCS Office by phone. According to Charlotte, Ms. Stapleton said,

"I am here with Mr. and Mrs. Whitaker, and I understand they were escorted from the hospital without an order signed by a judge, is that correct?"

The DCS supervisor told the lawyer that Charlotte only, could go back to the hospital, but her husband was not allowed to be with Jaden. Charlotte went back on August 19, 2013. On August 22 the Whitakers were called in to the Washington County Department of Child Services (DCS) for a Child and Family Team Meeting. According to DCS, the purpose of this meeting was to discuss the family story, prevention ideas, placement options, and family resources. According to Charlotte, DCS held the Family Team Meeting in support of keeping their family together, while at the same time completing necessary paperwork to permanently take Jaden from them. DCS called again on August 23 and escorted Charlotte Whitaker from the hospital for a second time.

DCF Plans to Permanently Take Children Away from Parents

Charlotte states that the real purpose of this Family Team

Meeting was to take the Whitakers' other children, Lexy and Cameron. Charlotte shared custody of Lexy with her ex-husband, but Joe was the primary parent in Cameron's life. DCS devastated the Whitaker children according to Charlotte.

DCS brought in the Whitakers' ex-spouses to the family meeting and told them a shocking, one-sided, false story about how Joe and Charlotte abused Jaden. DCS decided that custody of Lexy and Cameron would be given to the other biological parents, and they would decide if and when Joe and Charlotte would have visitation with their children.

At this time, Charlotte's parents, Sandra and Larry Shortt, requested consideration for placement of their grandchild, Jaden. Sarah Powell and her supervisor Kim Garland stated that they could fill out paperwork for potential placement of Jaden. According to Charlotte, all attempts that the Whitakers and their family made were in vain. In the end, the Shortts were devastated when DCS determined that they were not considered acceptable and would not allow Jaden to be placed with his grandparents.

Charlotte states that there was a no contact order at the end of August 2013; the Whitakers could no longer see Jaden.



Source: Whitaker family

Parents Arrested – Jaden Adopted by Strangers

On September 11, 2013, at midnight, Charlotte and Joe were arrested by the Washington County Sheriff's Office for aggravated child abuse and neglect. They hired a criminal attorney to represent them in both juvenile and criminal court, which turned out to be a big mistake, because the attorney was not knowledgeable about court hearings with DCS and juvenile law.

On September 25, 2013, DCS filed a Petition to Terminate Parental Rights (TPR). According to Charlotte, there was never an adjudication, or fact-finding hearing, involving the presentation of witnesses, evidence, and arguments by counsel or the parties. Joe and Charlotte were told by their lawyers that the juvenile hearing, held December 2 to December 5, 2013, was supposed to be the adjudication hearing. When they arrived at the hearing, to their disbelief, Judge Lincoln stated that this was a TPR hearing. The judge ruled on January 24, 2014, that the Whitakers' parental rights to their son Jaden were to be terminated.

Since that time, they have learned that their little boy has been adopted out to strangers.

Six Medical Experts Agree that Jaden Was NOT Abused and Was Misdiagnosed with Shaken Baby Syndrome

According to the [National Institute of Neurological Disorders and Stroke \(NINDS\)](#):

Shaken baby syndrome is a type of inflicted traumatic brain injury that happens when a baby is violently shaken. A baby has weak neck muscles and a large, heavy head. Shaking makes the fragile brain bounce back and forth inside the skull and causes bruising, swelling, and bleeding, which can lead to permanent, severe brain damage or death. The characteristic injuries of shaken baby syndrome are subdural hemorrhages (bleeding in the brain), retinal hemorrhages (bleeding in the retina), damage to the spinal cord and neck, and fractures of the ribs and bones. These injuries may not be immediately noticeable. Symptoms of shaken baby syndrome include extreme irritability, lethargy, poor feeding, breathing

problems, convulsions, vomiting, and pale or bluish skin.

When Joe initially noticed that something was wrong with Jaden and contacted his wife and 911, he described Jaden's arm being twisted awkwardly and abnormal breathing. According to Joe and Charlotte, Jaden was not suffering from lethargy, poor feeding, convulsions, or vomiting. NINDS also reports that when comparing SBS with accidental trauma, the majority of babies who suffer from SBS have long term damage, including blindness from retina damage and some form of neurological or mental disability, like cerebral palsy or cognitive impairment. Children who suffer from SBS may require lifelong medical care. This is not the case with Jaden.

Joe and Charlotte retained lawyers and requested medical experts to review Jaden's records and provide reports and testimony to DCS. All six of the medical experts reviewed Jaden's medical history, records and imaging and agree that Jaden did not have Shaken Baby Syndrome, nor was he abused. The medical experts agree that Jaden suffered from vitamin deficiencies and possible Rickets and medical health problems which need to be diagnosed and treated immediately. The experts agree that the hospital physicians involved with the child abuse diagnosis did not fulfill their duty as physicians according to The American Academy of Pediatrics' position papers that require physicians to eliminate non-abusive etiologies in alleged cases of child abuse, and this was not done in Jaden Whitaker's case.

Following are excerpts from the medical experts who reviewed Jaden's medical information and will provide their expert testimony in court.

Pediatric Forensic Expert Says Shaken Baby Diagnosis Incorrect

Dr. Charles J. Hyman, General and Forensic Pediatrics, thoroughly reviewed Jaden's records and films and provided a 50 page report which disputes the diagnosis of Shaken Baby Syndrome. Dr. Hyman is a board certified pediatrician with a very extensive medical background which includes Clinical Professor of Pediatrics for Loma Linda University Medical Center, founder and director of Loma Linda University Medical Center's child abuse team, awarded the State of California Martha Lou Berkley Award for excellence in child abuse intervention and education, co-director of the Children in Crisis Center (Child Abuse) of St. Bernadine's Medical Center in San Bernadino, and current member of the Criminal Division of the Superior Court of Los Angeles Expert Witness Panel. Dr. Hyman has conducted research for the last 12 years involving infants with bone fractures. Dr. Hyman holds memberships in a large number of organizations, including the International Society for Prevention of Child Abuse and Neglect (ISPCAN), the American Professional Society on the Abuse of Children (APSAC), the American Society for Bone and Mineral Research, the International Bone and Mineral Society (IBMS), the American Academy of Pediatrics, the American Medical Association, the American Academy of Pediatrics on Child Abuse and Neglect, and the International Society of Bone Morphology. Following the review of Jaden Whitaker's records, Dr. Hyman states:

*It is my medical diagnosis based on the history given by the parents, the medical records, and the brain imaging that Jaden Asher Whitaker was not a victim of child abuse. Jaden's findings, alone or in combination, are neither pathognomonic nor highly specific for child abuse. **The***

American Academy of Pediatrics' position papers regarding child abuse require physicians to eliminate non-abusive etiologies in alleged cases of child abuse. In my opinion, this was not done in Jaden's case. [emphasis added] In my clinical opinion, Jaden has a disorder of mitochondria that best fits the MELAS syndrome (mitochondrial myopathy, encephalopathy, lactic acidosis, and stroke-like episodes). It is imperative for the ongoing health of the child that this clinical diagnosis be considered by a molecular geneticist with expertise in mitochondrial inborn errors of metabolism. It is suggested that whole exome sequencing that includes the mt genome is performed to bypass the terribly confusing and intermittently displayed metabolic abnormalities seen with mitochondrial disease.

No Evidence of Shaking or Neck Trauma, Which Should Be Present if It Were Shaken Baby Syndrome

Dr. Hyman continues:

Alone or in combination, the presence of Jaden's central nervous system pathology and retinal hemorrhages are not pathognomonic of or highly specific for child abuse. There was no clear and convincing evidence of significant head impact contemporaneous with his central nervous system presentation. Importantly, the record clearly shows that there was no evidence of shaking or any other type of neck trauma; Jaden's neck was clinically and radiographically normal. The addition of the non-acute superficial right frontal forehead bruises, alleged metaphyseal fractures, and short stature cannot confirm a diagnosis of child abuse."

Additionally:

A relatively new concept repeated by the child abuse community is that a certain combination of injuries, called “constellation” of injuries, is diagnostic of and could only have been caused by abuse. In my opinion, this concept is erroneous and lacks scientific support. The facts of Jaden’s case and the scientific medical literature support that Jaden’s diagnosis of shaken baby syndrome (SBS) which is now termed “abusive head trauma” (AHT) is flawed and incorrect.

Genetics Medical Expert Says This Is Not Child Abuse; Criminal Charges “Outrageous”

Dr. Marvin Miller with Dayton Children’s Hospital Genetics Clinic was contacted to review the medical records of Jaden and determine if the symptoms from August 15 could be due to a mitochondrial disorder. Following the review of Jaden’s history, lab data, and imaging studies, Dr. Miller concludes:

- 1. Testing for MELAS is reasonable and should be done,*
- 2. Another likely explanation for Jaden’s presentation is the 2 short falls – one 5 days and the other 10 days prior to presentation. A cortical vein thrombosis might be present,*
- 3. I note that no thrombophilia evaluation was done during the admission of Jaden – it should also be done,*
- 4. This is NOT child abuse or SBS. Proceeding with criminal proceedings against the parents is*

outrageous.

Current Situation

The Whitakers have lost their parental rights and at this time are fighting criminal charges that were brought against them. The next court hearing is December 16, 2015, to hear motions for a new attorney. The criminal Judge Lisa Rice has already thrown out the Whitakers expert Dr. Ronald Wright. The Whitakers have two medical experts left allowed to testify, Dr. Julie Mack and Dr. Charles Hyman.

Health Impact News contacted Sarah Powell at the Washington County DCS office on October 19, 2015 at 423-854-5311. When asked if she was still working as a DCS investigator, Powell stated,

“I’m actually not going to be able to give you that information myself, but I can get it to the person that is talking to you guys if you would like to go that way.”

Health Impact News inquired,

“So you cannot tell us what your job title is currently with DCS?”

Powell stated,

“Correct. It has to go through somebody else.”

According to the receptionist for DCS, Powell has not been a DCS investigator for close to two years. Powell did state that if anyone had questions regarding the Whitaker case or how it was handled, they could contact Rob Johnson in Nashville at 615-532-5645.

Supporters are asking readers to help the Whitaker's fight this injustice by contacting the following:

Tennessee Governor Bill Haslam may be reached at 615-741-2001, or contacted [here](#). He also has a [Facebook](#) page.

Washington County Department Child Services (DCS), Sarah Powell and Kim Garland, 103 E. Walnut Street, Johnson City, TN, phone number 423-854-5311 <http://www.washingtoncountyttn.org/node/184>

Representative Mathew Hill represents House District 7 and may be reached at 615-741-2251 or contacted [here](#).

Senator Rusty Crowe represents their Senate District 3. He may be reached at 615-741-2468, or contacted [here](#).

Tennessee Children with Brittle Bones Suffer in State Care as Mom Charged with SBS



Turner family at visitation. Photo source: Turner family.

by **Health Impact News/MedicalKidnap.com Staff**

Chris and Keshia Turner from East Tennessee are still waiting to bring their son Brayden home since he was removed from their custody on December 11, 2014. Keshia had rushed the baby to the emergency room when his leg that had been splinted in the NICU became tight and warm to the touch. While at the hospital, an x-ray revealed a broken bone and several rib fractures.

The following day, Keshia took Brayden to his pediatrician to follow-up on his care. There she found herself confronted with law enforcement and a Department of Children's

Services worker who demanded that she take Brayden to Vanderbilt Medical Center in Nashville, nearly three hours away.

That evening, Vanderbilt Medical Center Child Abuse Specialist Dr. Deborah Lowen said that Brayden's injuries could only be abuse, and investigators and doctors allegedly stopped looking for another explanation.

Dr. Lowen first said that it was a "classic case of Shaken Baby" Syndrome (SBS), though most of the classic symptoms were not present. Later Dr. Lowen claimed that Keshia had crushed her three month old child with her hands and caused multiple rib fractures.

The Turner's first story is here:

Baby Found with Broken Bones – Parents Assumed Guilty of Abuse and Lose Custody

Keshia's Second Child Taken

In September of 2015, while her case was pending, Keshia delivered her second child, a baby boy named Carson, who was in perfect health. Sadly, he was removed from her custody four days after he was born because of the ongoing case involving Brayden. Both boys have been in a relative placement with their paternal grandparents. Chris and Keshia have had limited supervised contact with the children since their removal.

Recently, the boys were evaluated by Tennessee Early Intervention System, a voluntary educational program for children ages birth through age two with disabilities or developmental delays. The program is also associated with

Vanderbilt Medical Center. Both children were diagnosed with significant developmental delays.



Brayden with his baby brother Carson. Photo source: Turner family.

Brayden's evaluation revealed that he is delayed 25% in cognitive development and 40% in adaptive, communication, social skills, and motor. He also exhibited "multiple red flags of autism." Additionally, he has a 30 degree curvature in both feet and will require orthotics.

Carson's evaluation showed that he is delayed 25% in communication and cognitive development, and 40% in adaptive and motor. It was also noted that his head was "really flat." The family was told that when he begins to walk, there is a possibility that he will need to wear orthotics.

Additionally, both boys have low muscle tone. In light of the new developments, the family believes that this is, as Eugene Wilson at the Center for Ehlers-Danlos Syndrome Alliance says, "more than likely an underlying medical condition."

Therapy has been recommended for both children.

Difficult Day at Court

Because Keshia was the last one to care for Brayden before the emergency room visit, she is being accused of abuse in the dependency proceeding in juvenile court.

After several days of hearings, including the presentation of medical experts on behalf of the parents, on June 25, 2016 Judge Larry Warner found Keshia guilty of "severe child abuse." The judge cleared Chris of any finding of abuse. Because of that, the couple was advised by the father's attorney to file for divorce, in the hope that the court would award Chris custody. Although the couple's divorce is still pending, Judge Warner ordered immediate reunification with

Chris. However, the children are still in a relative placement, and the Department of Children's Services has not done anything to establish their reunification. There is no plan in place to get the children home with their father.

Bias and Lack of Understanding Impeding the Case

The judge's ruling came despite the Turners having two medical experts who testified on their behalf, a radiologist and a pediatrician with experience teaching at a university as well as working in the emergency room. The two medical experts gave extensive medical testimony—comprehensive explanations of Brayden's medical conditions— which both opined as osteopenia of prematurity.

Going in to court, the mother's Attorney Connie Reguli was concerned that Vanderbilt's Child Abuse Specialist Dr. Lowen's deposition had been filed months before the trial by Department of Children's Services. It appeared to Attorney Reguli that once the judge read it, he had made up his mind before coming to court, leaving no room for other medical explanations.



Dr. Deborah Lowen. Source: [Vanderbilt University](#).

Attorney Reguli points out that this is “an extremely complex” case. Because of that, the experts took painstaking measures to educate the judge about the “fragile bone state of a baby...who was premature and so small.” She says that after examining Brayden’s history, the pediatrician concluded that he had rickets of prematurity. The doctors explained in detail the medical evidence supporting their opinions, including the premature birth, the loss of amniotic fluid prior to birth, the low vitamin D levels, and the healing pattern of the bones.

The Turner family’s experts disputed Child Abuse Specialist Dr. Debra Lowen’s conclusion. Dr. Lowen said that Brayden’s injuries were non-accidental, and therefore, must be child abuse. Attorney Reguli says that Dr. Lowen’s conclusion was drawn without being challenged on the medical research upon which she relied. When Dr. Lowen was asked to submit medical research to support her conclusion, she submitted a mere nine articles and references, some of which

contradicted her own conclusion.

In contrast, the experts called by the family provided a bibliography of over 50 articles which supported the rickets diagnosis.

Attorney Reguli is very concerned about the court's apparent bias and lack of understanding about the intricacies of the medical evidence, which she believes are impeding this case. She says, "The complexity of presenting the evidence is a tremendous challenge." Further, she points out that the medical community is not in agreement on this issue, and she is concerned that it might be too complex for a juvenile court judge to understand.

The Environmental Epidemic of Vitamin D Deficiency in Infants

In August 2008, researchers Kathy A. Keller and Patrick D. Barnes published the article, "[Rickets vs. Abuse: A National and International Epidemic](#)." The article documents that, what was at first "believed to primarily affect the elderly and dark-skinned populations in the US," was found "demonstrated in otherwise healthy young adults, children, and infants of all races."

In "[Rickets or Abuse, or Both?](#)" Russell W. Chesney says, "We are in the midst of an epidemic of nutritional vitamin D deficiency rickets that has been termed 'the third wave of rickets.'" The article goes on to say, "Inherent in each wave is that infants with rickets are born to mothers who are deficient or insufficient in vitamin D themselves."

Dr. Teresa Hill points out in the [Journal Advocate](#) that vitamin D deficiency persists today. She says, "Vitamin D

deficiency during pregnancy is considered epidemic.”

One reason that the medical profession is not in agreement on this issue is the lack of information about the role of vitamin D deficiency resulting in metabolic dysfunction in abuse cases. [Dr. Mercola](#) reports that Dr. Ayoub, after reviewing over 3,000 pieces of medical literature, concludes that “a great number of child abuse cases may, in fact, be instances of misdiagnosed metabolic dysfunction.”

Dr. Mercola, citing the work of Dr. Ayoub and others, says:

“Thousands of child abuse cases may, in fact, be misdiagnosed cases of rickets caused by either vitamin D deficiency or aluminum adjuvants in vaccines, or both.” He goes on to say, “Vitamin D deficiency is a hidden problem that can actually cause bones to appear as if they’ve been broken on an X-ray, which is a sure diagnosis of abuse to the inexperienced eye.”

Dr. Mercola says that Dr. Ayoub estimates that “there may be literally tens of thousands of misdiagnosed cases of child abuse around the country,” and that it is a “trend of misdiagnosis goes back at least 25 years or more.”

Dr. Mercola calls this “the other side of the child abuse drama,” and he believes that “it is critical for this information to become more widely known.” He goes on to say that being informed about “how infantile rickets mimics cases of child abuse” is the best way to prevent the “traumatic injustice to parents who really have done nothing wrong, besides listening to and trusting conventional medical advice, which still does not place sufficient weight on the importance of vitamin D.”

Dr. Ayoub asserts:

“Modern textbooks simply do not cover rickets as textbooks of the past did, and flawed research has been used as the basis to perpetuate the misdiagnosis of healing rickets as an inflicted injury.”

Further, he says that the current protocol for doctors does not include testing vitamin D levels in expectant mothers, who are considered “one of the most at-risk populations.” In his opinion, this is “reprehensible medical malpractice.”

Apparent Conflict of Interest

The complexity of the underlying medical condition of the child is buttressed with the conflict of interest inherent in Child Abuse Specialists, whose only role is to determine and “diagnose” child abuse. Attorney Reguli says:

“Child Abuse Specialists aren’t doing true clinical rule-out evaluations.”

The hospital pediatricians who are certified as Child Abuse Specialists are considered by default “state expert witnesses.” However, they are not trained in all of the medical areas that they include in their opinions of abuse.

Further, Attorney Reguli says:

“Doctors like Lowen have a contract with the Department of Children’s Services and have a vested interest in maintaining

their relationship with them.” Subsequently, she says, “The Department has to remove children from their homes to get the money they need to fund the agency itself in the current federal funding scheme.”

Ultimately, the children and their parents are the ones who pay the price.



Carson pays the price of growing up without his parents.
Photo source: [Reunite the Turners Facebook page](#).

Attorney Reguli points out:

“The legal standard is that it’s the state’s burden” to prove that abuse has occurred. In order to do that, she says, “There must be clear and convincing evidence.”

She says that the mindset, “if you don’t know how it happened, it must be abuse,” is defective and must be replaced with a more comprehensive medical approach.

Attorney Reguli says that she has seen this “over and over in medical neglect cases,” and the inability to enlighten the judiciary on complex medical conditions “perpetuates the cycle.”

Attorney Reguli says that the Turner family will return to court for a de novo (new) hearing on the same issues in January 2017, where they plan to appeal Keshia’s adjudication of abuse and challenge Dr. Lowen’s conclusion with medical research and the most recent developments of the children.

How You Can Help

There is a Facebook page set up for the family called [Reunite The Turners](#) where supporters can follow the Turners’ story and help.



Supporters are asked to contact legislators on behalf of the family.

Tennessee Governor Bill Haslam may be reached at (615) 741-2001 or contacted [here](#). His Facebook page is [here](#), and [here](#) is a link to his Twitter page.

The Representative for the Turners' district is Rep. Cameron Sexton. He may be reached at (615) 741-2343, or contacted [here](#).

Senator Paul Bailey is the Senator for their district. He may be reached at (615) 741-3978, or contacted [here](#).

Tennessee Mom Gives Birth to Premature Twins 3 Times - Surviving Babies Medically Kidnapped for Research?



Tamika and babies. Source: Seagraves family.

by **Health Impact News/MedicalKidnap.com Staff**

The story of Nashville, Tennessee, mother Tamika Seagraves and her children is one of tragedy upon tragedy. It is the story of a mother who began questioning the things that she had been taught after catastrophe struck not once, but twice, taking the lives of 2 of her babies. Now, she is fighting Child Protective Services for her other children who have been taken from her.

Tamika has been pregnant 3 times, and in each case, she gave birth to premature twins, a boy and a girl every time. The first set of twins, Zayden and his sister Ziria were micro-preemies, born at just 24 weeks. Though Ziria grew stronger and eventually went home, Zayden never went home. He only survived 13 days.

Two years later, Jordan and Jaliyah were born at 35 weeks. When Jordan passed away at just under two months of age, his mother began questioning, looking at vaccines and the vitamin K shot. At the same time, Child Protective Services began questioning and looking at HER.

Whistleblowers who are NICU nurses have confirmed that they have seen premature infants injured in the NICU by vaccines, and a [2015 study](#) published in the *Journal of the American Medical Association* found that there are adverse effects from vaccinating very low birth-weight infants.

See:

[Nurse Whistleblower Confirms NICU Pre-term Babies Being Injured by Vaccines](#)

Jordan's autopsy stated that the cause of his death could not

be determined, but DCS (Department of Children's Services) has blamed Tamika. Instead of closing out the case when the autopsy report came back, DCS stepped in and seized custody of Jordan's twin sister Jaliyah. Tamika was able to place her older daughter with family members and keep her out of the hands of DCS.

According to court documents, DCS has accused Tamika of demonstrating "erratic behaviors" because she refuses vaccinations, stopped a medication for her child out of concerns for its side effects, "tried to have Jaliyah seen by a holistic chiropractor as opposed to a pediatrician," and missed doctors appointments. One was reportedly missed due to snow, and another because her older child was sick that day.

Jaliyah has also been slow to gain weight. Tamika says her growth pattern is similar to her big sister Ziria, whose growth was very slow during her first year of life also. Social workers and doctors at Vanderbilt have labeled Jaliyah "failure to thrive" and reportedly place the blame on her mother. Tamika says that there is more to the story and paints a very different picture than painted by DCS workers.



Jordan, gone too soon. Photo source: Seagraves family.

On December 5, 2016, Tamika gave birth again to another set of twins. When they were 5 weeks old, DCS seized both of them. Tamika says that the reasons that CPS gave her for taking the youngest twins, Zaylen and Zaliyah, had nothing to do with the twins, but everything to do with the allegations that she was already fighting concerning her daughter.

Just before court on Friday, March 3, Tamika was handed documents that accused her of “nutritional neglect” of Zaylen and Zaliyah, and of “lack of supervision” for Zaliyah.

She is very confused about these allegations. She explains that the youngest babies were exclusively breastfed, and that she was following the feeding recommendations of the hospital’s lactation consultant and the babies’ nurse-practitioner. Could the medical experts have missed some important cues that could have altered their feeding advice? If so, Tamika doesn’t understand how she could be held responsible when she did what she was instructed to do.

Concerned Friends Speak Out on Apparent Injustice

One of Tamika's friends wrote to *Health Impact News* asking us to look into her story. She told us that she sees Tamika like a sister, and that as long as she has known her, she has always had a passion for caring for others, especially the elderly and children. She says DCS "snatched" Jaliyah from her home "after the police came and lied to her to get her outside to talk to her." Tamika notes that her oldest child Zirai was in the home at the time Jaliyah was taken, but Zirai was not taken. Tamika was able to place her with some relatives shortly after Jaliyah was taken into custody, in the hopes of keeping Zirai out of the hands of DCS.



Tamika and Ziria in happier times. Source: Seagraves family.

Other friends have written on Tamika's behalf. In order to protect them from possible DCS retaliation, we have not published their names, since some of them have children of their own.

One friend describes Tamika as “a sweet and kind woman but most of all a loving mother.”

“She is the most loving and caring person I know,” writes another friend. She also spoke of Tamika’s passion to care for others. “I was amazed at how well she was able to handle what life was throwing at her [with the premature babies and losing 2 sons] ... it had made her love for her 2 daughters even stronger. ... there is not doubt in my mind that she is doing everything to make sure her children are well taken care of. ... You are looking at one GREAT MOTHER!!”

Tamika told *Health Impact News* that a friend warned her about Vanderbilt Hospital, telling her that she fears the hospital is using such unusual children for medical studies. She pointed out that it is extremely rare to find so many factors present in the same family – an African-American mother with 3 sets of twins, all premature births, each set with a boy and a girl, and deaths with the boys in 2 of the sets of twins. She reports that even though her oldest daughter had slow growth, just like Jaliyah, as well as other health issues, DCS did not become involved in their lives until after her second baby died. She says:

I will never back down. I am my children’s voices, and no one is going to fight for them like I am. I will never stop fighting for my children.

Tamika’s Tragic Story

When Tamika found out that she was having twins the first time, she was overjoyed. Zayden and Ziria were born too

soon, at just 24 weeks, on January 4, 2013. They were very tiny, weighing less than a pound and a half each, and went straight into the NICU. Both received the vitamin K shot. Zayden died at 13 days old from sepsis. Ziria had breathing problems and was on oxygen until she was 9 months old. She was fully vaccinated up until age 2.

Jordan and Jaliyah were born May 28, 2015, at 35 weeks. They both received the vitamin K shot, but no other vaccines. After a couple weeks in the NICU, they came home. Most of the time when they slept, the twins slept together in their crib. Tamika says that they liked to snuggle together.



Jordan and Jaliyah together in their crib. Source: Seagraves family.

On the night of June 21, when they were almost 2 months old, Tamika recalls that Jordan was uncharacteristically fussy that night. Though they did not usually co-sleep, on that night she put Jordan in bed with her, hoping that would help him sleep.

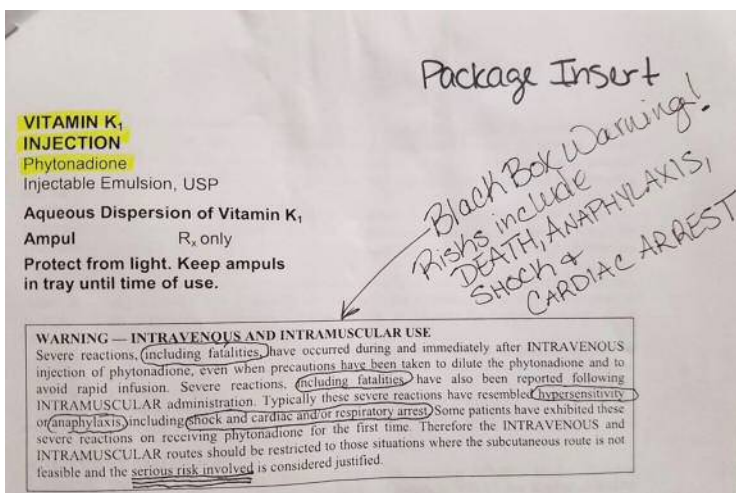
At around 3am, Jaliyah's crying woke up her mother. That is when Tamika discovered that Jordan was still and unresponsive. The terrified mother called 911, and he was rushed to the hospital. All attempts to revive him were unsuccessful, and he was pronounced dead an hour later.

The twins had been at the doctor the week before, and the doctor reportedly tried to convince Tamika to vaccinate the babies. She said that he told her that, if she didn't vaccinate them, they were going to die.

To this day, Tamika wonders if the babies were given vaccines at the hospital before they were released, despite her concerns and refusal. She noted a tiny spot on Jaliyah's leg that looked like a shot mark.

Vitamin K Shot Carries Serious Risks

During the months after Jordan's death, the devastated mother did a great deal of research. She discovered that the vitamin K shot, which she presumed to be harmless, actually carries a black box warning label, and that the package insert states that "deaths have occurred after intravenous and intramuscular administration." (Note: the shot is typically given intramuscularly.)



A number of other statements on the vitamin K injection package insert have concerned Tamika Seagraves, including:

- “Benzyl alcohol as a preservative in [the vitamin K shot] has been associated with toxicity in newborns.”
- “Benzyl alcohol has been reported to be associated with a fatal “Gasping Syndrome” in premature infants.”
- “WARNING: This product contains aluminum that may be toxic. ... Premature neonates are particularly at risk because their kidneys are immature.”
- “Hemolysis, jaundice, and hyperbilirubinemia in neonates, particularly those that are premature, may be related to the dose of vitamin K injection.”

During the months after Jordan’s death, she reports that she made frequent calls to the coroner’s office trying to find out what had happened to her baby. According to the [Justice for Jaliyah Facebook page](#):

The coroner eventually told her that they could not determine cause of death. By this point a friend of Tamika's had told her that with both of her boys dying that perhaps she should look into vaccines. She began to dig into vaccines and decided perhaps they had played a part in the boys' deaths. She asked the coroner if this could have been the case. The coroner responded in a way that made her think that yes, vaccines could have played a role, but that the coroner was not at liberty to suggest that (all calls are recorded from the coroner's office). Jordan's death record reads, "Couldn't be determined."

Even though there was no cause determined for Jordan's death, DCS has blamed his death on Tamika for co-sleeping, a practice that has been vilified by some doctors and social workers, despite its safe practice throughout most cultures in the world and throughout virtually all of human history. There is no evidence that co-sleeping played a role in the baby's death. He is the second twin boy in the family to pass away. His older brother died at only 13 days old, while he was still in the NICU. Tamika is sure that Zayden's death clearly had nothing to do with co-sleeping or anything that she did or did not do, but Tamika feels that the social workers are blaming her.

Twin of Deceased Baby Seized by DCS

When the DCS case investigating Jordan's death was due to close, DCS caseworker Freeman Peters showed up at Tamika's home requesting to take a picture of Jaliyah. He reportedly said:

She's so pretty. I want to show my supervisor.

That was apparently a ruse. When Tamika refused to allow him to take a picture, DCS supervisor Tiffany Washington reportedly called Tamika demanding that she take Jaliyah to doctors at Vanderbilt Children’s Hospital because Mr. Peters thought that she looked small. She told her that if she refused, they would seize custody of Jaliyah.

She was small. She was a preemie baby, who was following a very similar pattern of growth as her big sister Ziria, who grew very slowly during her first year. Doctors at Centennial Hospital had recently recommended testing for thyroid issues, due to elevated TSH levels, but Tamika reports that DCS did not want the judge to see that. Jaliyah had a history of vomiting and Tamika was in the process of working with her own doctors to find out what was going on with her daughter.

“Failure to Thrive” Used to Seize Child

DCS later did seize custody of Jaliyah, citing “failure to thrive.” Tamika says that she was following the instructions that doctors had given her with feeding Jaliyah her formula. Medical documents show that Tamika was given very confusing and conflicting feeding instructions. She was following the instructions to the best of her understanding, but the instructions were very unclear.

For example, one document from Vanderbilt contains instructions to feed 4 bottles a day, and to feed her 8 times a day – both instructions on the same instruction sheet. She says that at one doctor visit, she was asked what proportions she was using to mix the formula. She says that she gave the wrong answer because she didn’t remember the right numbers, but when she was home, she followed the proportions that were written down by doctors.

Tamika reports that though Jaliyah was tiny, she was doing well. She was a happy child, meeting her developmental milestones. She was walking and talking, energetic, playful, and peeing and pooping well – all of which are indicators that the child is thriving. She fed her when she was hungry.

She rarely cried. She was a very content baby. She didn't start crying a lot until they took her away from me.



Jaliyah – tiny, but happy. Source: [Justice for Jaliyah Facebook page](#).

She often vomited, and doctors at Vanderbilt said that it was reflux and prescribed medication. Tamika said that the medication did not seem to be making a difference, and that she was horrified to read the side effects of the medication. These types of medications, known as “acid blockers,” have recently been linked to increases in kidney disease and other side effects. (See: [Stomach Acid Blockers Linked to Brain Damage and Kidney Disease](#).)

Doctors and social workers were very unhappy with her when she discontinued the reflux medication. She later learned that it was not reflux at all; Jaliyah had a hernia which was causing some of the problems. She has since had surgery to repair the hernia.

Since Jaliyah has been taken from her, she has grown more. Tamika says that her big sister’s growth rate had also increased after she turned a year old. Jaliyah was also given more calories in her formula, something that Tamika says that she would have done herself if they had worked with her. She says she never intentionally withheld calories from her child; she was simply following the instructions that she had been given.



Big sister Ziria also gained weight slowly in her first year.
Source: Seagraves family.

Before Jaliyah was taken, a nurse had been coming into the home a couple times a week. She told Tamika that her baby was indeed growing, albeit at a slower rate, but that it was normal for premies to grow slower than their full-term counterparts. Vanderbilt has reportedly told social workers that she was not growing, but that is not what the nurse's records show. The nurse has testified that Tamika didn't do

anything wrong.

Still, Jaliyah was placed into state custody. Tamika wonders why the state never showed the same concern over Ziria, whose growth pattern was very similar to Jaliyah's. Ziria had more health issues than Jaliyah in her first year. She questions Vanderbilt's involvement. She says that it was not until after the death of her second baby that Vanderbilt and DCS began to scrutinize her. She questions their motives.

Jaliyah was placed into the custody of Tamika's mother, who has complied with every doctor visit request with Vanderbilt. From the court record, it is clear that DCS was aware that Tamika and her mother have not been on good terms, and they placed Jaliyah (and later Zaylen and Zaliyah) with her.

Tamika reports that her mother has refused to cooperate in allowing her court-ordered visits with her children. She says that her mother told her that DCS has told her not to let her see them, even though a judge has ruled otherwise.

Newest Babies Seized – Breastfeeding Blamed

Zaylen and Zaliyah were born on December 5, 2016. They were 34 week preemies, but they were both released to go home with no health concerns at less than a week of age. With these babies, Tamika didn't want to take any chances. She refused all vaccines, the eye ointment, and the vitamin K shot, citing religious reasons. She chose to breastfeed them.



Tamika's youngest twins, born December 5. Source: Seagraves family.

DCS showed up in early January to seize the new babies. The

initial documents for seizure cite reasons that concerned Jaliyah, not the new babies. Social workers apparently didn't even know the names of the new twins, calling them Baby A and Baby B.

It was not until Friday, March 3, that Tamika was handed a document at court alleging “nutritional neglect” for both twins and “lack of supervision” for Zaliyah.

DCS sent the babies to a new pediatrician, Dr. Roderick Bahner of Capstone Pediatrics, in mid January. He diagnosed them with failure to thrive and prematurity – twin gestation. He said that the babies should only receive formula, even though Tamika had been pumping her milk for the babies. He wrote in a medical report:

Breastmilk will not provide the enhanced calories required for growth.

Tamika asks how it is possible that, since breast is best, her breastmilk could not have the needed calories for her babies, and how her babies could have failed to thrive.

It appears that the reason that her babies were not thriving could lie with inadequate breastfeeding advice given to her by experts. Their prematurity also certainly played a significant role.

The babies were indeed small. They had only reached back up to their birth weight when Tamika took them to a nurse-practitioner on January 4. According to AmericanPregnancy.org:

A 7-10% loss is considered normal for breastfed babies. Most babies should regain this lost weight by days 10-14 of life. If a baby loses a significant amount of weight, is sick, or is premature, it may take up to 3 weeks to get back to his or her birth weight.

The babies were 4 weeks and 2 days. Combined with the history of Tamika's children to gain weight slowly at first, this may not have been alarming. Indeed, Tamika reports that the nurse-practitioner was not very concerned. She scheduled a follow-up appointment for January 19 to check their weight. They discussed the possibility of supplementing at that time if necessary.

Her concerns were calmed, and she continued feeding her babies as she had been instructed at the hospital where she gave birth – about every 3 hours for about 15-20 minutes at each feeding. She said that the nurse-practitioner had told her not to allow the babies to nurse more than that per feeding. She complied.



Tamika in her 2nd pregnancy. Source: Seagraves family.

Tongue Tie Affects Breastfeeding, Significance Downplayed

When *Health Impact News* asked if she experienced pain when nursing, Tamika described “red, shooting pain.” She didn’t realize that this is the universal description of the pain associated with a baby with a short frenulum, or “tongue-tie.” She said that the lactation consultant at the hospital where she gave birth said that the babies did, in fact, have tongue-tie, but she told her that it wasn’t severe enough to

be clipped.

Dr. Jack Newman of the [International Breastfeeding Centre](#) is considered by many to be the foremost breastfeeding expert physician in the world. He encounters tongue-tie frequently in his clinic. He addressed the issue in an email interview with a writer for the Canadian Medical Association Journal, and posted the interview on his [Facebook page](#). He wrote in part:

Many physicians will tell mothers that yes, the baby has a tongue tie, but a tongue tie does not interfere with breastfeeding, which is obviously not true. And most physicians will not release a tongue tie because they don't know how. It's not difficult, but if you don't know, it's frightening to do it. We teach physicians how to do it in the clinic.

Many mothers stop breastfeeding because the baby is not gaining, or does not latch on, or the mother has severe pain. Getting help for breastfeeding cannot wait weeks, but unfortunately we see many mothers and babies who don't get help for weeks when it may be too late to turn things around. For example, if a baby is not breastfeeding well because he has a tongue tie, this results in a decrease in milk supply over time. If the decrease in milk supply continues for weeks, it may be difficult to turn things around.

Could the youngest twins' failure to thrive been easily prevented if the lactation consultant simply recommended a tongue-tie release? All of the mothers in this writer's extensive experience with breastfeeding mothers who had a tongue-tie release procedure done have reported immediate relief from painful nursing and a significant increase in their

milk supply.

Instead of that reportedly happening with Tamika and her babies, Tamika has been blamed and her children kept from her.

In Friday's hearing, the judge reportedly told Tamika:

No disrespect to you, but your breastmilk is not giving them the nutrition that they need.

The much more likely scenario is that her milk was fine, and that the problem lay in the mechanics of removal of the milk due to the babies' tongue-tie, resulting in an inadequate milk supply. Instead of separating babies from their mother, which presents an emotional trauma all on its own, would not the more responsible action in the best interest of the children be to work with the mother to repair the feeding issues, even supplementing if necessary for the babies' growth?

Vaccines Recommended, But Avoided for Now

The same doctor who stated in his report that Tamika's breastmilk was inadequate also wrote in a letter that was presented to the court that:

We have been asked to give atestment (sic) to the need for vaccination of young infants. We are aware that the biological parent (mother) has historically rejected the children receiving vaccinations. There is scientific evidence to

urge vaccinating all infants to protect them from illnesses associated with these vaccines. Illness associated with the vaccines usually given to these infants can be very dangerous. It is with these considerations that we recommend these vaccines.

Sincerely, Roderick Bahner, MD

Tamika was greatly relieved when the judge honored her parental request not to compel her babies to be vaccinated. She reports that DCS workers were very unhappy with the decision.

Tamika Seagraves is one of many parents seeking to do the best for her children and to navigate the mountains of conflicting medical recommendations, from vitamin K to co-sleeping, from vaccines to breastfeeding. Her family has suffered devastating consequences that may have arisen from following prevailing medical advice. All she wants is to have her children back home and to be able to grieve the loss of her two sons. Is she being punished for trying to make decisions based on medical advice? Or worse, as she fears, are her children now targeted for research because of the unusual circumstances of their births – against incredible odds – 3 sets of twins, all premature, all boy/girl sets, the only children born to an African American mother, with 2 of the boys dying as infants?

Note: It is legal in the U.S. to do medical experimentation on children that are wards of the state. See:

Medical Kidnapping in the U.S. – Kidnapping Children for Drug Trials

How You Can Help

Supporters set up a Facebook page for the family after Jaliyah was taken, called [Justice for Jaliyah](#). There are several more court hearings scheduled over the next few months.



The Governor of the state of Tennessee is Bill Haslam. He may be reached at (615) 741-2001, or contacted [here](#).

Senator Thelma Harper represents the Seagraves family's district. She may be reached at (615) 741-2453, or contacted [here](#).

Representative Bill Beck is the Representative for the Seagraves' district. He may be reached at (615) 741-3229, or contacted [here](#).

Did Tennessee Father Convicted of Shaken Baby Syndrome Get a Fair Trial?



Joe Whitaker with his son Jaden in happier days. Source: Whitaker family.

by **Health Impact News/MedicalKidnap.com Staff**

In 2014, *Health Impact News* brought you a story about a Jonesborough, Tennessee, couple Joe and Charlotte Whitaker, who were accused of Shaken Baby Syndrome (SBS). The local police charged the couple following a 911 call from Joe Whitaker on August 15, 2013, when their son, Jaden, became unresponsive.

Jaden was diagnosed with the controversial Shaken Baby Syndrome by a “child abuse specialist,” Dr. Mary Palmer of

the University of Knoxville Medical Center. In an update to this tragedy, the formerly happy family of five has lost everything. The couple lost their son to the state in 2014, and recently Charlotte lost her husband, home, and job. Joe Whitaker is now in jail for a crime his family says he did not commit.

Read the original article here:

[Accusations of Shaken Baby Syndrome in Tennessee Destroys Family – Lands Parents in Jail](#)

On January 24, 2017, Joe Whitaker was convicted of shaking his son, Jaden, and sentenced on February 21, 2017, to 15 years in prison. This was in spite of the fact that all across the country scientific research has led medical and legal experts to question the SBS diagnosis and wrongfully convicted parents and caregivers are being exonerated. In states other than Tennessee, judges are retrying cases and in many situations, attorneys are being trained to properly represent clients who may be falsely accused of SBS. See:

[Attorneys Being Trained to Fight Bogus Child Abuse Charges used in Medical Kidnappings](#)

[University of Michigan Law School Awarded \\$250K to Learn How to Defend Shaken Baby Syndrome Cases](#)

[Supreme Judicial Court of Massachusetts Opens the Legal Door to Retry All Shaken Baby Syndrome Convictions](#)

In her paper, “[The Next Innocence Project: Shaken Baby](#)

Syndrome and the Criminal Courts,” Northwestern Law Professor and author Deborah Tuerkheimer explains:

Every year in this country, hundreds of people are convicted of having shaken a baby, most often to death. In a prosecution paradigm without precedent, expert medical testimony is used to establish that a crime occurred, that the defendant caused the infant’s death by shaking, and that the shaking was sufficiently forceful to constitute depraved indifference to human life. Shaken Baby Syndrome (SBS) is, in essence, a medical diagnosis of murder, one based solely on the presence of a diagnostic triad: retinal bleeding, bleeding in the protective layer of the brain, and brain swelling.

In the numerous shaken baby syndrome cases that have been covered by *Health Impact News*, we have seen that this “triad” has been used by Child Abuse Specialists and other doctors to accuse parents of abuse, even when there are no other symptoms and in the absence of any history of abuse or violence by the parents. In many of these cases, parents and primary caregivers or family doctors are not even consulted. Tuerkheimer continues:

New scientific research has cast doubt on the forensic significance of this triad (used to diagnose SBS), thereby undermining the foundations of thousands of SBS convictions. Outside the United States, this scientific evolution has prompted systemic reevaluations of the prosecutorial paradigm. In contrast, our criminal justice system has failed to absorb the latest scientific knowledge.

See more on the new Child Abuse Specialist Pediatric subspecialty:

Child Abuse Pediatricians: An “Ethically Bankrupt” Profession that Destroys Families

Are New Pediatric “Child Abuse Specialists” Causing an Increase in Medical Kidnappings?



Dr. Mary Palmer –Child Abuse Pediatrician. [Source](#).

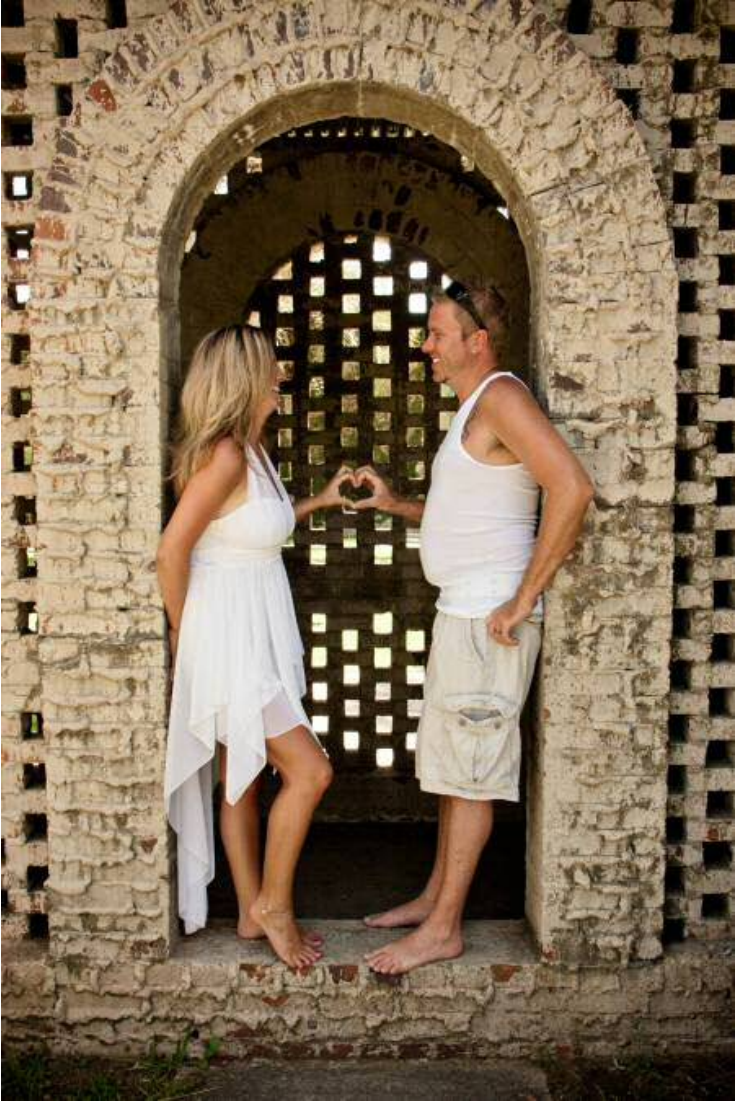
Insufficient Evidence that the Triad of Symptoms are Caused by Shaking

Joe Whitaker was accused, arrested, and convicted based on the triad of symptoms used by some medical professionals. The science upon which the diagnosis of shaken baby syndrome rests is being challenged by a growing number of medical experts.

See:

Dr. Waney Squier Speaks out on Faulty Shaken Baby Science Used to Condemn the Innocent

Joe and Charlotte Whitaker have maintained that something else is wrong with their son, Jaden. In a recent interview, Charlotte declared that the medical professionals involved with diagnosing Jaden with SBS never considered or tested for alternate causes. Those medical professionals have a responsibility to rule out other causes of the triad of symptoms, but in the Whitakers' case, they allegedly failed to do so.



The Whitakers have been ripped apart based on highly controversial science. Source: Whitaker family.

Both Joe and Charlotte reported that Jaden had two

accidental short-distance falls within weeks of August 15, 2013. Charlotte stated that the prosecution's medical experts testified in the trial that short-distance falls could not cause the triad of symptoms.

On the contrary, scientific research shows that short-distance falls can indeed cause the triad of symptoms used to diagnose SBS. The state utilized the triad to convict Joe Whitaker and, further, allegedly did not investigate the information about Jaden's falls or alternate medical problems presented by the defendant's medical experts.

During Whitaker's sentencing, Judge Rice quoted the prosecution's medical experts and stated that it would take a fall from at least 30 feet to cause Jaden's injuries.

However, there is evidence in the medical research that challenges that theory, evidence which was ignored in the Whitakers' case. In 2001, Minnesota pathologist Dr. John Plunkett conducted a [study](#) based on primary source data in which he concluded that short-distance falls are capable of producing the symptoms identified as shaken-baby syndrome.

Plunkett explains in an [interview](#) reported by USA Today:

It's clear that low velocity, even a 2- or 3-foot fall can cause serious and fatal brain injury. If people had paid attention to the science, it would not have been a mystery.

Judge Refuses to Allow Defense Medical Expert Testimony

A Daubert Hearing was held for the Whitaker trial in August 2015. Daubert Hearing is an evaluation by a trial judge on the admissibility of defined “expert,” or scientific and technical testimony and evidence. In the hearing, Assistant District Attorney, Erin McArdle, objected to the testimony of defense medical expert, forensic pathologist Dr. R.K. Wright.

To Charlotte’s disbelief, Judge Lisa Rice upheld the objection. Defense Attorney David Robins informed Charlotte that both Assistant D.A. McArdle and Judge Rice decided that a forensic pathologist would not be appropriate because Jaden was still alive.

Defense Experts – Jaden Not Abused, Had Stroke

Forensic Pathologist Dr. Wright states in his report which was not allowed into evidence:

Jaden Whitaker is neither an abused or neglected child as alleged in the presentment. ...He suffered a stroke. Strokes come in two flavors – ischemic, which he had and hemorrhagic which he did not have as the blood would have been seen in the brain in the CT and MRI. I have appended Nelson’s chapter on ischemic stroke. ... The retinal, subarachnoid and subdural hemorrhage are the result of Jaden’s successful resuscitation. Although historically (1972 – 2011) considered to be diagnostic of Shaken Baby, recent research has disproved this. Jaden seems to only have a scant subdural with no impact injury. That is a re-perfusion change.

Charlotte feels that, without the testimony of Dr. Wright, who planned to testify in person, Joe did not get a fair trial.



Loving dad lost his son when the court refused to hear evidence from medical experts. Source: Whitaker family.

Additionally, Judge Rice did not allow the remaining two experts, Dr. Julie Mack and Dr. Charles Hyman, to testify via live video. Defense Attorney David Robbins told Charlotte that Judge Rice also upheld the prosecution's objections to deleting portions of the medical experts' pre-recorded testimony.

Defense medical expert, Dr. Julie Mack, is affiliated with Penn State Milton S. Hershey Medical Center. She received her medical degree from Harvard Medical School and has been in practice for more than 20 years. Mack earned her fellowship in pediatric radiology from Children's Medical Center in Dallas, Texas. Dr. Mack is certified by the American Board of Radiology with an added certificate in pediatric radiology.

These qualifications were challenged in court by Assistant D.A. McArdle, who, according to Charlotte, claimed erroneously several times that Dr. Mack only specializes in mammograms. Charlotte believes this was an attempt by the prosecution to minimize defense medical expert witnesses.

Where They Are Now, and How You Can Help

The Whitakers will continue to fight for their family. On May 4, they are filing a motion for a new trial. If that is not successful, they plan to appeal. They are praying for justice and for Joe to be set free.

Meanwhile, he sits in jail and their son Jaden has been adopted out. The termination of their parental rights happened very quickly, within just a few months, after Jaden was diagnosed by the Child Abuse Expert as having Shaken Baby Syndrome. There is ample evidence that something else was going on and that the science behind Shaken Baby Syndrome is very flawed, but that evidence was apparently ignored by the court and by Child Protective Services.

A Facebook page has been set up in support of Joe, called [Justice for Joe:](#)



Governor Bill Haslam may be reached at 615-741-2001, or contacted [here](#).

Representative Mathew Hill, House District 7, may be reached at 615-741-2251, or contacted [here](#).

Senator Rusty Crowe, Senate District 3, may be reached at 615-741-2468, or contacted [here](#).

Donate to Families Against Medical Kidnapping to assist Joe and Charlotte Whitaker [here](#).

Terminally Ill Father Finds Cure in Cannabis Oil but Now on Death Bed After Complying with CPS to Get Children Back



Michael Brooks and his sons having fun at a visit. Source: Brooks family.

by **Health Impact News/MedicalKidnap.com Staff**

For nearly three years, Michael Brooks of Northwestern Tennessee has been fighting for his children and for his life. Faced with terminal Hepatitis C, he finally found a treatment that saved his life and brought him into remission.

However, Child Protective Services of Tennessee is using the

very thing that brought him from the brink of death – cannabis oil – as grounds to take his children and place them into foster care. He has been forced to choose between staying in Tennessee and accelerate towards his death or leaving to continue treatment in Colorado and risk being accused of abandoning his children.

In the summer of 2015, Michael, Jamie, and their young son Damon were recovering from lead poisoning that they had acquired from living in an old house. Jamie was still pregnant with their second son, Elijah.

The couple was horrified to learn that Damon’s blood had high levels of lead, and the poisoning had affected more than 30 percent of his cognitive abilities. Damon’s parents had noticed subtle behavioral changes like less eye contact, less social interaction, loss of affection, and the baby banging his head on the wall. They suspected that the baby had autism, but they never expected lead poisoning to be the culprit.

Damon started receiving some therapy, but Michael felt that it wasn’t enough and that he needed more help. He decided to contact the Department of Children’s Services (DCS) to voice his concerns about his son not receiving sufficient help. He told *Health Impact News* that he had been under the impression that, when you need help with your family, you call DCS and they will help. In the beginning, it appeared that he might have been correct. DCS sent a therapist to their home.

However, once they were in the home, social workers from Child Protective Services (CPS) got involved and ultimately took Damon. Michael said that DCS “reverse-engineered” the couple’s past domestic conflicts, which stemmed from the stress of dealing with terminal illness, and they took the baby. Then, mandatory drug screenings ensued, showing

Michael testing positive for THC, a psychoactive chemical in cannabis that alters brain function. Michael said that CPS began to “run through my life with a fine-tooth comb.”

<https://youtu.be/pXe4G1EC9xk>

Traditional Medicine Had No Cure as Michael was Dying

Michael has advanced Hepatitis C that he acquired from a shared tattoo kit that he and his friends used to tattoo crosses on their arms in high school. He is the only survivor of that group. He had lived half of his life without knowing that he had the disease. According to Michael:

They call it the silent killer, and for years it went undetected. When it affects your internal organs is when you know you have it.

Michael had overlooked signs until he was in excruciating pain. By the time he sought treatment, he was in the advanced stages. He said:

I was prescribed life-destroying, addictive substances, over 20 different medicines, like oxycodone, morphine, and benzodiazepines.

He said that the medications were not only “harmful to the body and alters your personality,” but also “cost taxpayers a million dollars” in the past decade. Additionally, he said that they offered little relief with regard to the pain, and they

significantly decreased his quality of life. He did not like the way the pain medications kept him from being present, in the moment, for his children.

As the disease progressed, Michael arrived at the point where traditional medicine could no longer help him. His pancreas was so badly damaged that he had to go on diabetes medication, and he was developing cirrhosis of the liver. He developed acquired hemophilia, and his blood platelet count was so low, that he was no longer eligible for traditional Hepatitis C treatment. Michael is 6'2", and at his lowest point weighed 123 lbs. He was bleeding out of his eye sockets and pores of his skin. He said:

I crawled in my deathbed. It was hell. It scared me so much. I just knew I was going to die. I prayed for death. It was the most intense suffering. I didn't think a human being could endure what I did. Now, I know what to be afraid of.

Medical Cannabis Proves to be “Miracle” Cure

When he had his health, Michael was well-known for his talent for restoring antiques and building custom furniture. He made a name for himself doing custom work for the stars, people like Hank Williams Jr. and Kid Rock. Michael is bright and has an impeccable eye for detail.

So, when faced with the challenge of beating Hepatitis C, he took to the internet, researching alternative treatments for his condition.

When you're desperate, you leave no stone unturned.

He was somewhat surprised when his research led him to medical cannabis. He learned that it slowed down the progression of Hepatitis C. For the first time since his diagnosis, he had hope. The possibility that he might have more time to be a father to one-year-old Damon was exhilarating. Being a good father to his son motivated him more than anything to seek to heal.

Michael contacted Phoenix Tears in Littleton, Colorado, where he learned that he could benefit greatly from cannabis oil.

I had not heard of medical cannabis. I didn't know about its medicinal properties. But, I prayed about it and took it on good faith. I thought, it could buy me some time.

He later discovered that “a guardian angel” had offered to pay for his treatment including travel and accommodations. Ideally, he and his family would have moved to Colorado. But, with an income of \$800 a month for disability, it was not financially feasible. Michael said:

We're not wealthy enough to relocate. It's expensive to relocate to Colorado.

In time, cannabis oil proved to be a miracle medication that exceeded all of Michael's expectations. In seven months, the disease was completely eradicated from his body, and all of his internal organs were healing. His blood platelet count

was up, and he gained 50 lbs. He was off all of his other medications.

My viral load was undetectable. My doctor cried! I had no idea what it was like to be healthy. I was doing cartwheels at 47 years old!

Michael's Health Declines after Ceasing Cannabis to Satisfy CPS Demands

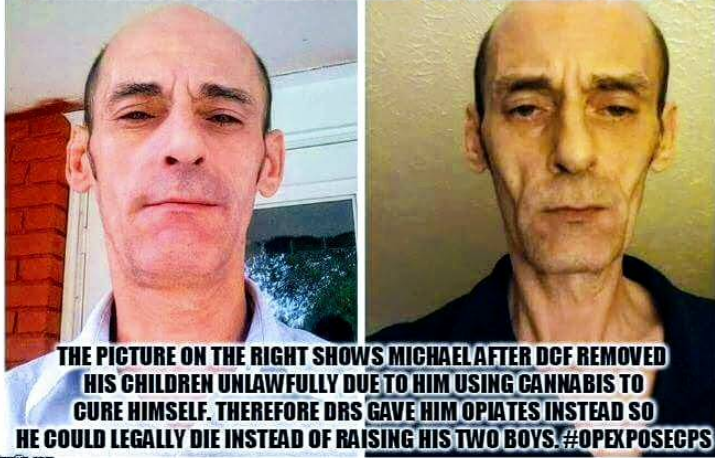
If Michael chooses to stay in Tennessee and cease cannabis treatment in Colorado, he will have a clean drug screening. If he chooses to leave the state for cannabis treatment in Colorado, CPS will view this as abandoning his children. With the heart of a loving, nurturing father, Michael has chosen not to leave Tennessee.

My health is going downhill pretty fast. I was the picture of health before they took my children.

Since he has been forced into mandatory drug testing by Tennessee CPS, he has relapsed back into the disease. He understands the repercussions of his decision. He said:

I'm literally dying. I'm cooperating with this because I love my children. I don't count my life as worthy as their lives. I choose to stay here and be run through the gauntlet.

THE PICTURE ON THE LEFT SHOWS MICHAEL AFTER CANNABIS OIL TREATMENT TO CURE HIS HEP C.



THE PICTURE ON THE RIGHT SHOWS MICHAEL AFTER DCF REMOVED HIS CHILDREN UNLAWFULLY DUE TO HIM USING CANNABIS TO CURE HIMSELF. THEREFORE DRs GAVE HIM OPIATES INSTEAD SO HE COULD LEGALLY DIE INSTEAD OF RAISING HIS TWO BOYS. #OPEKPOSECPS

The Children Suffer in DCS Care

Recently, Michael was told that Damon was having night terrors after visitation with him. He said that DCS is saying that it is a result of the child seeing his father. But, Michael disagrees. He believes that it is because of the trauma of the child being separated from the people who love him. When their visits are over, Michael reports the heartbreak:

I have to pull my son off of my leg.

Michael fears that they will start putting his son on psychiatric drugs. He longs to be more of a part of his children's lives. A while back, when he learned that his son had to have some testing done at Vanderbilt Hospital, Michael begged to be with him. He said:

I wanted to be there, to love and comfort my son while he goes through such an atrocious event. I wanted to crawl up in the bed with my son, comfort him where everybody is stabbing him under florescent lights.

Michael was devastated when his request was denied.

Michael said that his kids are being neglected while in DCS custody. He spoke of a recently supervised visitation at a facility where the kids were playing with toys that had corrosive battery panels.

It was to the point that they were leaking acid—the bin was soaking wet. I poured the bin out with battery acid.

He said that this was while a caseworker was on her phone “Facebooking” the whole time. That day Michael had an employee sign a document stating that he witnessed the incident.

Supportive Case Workers Removed from Case

Michael said that there have been many caseworkers, about a dozen since his family’s involvement with CPS, who were supportive of him. However, they have all been removed. He said that two caseworkers quit their job because of his family’s situation. In fact, he said that the first social worker quit three days into his case.

Note: This is very common in most of the Medical Kidnap stories that *Health Impact News* has reported. At least 75% of

the parents who have shared their stories with us have told us that at least one social worker quit or was fired specifically because of their case.

Michael's Biggest Regret – Calling DCS

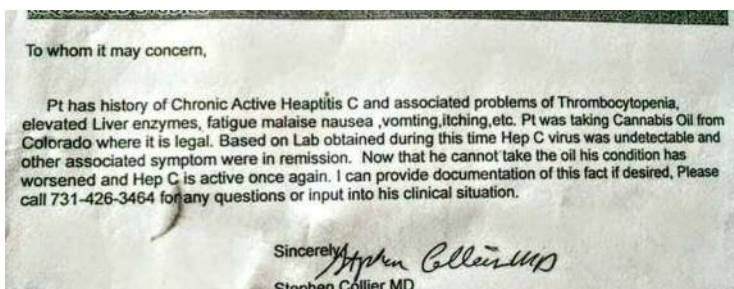
Although it was done out of the desire to advocate for his son, the biggest regret of Michael's life is that fateful phone call to DCS. He says that at the time he thought, "these are the people we need in our lives." Of all of the resources in their area, he felt that DCS could offer the most help. Laden with guilt, he now continually apologizes to his family:

I'm so sorry for what I've put you through ... I was so honest with them [DCS]. Honest to a fault.

Despite having one of his doctors offer to testify as an expert witness to the benefit and necessity of cannabis, Judge Mark Johnson has not changed his stance on the issue.

Michael said that, in the beginning, the children were being kept in custody on the basis of his use of "an illicit substance" despite being "warned about the dangers of cannabis around children and disregarding it." Now that he has stopped cannabis treatment, their reasons have changed.

They're saying I'm too sick to take care of my children.



It should be noted that DCS suggested that he and Jamie separate, and they did in the hope that it would get their children back.

A Dying Father's Message for His Children

Michael told *Health Impact News*:

I will continue to decline in health, and will die unless I take my health into my own hands. I can't take Hepatitis C medication—it will wipe me out. There's nothing that they could do.

Michael said that his local doctor is a Christian who prays with him and wants him to go back to Colorado for treatment. The doctor told him:

You need to go do what you gotta do. You've got a lot of organ damage. You were well on your way to recovery [before ceasing cannabis use].

The heart of the matter, however, is that Michael does not want to do anything that could be viewed as abandoning his

children. He wants his boys to know that he would never abandon them and that he is fighting for them—even at the expense of his own life. He loves his children more than anything, and he just wants to hold them and love on them, like a good father would.

On April 7, Judge Clayburn Peebles is scheduled to terminate Michael’s parental rights, which will make way for the boys’ foster parents to finalize the adoption.

See other stories where someone thought that Child Protective Services could help in a difficult situation, but ended up making the situation far worse:

[CPS Defies Doctors and Police to Take Young Children Away from Mother](#)

[Once Thriving Michigan Teenager Now Facing Death in CPS Custody](#)

How You Can Help:

Governor Bill Haslam may be reached at 615-741-2001 or contacted [here](#). His Facebook is [here](#). His Twitter is [here](#).

Representative Curtis Halford of House District 79 may be reached at 615-741-7478 or contacted [here](#).

Senator John Stevens of Senate District 24 may be reached at 615-741-4576 or contacted [here](#).

Michael’s GoFundMe called *Saving the Brooks Brothers* is [here](#).

Gibson County Department of Children’s Services may be reached at 731-855-7864.

Disabled Father Denied by State of Tennessee to Father his Own Child



Hailey having fun with her family at a visit. Photo provided by family.

by **Health Impact News/MedicalKidnap.com Staff**

Matthew Marble was not even in the state when his 10 month old daughter was hospitalized for abuse. Little Hailey was in the care of her mother and her mother's boyfriend when someone smashed her head into a table.

The head injury left her with cerebral palsy, and, due to the alleged actions of Tennessee social workers, the incident left her without her father.

Matthew, who is disabled himself, has been fighting to get his daughter ever since that fateful day in June 2013. His parental rights have been severed by the state of Tennessee, primarily due to his disabilities, but he and his attorney Connie Reguli hope to reverse that decision and have filed a lawsuit against the state for violations of the *Americans with Disabilities Act*.

Matthew is not alone in his fight. His family has been by his side throughout the whole ordeal. His aunt Bobbi Dubois contacted *Health Impact News* to ask for help in telling their story. Bobbi and her husband Will, Jr., have been willing to take care of Hailey and facilitate the relationship between father and daughter, but they have allegedly been blocked by Tennessee Department of Children's Services (DCS) at every turn. The Dubois are certainly well qualified – they have long been advocates for others, and have even been asked by their own state to take in disabled children.

Because of his disabilities, Matthew has never claimed that he could parent alone, but he just wants the opportunity to be a part of his little girl's life. However, DCS set up a permanency plan for him which, according to Reguli, was “discriminatory and failed to accommodate his limitations.”

This story is about a father's right to parent his child. He loves his daughter, and he did nothing wrong. He was not involved in the abuse that happened when she was in her mother's care. DCS knows that, but still they have kept him from his daughter and have demonstrated that they prefer that she live with strangers rather than her own family.

Baby Conceived; Father Takes Responsibility

Matthew Marble and Aren Stuber met and began dating in

high school. Aren became pregnant, and Matthew made it clear that he wanted to be a part of his child's life. Before the baby was born, the couple broke up and Aren moved with her mother to Tennessee. Even so, Matthew wanted to be there for his child, and he went to Tennessee for Hailey's birth on August 8, 2012. At that time, he had turned 18, and Aren was 16.



Matthew – proud daddy holds his newborn baby at the hospital in Tennessee. Photo courtesy of the family.

Since his daughter's birth, Matthew made several trips from Michigan to Tennessee to spend time with his new daughter. Aren also made about 3 trips to Michigan to leave the baby with Matthew and his family for visits. He sent money to help support his child. Despite the fact that Hailey's parents lived in different states many miles apart, she had a relationship with both parents and their families.

When Hailey was about 6 months old, Matthew went to Tennessee to file for joint custody of his daughter. The court reportedly told him that he should start off with filing for legal visitation rights, which he did. A hearing was set for July 3.

Horrified Father Learns His Baby Was Allegedly Abused In Mother's Care

Just before that hearing, everything changed. Aren and her current boyfriend were involved with partying and drugs, and, according to court documents, “left her 10-month-old baby without proper supervision.” At some point during the party, Hailey’s head was smashed on a coffee table, and her mother was reportedly passed out from drugs. Aren’s mother was allegedly involved as well in Aren’s having access to drugs.

Hailey was subsequently hospitalized at Vanderbilt hospital, where she was diagnosed with cerebral palsy. DCF understandably became involved because this was a case of severe abuse.

Meanwhile, a relative of Aren’s reportedly sent a message to Matthew and his family to get to Tennessee right away because there was an abuse allegation and Hailey was being taken from her mother and placed into foster care. Matthew’s aunt Bobbi told *Health Impact News*:

Nobody at that point actually knew what was going on, but it wasn't good.

Matthew, his mother Kimberly Trackwell, and the whole

family made a beeline to Tennessee to be there for Hailey. They were devastated that Hailey had been hurt. Because Matthew was the child's father, both legally and biologically, he should have been able to go straight to her and take her home with him. But DCF had different ideas. Though court records indicate that they were well aware that Matthew was Hailey's father, they had already picked out a home for her with complete strangers to the family.

The Guardian ad litem, Virginia Tomkins, said that the only way that Matthew and his family could even see the baby was for everyone, including a minor cousin, to a drug test. Everyone was clean, but still, the GAL allegedly refused to allow them to see Hailey.

Aren was charged with and pled guilty to severe child abuse, but neither her boyfriend or her mother were ever charged. Because Aren was still a minor at age 17 at the time, she was placed into foster care. She has since aged out. In November 2014, she voluntarily gave up her parental rights to her baby, but she and her family have reportedly been allowed visitation, as evidenced by photos and posts on Facebook.



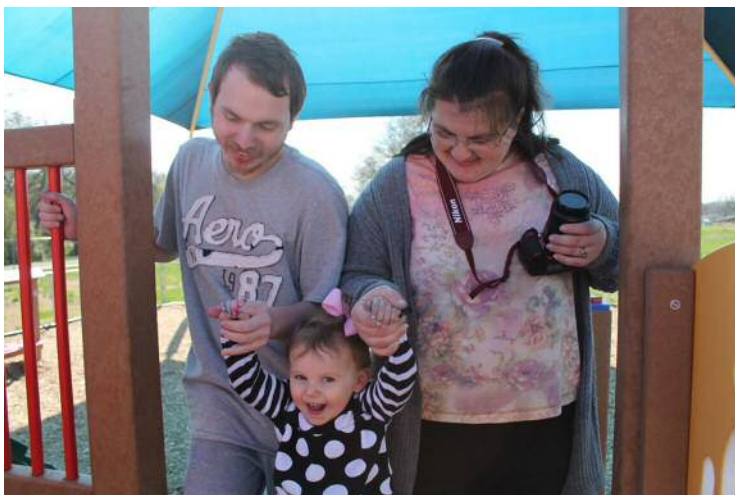
Hailey now has a little brother on her mother's side and was allowed to visit him in the hospital. Photo supplied by family.

DCS Stacks Deck Against Disabled Father

However, it is a different story with Matthew Marble and his family, who currently have no visitation rights, even though they had nothing to do with Hailey's abuse. In fact, according to court documents:

The father was never alleged to have been a risk of harm to his daughter.

Matthew is a sweet guy with a ready smile – the kind of person that people are immediately drawn to. According to his aunt, “everybody loves Matthew.” At the same time, it is apparent that something is not quite right.



Hailey having fun with her daddy and grandmother at a visit.
Photo supplied by family.

Matthew suffers from several cognitive and physical disorders, and DCS was made aware of these from the beginning. When he was in 3rd grade, he was hit in the face with a soccer ball and was knocked out when he fell backward onto a block of ice. Since that time, he has suffered from a seizure disorder. He is partially blind in one eye, and he suffers from chronic knee pain from a disorder which caused one leg to grow faster than the other. He was fully vaccinated as a child, and these symptoms are possibly related to vaccine injury.

DCS social workers argued that Matthew’s seizure disorder affected “his ability to be the sole parent.” At the same time,

they created a permanency plan for Matthew that he was not capable of meeting. Connie Reguli is his current attorney who was hired after his court-appointed attorney was fired for inadequate representation. She states that:

DCS knowingly gave [Matthew] objectives beyond his capabilities.

According to Reguli, “Under the ADA and Section 504, programs and services must be accessible to and usable by people with disabilities.” A disability is anything that interferes with daily activities, and Connie says, “the state must make accommodations.”

But the permanency plan that Matthew was ordered to complete before getting his own child included demands to:

- *pay child support*
- *obtain and maintain suitable housing for six months*
- *demonstrate payment for food and utilities on time*
- *provide documents for proof of income, including pay stubs*

Matthew has the full support of his family and resides with his family in Michigan. He has obtained jobs, but his disabilities, as well as multiple trips to Tennessee, have hindered his ability to meet these requirements. He completed the requisite parenting classes and assessments, signed medical release forms, and submitted to random drug

screens, which were all clean.

DCS terminated his rights to his child in April 2015 based on his lack of employment and dependence upon his family for housing. He was accused of “abandonment for failure to remit support,” and of “substantial noncompliance with the permanency plans.”

In a twist of irony, or excellent work by an attorney, a former DCF supervisor involved with the case met with attorney Connie Reguli for depositions on April 4, 2017, where Lois Gregory assured Reguli that many of these very demands “would not be a requirement of any permanency plan.” But they were for Matthew Marble, even with his disabilities which made those requirements unattainable for him.

Watch:

<https://youtu.be/55xynFMBKcG>

Reguli also says that they learned for the first time about secret meetings between DCS staff, behind closed doors, without any representation from the families whose lives are being decided in the meetings.

Hailey Considered Special Needs, Loves Her Father

After Hailey was placed into foster care in June of 2012, Matthew and his family were not able to see Hailey even once until September of that year. They were then able to have some visitation, for the time period until Matthew’s parental rights were terminated.

Because of the abuse, Hailey is now considered “special

needs.” She has cerebral palsy, but her doctor has said that it is mild and is not likely to get any worse. She also sometimes wears braces on her feet. Her cognitive abilities do not seem to be affected, and she is a bright, loving child who clearly loves her father. During the time that he was able to be in her life, Matthew testified:

She definitely understands I’m Dad, and she makes that well known when I walk into our visits because she’ll come up to me and she will give me a hug. And I’ll tell her I love her, and she says I love you. and then she’ll refer to me as Daddy or Dad.

Capable Family Placement Denied

Matthew’s Aunt Bobbi and Uncle Will DuBois, Jr., asked social worker Lindsey Kenyon in October about kinship placement. From the beginning, Kenyon made it clear that she wanted to keep Hailey in Tennessee and seemed to hinder the process of getting Hailey back to her family. She reportedly said she didn’t know what it would take for Bobbi to be eligible to care for Hailey.

Bobbi is a homeschool mom who has an Associates Degree in Special Education and has worked as an advocate for low-income families. Her husband builds vehicles for handicapped people. They have experience working with special needs. In fact, she says that Matthew’s family is full of teachers and nursing assistants – a family well-qualified to work with children with special needs.



Matthew has plenty of family support to help him take care of his daughter. Photo provided by the family.

When Bobbi got nowhere with Kenyon, she began researching what they would need to do to get an Interstate Compact for the Placement of Children (ICPC), so that they could care for Hailey and assist Matthew in being a parent to his child. This arrangement would have been acceptable to the family and would have been in compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act.

Bobbi found help with Felicia Harris in the Upper Cumberland DCS office, who explained that they would need to be certified in both Tennessee and Michigan. They started the process immediately and finished the process “in record time.” In fact, while they were qualifying to be foster parents in Michigan, they were asked to care for several special-needs children, which they did. They eventually adopted one of them. (Note: this was not a forced adoption. Bobbi made certain that the mother truly wanted to relinquish her rights to her child.)

All this was to no avail. By the time that Tennessee DCS stopped dragging their feet and this came before a judge, Connie Reguli says that DCS attorney Tracy Hetzel told the family court that it would be “barbaric” to send Hailey to live with relatives after she has been in foster care for so long. (See: “[DCS Advocates for Foster Parents Over Relatives](#)” by Connie Reguli)

This is in direct conflict with both Tennessee state law and federal guidelines, but as many of our families can testify, that seems to mean little to Child Protective Services. The family was heartbroken. Bobbi told *Health Impact News*:

We are OK to adopt others, but not our own niece! Our own flesh and blood!



Left to right: Hailey with her grandmother Kimberly, Aunt Bobbi and daddy. Photo supplied by the family.

The reason for this appears to be financial. Connie Reguli writes that under both state and federal guidelines:

...the state child welfare agency is required to place with a relative when the child cannot be returned to a parent. Kinship foster care is codified in Tennessee Title 37 and is also a requirement put down by the United States Department of Health and Human Services under Title IV E of the Social Security Act for any state child welfare agency receiving federal funds.

Foster Mother – “You Promised Me This Baby!”

Bobbi and the family witnessed a very disturbing display when they attended a preliminary hearing on November 7, 2013, more than 4 months after Hailey was removed and placed into foster care. According to court documents, the foster mother, through the [Camelot Care](#) foster care agency, turned to GAL Virginia Thompkins and said:

You promised me this baby!

Bobbi told us that she had tears in her eyes and was clearly not expecting the possibility of a family placement for her beautiful blond-haired, blue-eyed niece. The GAL reportedly responded to the distraught foster mother:

I know, and we are going to win.

Hailey and other children are not prizes to be won; they are children belonging to their families. How can this kind of thinking exist, where strangers believe that they have a right

to someone else's child?

At this point, it appears that the foster parents, GAL, and social workers did win, but an appeal has been filed, as well as an Americans with Disabilities Act lawsuit in federal court. Hailey's biological family is not giving up. Bobbi told us:

My nephew is so innocent. He just always wants to do the right thing. He would be such a great dad! All that he needs is an extra hand.

She says that DCS has stolen that from him for more than 3 years now.

Title IV-E Funding – the Root of Child Protective Services Corruption

In the documents filed by attorney Connie Reguli, the root of all this corruption – the stealing of children from loving parents – is spelled out:

Title IV-E funds are an unlimited source of funds for the child welfare state agency that are termed as a “use it or lose it” funding scheme. So long as states expend the monies granted to them, they are eligible to receive the same or more money for the following year.

However, these funds are only allocated for the financial support of the foster care system. A child can only qualify as a commodity in this funding scheme if the child is removed from the home by a State agency and placed in the foster care

system. The funds are NOT available for family preservation or protecting the family unit prior to removal. Nor are they available to provide resources after the child has been returned to the parent.

The State of Tennessee [and many other states] is dependent upon securing Title IV-E funds to maintain its annual operating budget and the continued employment of its staff. Therefore, the State must keep the flow of children into the foster care system to continue to receive their federal funding benefits.

The end result creates a “quota” of children that must be removed from the care and custody of their parents. ...

In addition, the State of Tennessee [and all other states] receives a bonus in the minimum amount of \$4,000 (four thousand dollars) for each child they adopt out after terminating the rights of the parent. [Funds provided under the Clintons’ Adoption and Safe Families Act of 1997.]

This financial incentive is authorized under Section 473A of the Social Security Act and provides motivation for the agency to terminate the rights of parents instead of complying with the public policy of Tennessee which is to reunify the child with the parents.

How You Can Help

Governor Bill Haslam may be reached at (615) 741-2001, or contacted [here](#).

Senator Mae Beavers represents the district where Hailey’s case is held. She may be reached at (615) 741-2421, or

contacted [here](#).

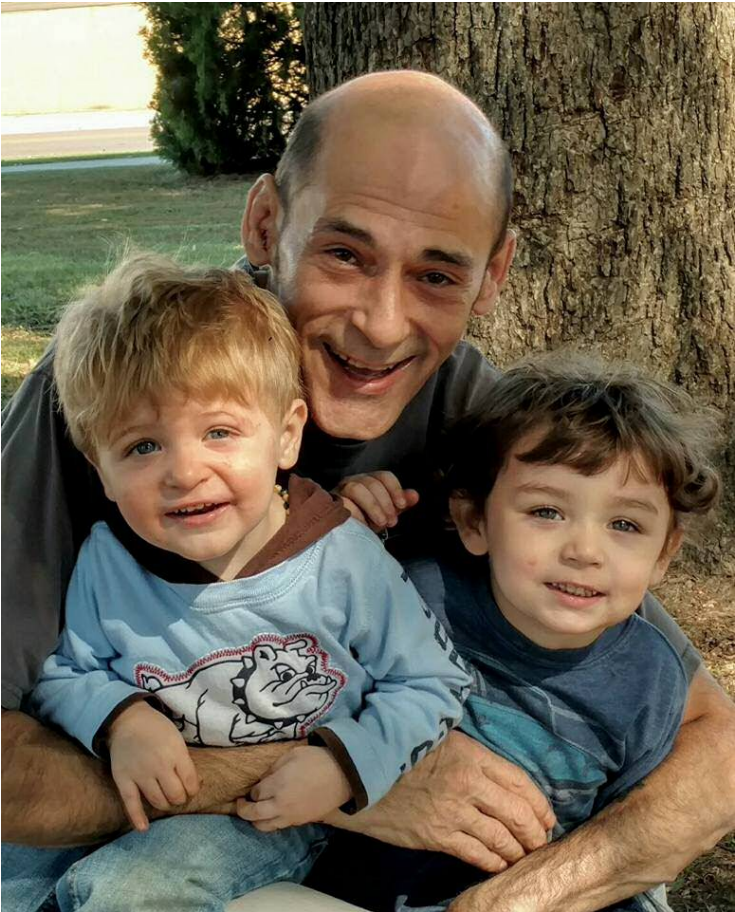
Representative Kelly Keisling represents their district. He may be reached at (615) 741-6852, or contacted [here](#).

Two Congressmen have recently introduced bills to extend Tennessee DCS until 2021. ([Source](#)) Concerned citizens need to contact them and ask them to reconsider their position in light of the harm that comes to families through the Department of Children's Services.

Senator Mike Bell introduced SB0068. He may be reached at (615) 741-1946, or contacted [here](#).

Representative Jeremy Faison introduced the companion bill, HB0224. He may be reached at (615) 741-6871, or contacted [here](#).

Tennessee Judge Gives Dying Father Chance to Defend Himself in Effort to Regain Custody of Children



Michael Brooks and sons. Photo courtesy of the family.

by Health Impact News/MedicalKidnap.com Staff

In a Facebook Live video Friday (April 7th), Michael Brooks gave an update on his case in Tennessee. He and Jamie had been in court that morning and were expecting Judge Clayburn Peebles to terminate their parental rights to their two sons. But, in an interesting turn of events, the couple left court that day with their parental rights still in place. Also, due to not having a lawyer present, Michael was given a 60-day window to prepare to present his case to the court again.

THE PICTURE ON THE LEFT SHOWS MICHAEL AFTER CANNABIS OIL TREATMENT TO CURE HIS HEP C.



THE PICTURE ON THE RIGHT SHOWS MICHAEL AFTER DCF REMOVED HIS CHILDREN UNLAWFULLY DUE TO HIM USING CANNABIS TO CURE HIMSELF. THEREFORE DRs GAVE HIM OPIATES INSTEAD SO HE COULD LEGALLY DIE INSTEAD OF RAISING HIS TWO BOYS. #OPEXPOSECPS

Michael Brooks is dying from Hepatitis C. His disease was under control while using medical cannabis, but he was forced to give up his medication due to Tennessee laws as he tried to meet requirements to get his children back from the Tennessee Department of Children's Services (DCS).

See original story:

Terminally Ill Father Finds Cure in Cannabis Oil but Now on Death Bed After Complying with CPS to Get Children Back

Michael arrived on time, but when he walked into the courtroom, his case was already being heard. He said that social workers with DCS and the children's Guardian ad litem (GAL) were "already there approaching the judge to hurry up and end this." He said that they were saying that it "was in the best interests of the children to go ahead and lay this to rest, and let them stay where they are."

Michael was surprised at the judge's response:

The judge kind of smiled at the GAL and said, "Yeah, I'm pretty sure that is what you would like to see happen."

Michael went on to say that Jamie was running late, and as a result, she was being accused of "wanton disregard" before the judge. Reportedly, the judge asked, "How can you call it wanton disregard, we don't even know what's happening with Ms. Williams?" The judge then went back to his chambers to wait for Jamie to arrive.

Michael explains:

He wasn't going to let them move forward without the parents. He was really looking out for us.

When Jamie arrived five minutes late, she gave an explanation, and the court forgave her tardiness.

Michael did not have a lawyer, and the judge was aware of it. His previous lawyer had been court-appointed, and according to Michael, would not make himself available when Michael needed him. He said that the lawyer was not looking out for his best interests and did not understand the healing properties of cannabis. The lawyer's blatant disregard for Michael was so egregious that Michael reported him to a professional board, and the complaint is now being reviewed.

Reportedly, in the courtroom on Friday, the GAL said that Michael not having a lawyer "was a tactic on his part to try and slow the process."

According to Michael, the judge interjected and said:

Mr. Brooks needs a lawyer.

Michael went on to tell the judge that he had brought all of his files with him and was prepared to go *pro se* if needed. (*Pro se* is a Latin term meaning "for himself." It is used when a person represents himself in court.) He told him:

Be patient with me, because I'm in the deep water. I don't know how to swim.

The judge reportedly called the actions of DCS and GAL "draconian," and would not allow the court to proceed without him having a lawyer present. The judge went into his chambers to make some phone calls to find Michael a lawyer. When the judge returned, he had the bailiff hand Michael the contact information for the attorney that he had

secured for him.

Michael said:

Jamie and I were sitting there—they're expressing their deep concern to go ahead and terminate our [parental] rights. And, the judge wouldn't allow it. Within a few minutes, I saw these women—it was like a feeding frenzy of hellish hounds over my children. The judge said he just wasn't going to sit there and watch that go down in his courtroom from a draconious [sic] group such as DCS. It's amazing what happened!

Michael gave all the glory to God and said:

This was truly the best possible outcome for this day. We've been given 60 more days. This is nothing less than miraculous. To see integrity in the courtroom, for the first time in 19 months, was such a breath of fresh air. I feel so revitalized. It feels like two tons have been lifted off of me. I haven't had this much hope in a long time. It feels good. It feels real good.

Michael ended the video thanking his supporters saying:

You guys are helping me to fight for my boys. They've got so much love. They're the most fortunate children in the world—in the end—that they've had people praying, in more than a dozen languages, around the world, for their safe return home to their momma and daddy.

How You Can Help

Governor Bill Haslam may be reached at (615) 741-2001 or contacted [here](#). His Facebook is [here](#). His Twitter is [here](#).

Representative Curtis Halford of House District 79 may be reached at (615) 741-7478 or contacted [here](#).

Senator John Stevens of Senate District 24 may be reached at (615) 741-4576 or contacted [here](#).

Michael's GoFundMe called *Saving the Brooks Brothers* is [here](#).

Gibson County Department of Children's Services may be reached at (731) 855-7864.

Medically Kidnapped Baby Scheduled for Execution TODAY!



Baby Steffen's parents do not want to take him off life support. They want to give him a chance to live. Photo provided by the family.

UPDATE 7/15/2018

Parents of Down Syndrome Baby Euthanized by Vanderbilt Hospital Expose Lies of Social Workers in Court

UPDATE 6/7/2018

7-Year-Old Sister of Down Syndrome Baby Euthanized by Vanderbilt Hospital Still Not Returned to Family – State Wants Her Adopted

UPDATE 3/20/2018

Tennessee Family Seeks Lawsuit for Malpractice, Negligence, and Wrongful Death Over Down Syndrome Baby Taken Off of Life Support

UPDATE 8/3/2017

Tennessee Sister of Baby Steffen Traumatized Seeing Dad Arrested During Chuck E. Cheese Visit

UPDATE 7/17/2017

Tennessee Parents of Baby Steffen Jailed While Appearing in Court and Questioning Drug Test

UPDATE 7/12/2017

Tennessee Family Buries Baby Steffen as Social Workers Stop Photos – Sister Still in Foster Care

UPDATE 7/6/2017

Tennessee Family Wants Daughter and Sister of Deceased Baby Steffen to Come Home

UPDATE 6/20/2017

Judge Who Ordered Baby Steffen to be Removed from Life Support Orders Sister be Placed for Adoption

UPDATE 6/13/2017

Family Seeks Answers on Baby's Death – Threatened Arrest for Trying to Record Last Moments of Life

UPDATE 6/6/2017

Civil Rights Abuse? Judge Only Gives Parents 24 Hours to Find Doctor Before Baby is Removed from Life Support

UPDATE 2 – 6/3/2017

Grandma Lisa took this video of Baby Steffen responding to her voice and touch today, and after recording it, she told Health Impact News that the head nurse told her she could no longer record:

<https://youtu.be/xXFwcwfY8dI>

UPDATE – 6/3/2017

Baby Scheduled to go Off Life Support Responding to Family - Rally and Court Date on Monday Morning

UPDATE 4 - 5/30/2017

WSMV Channel 4 Nashville has now covered the story:

Judge orders hospital to keep baby on life support

They had contacted us at Health Impact News to get in contact with the family, since we broke the story.

UPDATE 3 - 5/30/2017

Judge Grimes, the judge standing in for Judge Wayne Shelton today, granted the injunction until June 6th at noon. At that time, Judge Shelton, who is more familiar with the case, will make a ruling. The family is hopeful that things will turn around for the baby by then.

The family is requesting that DCS allow the family more time to visit the baby.

Here is a copy of [today's court order](#).

UPDATE 2 - 5/30/2017

Health Impact News has just learned that the grandma, Lisa, has been asked to leave the hospital room where Baby Steffen is staying:

DCS social workers, Deanna and Serena, just came into the hospital room and told the grandmother that Heather Wyatt,

DCS supervisor in Clarksville, called and said that Lisa is only allowed in the room an hour and a half every other day, and they escorted her out of the hospital room and unit. But they have allowed the foster mother and the sitter service lady is still allowed to be there.

The DCS main office number is (615) 741-9701. Supervisor Heather Wyatt's cell phone is 931 905 3800.

The parents, meantime, are waiting for the judge to return to court from lunch at 1:30 p.m. local time.

UPDATE 1 – 5/30/2017

There are reports on social media from some who have called the governor's office, that DCS no longer has custody of the baby, but Health Impact News has not been able to confirm this.

A family member has reported to Health Impact News:

Before 10 am, they "clamped" the machine, but he didn't do well, so they hooked him back up.

One person on Facebook has commented:

Vanderbilt will do it or they will withhold comfort measures. That's how they made us consent to pulling my daughter off. Lawyers won't take them on, hospitals won't take a transfer once they make this decision, and Vanderbilt doctors have no heart. They even admitted they messed up is why my daughter was dying. They won't win this.

Health Impact News has not confirmed anything in this particular comment, but you can read other stories of medical kidnapping we have published involving Vanderbilt Hospital at the bottom of this article.

The parents are reportedly on their way to court with their attorney seeking a Restraining Order.

If indeed the decision to stop life support rests in the hands of the hospital, this is a public, non emergency number, we have found:

Patient Relations: (615) 322-6154

For assistance, non-medical questions or complaints. This line is open every day from 7 a.m. to 9 p.m. If you are calling outside of these hours, listen to the recorded message carefully. Press zero for the Vanderbilt operator and request the Children's Hospital Administrator on call.

We will continue to provide updates as they come in.

Medically Kidnapped Baby Scheduled for Execution TODAY!

by **Health Impact News/MedicalKidnap.com Staff**

Doctors at Vanderbilt Hospital in Tennessee want to take a baby off of life support Tuesday, May 30. His family is fighting for his very life. They believe that there is still hope for 7 month old Steffen Rivenburg Jr., who was born with heart defects but was not sick until after Child Protective

Services seized custody of him and his older sister on February 2.

His mother Patricia Tornberg told *Health Impact News* that, even though he is very sick now:

I feel like he can make a turn-around. My husband and I want to give him a chance by keeping him on life support.

After baby Steffen was taken from his parents and placed into foster care, he caught a very serious viral infection on February 17 which caused damage to his heart. A heart surgery that the parents were told would not be needed until he was 6 months old became necessary on February 23. That was followed by 3 more heart surgeries and other procedures on his tiny body.

Patricia and Steffen Rivenburg Sr. have told the hospital and the Department of Children's Services (DCS) that they refuse to consent to taking their son off of life support, but the doctors reportedly plan to unplug him by noon on Tuesday, May 30th.

He is currently hooked up to an ECMO machine – extracorporeal membrane oxygenation machine, or a heart-lung bypass machine. According to [Healthline.com](https://www.healthline.com), the ECMO machine is used with serious, but reversible, heart or lung problems, and with the machine, the survival rate “can rise up to 60 percent.” Steffen's family just wants that chance for him.



Baby Steffen on life support Monday night, May 29. Photo provided by the family.

Born with Heart Defects But Thriving Before Taken by DCS

Steffen Jr. was born at Vanderbilt Hospital on October 15, 2016, with Down Syndrome and congenital heart defects, including Atrioventricular Septal Defect (AVSD), and pulmonary stenosis. By 3 months of age, Tetralogy of Fallot was suspected but not yet diagnosed. Doctors told his parents that he would require heart surgery at 6 months of age.

Despite his heart defects, he was thriving and doing well at home with his parents and big sister, Annalise, who was in first grade.



Big sissy kisses, before they were taken from their family.
Photo provided by the family.

His parents missed 3 doctors appointments due to car troubles. Each one was rescheduled. One of these was for a voluntary visit with a Down Syndrome clinic.

Annalise missed some school in the meantime. Patricia and Steffen Sr. were in the process of searching for an “umbrella school” – a homeschool cover school that they could use in order to legally homeschool in the state of Tennessee. They recognized that the baby’s heart condition and upcoming surgeries created conditions under which homeschooling would work better for their family.

They never got the chance.

DCS Seizes Both Children on the Same Day

While Steffen Sr. and Patricia were at the hospital for a doctor visit on February 2, grandmother Lisa waited for Annalise to get off of the school bus. When she didn’t, Lisa began an all-out search, calling the school and neighbors. She learned that DCS had come to the school that day and seized her over truancy allegations.



Lisa with her granddaughter Annalise. Photo supplied by the family.

At the same time, DCS came into Vanderbilt Hospital and seized 3 month old baby Steffen, alleging abuse over the 3 missed doctor appointments.

Baby Deteriorates Quickly In CPS Custody

Steffen and Annalise were placed with a foster family. Medical records show that the baby's condition was stable at the time. In documents later filed with the court, Patricia states:

The child was fine and healthy, eating well and not choking prior to the DCS removal.



Baby Steffen in happier times. Photo provided by the family.

Immediately after the children were taken, they were given multiple vaccines. Steffen's formula was changed as well.

Just 2 weeks later, on February 17, the foster mother brought Steffen to Vanderbilt reportedly for choking. He was admitted to intensive care where he was diagnosed with metapneumovirus, which he contracted AFTER being taken into state custody.

The serious infection caused damage to his already fragile heart. Heart surgery was now needed to place a shunt to increase the blood flow. The surgery was performed while Steffen was still sick and in a weakened state. Later, the

shunt was removed.



Baby Steffen after heart surgery at 4 months – in state custody. Photo provided by the family.

He had a total of 4 heart surgeries within weeks of each other, per decisions made without the parents involvement. Patricia says that the hospital has made “a lot of mistakes” with her baby. He has now been on the ECMO machine for 5

weeks.

Lisa believes that:

He was being used as a lab rat at a medical university.

Now, doctors are reportedly telling the family that his heart muscle is too hard and that he will not survive.

Vanderbilt Hospital has denied a heart transplant for him.

Family Is Praying for God to Heal Baby

Grandmother Lisa told *Health Impact News* that she believes that he will survive. She has a strong Christian faith, and she has already seen God work in her grandson's body. She said that one day, Steffen's diaper was filled with blood. A doctor reportedly told her that he had a hole in his intestine and that his colon was dead. Lisa prayed and spoke life to his body in the name of Jesus. She said the very next day, another doctor told her that there is no hole in his intestine and that his colon is not dead.

It is that faith that she is holding onto for little Steffen to pull through this also. A song that she holds onto is "[Awake My Soul](#)" by Chris Tomlin. Some of the lyrics are:

*Breathe on me, breath of God, breathe on me
I come alive, I'm alive when you breathe on me*

*Awake, awake, awake my soul,
God resurrect these bones
From death to life, through you alone*

Awake my soul

For some time, DCS refused to allow the family's pastor to come to see the baby. He was finally permitted to come on Saturday, but DCS reportedly kicked him and Lisa out of the room.

She is concerned that people at Vanderbilt continually speak death over him. She said that, on Monday, there were flies on Steffen in the hospital room that they had to shoo away.

Yet, even during Monday night's visit at the hospital, they saw signs of hope. Even though he was "heavily sedated," Lisa said that:

He knows I am there. He squeezes my hand, and opens his eyes.

He is very active at times when [his parents, sister, and I] are present. Then they, what I call, juice him with narcotics and sedate him. Even then he fights it at times.



Baby Steffen fights for his life as his mama and family pray. Photo provided by the family.

She said that doctors told the family that their plan, the one they want the parents to consent to, is to give him a bunch of narcotics to “keep him comfortable” and then unplug him from the machines at noon on Tuesday.

They want to put him down like a dog!

I just cannot understand the breadth of power that DCS has that cannot be stopped. They have so much Title IV funding at their disposal.

Parents Fighting for Children; DCS Plans Adoption

Patricia and Steffen Sr. did the DCS required parenting classes in record time, completing them in just 3 days. They say that they have done everything that DCS has asked of them. They are also required to pay child support.

Yet, it has become apparent that the state had no intention of returning the children. They were placed into a foster home with a couple who posted a GoFundMe on January 31, 2 days before the children were placed with them, asking for donations to help them adopt. There are photos of Annalise and Steffen with their family on their Facebook page, and they have made it clear that they planned to adopt the children.

Patricia has filed documents protesting the DCS permanency plan which lists adoption as a goal. She says that the goal is very premature. She says that the portrayal of her children with the foster parents as part of “an adopted family”

suggests that this removal was a deliberate attempt by DCS and the placements to conspire to remove these children for the sole purpose of adoption and not try to reunify the Rivenburg family.

Lisa told us that DCS wants to do a psychological evaluation on Annalise. They are reportedly saying that she is getting into trouble “all the time.” Lisa says that the family never had problems with her before she was taken away from her family. She wants to know if the purpose of the psych evaluation is to put her on a bunch of psychotropic drugs.

How You Can Help!

First and foremost, the family requests prayer for baby Steffen. They are not ready to give up on him.

Tennessee Governor Bill Haslam may be reached at (615) 741-2001, or contacted [here](#), to ask that life support be continued for Steffen Rivenburg Jr., to give him a chance to live. Governor Haslam is also on [Facebook](#).

The Senator for their district is Dr. Mark Green. He may be reached at (615) 741-2374, or contacted [here](#).

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Other Medical Kidnapping stories involving Vanderbilt Hospital:

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**Are New Pediatric “Child Abuse Specialists”
Causing an Increase in Medical Kidnappings?**

**Child Abuse Pediatricians: An “Ethically
Bankrupt” Profession that Destroys Families**

Do you have a story about Vanderbilt University medical system? [Contact us](#).

Baby Scheduled to go Off Life Support Responding to Family - Rally and Court Date on Monday Morning



Baby Steffen during happier days. Photo supplied by the family.

UPDATE 6/6/2017

[Civil Rights Abuse? Judge Only Gives Parents 24 Hours to Find Doctor Before Baby is Removed from Life Support](#)

UPDATE 6/3/17

Grandma Lisa took this video of Baby Steffen responding to her voice and touch today, and after recording it, she told Health Impact News that the head nurse told her she could no longer record:

Baby Scheduled to go Off Life Support Responding to Family – Rally and Court Date on Monday Morning

by Health Impact News/MedicalKidnap.com Staff

The family of Baby Steffen has court on Monday morning, June 5th, at 9 am, and supporters are holding a rally and prayer vigil simultaneously at the Montgomery County Juvenile Court at Two Millennium Plaza, Clarksville, TN 37040. They are inviting people from all over to come and show support and pray to save Baby Steffen's life.

See our original story on this family here:

[Medically Kidnapped Baby Scheduled for Execution TODAY!](#)



JUN
5

Steffen Rivenburg Jr- CPS Judicial Accountability Stand4Steffen

Public · Hosted by Op Expose DCS Tennessee #opexposecps
and 2 others

We asked grandmother Lisa Rivenburg if Baby Steffen is showing any signs of responding to family. She responded:

YES! ALL signs! He opens his eyes, squeezes my hand, puts his hands up in the air, kicks his feet. He smiles. He grimaces. He makes his little “Elvis face.”

She told us that he lifts his hands up when she plays his favorite song, “Awake, My Soul,” by Chris Tomlin.

He’s completely cognizant when he’s not heavily medicated.

Steffen responds to his family as much as he can while being limited by wires and tubes. Lisa said that he fights the medications that make him sleep.

The family has court on Monday, the day before the court order expires that is keeping Baby Steffen alive. They have been told that Vanderbilt Hospital intends to bring in a doctor from their hospital “to say the baby has no chance.”

They report that they need to find a neurologist who will look at the records and the baby to testify that he is not brain-dead. They also seek a heart transplant doctor who can give a second opinion as to whether or not a new heart will help him. Vanderbilt doctors have reportedly denied a heart transplant.

When Baby Steffen entered foster care at 3 months of age, he had congenital heart defects and Down Syndrome, but he was doing well at the time. He was not expected to need heart surgery until 6 months of age. He contracted a serious viral infection in foster care just weeks later, which started a snowball effect of multiple heart surgeries, and now he is on a heart and lung bypass machine keeping him alive – a machine that DCS and Vanderbilt doctors want to unplug.

Lisa told us that the doctors told the family at one point:

We messed up.

She reports that the baby’s parents were in the hospital room when the doctors said that they did so much to the baby and so many surgeries close together that it hardened his heart muscle.

The family still believes that there is hope. They are praying for God to heal Baby Steffen, and to bring him and his big sister Annalise home from foster care.

Annalise, age 7, told her parents on the phone Friday that she left a card in her brother's room for people to sign. When they returned to the room shortly after, the card was gone. They searched everywhere and asked the staff, but no one reportedly knew anything about it.

Annalise is still in the custody of DCS in foster care as part of this medical kidnapping case, and she wants to go home to her family.

Who to Contact:

Tennessee Governor Bill Haslam may be reached at (615) 741-2001, or contacted [here](#), to ask that life support be continued for Steffen Rivenburg Jr., to give him a chance to live. Governor Haslam is also on [Facebook](#).

The Senator for their district is Dr. Mark Green. He may be reached at (615) 741-2374, or contacted [here](#).

Their state Representative is Representative Joe Pitts. He may be reached at (615) 741-2043, or contacted [here](#).

The DCS main office number is (615) 741-9701. Supervisor Heather Wyatt's cell phone is 931 905 3800, and office phone is 931 503 3253.

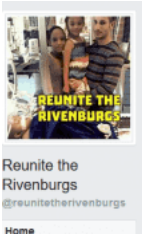
To reach the Monroe Carell Jr. Children's Hospital at Vanderbilt, call this public, non emergency number:

Patient Relations: (615) 322-6154

For assistance, non-medical questions or complaints. This line is open every day from 7 a.m. to 9 p.m. If you are calling

outside of these hours, listen to the recorded message carefully. Press zero for the Vanderbilt operator and request the Children's Hospital Administrator on call.

Supporters have set up a Facebook page for the family called [Reunite the Rivenburgs](#).



Reunite the
Rivenburgs
@reunitetherivenburgs
Home



Civil Rights Abuse? Judge Only Gives Parents 24 Hours to Find Doctor Before Baby is Removed from Life Support



Steffen and his mother Patricia, who isn't ready to say, "Good-bye." Photo provided by the family.

UPDATE 4 – 6/8/2017

Baby Steffen has “gone to Jesus,” according to a text we received from a family member. They ask that they be given some privacy so that the family can grieve.

Supporters who went to Vanderbilt hospital to pray report that they saw the family being escorted out of the hospital under armed guard.

The prayer vigil had to be moved outside of the hospital after the group was told by hospital staff that they were not permitted to pray in the hospital chapel as a group.

This story is not over yet.

Baby Steffen’s big sister Annalise remains in foster care, away from her family members who love her and plan to continue to fight to bring her back home.

UPDATE 3 – 6/8/2017

Vanderbilt Hospital has informed the family that they intend to pull the plug on Baby Steffen at 2:30 pm Central Time. His parents and grandmother are en route from the courthouse to the hospital.

Health Impact News spoke with one of Steffen Rivenburg Sr.’s sisters who reported that, to the family’s knowledge, Vanderbilt doctors did not respond to any of the other doctors or hospitals who were willing to offer a second opinion, even though Dr. Harold Andrew Smith of Vanderbilt agreed with Judge Wayne Shelton on Monday to allow the family the opportunity to get a second opinion about Baby Steffen’s condition. The ball was in Vanderbilt’s court, and

they reportedly let it drop.

Steffen Sr.'s sister said:

We're all thinking that they're trying to hide something.

Supporters are continuing a prayer vigil at the hospital. The family continues to believe God for a miracle, and are praying for God to heal little Steffen. They remain hopeful that, when doctors take Baby Steffen off of the ECMO machine, his heart will beat adequately and that he will breathe.

The motion to appeal has still not been heard.

UPDATE 2 – 6/8/2017

From the Reunite the Rivenburg Facebook page:

Breaking news! Motion to stay denied. Judge Wayne Shelton doesn't seem to care about the parent's civil rights. Or the life of this child. Please keep praying. And calling Vanderbilt and governor [Bill Haslam](#). If Vanderbilt kills this child today, we will not stop fighting until we have Wayne Shelton's judgeship and justice for the Rivenburg family!

The motion to appeal has not been heard yet.

UPDATE 1 – 6/8/2017

Vanderbilt Hospital reportedly intends to remove Baby Stephen from life support at 1 pm central time today.

Supporters are currently meeting at the hospital for a peaceful prayer vigil, and they are praying for a miracle. See event [here](#).

Late yesterday, the family filed an appeal as well as a motion to stay, or stop, the judge's ruling from Monday which gave the hospital, not the parents, the right to decide the baby's fate. Reportedly, the motion to stay will be heard this morning in an emergency hearing with Judge Shelton. According to the [Reunite the Rivenburgs](#) Facebook page:

BREAKING NEWS!!! The entire family, DCS, and all attorneys have been called to court IMMEDIATELY!! Please send prayers!!

The family has been in contact with numerous doctors and hospitals that are reportedly willing to look at the baby's case, and the family has given contact information to Vanderbilt, who would need to send over records for the other doctors. There has been no word yet whether Vanderbilt doctors have responded to them.

Civil Rights Abuse? Judge Only Gives Parents 24 Hours to Find Doctor Before Baby is Removed from Life Support

by Health Impact News/MedicalKidnap.com Staff

After a long day in court Monday June 5th, the Rivenburg family did not get the news they wanted to hear about Baby

Steffen.

Last week, a judge approved a temporary injunction to keep the 7 month old baby from being taken off life support.

On Monday afternoon, Judge Wayne Shelton ruled that Baby Steffen's mother does not have the right to make the decision of whether or not to take him off of life support, and he denied the request to extend the injunction.

The family has a short 24 hour, up to 48 hour, window to find a pediatric cardiologist in the South willing to testify that the baby is eligible for a heart transplant and would survive it.

Unless they find such an expert, Vanderbilt doctors, not the parents, will decide when to take Baby Steffen off of the life support machine that is keeping him alive at this time.

See original story and follow up:

[Medically Kidnapped Baby Scheduled for Execution TODAY!](#)

[Baby Scheduled to go Off Life Support Responding to Family - Rally and Court Date on Monday Morning](#)

The family is shocked and devastated. No one in the family or in their close circle of friends and supporters expected this verdict. They told *Health Impact News* that they fully expected that the judge would rule to give the baby a chance to live.

Some family members told us that they are praying for a

miracle, and just want Steffen to have more time to heal from the infection and multiple heart surgeries that doctors performed in a short period of time.

While supporters and extended family rallied and prayed outside the Montgomery County Courthouse, the judge heard testimony from social workers, the GAL, and a doctor from the Children's Hospital at Vanderbilt, as well as the parents and grandmother.



Supporters rallied and prayed outside the courthouse. Photo provided by Lydia Hubbell.

Should Only Medical Factors be Considered in Timing to End Life?

Dr. Harold Andrew Smith reportedly told the judge that Baby Steffen "can be aroused," but that he has no chance of

surviving a heart transplant. This, despite the fact that the baby is responsive and alert when he is allowed to come out of heavy sedation. (See [video](#).)

A child's Guardian ad litem (GAL) is supposed to represent "the best interest of the child" in the recommendations to the judge. Baby Steffen's GAL reportedly suggested that the people involved in his life needed to consider his "quality of life." Based on her assessment of such, she recommended that he be removed from life support.

If the family is not able to provide an expert quickly, then the final decision as to Baby's Steffen's fate will now be allowed to be made by Vanderbilt doctors. Even if the parents refuse to consent to their son being taken off the machine, the judge's ruling means that doctors can override their decision.

Judge Shelton's game changing ruling means that the doctors have been awarded the right to decide when the baby's life ends.

Based on the evidence of the baby's cognizance and intentional responses, the family argues that taking him off of life support amounts to murder. They understand that, unless there is a miracle or a heart transplant, Baby Steffen likely does not have long to live, but they want the timing to be God's decision, not that of Vanderbilt doctors.



Baby Steffen is fighting for his life, and his family is not ready to give up on him. Photo screenshot from video taken 6/3 by Lisa Rivenburg.

Are Civil Rights Issues Being Considered?

Perhaps lost in all the medical discussions about Baby Steffen's welfare are the civil rights issues in this case, which makes this case different than strictly a medical case where only medical facts should be considered.

According to the family, there were never any legal reasons for the State of Tennessee, through DCS, to take Baby Steffen away from them. The child was not sick or in imminent danger when he was removed from the custody of his family.

All of the medical problems that led to multiple surgeries allegedly happened while the child was in foster care, under the custody of the state.

WSMV Channel 4 of Nashville reports that Vanderbilt released a statement about the judge's decision:

We are gratified that the Court recognized that the medical professionals on the treatment team should be allowed to make the decisions that they believe, in their professional clinical judgment, are in this child's best interests. It has been and has remains [sic] our desire to do so in collaboration with the child's parents.

The parents don't feel collaborated with. They are broken-hearted by the decision, and they remain skeptical of the decision-making responsibility being left with the very doctors who admitted to them that they "messed up." They are quick to point out that their baby was not sick when he went into DCS custody. He had congenital heart defects, but there were no immediate problems, and no infection.

Several family members and supporters have suggested that Vanderbilt is trying to cover something up by "pulling the plug" on Steffen. There were many questions outside the courtroom concerning the motives of DCS and the hospital for their actions, considering the facts that the baby was not sick when he was taken from his family, and that doctors reportedly apologized recently to the family, saying that they had "messed up" by doing so many surgeries so closely together.

Given the civil rights implications here, with potential civil rights abuse against the baby and his family by DCS and

Vanderbilt hospital, was the appropriate action made to remove life support when the parents were notified of such action the day before this action was to occur, on Memorial Day, a holiday when no court was in session to hear an appeal?

As we reported in an update on our [original story](#) last Tuesday, a family member present in the room reported that the hospital:

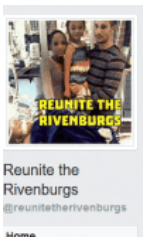
“clamped” the machine, but he didn’t do well, so they hooked him back up.

During the time this was going on, the parents were hastily trying to get a court order to stop the hospital from taking him off of life support, and were only able to do so in the afternoon that day.

If indeed Baby Steffen is dying through no fault or action of the parents, but as a result of civil rights abuse by both Tennessee DCS and Vanderbilt Hospital, is the judge making the right decision to only give the parents 24 hours notice to try and find their own doctor who might be willing to do a heart transplant?

How You Can Help

Supporters have set up a Facebook page for the family called [Reunite the Rivenburgs](#).



Baby Steffen's big sister Annalise also remains in foster care. The family's next hearing on their case is scheduled for June 19. They plan to appeal Judge Shelton's ruling.

Tennessee Governor Bill Haslam may be reached at (615) 741-2001, or contacted [here](#), to ask that life support be continued for Steffen Rivenburg Jr., to give him a chance to live. Governor Haslam is also on [Facebook](#).

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[Kentucky Family Falsely Accused of Child Abuse – Children Medically Kidnapped to Cover Corruption](#)

[1-Hour Old Newborn Baby Kidnapped at Kentucky Hospital because Parents Refused to Take Parenting Classes](#)

[Baby Found with Broken Bones – Parents Assumed Guilty of Abuse and Lose Custody](#)

[Tennessee Children with Brittle Bones Suffer in State Care as Mom Charged with SBS](#)

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Disabled Father Denied by State of Tennessee to Father his Own Child

See more about Child Abuse Specialists:

Are New Pediatric “Child Abuse Specialists” Causing an Increase in Medical Kidnappings?

Family Seeks Answers on Baby's Death - Threatened Arrest for Trying to Record Last Moments of Life



Baby Steffen – October 15, 2016 to June 8, 2017. Photo provided by the family.

by **Health Impact News/MedicalKidnap.com Staff**

The Rivenburgs were not ready to say goodbye to Baby Steffen. On the morning of his death, Steffen's parents and grandparents were in court pleading for his life, but their cries were drowned out by the voices of others who literally argued for his death. The events surrounding Baby Steffen's death on Thursday afternoon, June 8, are disturbing, and the family wants answers.

They are hoping that an autopsy and investigation will provide answers, but time is running out for the family to gather the funds for an independent autopsy. Every day that passes, evidence contained in the tiny body deteriorates further. Grandmother Lisa Rivenburg told *Health Impact News* that time is of the essence.

See original story and follow up:

[Medically Kidnapped Baby Scheduled for Execution TODAY!](#)

[Baby Scheduled to go Off Life Support Responding to Family - Rally and Court Date on Monday Morning](#)

[Civil Rights Abuse? Judge Only Gives Parents 24 Hours to Find Doctor Before Baby is Removed from Life Support](#)

[Heart Was Beating On Its Own, Then Baby Was Drugged](#)

The prayer of thousands of people around the world was that Baby Steffen's heart would beat and that he would breathe

when doctors at Monroe Carell Jr. Children's Hospital at Vanderbilt removed him from the ECMO machine.

According to Lisa Rivenburg, that is exactly what happened.

His heart was beating!

But she says that the doctors didn't give him the option of surviving. A doctor told the family that his heart wouldn't beat for long, so they wanted to give him pain killers "to relax him."

Even though his grandmother Lisa and parents Steffen Rivenburg Sr. and Patricia Tornberg wanted to give him the chance to live, they were repeatedly denied that chance, earlier that morning in court, and then in the hospital room that afternoon.



Baby Steffen's mother fought for his life till the very end.
Source: Rivenburg family.

The drug that the doctors gave to Baby Steffen was reportedly propofol, the “Michael Jackson drug” which was implicated in the death of the King of Pop Music.

Propofol is a drug typically used for deep sedation in very controlled environments. According to [ABC News](#), Dr. Brian Olshansky, cardiologist at the University of Iowa, says that propofol:

rapidly induces unconsciousness and apnea. People stop breathing within seconds of being given the drug.

[MedicineNet](#) describes the effect:

The issue with propofol is that it can make the patient's brain forget to breathe. It's not a side effect or complication; it's just what it does.

Baby Steffen's family wants to know why doctors felt that the drug was necessary.

Baby Conscious – Grandmother Threatened With Arrest for Recording

Just a short time before he was removed from life support, Baby Steffen was kicking his feet and moving his arms in response to his family. While his parents still pleaded for his life and for time with their baby, Lisa tried to record her grandson's final moments.

She reports that a Vanderbilt police officer told her to stop recording:

I'm getting ready to arrest you.

She said that he started to reach for something. She didn't know whether he was reaching for his handcuffs or gun or something else, but she stopped recording.

Here is the last video that the family was able to record, which clearly shows that the baby was interacting with his family:

<https://youtu.be/JyjE63Xoc4M>

Just that morning, Dr. Harold Andrew Smith reportedly

described Baby Steffen as “brain-dead” to Judge Wayne Shelton.

The family had been prepared to go to the hospital when they were all called into court for an emergency hearing.

Lisa told us that the doctor from Vanderbilt painted a “horrific” picture of the baby’s condition in court, and the Guardian ad litem agreed with the doctor that it would be “in the best interest of the child” to allow him to die. In any other context, Lisa said this would be described as “euthanasia.”

Lisa told us that a few minutes later, the “executioner” and doctor told her that they needed her phone:

They confiscated my phone.

No one was able to record the heart wrenching final moments of Baby Steffen’s life. Doctors took the baby off of the ECMO machine, and the family had a few minutes of hope that he would survive when he breathed on his own and his heart continued to beat.

They will always wonder if he could have survived if he had not been drugged a few minutes later.

Lisa did not get her phone back until she was seated in her car. She and the baby’s parents were escorted under armed guard out of the hospital.

We were treated like criminals!



The family was escorted in and out of Vanderbilt hospital under armed guards. Source: [Reunite the Rivenburgs](#) Facebook page.

Did “Protective” Services Cause Harm?

Though Baby Steffen was born with Down Syndrome and congenital heart defects, he was healthy when he was taken from the family by the Department of Children’s Services (DCS) at 3 months of age because his parents missed 3 doctors appointments.

On each occasion, the parents had car trouble, so they rescheduled the appointments. He wasn't sick; they were just routine appointments.

Steffen's mother Patricia told us that she would have found a way to take him somehow if he had actually been sick or truly needed to go to the doctor. But that was not the case.

Other parents of children with congenital heart defects have reported that their children were non-symptomatic, and some even outgrew the heart defects.

Had Steffen been showing symptoms of problems, car troubles would not have stopped the family from getting him help. They had been told that he would "likely" need surgery at around 6 months, but he was doing well when he missed the appointments.

DCS seized the baby during one of Steffen's rescheduled appointments at Vanderbilt hospital, and they seized his big sister Annalise from her first grade classroom at school, placing both into foster care. Both children were given numerous vaccinations the very next day, and within just 2 weeks, the once-healthy baby Steffen became very ill with a serious viral infection. Several heart surgeries followed within rapid succession.

Supporters of the family have questioned the protective ability of Child Protective Services, and point out that the actions of DCS caused far more harm to Baby Steffen than a few missed doctors appointments did.

Family Seeks Autopsy

Shortly after Steffen's death on Thursday, the family was

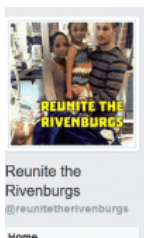
alarmed to learn that DCS might not release his body to the family, and they might never have the answers they desperately seek.

Advocate Mattie Shae Mitchell with Liam Changed the World Inc., a non-profit organization dedicated to raising funds for sick children and helping with funeral expenses, started making phone calls. The family was able to arrange for Steffen's body to be moved to a secure location.

Now the family is seeking funds for a private autopsy that they hope will provide some answers.

How You Can Help

Supporters have set up a Facebook page for the family called [Reunite the Rivenburgs](#). There, supporters can find more information on how to help the family.



Baby Steffen's big sister Annalise also remains in foster care. The family's next hearing on their case is scheduled for June 19. They plan to appeal Judge Shelton's ruling.

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Judge Who Ordered Baby Steffen to be Removed from Life Support Orders Sister be Placed for Adoption



Annalise with her baby brother Steffen. Photo provided by the family.

by **Health Impact News/MedicalKidnap.com Staff**

The Rivenburg family was back in court on Monday morning, June 19. This time, it was to fight for Annalise, the big sister of Baby Steffen, the baby who was taken off of life support on June 8.

The family, including aunts, uncles, and cousins, were hopeful that the court would send little Annalise back home

to be with her family, but that did not happen.

Instead, they learned that the Department of Children's Services (DCS) now plans to terminate her parents' parental rights and place her for adoption, presumably with the foster family with whom she and Baby Steffen were placed 4 months ago, just before the baby got sick.

They are devastated.

Patricia's heart-wrenching sobs could be heard in the background as a family member told the news to *Health Impact News*. The thought of losing Annalise seems an unbearably cruel blow to the family that is still reeling from what they call Baby Steffen's "potentially preventable" death.



Annalise with her baby brother at a visit in the hospital, after they were seized by DCS. Photo provided by the family.

See our coverage of the family's story:

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Baby Scheduled to go Off Life Support Responding to Family – Rally and Court Date on Monday Morning

Civil Rights Abuse? Judge Only Gives Parents 24 Hours to Find Doctor Before Baby is Removed from Life Support

Family Seeks Answers on Baby's Death – Threatened Arrest for Trying to Record Last Moments of Life

Parents Patricia Tornberg and Steffen Rivenburg Sr., along with grandmother, Lisa Rivenburg, went to the Montgomery County Juvenile Court in Clarksville, Tennessee, for a review hearing of the DCS dependency case.

According to the [Reunite the Rivenburgs](#) Facebook page:

The parents have filed a motion to have Judge Wayne Shelton recuse/disqualify himself for violation of their constitutional rights and his judicial canons.

They have also filed an appeal on the denial of the motion to stay that took Baby Steffen from the world over a week ago, which will be heard soon in a higher Court.

Grandma Lisa has her own motions – a motion for placement of Annalise with her or other kinship care, and a motion for visitation and phone calls with her granddaughter.

Kinship Placement Bypassed in Favor of Foster Care with Strangers

Lisa Rivenburg was reportedly not permitted into Judge Wayne Shelton's courtroom on Monday, and her motions have been postponed until July 24. Lisa has been a huge part of Annalise's life, but DCS has not permitted her to even see her granddaughter.



Lisa Rivenburg with her granddaughter Annalise in happier times, before DCS. Photo provided by the family.

DCS has allegedly not considered her for placement for her grandchildren, even though she has a “squeaky clean” record. She has never been in trouble with the law and graduated from college with honors. She homeschooled all 7 of her children, and has taken in other children besides her own over the years.

Other relatives with clean records have also reportedly been passed over for consideration for placement.

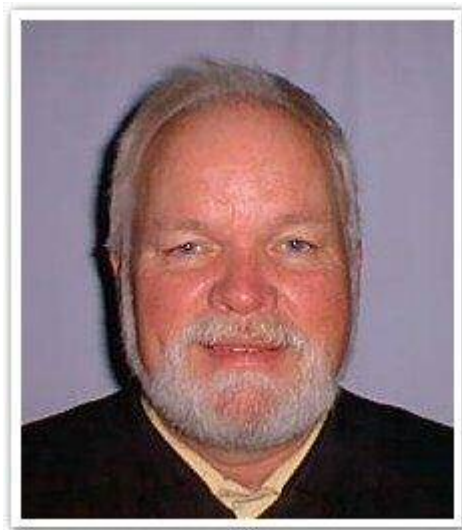
This is consistent with reports that we hear at *Health Impact News* from all over the country. States are able to secure far

greater federal funding when children are placed into foster care with strangers as opposed to placement with family or friends that the children know.

See:

[Report Exposes Why Corrupt CPS Agencies Seldom Place Foster Children with Family Members](#)

[Judge Who Ordered Life Support Removed from Baby Steffen Refuses to Recuse Himself](#)



Judge Wayne C. Shelton. [Image source](#).

Patricia and Steffen Rivenburg Sr. asked Judge Wayne Shelton to remove himself from future hearings dealing with their family. The motion notes that the family has appealed

the judge's decision which allowed Vanderbilt hospital to take their son off of life support.

They allege that their “objections, parental, and constitutional rights have been repeatedly ignored” in Judge Shelton’s court, and that he has not performed his duties impartially and fairly, instead showing bias and prejudice.



Patricia, Annalise, and Steffen – a family that needs each other after such a devastating loss. Photo supplied by the family.

Judge Shelton denied the motion to recuse himself.

The family has also learned that DCS does not consider that Baby Steffen is in their custody any longer, and is not planning to pay for his burial.

Is the Change to Terminate Parental Rights Retaliation for Speaking Out?

Even so, the most difficult part of court on Monday was the realization that DCS has decided that the goal of reunification with 6 year old Annalise, which was stated just last week, has been abruptly changed to a plan to terminate the parental rights.

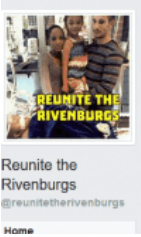
They were crushed when the Guardian ad litem argued that it is now in Annalise's best interest to be adopted by non-family members. This is the same GAL who reportedly told the judge to pull Baby Steffen off of life support, where doctors then administered the drugs that killed him.

Some supporters wonder if this is possibly retaliation against the family speaking out so vocally against DCS and about their experience with Baby Steffen at Vanderbilt. Most supporters that we spoke with believe that there is a cover-up happening, and that Annalise is an innocent victim caught up in the events.

The Rivenburgs have lost Baby Steffen. They just want to bring Annalise home and to heal together as a family.

How You Can Help

Supporters have set up a Facebook page for the family called [Reunite the Rivenburgs](#). There, supporters can find more information on how to help the family.



Reunite the
Rivenburgs
@reuniteherivenburgs
Home



Tennessee Governor Bill Haslam may be reached at (615) 741-2001, or contacted [here](#). Governor Haslam is also on [Facebook](#).

The Senator for their district is Dr. Mark Green. He may be reached at (615) 741-2374, or contacted [here](#).

Their state Representative is Representative Joe Pitts. He may be reached at (615) 741-2043, or contacted [here](#).

Medically Kidnapped Toddlers of Tennessee Parents Returned After 2 Years



The Turner family – together again! Photo provided by the Turners.

by **Health Impact News/MedicalKidnap.com Staff**

It was the best news ever for Chris and Keshia Turner of East Tennessee. After two and a half years battling Child Protective Services, their children were coming home.

On Friday, June 24, 2017, Keshia posted the happy news on Facebook:



When *Health Impact News* first spoke with the Turners more than two years ago, their oldest son Brayden had been taken from them by the Tennessee Department of Children’s Services (DCS) after doctors discovered that her son had multiple fractures in various stages of healing. Keshia was accused of Shaken Baby Syndrome and abuse.

See original story:

[Baby Found with Broken Bones – Parents Assumed Guilty of Abuse and Lose Custody](#)

Keshia told us that she believed that her son Brayden was coming home eventually. Her faith in God was what kept her going, she said, and she trusted that God would one day

bring good out of all that they were going through.

Then, she gave birth to Carson in September 2015. Because DCS had an ongoing case against Keshia, her 4 day old baby was seized by DCS and placed with his brother.

See story:

Tennessee Children with Brittle Bones Suffer in State Care as Mom Charged with SBS

Through it all, the Turners fought hard to get their children back. When we first spoke with the couple more than 2 years ago, they knew that there had to be some kind of medical explanation for Brayden's broken bones and symptoms. However, once a doctor accused the parents of abuse, they said that the doctors stopped looking for answers.

But Keshia did not stop looking. She knew that there had to be answers that the doctors had missed.



The Turner family at a visit in 2016. Photo source: [Reunite the Turners](#) Facebook page.

Experts Testify: Rickets, Not Abuse Responsible for Broken Bones

According to medical experts Dr. David Ayoub, radiologist, and Dr. John Galaznik, pediatrician, what the doctors at Vanderbilt hospital missed was evidence that Brayden suffered from infantile rickets and osteopenia of prematurity.

In June of 2016, a juvenile court judge decided that DCS was justified in accusing Keshia Turner of “severe child abuse” and found her guilty.

Last week, their case was heard by a different judge in a circuit court. It was basically a whole new trial, and Judge Amy V. Hollars heard testimony from the DCS side as well as almost 10 hours of medical testimony from the Turners’ medical experts, Dr. Ayoub and Dr. Galaznik.

The experts explained that there is a great deal of research demonstrating that there are often medical reasons for injuries that mimic abuse, and that there are specific indicators of such that many doctors miss.

The science behind “Shaken Baby Syndrome” and multiple broken bones in children is far from “settled science,” and many innocent parents have lost their children and others have been imprisoned when doctors have failed to consider new research and literature or to perform adequate testing to rule out other medical causes for the injuries.

Judges across the country are re-trying convictions of Shaken Baby Syndrome where only one side of the evidence was presented in court, and where the accused did not have an opportunity to present other medical evidence that can

cause broken bones apart from abuse or “shaking.” See:

[Attorneys Being Trained to Fight Bogus Child Abuse Charges used in Medical Kidnappings](#)

[University of Michigan Law School Awarded \\$250K to Learn How to Defend Shaken Baby Syndrome Cases](#)

[Supreme Judicial Court of Massachusetts Opens the Legal Door to Retry All Shaken Baby Syndrome Convictions](#)

Dr. Ayoub and Dr. Galaznik were able to present the court with their findings, based on Brayden’s x-rays and his medical history. They demonstrated that there was ample evidence that he had medical conditions that caused his broken bones, and they asserted that this was not a case of abuse.

After a week of testimony, the family was called into court at 2 pm on Friday, June 24, to hear the judge’s verdict.

Attorney Connie Reguli said before the ruling that she knew that the truth was on the family’s side. However, too many families have lamented to us that the truth often appears to be irrelevant in DCS/CPS cases. No one knew what to expect, but the family remained hopeful.



A joyful Keshia is reunited with her baby Carson. Photo provided by the family.

The judge's ruling was music to their ears. The family won the case, and their children were to be returned to their parents. There was to be no gradual reunification process; they were ordered to be returned immediately.

Keshia's attorney Connie Reguli said of the case:

Judge Amy V. Hollars found the expert witnesses very persuasive in describing metabolic bone disease.

Their long nightmare is over, and now the healing and restoration process can begin.

Tennessee Dad Who Lost Children due to Medical Cannabis that Saved his Life Continues to Fight for Children's Return Home



Michael with Damon and Elijah. Photo provided by the Brooks family.

by **Health Impact News/MedicalKidnap.com Staff**

Michael Brooks is a Tennessee dad whose children were taken from him by Child Protective Services after he used medical cannabis to treat his Hepatitis C. After conventional medical treatments failed to cure his terminal Hepatitis C, he turned to medical cannabis and soon his Hepatitis C was

in remission. But unfortunately, Tennessee DCS used his medical cannabis treatment as a reason to take away his children.

His health deteriorated rapidly when he stopped using the treatment in the attempt to comply with requirements by the Tennessee Department of Children's Services (DCS) in order to get his children back.

He was set to have his rights terminated last month, but his case was continued. Michael took to Facebook Live on June 26, 2017, to record a [video](#) for his followers, and it looks like things may be turning around for the Brooks family. His health has begun to improve and there is again hope of his getting visitation back.

See original story and update:

[Terminally Ill Father Finds Cure in Cannabis Oil but Now on Death Bed After Complying with CPS to Get Children Back](#)

[Tennessee Judge Gives Dying Father Chance to Defend Himself in Effort to Regain Custody of Children](#)

Health Improves with CBD Oil

Michael Brooks has been dying from Hepatitis C. His disease was under control while using medical cannabis, but he was forced to give up his medication due to Tennessee laws as he tried to meet requirements to get his children back from DCS.

On Facebook Live, Michael said that he had been taking [CBD oil, or cannabidiol oil](#) and Moringa oil for the past two weeks. CBD oil is legal in all 50 states, as it contains almost no THC, the chemical that gets one “high.”

His body has responded so well that he has been able to throw away his other 20 medications. He said:

The depression is defeated; I'm thinking clearer than I have in a long time.

He told *Health Impact News* that his appetite has greatly increased—so much so that he may have gained as much as ten pounds.

Michael went on to say that before starting the CBD and Moringa oil, he was having seizures several times a week. But, within the first few days of the new treatment, the seizures ceased.

Before and After Photos



The “before” was a screenshot taken from Michael’s Facebook Live video on May 10, and the “after” was a screenshot from Facebook Live on June 26.

Michael said:

I’ve been going through this for two years. Two years! It’s almost physically killed me, spiritually left me barren for some time, and emotionally, I was a wreck for a while.

But, I’m coming out the other side of this. I’ve learned how to let it go and give it to God. I do everything that I can on a daily basis.

I call every state representative, every congressmen. Our governor. I press-in. I call DC.

I do everything that I can, and then I give it to God. I think we all should do that. If we want to see change, we’ve got to be the change we want to see.

Possibility of Resuming Visitation

In the Facebook Live video, Michael Brooks said that he expects to go to court on July 19, and he is hopeful about getting visitation with his children back.

It has been about 12 weeks since he and Jamie, the children's mother, have seen the children. Michael told *Health Impact News* that the visitations stopped after he complained about the unsanitary condition of the vehicle that the children were transported in.

Michael said that on July 19, his legal team will address issues with the Attorney GAL assigned to his case who has testified that he and Jamie were “not even suited as human beings” to parent, without ever officially meeting the couple.

According to Michael, he and Jamie have only spoken to the Attorney GAL about three times in a courtroom. Reportedly, the Attorney GAL has “acted as a witness and a lawyer” in this case, which, Michael said, is illegal. He said that the Attorney GAL's testimony has impeded his and Jamie's ability to have visitation resumed.

Michael went on to say that the court was set to Terminate Parental Rights (TPR) for him and Jamie on June 30, but it has been changed to July 28.

How You Can Help

Governor Bill Haslam may be reached at (615) 741-2001 or contacted [here](#). His Facebook is [here](#). His Twitter is [here](#).

Representative Curtis Halford of House District 79 may be

reached at (615) 741-7478 or contacted [here](#).

Senator John Stevens of Senate District 24 may be reached at (615) 741-4576 or contacted [here](#).

Gibson County Department of Children's Services may be reached at (731) 855-7864.

Tennessee Family Wants Daughter and Sister of Deceased Baby Steffen to Come Home



The fight to bring Annalise home continues, as the family lays Baby Steffen's body to rest. Photo provided by the family.

by **Health Impact News/MedicalKidnap.com Staff**

Baby Steffen's tiny body will be laid to rest on Friday, July 7, in Clarksville, Tennessee. His battle to live has ended, but his family's battle for his big sister Annalise continues.

The Rivenburgs still don't have the answers that they seek as to what happened at Vanderbilt once Baby Steffen was taken into Department of Children's Services (DCS) custody. They are waiting for the results of a private autopsy, funded by

donations from people who believe that the family deserves unbiased answers.

Those results could take up to 3 months. The fate of Annalise may be decided in less than 3 weeks. DCS has requested a hearing to terminate the parental rights of Steffen and Patricia. That hearing is scheduled for July 24.

Supporters of the family believe that Annalise is a casualty of what they are calling a “cover-up” by DCS and Monroe Carrell Jr. Children’s Hospital at Vanderbilt.

Baby Steffen was born with Down Syndrome and a congenital heart defect, for which doctors said that he would need heart surgery at about 6 months. Despite his disabilities, he was doing well and was not showing any signs of sickness.

His parents missed 3 doctors appointments due to car trouble, which they rescheduled. The family was transitioning Annalise toward homeschooling during the same time period. They had not yet found an “umbrella” or “cover school,” but Annalise missed several days of public school.

DCS seized both children on the same day – Annalise from school, and Steffen from his doctor’s appointment. Shortly after, they were placed into foster care, Steffen became very ill.

Doctors reportedly admitted to the family that they did “too many surgeries too close together,” and they told the family that the baby didn’t have long to live. Together with DCS, Vanderbilt petitioned the state to override parental authority and allow the doctors permission to decide when to pull the plug. Judge Wayne Shelton agreed.

See original story and updates:

[Medically Kidnapped Baby Scheduled for Execution TODAY!](#)

[Baby Scheduled to go Off Life Support Responding to Family – Rally and Court Date on Monday Morning](#)

[Civil Rights Abuse? Judge Only Gives Parents 24 Hours to Find Doctor Before Baby is Removed from Life Support](#)

[Family Seeks Answers on Baby's Death – Threatened Arrest for Trying to Record Last Moments of Life](#)

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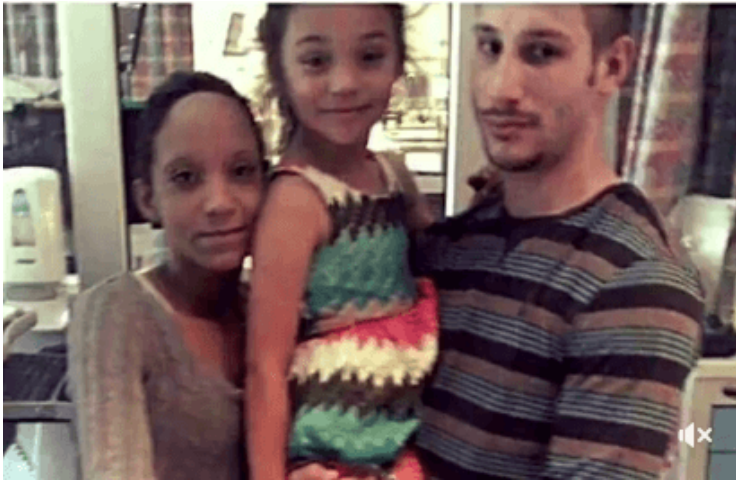
Hearings on Annalise

According to the *Reunite the Rivenburgs* Facebook page, there are 3 court dates coming up in the upcoming weeks.

July 11 is a Foster Care Review Meeting at the Clarksville Courthouse at 2:30 pm.

July 17 at 10:30 am “is when the family is asking that Annalise be placed with them, if not directly with the parents.”

The Termination of Parental Rights (TPR) for Annalise is scheduled for July 24 at 9:00 am. If the family is unsuccessful in regaining custody, or getting her placed with relatives, Annalise would be eligible for adoption. She reportedly lives with a foster family who plans to adopt. Her family wants her home.



Patricia and Steffen Sr. pray their daughter Annalise can come home. Photo provided by the family.

The plan for Annalise was originally reunification. The family finds it fishy that the plans to reunify abruptly changed to TPR after Baby Steffen's death. They are devastated and desperately pray that Judge Wayne Shelton will look at the evidence in the case, as well as the lack of evidence that they have caused harm to their daughter.

Can this Judge Be Impartial?

At a hearing on June 19, the Rivenburgs petitioned Judge Shelton to recuse himself from further hearings on the

family's case. He was the judge who ruled, twice, in favor of taking parental authority away from the parents and give the authority to make the end of life decisions for Baby Steffen to doctors at Vanderbilt Hospital.

Not only did doctors at Vanderbilt “pull the plug,” they administered what appeared to the family to be a lethal dose of propofol after Baby Steffen's heart beat on its own and he was breathing on his own.

Later, when the family asked the court to authorize funds for a private autopsy, multiple sources told *Health Impact News* that the judge asked:

Why would I give you money to help you with something you're trying to do that could cause me to lose my job?

Nonetheless, the family was able to raise the funds for a private autopsy, which was recently completed. It may take up to 3 months to get the results back. They hope that the autopsy will provide some answers.

Vanderbilt Refused to Contact Doctors for Second Opinion

A number of supporters join the family in believing that the hospital is attempting to cover-up something, whether it be medical malpractice by the doctors involved with the surgeries, or medical experimentation done by the hospital.

When doctors at Vanderbilt gave up on Baby Steffen, the family petitioned the court to allow them to get a second opinion or transfer Steffen's care to another facility and at

least try to give the baby a chance to live. Judge Shelton ruled that the family could have up to 48 hours to get a second opinion.



Baby Steffen fought to stay alive, but he was not given the opportunity. Photo provided by the family.

Within hours of the ruling, doctors and hospitals began contacting the family, offering to review the medical records and offer a second opinion. Lisa Rivenburg, Steffen's grandmother, told *Health Impact News* that she heard from hospitals in Texas, Boston, Colorado, Wisconsin, Memphis, and others – about 10 in all.

The caveat was that each needed to speak with doctors at Vanderbilt and get Baby Steffen's medical records to review.

Though Lisa says that she and the family gave Vanderbilt doctors contact information from each facility that contacted them, Vanderbilt reportedly refused to talk with them:

I found them 10 plus doctors, but they [Vanderbilt] didn't try.

She notes that Judge Shelton refused to follow his own order and require Vanderbilt to talk to the other doctors.



Parents Steffen Sr. and Patricia fought for their son's life. Photo provided by the family.

One advocate spoke with a nurse who is the transplant coordinator for her hospital. The hospital was willing to talk with Vanderbilt doctors and offer a second opinion. She just needed for his medical records to be released to her. But Vanderbilt never talked with her.

There could readily have been a second opinion, if only Vanderbilt had cooperated. Publicly, they gave lip service to working with the family, but the reality that the family says

they experienced was that their efforts to save Baby Steffen's life were thwarted at every turn by Vanderbilt, DCS, and the judge.

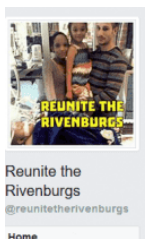
Funeral Arrangements

Baby Steffen's final resting place will be at Resthaven Memorial Gardens in Clarksville, Tennessee. There will be a time for viewing at noon on Friday, July 7, with the funeral following at 1 pm. The address is 2930 Highway 41A South, Clarksville, Tennessee 37043. He will be buried in the Angel Garden.

The family invites supporters to come to Baby Steffen's funeral service. Lisa Rivenburg requests that, "if you can't come, please pray."

How You Can Help

Supporters have set up a Facebook page for the family called [Reunite the Rivenburgs](#).



Tennessee Governor Bill Haslam may be reached at (615) 741-2001, or contacted [here](#), to ask for intervention for Annalise. Her family does not believe that her fate should be determined by the very judge who sentenced her baby brother to death. Governor Haslam is also on [Facebook](#).

The Senator for their district is Dr. Mark Green. He may be reached at (615) 741-2374, or contacted [here](#).

Their state Representative is Representative Joe Pitts. He may be reached at (615) 741-2043, or contacted [here](#).

Tennessee Family Buries Baby Steffen as Social Workers Stop Photos - Sister Still in Foster Care



Annalise and her mother Patricia at Baby Steffen's funeral.
Photo source: [Reunite the Rivenburgs](#) Facebook page.

by **Health Impact News/MedicalKidnap.com Staff**

Baby Steffen was buried on Friday, July 7, almost a month after his death when DCS, Vanderbilt hospital, and a judge decided to overrule his parents' rights to make decisions for

their baby. The Tennessee family was thankful that Steffen's big sister was allowed to leave the foster home to attend her brother's funeral. Even so, social workers kept a tight reign on Annalise, and threatened to take her away if the family continued to take photos.

The children's grandmother Lisa Rivenburg said it was their last time together as a family with Baby Steffen, and she felt that the social workers' threats were a cruel addition to an already difficult day.

Their fight continues to try to bring Annalise home and to find answers about what happened to Baby Steffen in DCS custody.

See original story and updates:

[Medically Kidnapped Baby Scheduled for Execution TODAY!](#)

[Baby Scheduled to go Off Life Support Responding to Family - Rally and Court Date on Monday Morning](#)

[Civil Rights Abuse? Judge Only Gives Parents 24 Hours to Find Doctor Before Baby is Removed from Life Support](#)

[Family Seeks Answers on Baby's Death - Threatened Arrest for Trying to Record Last Moments of Life](#)

Judge Who Ordered Baby Steffen to be Removed from Life Support Orders Sister be Placed for Adoption

Tennessee Family Wants Daughter and Sister of Deceased Baby Steffen to Come Home



Patricia, Annalise, and Steffen Sr. say their last goodbyes to Baby Steffen. Photo source: [Reunite the Rivenburgs](#) Facebook page.

Waiting for Results from Private Autopsy

The funeral was a long time in coming. It was June 8th when doctors at Monroe Carrell Jr. Children's Hospital at Vanderbilt took Baby Steffen off of the life support machine and administered the anesthetic drug propofol to "relax

him” after his heart continued to beat and he breathed on his own. He died shortly after being given the drug.

On that day, the family was told that his body would not be released to the family for burial, but that DCS would keep his body in their custody.

Advocate Mattie Shay Mitchell with [Liam Changed the World, Inc.](#), helped the Rivenburg family to negotiate to get the baby’s body taken to a funeral home, where he would be kept under lock and key, in hopes of the family obtaining a private autopsy.

It took some time, but Mitchell’s group and the family were finally able to raise enough donations to get a private autopsy.

It may take up to 3 months to get the results, but the Rivenburgs and supporters hope that it will provide some answers as to why the baby, who was not sick when he was seized by DCS and placed into foster care, was on death’s door just 4 months later.

Baby Steffen was born with Down syndrome and congenital heart defects, but there were no problems from his condition before DCS took him over missed routine doctor’s appointments.



Steffen declined rapidly in state custody, and he had several surgeries at Vanderbilt hospital. Photo provided by the family.

Sorrow Mixed with Joy

The family was not sure that DCS was going to permit Annalise to come to her brother's funeral, and the Rivenburgs were overjoyed to see her arrive. There were many hugs with her parents, grandmother, and all of her aunts, uncles, and cousins, most of whom hadn't seen her at all since DCS seized her on February 2.

One of her cousins is just a few months older than her, and people call the two cousins "twins," because they look so

much alike. The two were very happy to see each other again.

It was obvious to advocate Lydia Hubbell that Annalise is very loved by her immediate and extended family. The day was a heartbreaking combination of joy over seeing Annalise and grief over Baby Steffen's death.



Grieving the loss of Baby Steffen as well as the DCS-imposed separation of mother and daughter. Photo Source: [Reunite the Rivenburgs](#) Facebook page.



A mother's grief. Photo source: [Reunite the Rivenburgs](#) Facebook page.



Holding Baby Steffen's little hand, one last time. Photo source: [Reunite the Rivenburgs](#) Facebook page.



Annalise with her daddy at the funeral. Photo source: [Reunite the Rivenburgs](#) Facebook page.

Social Worker – No More Photos or Annalise Has to Leave

According to Lydia Hubbell, Annalise was accompanied to Baby Steffen’s funeral by two social workers, “Charlotte” and “Ms. Pena.”

Shortly after Lydia recorded a brief [video](#) of Annalise and her

“twin” cousin, the DCS workers told her that videotaping was not allowed. They told her that it violated the family’s privacy, which confused Lydia because no one in the family was complaining.

Lydia was given the name and number of the social workers’ team leader, Heather Wyatt, and that she could call her at 931-503-3200. She called and left a message. She later wrote of the incident on [Facebook](#), saying:

I told them that I and a lot of other people have an interest in this case and the issue of parental rights being unrecognized.

They were concerned about photos or videos being published on the internet or by the media. Okay...but WHY? and why is that a DCS problem?

Just before the preacher started to speak, Lydia reports that Charlotte sat down beside her and told her that she had just been told by her supervisor that if she or anyone else took any more photos, they were instructed to take Annalise and leave. The family was told the same.



Patricia by her son's grave. Photo source: [Reunite the Rivenburgs](#) Facebook page.

Lydia said:

I know everyone is grateful that Annalise was “allowed” to be a part of her brother’s memorial and to see him being laid to rest and to comfort and be comforted by loved ones.

But I am still firmly convinced that Annalise and Steffen should not have been removed in the first place, and that it is NOT in Annalise’s best interest to be cut off from the friends and family who love her and are loved by her.

The mother of Annalise's "twin" told me that she didn't tell her daughter ahead of time that Annalise would be there. Nobody really expected her to show up, I think.

We all knew she SHOULD be there, but we also know that she never should have been taken in the first place.

The Fight for Annalise Continues

On July 17 at 10:30 am, there will be a hearing where "the family is asking that Annalise be placed with them, if not directly with the parents."

If Judge Wayne Shelton rules against the family again, the next step is a Termination of Parental Rights (TPR) hearing, scheduled for July 24 at 9:00 am.

Attorney Connie Reguli says of the situation:

Take a look at this little girl. Let me tell you what is going to happen to Annalise.

Her brother was euthanized by Tenn. DCS and Vanderbilt at 7 months old. And that is just the beginning.

Now DCS, who has already removed her from her parents for being tardy to school, will go to court and tell the judge that they want a finding of severe abuse against her mother because she took a lortab while pregnant with her baby brother – who is now dead at the hands of the state – then

DCS will use the finding of severe abuse on her dead brother to terminate parental rights and put Annalise in a strangers home and cut her off from her mommy, daddy, grandmother, and cousins forever.

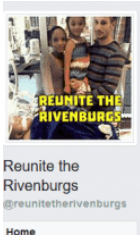
Could this possibly be any more cruel? Can you imagine being seven years old and losing your whole family like this?



Annalise just lost her brother. Must she lose her whole family, too? Photo source: [Family Forward Project](#) Facebook page.

How You Can Help

Supporters have set up a Facebook page for the family called [Reunite the Rivenburgs](#).



Tennessee Governor Bill Haslam may be reached at (615) 741-2001, or contacted [here](#), to ask for intervention for Annalise. Her family does not believe that her fate should be determined by the very judge who sentenced her baby brother to death. Governor Haslam is also on [Facebook](#).

The Senator for their district is Dr. Mark Green. He may be reached at (615) 741-2374, or contacted [here](#).

Their state Representative is Representative Joe Pitts. He may be reached at (615) 741-2043, or contacted [here](#).

Tennessee Parents of Baby Steffen Jailed While Appearing in Court and Questioning Drug Test



Baby Steffen's parents with Annalise at Baby Steffen's funeral. [Story](#).

by **Health Impact News/MedicalKidnap.com Staff**

Patricia Tornberg and Steffen Rivenburg, Sr., thought they were going to court this morning, July 17, 2017, to try to bring Baby Steffen's big sister Annalise home to be with family members and out of foster care. Instead, the judge had them arrested and thrown into jail.

Family members and supporters alike are shocked at the turn of events, and see this as another way for the court and DCS to grasp at any way to justify their actions and deflect attention away from their role in [Baby Steffen's death](#).

Last month (June 2017) Baby Steffen was taken off of life support against the wishes of his family, and before the family could find a second doctor's opinion regarding his condition. Baby Steffen was removed from his parents while still healthy, and yet the parents had no say over his medical care or removal from life support.

Tennessee DCS also removed Baby Steffen's sister, Annalise, from the parents.

Advocate Serra Frank told *Health Impact News*:

This judge is scrambling to get rid of this mess, and he's just making it worse.

The hearing was supposed to be about hearing motions for Annalise to be placed with family members.

Grandmother Lisa Rivenburg and two aunts, each willing and able to care for Annalise, were present at the hearing, but the motions were never heard. Judge Wayne Shelton reportedly stated that he did not intend to hear their motions.

See original story and updates:

[Medically Kidnapped Baby Scheduled for Execution TODAY!](#)

**Baby Scheduled to go Off Life Support
Responding to Family - Rally and Court Date on
Monday Morning**

**Civil Rights Abuse? Judge Only Gives Parents 24
Hours to Find Doctor Before Baby is Removed
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**Family Seeks Answers on Baby's Death -
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**Judge Who Ordered Baby Steffen to be Removed
from Life Support Orders Sister be Placed for
Adoption**

**Tennessee Family Wants Daughter and Sister of
Deceased Baby Steffen to Come Home**

**Tennessee Family Buries Baby Steffen as Social
Workers Stop Photos - Sister Still in Foster Care**



Mother Patricia Tornberg with her daughter Annalise at Baby Steffen's funeral. Annalise wants her family. Source – [Reunite the Rivenburgs](#) Facebook page.

Secret DCS Court Hearing

Instead, the focus turned to a motion filed on July 1 without the family's knowledge by Margaret Parker, attorney for DCS, to compel the parents to submit to drug testing. There was allegedly a secret hearing between DCS and the judge on July 10 to hear the motion, but the family was never notified about it.

It was only incidentally that the Rivenburg family learned about the hearing after the fact, when they went to their

former court-appointed attorneys' offices to get their files on July 12. The motion was attached to the back of some paperwork, but there was nothing in the paperwork about any decision on the motion.

Rivenburgs in Court without Legal Counsel

All of the court-appointed attorneys connected with the case, including the Guardian ad litem for Annalise, have quit since Baby Steffen's death.

The young parents went into court today without any legal counsel. Since their court-appointed attorneys have quit, Patricia and Steffen asked Judge Wayne Shelton for new counsel to be appointed for them today.

He reportedly told them that none of the attorneys wanted to touch the case because of the "notoriety" of the case.

Serra Frank said that when the judge learned that the parents were without counsel, he should have continued the case. They need to be given time to find an attorney. They cannot afford to hire an attorney. Thus, there was no one to argue against the request for drug testing at court.

Why Drug Testing Now?

Since their only knowledge of any request for drug testing came from the motion they found included in the paperwork, Patricia and Steffen asked the court for clarification.

They wanted to know a couple of things about the purpose of the drug testing:

1. Why was it being requested now, since they have always been in compliance before with all requested drug tests, and neither parent has had a dirty test during their entire ordeal with DCS.
2. Was it even necessary since DCS and the court has made it clear that they intend to terminate their parental rights for Annalise on July 24? What is the point now of the test?

To be clear, they were not refusing the testing; they simply wanted clarification. They were in the hearing without an attorney. They wanted to know if submitting to the testing would help them to get their daughter back. They did not get an answer to that question.

When they were asked to submit a urine sample at court, they told the judge that they did not have to urinate right then. Judge Shelton reportedly told them:

You will by the end of the day.

Then, he had them arrested for contempt of court. There was no bond set, and their family was told they would have to stay in jail until they produced a urine sample.

Steffen Sr.'s mother Lisa Rivenburg said:

I can't believe my children were arrested for contempt on something they were never served with.

History of Clean Drug Tests

Steffen Rivenburg, Sr., has no drug history, and the only thing that is alleged as a drug history for Patricia is something that never occurred to her would be interpreted as problematic.

She had a positive drug test last May arising from taking a single Lortab before she realized that she was pregnant.



They fought hard to save Baby Steffen's life, but were overruled by the judge and hospital. Photo supplied by family.

It was a one-time thing, she said, and it showed up in her

urine at the obstetrician's office when she realized she was pregnant and began prenatal care.

When Baby Steffen was born, his Neonatal Assessment Syndrome (NAS) score was zero, indicating that there were no drugs and that he was not born addicted to any substance.



Baby Steffen was born with birth defects, but was not sick when DCS seized him from his parents. Photo supplied by family.

Both parents were drug-tested repeatedly once DCS seized custody of Baby Steffen and Annalise in February 1017, and they have always tested clean.

There is no history of drug use by either parent.

Even so, Patricia voluntarily submitted to drug counseling that was requested by DCS during the process of working out the case plan.

So why, all of a sudden, is DCS demanding that both parents submit to a urine analysis and hair follicle drug testing?

Constitutional Concerns and Civil Rights Violations

The argument could be made that, if they have nothing to hide, then why not submit?

Besides concerns expressed by one supporter that DCS could falsify the results in their attempt to cover up wrong-doing in seizing the Rivenburg children, there are basic Constitutional concerns here.

The 4th Amendment to the United States Constitution states clearly:

The right of the people to be secure in their persons, houses, papers, and effects, against unreasonable searches and seizures, shall not be violated, and no Warrants shall issue, but upon probable cause, supported by Oath or affirmation, and particularly describing the place to be searched, and the persons or things to be seized.

This is a basic American right guaranteed to all citizens. The Founding Fathers recognized that it was not good for government to have free access to search people or their

property without a valid reason to do so, and thus secured this protection in the Bill of Rights.

The 11th Circuit Court of Appeals upheld this principle in a case involving suspicionless drug testing for people applying for food stamps. (See [case](#).)

The American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) states its position on their [website](#):

Courts agree: Blanket drug testing with no individualized reason for suspicion is unconstitutional.

The ACLU says:

Additionally, the compelled production of bodily fluids is a search under the Fourth Amendment, which, absent consent, requires a warrant supported by probable cause. ([Source](#))



Baby Steffen's parents' rights were overruled and he was taken off life support on June 8, while other hospitals offered to give 2nd opinions. Photo supplied by family.

Grandmother Kicked Out of Court

The family went back into court at 1 pm on July 17. According to the [Reunite the Rivenburgs](#) Facebook page:

Grandma Lisa was removed from the court room for taking notes. Witnesses who remained in the court room say that Patricia is now being forced to either sign agreement to the permanency plan of adoption for Annalise or be jailed again. She is reported to be UNDER DURESS.

Please Help!

Parents Submitted to Drug Tests, Mother Compelled to Sign Papers

Advocate Lydia Hubbell was at court with the family, and she posted onto the Reunite the Rivenburg Facebook page that both Patricia and Steffen Rivenburg, Sr., did, in fact, submit to the drug tests this afternoon:

[T]he parents were arrested for not taking a urine drug screen and hair follicle on the spot as DCS requested. They let me and Lisa stay in there for the contempt, but when the baliff saw Lisa taking notes, made her leave, saying it was inappropriate. So, both parents are without representation and it is my understanding that Annalise was without representation.

When I left the courtroom, the DCS caseworker was coercing the mom into signing a bunch of DCS papers. The judge had said that if she didn't sign, she would spend the night in jail and see him at 9 a.m.

If you refuse to take a drug test, it counts against you as they assume it would be positive. Both parents did take both a urine and hair follicle test. I asked the baliffs if the mom was going to get another lawyer appointed. They didn't know. DCS is running the show.

I will say that the judge was very kindly pleading with Patricia to take the test. Patricia said she felt like it would count against her anyway.

We have all heard of false positive drug screens. It was a no-win situation.

The caseworker was also very kind and respectful as he was explaining the paperwork to her. She was concerned as to what she was signing away. I am sure any lawyer would have told her to comply. Some of what she signed was for a year. It was either sign or go to jail.

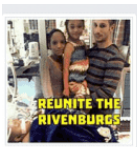
I tried to approach the other DCS workers, but was sent back by the bailiffs. I was mad that they kicked Lisa out, saying it was 'inappropriate' for her to take notes. I left the courtroom at 2:15 or so.

Parents Still in Jail

This is a developing story, and the parents are both still in jail as of Monday afternoon. Their family and advocates are trying to get answers, and we will update as we learn more.

How You Can Help:

The Rivenburg family desperately needs legal counsel but cannot afford an attorney.



Reunite the
Rivenburgs
@reunitetherivenburgs
Home



There are calls to action posted on the Reunite the Rivenburgs Facebook page, including these:

Please keep calling these numbers and tell them to uphold

the Sixth Amendment right to an attorney for these parents in court.

Call the Montgomery County Court and tell them to let those parents go!!! 931-648-5766

Then call the Montgomery County Jail! 931-648-0611

Call Governor Bill Haslam and demand he enforce the 6th amendment right to an attorney in his State's courts! (615) 741-2001

And call the local news and tell them to keep covering this story! (615) 353-4444

Tennessee Sister of Baby Steffen Traumatized Seeing Dad Arrested During Chuck E. Cheese Visit



Annalise and her dad at Baby Steffen's funeral last month.
Photo source: [Reunite the Rivenburgs](#) Facebook page.

by **Health Impact News/MedicalKidnap.com Staff**

Steffen Rivenburg, Sr., looked forward to his visit with his

daughter Annalise. It was the first visit since Baby Steffen's funeral more than 3 weeks ago. This would truly be a special visit – at Chuck E. Cheese, where Annalise should have been able to enjoy time playing with her Daddy.

Instead, she watched him be escorted out of the restaurant by police.



Social workers had local police arrest Steffen at a Chuck E. Cheese location as he visited with his daughter. Photo by Lisa Rivenburg.

Her grandmother, Lisa Rivenburg, said that she felt like it was a set-up. There was no way that her son was going to miss his scheduled visit with Annalise.

I cannot believe that they used my granddaughter as BAIT to

get him here to arrest him!

There was no warrant for his arrest. They asked, and were told by police that they didn't have to show one. Lisa told *Health Impact News* that her son was not read his Miranda rights. She later learned that the charge was "contempt," presumably over the demand, without a court order, for a hair follicle drug test.



Father allegedly jailed with no warrant, Miranda rights not read, while visiting his daughter at Chuck E. Cheese. He asked questions about a drug test he was ordered to take. He has no prior drug use charges.

See original story and continuing coverage:

[Medically Kidnapped Baby Scheduled for Execution TODAY!](#)

[Baby Scheduled to go Off Life Support Responding to Family – Rally and Court Date on Monday Morning](#)

[Civil Rights Abuse? Judge Only Gives Parents 24 Hours to Find Doctor Before Baby is Removed from Life Support](#)

[Family Seeks Answers on Baby's Death – Threatened Arrest for Trying to Record Last Moments of Life](#)

[Judge Who Ordered Baby Steffen to be Removed from Life Support Orders Sister be Placed for Adoption](#)

[Tennessee Family Wants Daughter and Sister of Deceased Baby Steffen to Come Home](#)

[Tennessee Family Buries Baby Steffen as Social Workers Stop Photos – Sister Still in Foster Care](#)

[Tennessee Parents of Baby Steffen Jailed While Appearing in Court and Questioning Drug Test](#)

“Protective” Services Traumatizes Child

The entire family is very concerned about Annalise, a little girl who was taken from her family, placed in a home with strangers, and watched her baby brother get sick, die, and be

buried. She had surely looked forward to visiting her parents and playing with them at Chuck E. Cheese. It was a 2 hour drive from her foster house to meet them.

Now, the place that is supposed to be associated with fun and being a kid will forever be associated with the traumatic memory of seeing her daddy arrested.

Her social worker Earnest Williams and another worker accompanied her to the visit that Lisa Rivenburg and many supporters say was a cruel set-up.



Ernest Williams updated his profile picture.

Jul 5, 2013 at 9:31am • 🌐



Social worker Ernest Williams. Photo from Facebook.

Grandma Lisa Rivenburg reported:

*My son said Annalise was teary eyed when it all went down...
DCS didn't shield her from the trauma of seeing her father
being confronted by officers.....
I would label that trauma, abuse and neglect on the part of
DCS.*

Mother Also Arrested Prior to Visit



Mother is arrested for asking questions about a drug test she was ordered to take. She was unable to visit her daughter because she was in jail.

Up until the mid-afternoon visit, Lisa and Steffen had been searching for Patricia, Annalise's mother, whom they had not seen since she went to court at 9:00 that morning. Steffen went ahead to the visit without Patricia, since they couldn't find her.

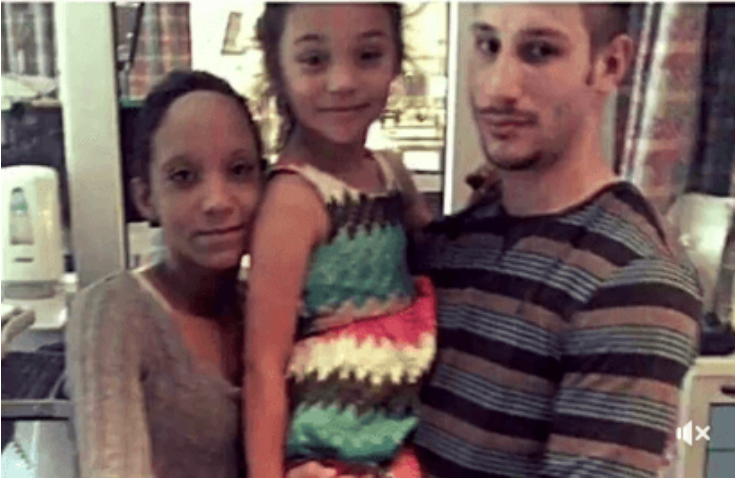
He and his mother found a ride with a friend, since the family car, again, broke down that morning. (This is the same undependable car that was the reason for Baby Steffen's missed doctor appointments – the reason that DCS seized the baby in the first place.)

After they dropped him off, Lisa found out why they couldn't find her – because she had been arrested that morning at court, but she wasn't booked until almost 2:30 in the afternoon.

Both parents were charged with contempt and were forced to submit to a hair follicle drug test. Lisa clarifies:

For the record ... They didn't refuse. They just wanted the law to be followed with being issued the order.

The couple were told last week that the Department of Children's Services (DCS) attorney Margaret Parker wanted them to do both a urine and a hair follicle drug test. They have been asking why, but still have not been given an explanation, and they never saw any written order.



Annalise with her parents, Patricia and Steffen. Photo source: [Reunite the Rivenburgs](#) Facebook page.

Patricia has had clean drug tests throughout the entire ordeal with DCS. She had a positive drug test last May arising from taking a single Lortab, for which she had a prescription, before she realized that she was pregnant.

Steffen Rivenburg, Sr., has never had any kind of a drug history, so his family is puzzled as to why DCS is so emphatic about having him drug tested.

In fact, his only run-in with the law was a domestic violence charge last year. He and one of his sisters got into an argument, and the charge was nullified. It was not even something that DCS considered a factor in taking the children away from the family.

DCS has alleged that Baby Steffen was born with drugs in his system, but there is no evidence to support such an allegation. According to medical records, Steffen's NAS

([Neonatal Abstinence Syndrome](#)) test score was zero. The test “assesses 21 of the most common signs of neonatal drug withdrawal syndrome.”

Without there being a real drug history, why is DCS insistent upon continuing to drug test the couple? Those close to the family are very skeptical and fear that the people who have already done so much to hurt the family, including killing Baby Steffen, will attempt to falsify the test results.

There was no bond set. Patricia was forced to have some hair cut for the test and she was released later the same day, Monday, July 31. Steffen was released the next day, after one of his legs was shaved to obtain hair for the test.

There were new court-appointed attorneys. Patricia did not meet hers until court on July 24. Steffen’s attorney withdrew on Monday, July 31, without ever having called Steffen. They are hoping to raise enough money to secure a good attorney to help them fight for Annalise.

Judge Demands Tapes of Hearings, Threatens Grandmother

Like many families embroiled in the court system, the Rivenburgs have attempted to get records of court proceedings. This attempt has landed Lisa Rivenburg at odds with Judge Wayne Shelton.

She wants to know why.

After Baby Steffen’s death, Lisa went to the courthouse and requested audio records of the case. She paid the fee and specifically requested the records from June 8 – the day that Baby Steffen was taken off of life support at Vanderbilt

hospital, as well as from the 2 prior hearings on May 19 and June 5.

The courthouse clerk gave her tapes 48 hours later.

The family wanted the record from June 8 of the testimony of doctors from Vanderbilt telling the judge about the baby's condition. This was the day that Judge Wayne Shelton made the decision to allow the doctors, not the parents, to make the final decision about whether or not to take the baby off of life support.



Steffen Sr. and Patricia prayed that their baby would have a chance to live. A court and doctors overruled them. Photo source: [Reunite the Rivenburgs](#) Facebook page.

Unfortunately, allegedly due to a mix-up, the tape that the family most wanted to have was not included in the tapes that Lisa picked up from the courthouse. Because the case had been moved to a different courtroom on that day, she accidentally got the tape from a criminal case that took place in Judge Shelton's normal courtroom.

The clerk reportedly called Lisa once she realized the mistake. She also told her that they gave the other 2 tapes to her in error as well. She would need to file papers with the judge to get the tapes because it was a juvenile case.

Shortly after, Lisa learned through the grapevine that Judge Shelton wanted the tapes back.

When she went to court with Steffen and Patricia on July 24, the judge demanded the tapes. She didn't have them with her that day, but they were under lock and key, she said, in a safe place. The judge then threatened her with contempt charges and jail if she did not return them.

She said that the judge told her that the clerk who gave her the tapes in error has since been fired.

Lisa returned the tapes to him on Monday, but she wants to know why he was so desperate to get the tapes back. What is he hiding?

That is a question that the family and their supporters have asked a lot since the children were taken. They are hopeful that the private autopsy will provide some answers, but it could take a couple more months to get those results back.

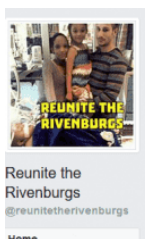
Meanwhile, the family desperately wants to bring Annalise home. They don't understand how DCS and the family court

have so much power over their lives to overrule their parental rights and keep Annalise away from them.

The children were loved and wanted, and neither Baby Steffen nor Annalise were abused or neglected at home. Baby Steffen is gone forever. They pray continuously that they do not lose Annalise.

How You Can Help

Supporters have set up a Facebook page for the family called [Reunite the Rivenburgs](#).



Tennessee Governor Bill Haslam may be reached at (615) 741-2001, or contacted [here](#), to ask for intervention for Annalise. Her family does not believe that her fate should be determined by the very judge who sentenced her baby brother to death. Governor Haslam is also on [Facebook](#).

The Senator for their district is Dr. Mark Green. He may be reached at (615) 741-2374, or contacted [here](#).

Their state Representative is Representative Joe Pitts. He may be reached at (615) 741-2043, or contacted [here](#).

The sheriff for this county is [Montgomery County Sheriff John Fuson](#). Contact him at (931) 648-0611 [or here](#). Questions to ask the sheriff (one of his cars is in the photo above):

1. Were these parents arrested with no warrant?
2. Were their Miranda rights read to them?
3. Did they have the right to remain silent and contact an attorney?
4. Does the father have legal representation as required by law?
5. Were they forced to give a drug test against their will?
6. Does your department routinely assist social worker allegations in the absence of a court order or warrant?

For more information about how sheriffs, who are elected officials, can be part of the SOLUTION rather than the PROBLEM, see:

[Are Constitutional Sheriffs America's Hope to Ending Child Protective Services' Tyranny?](#)

Disabled Man in Tennessee Loses Daughter - Finds Out She was Adopted to Strangers via Facebook



Adoption photo on Facebook

"The Real Story"

Photos provided by the family of Matthew Marble. The photo on the left was posted on Facebook. This was how Matthew learned that his daughter had been adopted. His aunt Bobbi shared the photo on the right to tell "The Real Story" of her adoption.

by Health Impact News/MedicalKidnap.com Staff

Matthew Marble is a disabled dad who loves his daughter

very much, and claims he has never done anything to harm her.

When the state of Tennessee terminated his right to parent his child, he was shattered. Requests by family members to care for her were denied by the Department of Children's Services (DCS).

Recently, he learned the devastating news—on Facebook—that his little girl has been adopted out. The news came right before Hailey's 5th birthday. Several family members saw the public posts with her adoption photos. Matthew's mother, Kim Trackwell wrote:

To find out over Facebook that his daughter was adopted ... the tears just won't stop. I love you, Hailey!

Bobbi Dubois is Matthew's aunt, who has tried to help bring Hailey back home with her family. She told us that she learned that Child Protective Services is under no obligation to tell the biological parents that their child was adopted if their parental rights were terminated.

Matthew's family has long held out hope that he could win the right to be in his daughter's life through the appeals process, but their appeal was denied. There have been two lawsuits filed in the case, but one of those was recently denied.

Matthew and his close-knit family are trying to comprehend how all of this could happen.

He recognizes his limitations, but he doesn't believe that his daughter is in the best place for her. She has a whole

extended family that she is now cut off from.

See original story:

Disabled Father Denied by State of Tennessee to Father his Own Child

Matthew suffers from several cognitive and physical disorders, conditions which DCS was made aware of from the beginning of the case. When he was in 3rd grade, he was hit in the face with a soccer ball and was knocked out when he fell backward onto a block of ice. Since that time, he has suffered from a seizure disorder.

He is partially blind in one eye, and he suffers from chronic knee pain from a disorder which caused one leg to grow faster than the other. He was fully vaccinated as a child, and these symptoms are possibly related to vaccine injury.

Despite his handicaps, family members describe him as being full of love. He is the kind of person who brings joy to those around him.

When he was in high school in Michigan, he learned that he and his girlfriend Aren Stuber were going to have a baby. He told *Health Impact News* that he was very excited about becoming a father. The couple's relationship didn't last, but he was determined to be a part of his baby's life.

Before Hailey was born, Aren and her family moved to Tennessee. Matthew was there for his baby's birth, and was listed on the birth certificate as her father.

Though they lived in different states, he made several trips to Tennessee for visits, and Aren traveled to Michigan as

well. Hailey was able to bond with both parents as well as the extended family – grandparents, aunts, uncles, and cousins.



Hailey with her extended family at a visitation. Photo provided by the family.

The relationship was there, but there were no legal custody or visitation documents in place to secure his right as a parent to be involved in his child’s life.

He had begun the process of applying for joint custody when the unthinkable happened. Hailey was abused and suffered a head injury while in her mother’s care.

Matthew and his family raced to Tennessee to be there for Hailey. When the Guardian ad litem, Virginia Thomkins, saw him at the first meeting, Matthew says she asked:

Who the hell are you?

Matthew and his family learned at that time and during the months that followed that strangers had more rights in Hailey's life than her own biological father.

Ineffective Defense by Court-Appointed Attorney

DCS refused to allow him to take his daughter home with him, even though he was hundreds of miles away when the abuse happened. DCS substantiated allegations against him of "severe abuse," because they said that he didn't protect his daughter from the abuse that happened in her mother's care.

He was given a list of things that he had to do in order to get his daughter. Without jumping through all the hoops, DCS told him that he would not be able to be a part of his own child's life.

There were never concerns that he had done anything to harm her.

It was made clear to everyone involved from the beginning that Matthew had disabilities. Because of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), accommodations should have been made, but they were not. Even something as basic as allowing him to have help filling out paperwork was denied him.

Tennessee Family Law Attorney Connie Reguli became involved later in the case. She says that his original court-ordered attorney failed to mount an effective defense.

He was set up for failure when DCS required him to do the permanency plan steps to get Hailey back, because there were never any accommodations made for his disabilities. Requirements were placed on him that should not have been placed on anyone as a condition for reunification, much less someone with his limitations.

Matthew Marble and his family point out that he wasn't asking to parent alone. He would have had the help of his mother and aunt and uncle. He didn't even mind if other family members had custody, as long as he was involved in her life.

Connie Reguli filed a lawsuit on his behalf against his first attorney for inadequate defense based on his disabilities. She said that the system set him up for failure. At the end of August 2017:

The lawsuit against the court appointed attorney got dismissed since his parental rights were terminated.



Family Law Attorney Connie Reguli. Photo source – [Facebook](#).

This was a crushing blow to Matthew and his family. Connie Reguli says that this demonstrates a fatal flaw in the Child Protective Services system for families:

Basically, parents have no remedy for a bad attorney.

This is apparent not just in Tennessee. Numerous parents around the country have found the same lack of accountability or recourse for poor or inadequate

representation.

While legislative task forces and bureaucrats pat themselves on the back and reassure themselves that there are “checks and balances” protecting families within the family court system, the reality is that it is a case of the foxes guarding the hen house.

There is only an illusion of accountability within the system. Those within the system write the rules in such a way that they win, and outsiders, the parents, come into the game at a strong disadvantage.

There is still a pending Americans with Disabilities Act lawsuit in federal court. All the other attempts for justice have failed.

Impact of Grief on Matthew's Health



Hailey having fun with her family at a visit. Photo provided by the family.

Matthew's aunt Bobbi Dubois is worried about him. She told us that her nephew had been free from seizures for the 3 years prior to DCS involvement, but:

All this has taken a toll on him.

He has started having seizures again, which she says are caused by all the stress of losing his daughter. He is on medications but he cannot drive. Bobbi says that he has suffered from depression since his rights were terminated. Matthew told us:

It kills me that I haven't been able to see her for over a year.

Even after his rights were terminated, he kept asking for visits, but he was rebuffed at every turn. His tone turned hopeless as he said:

Somewhere along the line, I gave up asking because no matter how hard I tried, I wasn't getting anywhere.

Bobbi Dubois believes that her nephew is a good father who loves his child very much. She has a hard time comprehending the corruption she sees in the DCS system and the injustice that she sees happening to Matthew, who she describes as "very loving."

Sweet Memories of Daddy and Daughter Times

Ever since Matthew found out that he was going to have a child, he knew he wanted to be a part of his child's life. He wants to be his daughter's father, to support her, love her, and guide her.

But now, it doesn't look like that will happen.

Despite his heartache, he wants to remember the good times with his little girl. He holds those memories close to his heart.

He shared how they would play together at visitation. He would play tea party with her. Hailey liked the kitchen playset at the DCS visitation room.

We had like this silent language thing going on, and they [social workers] hated it. I liked it. It was fun.

As her father, I already knew what to do, because she's just like me.

At one visit, he said that his mother convinced Hailey that she wanted to play pony. She "had a ball" riding on his back. Another time, she found some tutus and put one on.

She wanted me to get into one, too. So I did. Anything for my little girl!

They enjoyed playing on the slides and the playground together.

I know she loved it! I'm like a big kid sometimes.



Hailey with her daddy and grandmother at the playground. Photo provided by the family.

His favorite memory with Hailey happened around Halloween when they visited a pumpkin patch. Hailey got to paint a pumpkin, and then:

she wanted to paint ME, which was adorable.

She pulled my beard hairs, which was entertaining to her. It's attached to my face, so of course, I had to follow!

He laughed as he shared the tender memories:

All in all, those were some really good days.

Those visits ended all too soon. He said that, when it was time to leave, she would get angry. Like so many parents, Matthew described how difficult it was to get her into the car to go back to the foster parent's house.

The System Wins – The Parents Lose

In the end, the system beat them. Even though he loved his daughter and had never done anything to hurt her, DCS had more power. No matter what he did, it wasn't enough.

His disabilities hindered him from being able to do everything that the social workers wanted him to do. Despite the requirements of the Americans with Disabilities Act, social workers demanded that he be able to support himself, including a job, housing, and utilities, on his own, and to pay child support. He has always had the support of his family, but DCS insisted that he provide as though he were not disabled.

His family believes that DCS never had any intention of returning blond-haired, blue-eyed Hailey to her biological family. They learned that the adoptive family is heavily politically connected in Tennessee. There is court testimony that the woman who later adopted Hailey shouted to the DCS workers at the courthouse:

You promised me this baby!

After they found out on Facebook that she was adopted, Bobbi wrote:

Our hearts have been ripped wide open and nobody will ever understand how this has ripped her loving father apart. She is allowed to see the mother who abused her but not allowed to know the father who fought years for her that didn't harm her at all. Tennessee is AWFUL!

More than anything, Matthew Marble wants Hailey to know that he fought for her:

I just really want her to know that I love her, and that I didn't give up on her. I have been through hell and back to try to get her back.

How You Can Help

Governor Bill Haslam may be reached at (615) 741-2001, or contacted [here](#).

Senator Mae Beavers formerly represented the district where Hailey's case is held. She recently resigned in order to campaign for the governors race for 2018 against Governor Bill Haslam. She may be contacted [here](#).

Representative Kelly Keisling represents their district. He may be reached at (615) 741-6852, or contacted [here](#).

Tennessee Mom of Premature Twins Who Refused Vaccines is Arrested and Jailed



Tamika with her youngest twins. Photo provided by Seagraves family.

by **Health Impact News/MedicalKidnap.com Staff**

Almost a year after her youngest set of twins was taken by Child Protective Services, a Tennessee mother was arrested this week and charged with 2 counts of felony child neglect. Tamika Seagraves was blindsided by the arrest when she appeared for a child support hearing on Tuesday, October 24.

Friends are trying to raise money to get her out of jail. According to the Nashville and Davidson County court [website](#), her bond is set at \$20,000. Her arraignment is set for 9 am on November 8 at the Justice A.A. Birch Building Courthouse in Nashville, Tennessee.

Now, her biggest fear, according to her close friend who contacted *Health Impact News*, is that her babies will be vaccinated and her son circumcised without her consent.

Tamika has been fighting to get the twins back home since they were medically kidnapped in January 2017 by the Department of Children's Services. They were taken based on allegations that the breastfeeding mother neglected the nutrition of her youngest set of twins.

However, Tamika asserts that she was working with medical professionals and following their advice.

She has always believed that their seizure by DCS had less to do with their weight and more to do with the unusual circumstances of their birth.

See the Seagraves family's original story here:

Tennessee Mom Gives Birth to Premature Twins 3 Times – Surviving Babies Medically Kidnapped for Research?

Zaylen and Zaliyah were born on December 5, 2016. They were premature – born at 34 weeks. They were the third set of fraternal twins born to their mother, and all 3 sets of twin were a boy and girl pair. Their oldest brother Zayden died in the hospital at 13 days old. He and his twin Ziria were micro-preemies, born at just 24 weeks gestation.

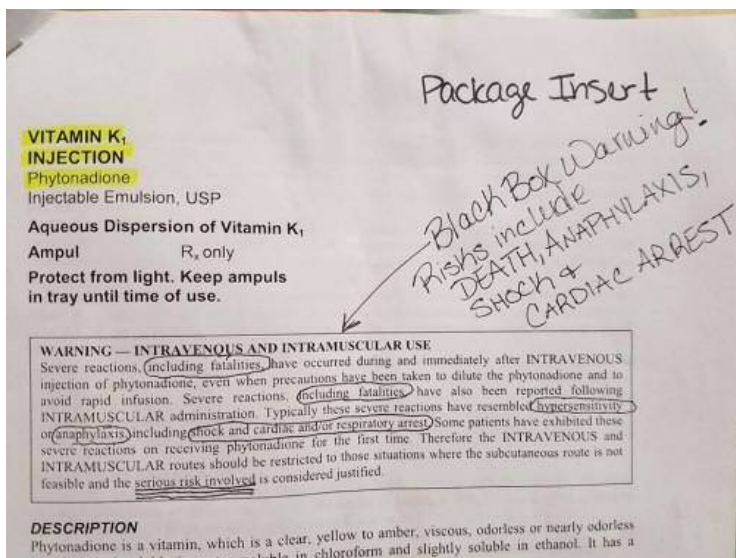
Two years later, Tamika Seagraves gave birth to another set of twins – Jordan and Jaliyah, born at 35 weeks. Again, tragedy struck when little Jordan passed away in his sleep. He was almost 2 months old.



Baby Jordan, shortly before he passed away. Photo provided by Seagraves family.

After she lost her first son, Tamika began researching vaccines. Based on what she found, she decided to limit the

shots that her second set of twins received to solely the Vitamin K shot. It was not until after Jordan's death that she learned that even the seemingly benign Vitamin K injection carried a black box warning label.



Since the routine Vitamin K shot carries a Black Box warning label, maybe it shouldn't be so routine.

While she continued her research, DCS and doctors at Vanderbilt Children's Hospital began looking at her.

After Jordan's autopsy came back saying that the coroner could not determine the cause of death, DCS blamed Tamika and the fact that she occasionally co-slept. According to court documents, DCS has accused Tamika of demonstrating "erratic behaviors" because she refuses vaccinations, stopped a medication for her child out of concerns for its side effects, "tried to have Jaliyah seen by a holistic chiropractor as opposed to a pediatrician."

Soon after, DCS seized custody of Jaliyah.

While Tamika was fighting the state to get Jaliyah back, she gave birth to her third set of twins.

When they were born, Tamika determined not to take any chances with their health. She refused all vaccines, the Vitamin K shot, the eye ointment, and circumcision for her son. She chose to exclusively breastfeed.

Whistleblowers who are NICU nurses have confirmed that they have seen premature infants injured in the NICU by vaccines, and a [2015 study](#) published in the *Journal of the American Medical Association* found that there are adverse effects from vaccinating very low birth-weight infants.

See:

[Nurse Whistleblower Confirms NICU Pre-term Babies Being Injured by Vaccines](#)

Like their sisters before them, the youngest twins were slow to gain weight. Tamika was working with a lactation consultant and a nurse-practitioner at the time. The lactation consultant noticed that the babies had a “tongue tie” or short frenulum, but she didn’t think it was cause for concern. She never suggested clipping it, a simple solution which almost always results in an increased milk supply, weight gain for babies, and decreased pain for mothers.

The nurse-practitioner was not very concerned about the twins’ weight at the 4 week appointment either, and set up an appointment for 2 weeks later for the babies to be weighed. If they still had weight issues, the plan was to then consider supplementation with formula.

Tamika followed all of their recommendations for feeding, so she was shocked when DCS showed up at her door when the babies were 5 weeks old. The allegations for removal at the time were more about Jaliyah than the new twins. It was not until a court hearing in early March that Tamika learned that doctors at Vanderbilt were alleging nutritional neglect.

Arrest Came as a Surprise

In an update on the [Justice for Jaliyah](#) Facebook page on June 15, Tamika wrote that the courts found her guilty of severe child abuse against the babies, citing allegations by Vanderbilt that she was starving her children. This was the juvenile court system that reportedly arrived at this finding, not a criminal court. However, to date, Tamika has reportedly not received a final report from the juvenile court.

According to Tamika's friend who contacted *Health Impact News*, things have been fairly quiet lately with the case. Tamika has been able to have visitation with her children, and she has been working towards the hoped-for goal of getting her children back.

Tuesday's arrest was unexpected. After the babies have been in state custody for almost 10 months, why are criminal charges just now being filed?

Now, her case moves to criminal court.

While she sits in jail she is not able to work, and her job is probably in jeopardy now.

How You Can Help

Supporters set up a Facebook page for the family after

Jalayah was taken, called [Justice for Jalayah](#).

Friends are trying to raise money to get her out of jail. According to the Nashville and Davidson County court [website](#), her bond is set at \$20,000. Her arraignment is set for 9 am on November 8 at the Justice A.A. Birch Building Courthouse in Nashville, Tennessee.



The Governor of the state of Tennessee is Bill Haslam. He may be reached at (615) 741-2001, or contacted [here](#).

Senator Thelma Harper represents the Seagraves family's district. She may be reached at (615) 741-2453, or contacted [here](#).

Representative Carson W. (Bill) Beck is the Representative for the Seagraves' district. He may be reached at (615) 741-3229, or contacted [here](#).

See other Medical Kidnap stories involving Vanderbilt Hospital:

[Kentucky Baby Medically Kidnapped Along with Siblings and Forced on to Formula](#)

Baby Found with Broken Bones – Parents Assumed Guilty of Abuse and Lose Custody

Tennessee Children with Brittle Bones Suffer in State Care as Mom Charged with SBS

Medically Kidnapped Toddlers of Tennessee Parents Returned After 2 Years

Kentucky Family Falsely Accused of Child Abuse – Children Medically Kidnapped to Cover Corruption

Vanderbilt Children's Hospital was also involved in one of the most horrific stories we have ever covered, where they played a central role in the death of Baby Steffen:

Medically Kidnapped Baby Scheduled for Execution TODAY!

Baby Scheduled to go Off Life Support Responding to Family – Rally and Court Date on Monday Morning

Civil Rights Abuse? Judge Only Gives Parents 24 Hours to Find Doctor Before Baby is Removed from Life Support

Family Seeks Answers on Baby's Death – Threatened Arrest for Trying to Record Last Moments of Life

Judge Who Ordered Baby Steffen to be Removed from Life Support Orders Sister be Placed for Adoption

Tennessee Family Wants Daughter and Sister of Deceased Baby Steffen to Come Home

Tennessee Family Buries Baby Steffen as Social Workers Stop Photos - Sister Still in Foster Care

Tennessee Parents of Baby Steffen Jailed While Appearing in Court and Questioning Drug Test

Tennessee Kidnaps 3 Boys from Mentally Disabled Mom - Refuses Grandmother Custody in Favor of Adoption to Strangers



“Adoptable” brothers Bentyn, Ethyn, and Kamdyn were taken from a disabled mother and are now cut off from all family members. Photo provided by family.

by **Health Impact News/MedicalKidnap.com Staff**

A grandmother is fighting to save 2 generations of her family from abuse by the state of Tennessee. Through no fault of her own, her family is being ripped apart, in a terrifying sequence of events that could happen to anyone.

She is afraid for 3 of her grandsons who were seized by Tennessee Department of Children's Services (DCS) from their mentally disabled mother. They have suffered horrific abuse in foster care. Now the state is attempting to sever all family ties so that they can adopt them out to strangers.

She is also fearful for the life of her 33 year old daughter Tara, the boys' mother, whose mental illness became much worse after the boys were taken. When they learned of the abuse of the boys in foster care, the sense of utter helplessness to protect them pushed her daughter over the edge.

The law provides for families to do what families do – for those members who are capable to step in and help other family members who are incapacitated in some way.

However, in this family's case, the state seems determined to keep that from happening.

Violation of Civil Rights for Disabled Mom



Whitney Manning (left) with her daughter Tara. Photo provided by family.

Whitney became conservator over her daughter's affairs when Tara's mental health declined to the point where she couldn't take care of them on her own.

Tara has suffered from depression, anxiety, bipolar disorder, and ADHD for many years. Since her children were taken, Tara has declined dramatically. She has now been diagnosed with psychosis and schizoaffective disorder.

There are provisions in the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) that should have been followed by DCS but allegedly have not been followed in this case. Though it is documented that DCS has known about her mental illness from the beginning of their involvement, they have reportedly failed to address it.

Currently, she is not receiving any therapy, and Whitney is not being permitted to make medical decisions for Tara to ensure that she gets needed treatment.

The state refuses to allow Whitney to care for her own grandsons, even though she has custody of the boys' little sister.

DCS social workers are now attempting to have Whitney removed as conservator altogether so that they can proceed with the termination of Tara's parental rights and adopt out her 3 sons without Whitney's input.

If they are successful, Whitney says she won't know what they are doing to her grandsons or to her daughter. She will no longer have to be notified if Tara goes missing (as has happened before) or if they change her medications.

DCS wants the state to put a doctor in charge of Tara as

conservator. What kind of things could happen to Tara then? Would she become a science experiment or lab rat? How would anyone know if her family were cut out of the picture?



Tara with her 3 sons during a visit. Photo supplied by family.

Children Taken over Alleged Psychological Harm by Father

DCS first became involved with the family in October of 2010 after allegations of their father being abusive toward their mother. Ethyn (now 11) and Kamdyn (now 9) were toddlers at

the time.

As soon as Whitney Manning was notified, she headed to Tennessee immediately from her home just outside of Washington, D.C.

In court, it was decided that the boys could go home with their mother as long as she was supervised by another family member. Their father was issued a no-contact order and told not to contact Tara or the boys at all.

For the next year, Whitney's life alternated between life in Tennessee where she supervised Tara and her grandsons, and life at her own home in Virginia with her own sons and her husband, while another family member supervised Tara and the boys.

In June of that year, Tara gave birth to another boy, Bentyn.

The family went to court in September of 2011. The judge placed Ethyn and Kamdyn under Whitney's guardianship and gave her permission to take the boys back to her home in Virginia. Tara was allowed to have supervised visits.

It was decided that baby Bentyn would live with Tara's father (the baby's grandfather) and his wife in Tennessee, so that Tara could have more frequent visits for bonding.



Bentyn with his mother on his first birthday. Photo supplied by family.

Social workers told both grandmothers that the case was closed and DCS was out of it.

Whitney went to Virginia and got everyone in a good routine there. The boys had frequent phone calls with their mother and visits once a month. They started preschool. There were plenty of family members for support as well as a nurse in the home 12 hours a day for Zachary, Whitney's 3 year old son with Down Syndrome.

Social Worker Lies, Says They Have to Return to Tennessee

Just after Thanksgiving, Whitney says she was “shocked” by a call from DCS social worker Crystal Lyons, who allegedly told her that “the judge had illegally placed the boys and

that they needed to return to Tennessee.”

When Whitney asked why, she states that Lyons threatened her with kidnapping charges if she did not comply.

Whitney later learned that this was not true. She found the law. DCS acted under the color of law to force her to do something that she was not obligated to do.

She took her son Zachary and her grandsons back to Tennessee on December 26, 2011, to stay with Tara:

When I left I had to give up all of Zachary's services and doctors. I also left behind my other 2 younger boys, ages 8 and 11.... I left my other children for Ethyn and Kamdyn all because of a lie from Crystal Lyons.

Whitney quickly rented her own place in Tennessee, but DCS was involved again. They wanted the 3 brothers together. Whitney told them that she could take the baby IF she could go back to Virginia where she had support, including a nurse and therapists for her own little boy, who had a host of medical issues himself. All of her resources were in Virginia.

The boys' Guardian ad litem Polly Peterson didn't want the 3 boys in the same house with Zachary. Because of his Down Syndrome, she considered him to be a threat to his nephews. Whitney was told that she had to choose to keep her own son with her or to care for her grandsons. She couldn't do both.



September 12, 2015 · 2

Had to share Kamdyn (my grandson) and Zach . Kamdyn is reading Zachs little Bible to him. Zach is a month older then Kamdyn and they love each other so much. Kamdyn is so kind always helping and loving on his best buddy . I love these little guys to the moon !



Zachary never posed a threat to his nephews. The boys were very close as this post by Whitney Manning from a visit in 2015 shows.

At one point, Whitney mentioned being “tired” to the social worker, but her words were twisted to mean that she didn’t

want the boys. Nothing could have been further from the truth.

Boys Abused in State Care

The social worker later admitted that she did not do a background check on the couple with whom the boys were placed.

That placement turned out to be disastrous.

According to Whitney Manning:

The boys went from happy, polite, healthy, fun, well-loved little boys to having sores, nightmares, peeing on themselves, sick, underweight, scared, sad, crying, withdrawn little boys.

Even though Whitney bought bunkbeds for the boys, she says that they had to sleep on the floor. Sometimes one of the boys would allegedly be handcuffed and locked in the closet with no clothes or blankets. One of the children showed up to visits with cigarette burns on his body.

The boys used to love bathtime. Now they screamed. They learned that Kamdyn had allegedly been held down with his head under ice cold water in the bathtub.

When Ethyn was 5 and Kamdyn was 3, Ethyn described witnessing very disturbing behavior at the foster home. He said that he would get off the schoolbus and come into the kitchen to find his little brother squatting up against the wall with the foster mother holding a butcher knife between his legs, blade side up, so that it would cut him if he moved.

He demonstrated how Kamdyn had to squat. It was a story he told on multiple occasions, including, allegedly, to the social worker and Guardian ad litem.

Nothing was done about this or the other abuse. His family was helpless to stop the abuse, though they tried. Meanwhile, Tara's mental health declined. Whitney told *Health Impact News*:

There was nothing we could do to protect them, and that is when she started losing her mind.



Tara at dinner at her mother's house, surrounded by her children and brothers. Whitney says, "She just wanted a family and a white picket fence." Photo supplied by family.

On one occasion in early 2013 Whitney was present when the boys told the therapist that the fosters would put Kamdyn outside in the dog kennel and force him to eat dog feces that they had placed on a toy bar of soap. Ethyn was forced to watch from inside.

Whitney was horrified. After the therapist visit, she couldn't bring herself to take the children back to the DCS office. Instead, she drove to the attorneys' office where they called DCS. Social workers insisted that she had to bring the boys back. When she arrived, she says that her car was immediately surrounded by police.

She didn't hear from them for 3 days after that. The boys were placed into another foster home.

Abuse Continues in Next Foster Home

The boys have shown up for visits with bruises and cuts. Whitney sent us a photo of Bentyn with a gash over his eye. He told her that the foster mother had kicked him into the corner of the wall.



Gash over Ethyn's eye sustained in state custody. Photo supplied by family.

During a weekend visit with Whitney in the summer of 2016, she recorded Ethyn describing an incident that happened at the YMCA after school. He said he was upset because the foster care review board had told him that he was going to be adopted. He got into a conflict with someone at the Y and ran off.

When he described the incident, he sounded like a child who had lost all hope. Referring to the foster mother, he said:

I knew she was going to hurt me anyway.

DCS Retaliates for Grandmother Reporting Abuse in Foster Care – Cuts Off All Contact with Family

Whitney reported the incident to the CPS hotline, and she showed the video to Tara's attorney. When she showed it to Polly Peterson, Whitney says the GAL just "rolled her eyes."

Immediately after Whitney reported the abuse, there was apparent retaliation.

That visit on August 12, 2016, ended up being the last time she has seen her grandsons. Her mother, the children's elderly great grandmother, also lost visitation. Tara's visits were halted soon after.



These children love each other dearly, but through no fault of their own, they cannot see each other. Photo supplied by family.

Mother's Mental Health Plummet

During the course of DCS involvement, Tara's mental health

declined. She tried to comply with the requirements of the permanency plan, but Whitney says:

They put Tara in a no-win situation setting her up to fail.

The Americans with Disabilities Act specifies that Child Protective Services must make accommodations for parents with disabilities in their requirements.

According to Whitney, they made none:

Crystal [the social worker] admitted that there were not facilities or doctors equipped to take care of or address Tara's mental health needs in the area.

Another Baby Born, Grandmother Approved to Care for Her

Tara gave birth to another baby, Makinlyn, in April of 2014. DCS placed her into Whitney's custody where she has been ever since.



Tara with Makinlyn at a visit. Photo supplied by family.

That case is closed. The same DCS department still refuses to allow Whitney to care for the 3 brothers of that baby.

Even though the baby is safe, Tara's helplessness to stop the reported abuse to her sons plunged her into a deep depression, something *Health Impact News* has found is common with parents who lose their children to the state and who are subsequently abused in foster care.

Tara is now on disability, and Whitney is now the conservator over her affairs.

Multiple Generations Impacted

At stake here are 2 generations. Whitney wants the state of Tennessee to simply allow her to take care of her family, as is her right and responsibility.

She is very concerned about the safety of her grandsons under state care.

She is also very concerned about her daughter's health and well-being. She believes that Tara will fare much better if she knows that her children are safe and free from abuse.

DCS has petitioned the family court to terminate Tara's parental rights (TPR) on the grounds of mental incompetence.

The family is not trying to get the children back into their mother's custody. They recognize that she is not capable of taking care of them.

But Whitney Manning is.



Makinlyn loves her 3 brothers. Because of DCS decisions, she hasn't seen them in a year and a half. Photo supplied by family.

For millennia families have stepped in when family members needed help. It is what families do. However, in today's climate in the U.S., government has replaced families in deciding what they feel is "best" for the children, which all too often means massive federal and state funding for foster care and adoption that is obtained ONLY when

children are removed from their families.



They are family. Why are these relationships being severed?
Photo supplied by family.

Sara Gordon Case and the ADA

The Department of Justice supports the role of extended family in cases involving disabled persons.

In the case of Sara Gordon, Massachusetts DCF seized a newborn baby from a mother with a developmental disability, even though she lived with her parents who were perfectly capable of helping her. (See [link](#).)

In February 2015 the DOJ ordered her baby to be returned and issued an opinion which attorney Connie Reguli summarizes, stating that the DOJ:

held that the state's welfare agency had violated ADA for the mentally disabled Mother when they refused to consider the support she could receive to parent her child from her family (specifically her mother). This was considered a reasonable accommodation for a mentally disabled Mother whom the state sought to terminate her parental rights on the grounds

of mental incompetency.

Social workers in the Child Protective Services industry apparently don't see it that way. The DOJ decision has held little impact on the practices of social workers and family courts. (See related [story](#).)

Conservatorship Opposed Because Whitney Doesn't Trust DCS

The newest tactic by DCS is an appeal to the court to have Whitney removed as conservator. If that were to happen, it would be practically assured that DCS would be able to terminate Tara's parental rights and adopt her children out.

Tara's GAL Claire Addlestone brought a report to the latest court hearing on January 10, 2018, saying that Whitney should not be Tara's conservator or have authority over her medical care. The reasons cited were that Whitney:

- 1. cannot be objective because she believes that Tara would get better if she had a relationship with her children, and*
- 2. does not trust DCS and has repeatedly said that DCS "stole" her grandsons.*

Of course Whitney has a conflict with DCS. She is fighting them for her family.

Polly Peterson, the GAL for the boys, should have had no reason to be involved with the conservatorship case, but she

was able to testify at last week's hearing. She reportedly recommended that a particular state doctor could oversee Tara's case and be her conservator as well.

That thought is scary to Whitney. Besides the obvious conflict of interest issues with this man that she had never seen before, Whitney is afraid that, if her daughter elopes again as she did just before Christmas (see [link](#)), or disappears, or dies, she wouldn't even know about it if the state is allowed to replace her as conservator.

How to Help

Though this family's story is a tangled nightmare with many layers, the solutions are simple:

- Whitney Manning needs to remain conservator for her mentally disabled daughter so that 1) she has the authority to get her the help she needs, and 2) she can intervene in the DCS proceedings on behalf of Tara.
- The 3 boys, Ethyn, Kamdyn, and Bentyn need to be removed from foster care where they are being abused and be placed under the care of their grandmother.

Whitney tells *Health Impact News*:

They have destroyed my child. It didn't matter what she did, they were determined to take her kids, and they took them from me, too.

Tennessee Governor Bill Haslam may be reached at (615) 741-2001, or contacted [here](#).

Senator Jon Lundburg represents the district where Tara and her boys are being held. He may be reached at (615) 741-5761, or contacted [here](#).

Representative Bud Hulseby represents their district. He may be reached at (615) 741-2886, or contacted [here](#).

Do Criminals have more Rights than Parents in Tennessee? Local Media Covers Problem of "Legal" Kidnapping by State of Tennessee



Image courtesy of [Fox17 Nashville](#).

Comments by Brian Shilhavy
Editor, Health Impact News

We applaud and thank reporter Dennis Ferrier for [exposing the injustice in Tennessee's Juvenile Justice System](#), where he reports that "serial killers have more rights than parents in Tennessee." Please click through to read his entire expose, and thank him for daring to cover this important topic.

For more on the unconstitutional practices of family courts nationwide that routinely remove children from parents against their will and against the principles of the U.S.

Constitution, where a rapist, murderer, or terrorist has more rights in our judicial system than parents do in family courts, see:

Does the State Ever Have a “Right” to Remove Children from a Home?

FERRIER FILES: Do criminals have more rights than parents in Tennessee?

by [Dennis Ferrier](#)
[Fox17 Nashville](#)

Excerpts:

It is pretty hard to believe that serial killers have more rights than parents in Tennessee, but once you enter the Juvenile Justice System, anything can happen.

And even if you do absolutely nothing wrong, your children can be taken from you. It may sound like a ridiculous question but not when you consider what happened to a Williamson County, Tennessee, mom.

It all started when Tori’s 3-year-old son told her something inappropriate happened to him when he was with their father. The couple is divorced.

Tori followed the law and reported it to DCS.

“I was interrogated for two to three hours with no videotape, no attorney present,” Harper said. “I was a little intimidated, but at that time I still didn’t think I had done anything wrong when I realized they were investigating me.”

Remember, there is no allegation against Tori Harper, yet DCS asked her to surrender her kids on the spot and relinquish custody during the investigation.

“There was no way I was going to give strangers custody of my children even for a day or two especially with that going on,” Harper said. “I wanted my children.”

The next day she said DCS secretly went to Williamson County Juvenile Judge Sharon Guffee and asked for an ex-parte order to get custody of the kids. The judge signed the order even though Tori wasn't present to defend herself.

DCS claimed Tori Harper was mentally unstable...

“I’ve never had a speeding ticket,” Harper said. “I have no mental health history. I’m a good mom. I love my kids. I was a room mom that year for my oldest son.”

Her lawyer, family law specialist Connie Reguli, said this is standard practice, and it is nasty stuff.

“For people who don’t know what ex-parte means it is behind the back,” Reguli said. “They knew Tori. They certainly had an opportunity to get it before the court. Instead they get an ex-parte order to get her children in custody of DCS. DCS can do whatever they want to them. They obviously didn’t want Tori or her lawyer there.”

Family law attorney Connie Reguli said this story may sound

shocking, but it is common.

Read the [full story at Fox17](#).

Disabled Virginia Mom Arrested with No Warrant, No Charges Because Health Impact News Exposed her Story



Left: Mentally disabled mother arrested with no charges to a crime, no arrest warrant and no reading of Miranda rights. Right: Disabled mother handcuffed to a bed in a mental health facility after being arrested. Photos provided by family.

by **Health Impact News/MedicalKidnap.com Staff**

Police have arrested a mother in Virginia. She was charged with no crime. There was no warrant. Tara Chapman, who has a mental health disability, was reportedly dragged out of the house, placed in handcuffs, and taken away in a police car yesterday, March 7, 2018.

Whitney Manning is her mother, and she has been fighting Tennessee's Child Protective Services for her daughter and grandchildren for several years. She is terrified for the very life of her daughter.

Attorney Connie Reguli told *Health Impact News* that she believes that Tara's arrest was "all retaliation" for their story being exposed. She said that Tara was not a threat to herself or to anyone else.

She was TRULY medically kidnapped. They are treating her like a criminal. This is true abuse of the mentally ill.

We reported the family's story in January. See:

Tennessee Kidnaps 3 Boys from Mentally Disabled Mom – Refuses Grandmother Custody in Favor of Adoption to Strangers

Since that time, Whitney has been gagged by the family court from talking about the Termination of Parental Rights (TPR) case against her daughter. Whitney has served as conservator over her daughter, whose mental health seriously declined after the children were taken from her family.

The chancery court, in which the conservatorship case is held, has been reportedly "following suit" of the family court in trying to bully Whitney Manning into silence.

Her attorney clarified to *Health Impact News* that there is no gag order on the chancery court case, but it is under seal. It is clear, however, that Whitney is afraid to speak out, but she is

even more afraid of what will happen to Tara if she doesn't speak up now.

Tara Was in Danger in Tennessee Facility

For many months, Tara has been a resident of the Gibson Place, a voluntary, residential treatment facility in Johnson City, Tennessee. Her family has been concerned for her safety there because she has eloped, or run away 4 times to date from the facility. Each time, she was sent to a mental health hospital for a few days, and then she would be returned to Gibson Place.

It was obvious to Whitney that this arrangement was not working. Tara's needs were not being met there, and she wanted to go home.

There was also a lab report showing that she had high ammonia levels in her blood. Tara was also in a back brace. A doctor's report said that she had severe pulled muscles and ligaments. It happened at Gibson Place, but nobody can tell Whitney how it happened. Whitney has been greatly concerned for Tara's safety in the facility.

On Friday, February 16, 2018, Whitney picked Tara up for a weekend visit with family in Virginia. The following Monday, they sent word to the voluntary treatment facility that Tara was not going back.

It should have been their choice.

For 3 weeks, Tara did "excellent." Though her sons remain in foster care in Tennessee, she was with other family members, and that was good. They enjoyed having meals together and being a family again.



During the past 3 weeks, Tara enjoyed spending time with family and even helped to provide meals. Photo provided by family.

Whitney has told *Health Impact News* in the past that she believed that being around her family would be very therapeutic for her daughter.

Tara had graduated with honors from college and had a teaching degree. The Tennessee Department of Children's Services (DCS) became involved during a time when Tara was being abused by her sons' father. She had struggled with depression and bipolar disorder to some degree before that, but her children being taken literally drove her crazy.



Whitney Manning (left) with her daughter Tara. Photo provided by family.

After her mother took her out of the Tennessee group home, Tara began seeing doctors in Virginia for medical treatment. It appeared that, even with Tara's mental disability, there was hope for her to get somewhat better.

Tara was doing great. She and her mother went out shopping on Wednesday for craft supplies.

Then the police showed up.

Arrested in Virginia Without a Warrant

Whitney says that her daughter had not done anything wrong. Attorney Connie Reguli told us that Tara Chapman was not a threat to herself or anyone else. If she had been, there would have been clear grounds for the police to take her into custody. Those conditions did not exist.

The police didn't have a warrant. They reportedly told Tara and her family that they have something signed by a court and they don't need anything else. Whitney was on the phone with her attorney, but Connie says:

They refused to produce a warrant or court order.

No Miranda rights were read.

The 4th Amendment to the United States Constitution states:

The right of the people to be secure in their persons, houses, papers, and effects, against unreasonable searches and seizures, shall not be violated, and no Warrants shall issue,

but upon probable cause, supported by Oath or affirmation, and particularly describing the place to be searched, and the persons or things to be seized.

Apparently, a Tennessee magistrate had signed an emergency custody order for Tara, even though she had been in Virginia for 3 weeks, safely in the care of her mother and family.

Adult Medical Kidnapping – Tennessee Takes Custody through Conservatorship

There was reportedly an ex parte hearing in Tennessee without the family or their attorneys during which Whitney Manning’s conservatorship over her daughter was taken from her and placed with someone else. Who that “someone else” is, no one connected to the family knows.

Police took Tara Chapman to a local mental hospital where she was handcuffed to a bed. Whitney had to ask for a pillow to cushion Tara’s arm from the metal bed rail.



Posted to [Family Forward Project](#) Facebook page: “This is how our government treats a mom with a mental health disability.... The corruption is rampant. Disability rights trampled on. Due process annihilated.” – Connie Reguli

Connie Reguli reports:

The mental health exam showed that she did not reach the criteria of admission. [But] they still held her hostage.

From the mental health hospital, Tara was transported to a police station in Virginia.

Where Is She Now?

The Virginia police refused to allow her to go home with her family, insisting instead that they would only release her to the conservator who had been appointed (“Ex parte,” Reguli adds.) Tara has never met the conservator before. The family and the attorney still do not know who this person is.

As it stands now, Connie Reguli says:

We don't know who picked her up or where they've taken her.

Whitney is terrified for her daughter.

According to the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), the law requires that the disabled be in the “least restrictive environment” possible. It is her legal right to be with her family if they can care for her. It is a violation of ADA to force her into captivity.



2017 Family Forward Project in review

Connie Reguli with Whitney Manning. Photo from [YouTube video](#).

Tara's children should have been placed with her family, also according to ADA. As we wrote in the story of disabled father Matthew Marble (see [link](#)):

Connie Reguli writes that under both state and federal guidelines:

...the state child welfare agency is required to place with a relative when the child cannot be returned to a parent. Kinship foster care is codified in Tennessee Title 37 and is also a requirement put down by the United States Department of Health and Human Services under Title IV E of the Social Security Act for any state child welfare agency receiving federal funds.

Story Shared in Public Forum before Gag Order

Our previous coverage of the family's story came before the Tennessee family court issued the unconstitutional gag order.

See more on the constitutionality of gag orders here:

[Family Court Judges' Unconstitutional Gag Orders On Parents](#)

Also before the gag order was this YouTube video showing Whitney Manning speaking in a public forum on August 11, 2016, about what DCS has done to her family:

<https://youtu.be/p-R67no1tHQ>

How You Can Help

Tennessee Governor Bill Haslam may be reached at (615) 741-2001, or contacted [here](#).

Senator Jon Lundburg represents the district in Tennessee where Tara's conservatorship case is involved with the chancery court and where her boys are being held. He may be reached at (615) 741-5761, or contacted [here](#).

Representative Bud Hulse is the Representative for that district. He may be reached at (615) 741-2886, or contacted [here](#).

See related story:

**Disabled Parents Losing Right to Parent their
Own Children in America while Foster Parent
Recruitment Seeks “Imperfect Parents”**

Tennessee Family Seeks Lawsuit for Malpractice, Negligence, and Wrongful Death Over Down Syndrome Baby Taken Off of Life Support



Baby Steffen in happier times, before DCS and too many surgeries at Vanderbilt. Photo provided by family.

by **Health Impact News/MedicalKidnap.com Staff**

A Tennessee family is crying out for justice. When doctors, social workers, and lawyers pushed last spring to have Baby Steffen taken off of life support, his family and their supporters pleaded for him to be given a chance to live. They could not understand why there was such a concerted effort to end Baby Steffen's life. It made no sense to them.

Now, the results of a private autopsy are back, and the reasons seem crystal clear to the family. According to Baby Steffen's grandmother, Lisa Rivenburg:

It's open and shut malpractice, negligence, and wrongful death.

They have suspected all along that somebody was covering something up. Now, they believe they have the evidence they need to pursue a lawsuit. They are in need of an attorney willing and able to take on the case.

Medically Kidnapped Over Missed Doctor Appointments

Baby Steffen was taken from his parents, Patricia Tornberg and Steffen Rivenburg, Sr., on February 2, 2017. His sister Annalise was seized the same day.

The Department of Children's Services (DCS) alleged abuse because the parents had missed a total of 3 doctors appointments for Baby Steffen due to car problems. Each appointment was rescheduled. None were urgent.

Steffen was born with Down Syndrome and congenital heart defects, including Atrioventricular Septal Defect (AVSD), and pulmonary stenosis. By 3 months of age, Tetralogy of Fallot was suspected but not yet diagnosed. Doctors told his parents that he would likely require heart surgery at 6 months of age. (Note: some children outgrow these heart defects and no longer require surgery.)

Despite his condition, the family says he was thriving and doing well at home with his parents and big sister, Annalise, who was in first grade.

On the day Baby Steffen was taken, he was with his parents at one of the make-up doctor appointments. He was allegedly not sick. However, the children were placed with strangers who wanted to adopt children.

Previously Stable, Baby Declines Rapidly in State Custody

Both siblings were allegedly given multiple vaccines the day after they were taken from their family.

By the end of their second week in foster care, Baby Steffen became very ill with metapneumovirus, which he contracted while in state custody. The illness was hard on his already fragile heart.

Doctors at the Monroe Carell Jr. Children's Hospital at Vanderbilt performed the first heart surgery on Baby Steffen in late February, followed shortly after by 2 additional heart surgeries and other procedures, which resulted in him being placed on life support.

State Players Argue for His Death

By the end of May, doctors at Vanderbilt sought court orders to remove the baby from life support, even though the family says he showed clear signs that he was not brain dead.

<https://youtu.be/xXFwcwfY8dI>

Our readers responded quickly to his story, pleading with the hospital and lawmakers to give the baby a chance to live.

See original story and follow up here:

Medically Kidnapped Baby Scheduled for Execution TODAY!

Baby Scheduled to go Off Life Support Responding to Family – Rally and Court Date on Monday Morning

Civil Rights Abuse? Judge Only Gives Parents 24 Hours to Find Doctor Before Baby is Removed from Life Support

Other doctors and hospitals were willing to have him transferred and evaluate him to see if there was any hope to save his life.

All of the cries from the public as well as the requests from other medical professionals apparently fell on deaf ears. The family filed motions in court, but they were ignored.

It seemed to the family that the doctors, social workers,

attorneys, and even the judge were determined that nothing was going to stop the predetermined path to ending Baby Steffen's life. Attorneys argued that it would be "in Steffen's best interests" to remove him from life support.



Baby Steffen on life support Monday night, May 29, 2017. Photo provided by the family.

The family and thousands of supporters all over the world were confused and horrified that there seemed to be no way to stop them.

Euthanized at Vanderbilt

On June 8, 2017, the family's opponents were successful in blocking every attempt to give Baby Steffen any more time to live. As the family was allegedly threatened by police for filming Baby Steffen's last moments in the hospital, Baby Steffen was removed from life support.

For a brief moment, the family felt hope. Baby Steffen's little heart beat on its own and he was breathing on his own. Their hope was short-lived. A doctor reportedly insisted on giving the baby a shot "to relax him." The shot contained propofol – the "Michael Jackson drug," a drug that causes people not to breathe.

Baby Steffen died in his devastated mother's arms.



Baby Steffen's mother fought for his life till the very end.
Source: Rivenburg family.

WHY?

The family has been asking ever since his death, "Why?"

Since the day that doctors began insisting that Baby Steffen was not going to live, grandmother Lisa Rivenburg and his

parents Trish and Steffen have wanted to know what was going on.

They have maintained that there was “something fishy.” They have always believed that he should not have died, and that something happened in that hospital that caused his decline and the apparent rush to destroy evidence – his tiny body.

See:

[Family Seeks Answers on Baby’s Death – Threatened Arrest for Trying to Record Last Moments of Life](#)

Almost miraculously, they were able to get his body away from Vanderbilt hospital and take him to a secure location. With the help of Mattie Shay Mitchell, her non-profit [Liam Changed the World Inc.](#), and *Health Impact News* readers, the family was able to raise the money for a private autopsy, which they hoped, and believed, would provide much-needed answers.

They were correct.

Autopsy Shows “Important Findings”

The specific findings of the autopsy cannot be released at this time, because Baby Steffen’s family has every intention of filing a lawsuit. However, they report that the results are shocking.

They asked us not to release the name of the private, licensed medical examiner who performed the autopsy, but he is prepared to testify to his findings in court.

Just before he sent the results to the family, he told Lisa Rivenburg that the findings were “important, especially to your future lawyers.”

Lisa sought to clarify in a text message:

So they messed up as we thought all along.

The medical examiner responded:

Yes. There are important findings that I will go over with you in detail.

The family is searching now for an attorney to take their case to file a lawsuit. Lisa Rivenburg spoke with an attorney recently who told her that he cannot handle the case. He reportedly agreed that there is malpractice and negligence, as well as “mental anguish.”



Heartbroken, Annalise grieved the loss of Baby Steffen with their mother. Photo Source: [Reunite the Rivenburgs](#) Facebook page.

Because the family has very limited financial resources, they need an attorney who will take the case on a contingency. They have the evidence that they need to show that Baby Steffen should not have died.

The questions now are:

- *How much did DCS social workers and attorneys know about what was happening with Baby Steffen's medical condition, and when did they know it?*
- *Will doctors at Vanderbilt and the DCS social workers be held accountable?*
- *When will Annalise come home?*

Baby Steffen's 7-Year-Old Sister Still Not Home

Baby Steffen's sister Annalise is still not home. DCS removed her from the foster parents with whom she lived when her brother was alive, but she is still not with any of her family.

DCS is in the process of "transitioning" her back home.

As most families dealing with Child Protective Services know, CPS often takes children in a moment, but they usually insist on a transition or reunification process that can take many months to complete.

The argument is typically something along the lines of helping the children to adapt to being back home after being "stable" in foster care, a concern that is noticeably missing from virtually every child removal from their family that has ever taken place.

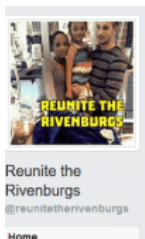
Parents Trish and Steffen reportedly continue to comply with

every requirement, many of which they have completed several times over. They are both working. Though Steffen Sr.'s mother Lisa Rivenburg has plenty of room for them to live with her, DCS insists that they have their own place.

As soon as they secure that, they are very hopeful that Annalise will be home with them soon.

How You Can Help

If there is an attorney willing to step in and help the family to file a lawsuit, the Rivenburg family wants their contact information. Supporters have set up a Facebook page for the family called [Reunite the Rivenburgs](#).



Tennessee Governor Bill Haslam may be reached at (615) 741-2001, or contacted [here](#). Governor Haslam is also on [Facebook](#).

The Senator for their district is Dr. Mark Green. He may be reached at (615) 741-2374, or contacted [here](#).

Their state Representative is Representative Joe Pitts. He may be reached at (615) 741-2043, or contacted [here](#).

Other coverage of the family's continuing story:

[Judge Who Ordered Baby Steffen to be Removed from Life Support Orders Sister be Placed for Adoption](#)

[Tennessee Family Wants Daughter and Sister of Deceased Baby Steffen to Come Home](#)

[Tennessee Family Buries Baby Steffen as Social Workers Stop Photos – Sister Still in Foster Care](#)

[Tennessee Parents of Baby Steffen Jailed While Appearing in Court and Questioning Drug Test](#)

Other Medical Kidnap stories involving Vanderbilt Hospital:

[Tennessee Mom Gives Birth to Premature Twins 3 Times – Surviving Babies Medically Kidnapped for Research?](#)

[Kentucky Family Falsely Accused of Child Abuse – Children Medically Kidnapped to Cover Corruption](#)

[1-Hour Old Newborn Baby Kidnapped at Kentucky Hospital because Parents Refused to Take Parenting Classes](#)

[Baby Found with Broken Bones – Parents Assumed Guilty of Abuse and Lose Custody](#)

[Tennessee Children with Brittle Bones Suffer in State Care as Mom Charged with SBS](#)

[Kentucky Baby Medically Kidnapped Along with Siblings and Forced on to Formula](#)

[Kentucky Family Falsely Accused of Child Abuse – Children Medically Kidnapped to Cover Corruption](#)

[Disabled Father Denied by State of Tennessee to Father his Own Child](#)

See more about Child Abuse Specialists:

[Are New Pediatric “Child Abuse Specialists” Causing an Increase in Medical Kidnappings?](#)

"Mental Illness" Label Used to Medically Kidnap Mother and Try to Adopt Out Her Children



Tara Chapman was doing great with her family when she was seized, handcuffed, and ultimately locked up in a psych facility. Photo provided by family.

by **Health Impact News/MedicalKidnap.com Staff**

Tara Chapman, a 33 year old disabled mother, was handcuffed, drugged, and carted away to a facility that is 8 hours from her family. She is being held prisoner in Tennessee under the guise of mental illness, even though a mental hospital in Virginia recently said that she did not

meet the criteria to commit her.

The state of Tennessee wants Tara's three boys to stay in foster care, away from family. The family wants to know how far the state is willing to go to ensure that neither Tara nor her family gets her 3 children back? A fourth child, Tara's daughter, is being cared for by her mother Whitney, the children's grandmother, but the state refuses to allow the grandmother to care for the 3 boys.

There was supposed to be a court hearing on Friday, April 13, 2018, but the juvenile court cancelled it without warning less than 24 hours before.

Tara has suffered from mild mental illness for many years, but it was only after her children were seized by Child Protective Services and abused in foster care that her mental health deteriorated to the point where she qualified for disability.

See original story, reported in January:

Tennessee Kidnaps 3 Boys from Mentally Disabled Mom – Refuses Grandmother Custody in Favor of Adoption to Strangers

Mental Illness Symptoms Disappear after Weening off of Psych Drugs

She was recently home with family members in Virginia for almost 3 weeks before she was medically kidnapped. During that time, her mother Whitney Manning was able to ween her off of the psychotropic medications.

The change in Tara was almost miraculous. Whitney found

that the symptoms in her daughter that they had been led to believe were due to her “mental illness” disappeared. She stopped hallucinating. The crazy talk ceased. They were able to share meals together. They worked on crafts together.

How much of the symptoms were never part of any mental illness, but were simply effects of the psychotropic medications?

The following video was taken just 2 hours before police arrived on March 7, 2018, to drag her out of the house in handcuffs. Whitney and her attorney Connie Reguli had planned to submit the video in court last Friday, to demonstrate how well Tara was functioning without the medications but with family support.

Since they now don't know when the next court hearing will happen, Whitney Manning posted it onto Facebook to show the injustice that is happening under Tennessee courts.

<https://youtu.be/dG4WYGiOMwo>

There was no warrant. Tara was never charged with a crime. Yet, a woman has lost her freedom, and a mother has lost her adult daughter while her grandsons suffer in foster care with strangers.

See story of Tara's seizure:

[Disabled Virginia Mom Arrested with No Warrant, No Charges Because Health Impact News Exposed her Story](#)

It has been said many times that we have a mental health crisis in America, and that may well be true. However, it is

not what people think.

It is not that so many people have mental health issues; it is that government agencies are USING these diagnoses to strip away every human right that these people have – taking them from their families, taking their children away from them, drugging them, and locking them up against their will even though they pose no threat to themselves or others, all when they have family or friends willing to help them.

In short, the real mental health crisis is that the legal system is stripping their humanity from them.

Grandmother's Guardianship in the way of DCS Goal to Terminate Parental Rights and Adopt Out the Children

Whitney became the legal guardian and conservator over her daughter when it became clear that Tara's condition had declined to the point where she could no longer take care of her own affairs.

Tara qualified for disability in 2013, shortly after her sons were placed into foster care. The more that they saw signs that the boys were being abused in foster care, the more helpless Tara felt. The grief sent her into a tailspin.

When Tara gave birth to another baby, Makinlyn, DCF placed the baby with Whitney. Makinlyn is thriving in her grandmother's home. However, Whitney has been fighting to no avail to get the boys back home with her.

Tennessee DCF has been attempting to terminate Tara's parental rights (TPR) on the 3 boys so that they can be adopted out. The fact that Whitney was guardian and

conservator for Tara has stood in the way of the TPR.



It has been more than a year and a half since anyone in the family has seen brothers Bentyn, Ethyn, and Kamdyn, who were taken by DCF and placed into foster care.

The battle has become increasingly vicious. DCF social workers have been working with the Chancery Court, which is the court that oversees guardianships and conservatorships for adults. They allegedly needed to get Whitney out of the picture to clear the way for the TPR.

As part of that effort, an ex parte hearing took place in Tennessee without the family or their attorneys during which Whitney Manning's conservatorship over her daughter was taken from her and placed with someone else. There was never any hearing for the family to present any evidence or to dispute any allegations. It was a one-sided decision that has resulted in Tara's captivity.

The very fact that Whitney has always believed that her daughter would get better if her children were safe with family and if she were permitted to be around them has been used against her in the argument that Whitney is not accepting "reality."

Tara's brief time home as she weaned off the psychotropic drugs and began functioning normally serves to strengthen Whitney's position. It would appear that she was right.

When Tara was seized in March, Whitney and the rest of the family had no idea who had been appointed as conservator for Tara. No one told them who it was who came to Virginia to pick up Tara and transport her to Tennessee.

The sequence of events that the family knew about was this:

- *Police came to the home in Virginia and dragged Tara out in handcuffs. No warrant. There was apparently an emergency custody order signed by a Tennessee magistrate, but it was not produced for the family to see.*
- *Tara was taken to a local mental hospital where they found that she did not meet the criteria for admission. The results of the psychological evaluation was that she was not "committable." She said that she wanted to be with her family, but that didn't happen.*

- *Tara was transported to a Virginia police station. Police refused to release her to her family, stating that they would only release her to the newly appointed conservator.*
- *Someone picked up Tara and transported her to Tennessee.*

Since that time, Tara has been placed in a facility near Memphis, an 8 hour drive away from home. She is being heavily drugged again.

It was not until recently that Whitney learned that her daughter is, and was in the past, being given a drug called Effexor, an antidepressant in the class of drugs called selective serotonin and norepinephrine reuptake inhibitors (SSNRIs).

No one involved with taking Tara has ever asked Whitney about her medical history or family medical history. If they had, they would have learned that Tara did not react well to anti-depressants that were tried when she was a teenager.

They would also have learned that there is a family history that should caution against prescribing anti-depressants, because her paternal grandfather reacted very poorly to an anti-depressant. Not long after he was prescribed one such drug, he told his doctor that he didn't "feel right." The doctor reportedly told him to give the drug a couple more weeks to give his body the chance to adjust, but he never did adjust well to the psychotropic drug.

After taking it for 5 weeks, he committed suicide.

While Tara has been in state care, she has experienced hallucinations and has been heavily drugged. How much of her mental illness is simply a side effect or a reaction to the drugs? She already has a family history of severe reactions.

Advocate Jennifer Winn described what happened to Tara:

They kidnapped [Whitney's] daughter. They put her back in handcuffs, and what do you think happened after that?

They drugged her. They gave her more pharmaceuticals to knock her down and make her shut up.

We have a mom who is disabled who was basically drugged by pharmaceuticals, to the point that her slight mental illness has gone to extreme mental illness that is absolutely induced by pharmaceuticals.



Left: Mentally disabled mother arrested with no charges to a crime, no arrest warrant and no reading of Miranda rights. Right: Disabled mother handcuffed to a bed in a mental health facility after being arrested. Photos provided by family.

Why is Court-Appointed Attorney Not Advocating for Tara to be Supported by her Family?

At the time we reported the last story, no one in Tara's family knew who picked up Tara from the Prince William County, Virginia, jail or where they took her.

They now know that Tara's Guardian ad litem (GAL, court-appointed attorney) Claire Addlestone rode with her husband Steven to pick Tara up and drive her almost 400 miles to the far side of Tennessee*.

Claire Addlestone and her husband were the subject of an article in the Brain & Behavior Research Foundation

newsletter in 2013 entitled “[With Persistence, Recovering from Depression.](#)”

Like Tara, her GAL attorney’s husband suffers from mental illness.

It took years of one treatment after another to get his symptoms under control. According to the article:

What sustained him during those years and made it possible for him to function, if with difficulty, was the support he received from his family and colleagues who, he says, “understood what was going on and were willing to work with me.”

...“Most importantly,” he says, “I’m able to enjoy being with the family who supported me so much during the hard times.”

At the time of the writing of the article, the Addlestons had 2 teenage children.

*Recently, hoping to help others who may not have adequate support, Steven signed on as a peer counselor in a program for members of his profession who are experiencing mental or emotional distress. “There’s still a lot of stigma attached to **mental illness**,” he says, “and often people don’t seek treatment because they’re embarrassed at having a ‘weakness’ they don’t want to admit.”*

The story of the Addlestons family is one of overcoming the trials of mental illness. Family support appears to have been

key to his victory. His wife was there through it all:

No one who has had experience with mental illness needs to be told that it's a family affair. Claire Addlestone was an up-and-coming corporate attorney when she put her career on hold to take care of her husband during his darkest days and to shoulder the lion's share of their children's early rearing.

Today, she practices a very different kind of law, as a guardian ad litem, a court-appointed legal representative for neglected and abused children. In that role, she sees daily the ravages that parental stress and mental illness can inflict on families who lack the knowledge or resources to obtain appropriate diagnoses and help.

It would seem that Claire Addlestone would be uniquely suited to understand the struggles facing Tara Chapman and her mother Whitney Manning. Why is it, then, that as Tara's Guardian ad litem, she is not fighting for Tara to have the very same family support that made such a difference in her husband's life?

Where her husband had family support, they allegedly were the ones to drive Tara eight hours away from everyone that Tara knows and loves. Where they were able to raise their own children, despite considerable mental illness, Claire is allegedly involved with working diligently to sever Tara's parental rights and, indeed, every familial connection that Tara's sons have with any of their family.



Tara Chapman (right) has the unconditional love and support of her mother Whitney Manning and of her family. Photo supplied by family.

It is obvious that they support the concept of a mentally ill person working through their illness, so why is Claire on the side opposing Whitney Manning and her attorney Connie Reguli in their fight to help Tara Chapman?

Incentives to Keep Children in Foster Care

Could it be related to the fact that Tennessee's foster care and adoption system, which has been privatized, provides additional incentives to the standard financial incentives that already exist through the Adoption and Safe Families Act of 1997?

The Tennessee foster care system is being run as a business, with children as the commodities to be sold.

There is an increased incentive to keep children in the system. Sadly, instead of improving outcomes, there is evidence that privatized foster care is even more dangerous to children than typical foster care. In standard foster care, children are at least 6 times more likely to be raped, molested, abused or killed than if they had been left in their own homes, even if that home is a troubled home.

The LA Times found that children in private foster care are even worse. Like Tennessee, the Los Angeles area has privatized foster care.

Those living in homes run by private agencies were about a third more likely to be the victims of serious physical, emotional or sexual abuse than children in state-supervised foster family homes, according to a Times analysis of more than 1 million hotline investigations over a recent three-year period. ([Source](#))

Tara's sons have reportedly suffered horrific abuse in foster care, and there is no one from their family who is allowed in their lives to protect them.



Meme by Mad Angels Army

The LA Times notes:

The currency of the system is children; the key to getting more children — and earning more money — is finding willing foster parents.

The more foster parents the system can find, the more children they can place, and thus keep the funding going. The system is about profit, and the financial incentive is to keep children in the system, eventually adopting out as many as possible.

Because more incentives are tied to adoption and foster care with strangers, as opposed to family members, there is little

incentive to keep children with family members, as well as strong motivation to terminate parental rights.

“In the best interest of the child” may be the mantra chanted to the public and to legislators, but the literal translation of that phrase within the system is actually “in the best interest of the state.”

Confined to Mental Health Facility without Evidence

The emergency order filed that enabled the state of Tennessee to medically kidnap Tara Chapman was reportedly based on hearsay. Attorney Connie Reguli said that there was “no competent evidence” used to take her, and they have filed an objection to her seizure.

Meanwhile, attorneys, social workers, conservators, and Guardian ad litem continue to play shell games with the lives of 3 little boys and their mother, all of whom are dearly loved by their real family.

According to the Americans with Disabilities Act, Tara should be placed in the “least restrictive environment possible.” Yet, she is trapped in a facility a day’s drive away from her home. There is no one and nothing that is familiar to her.

Supporters of the family want to know how a mother who has committed no crime, who is not a threat to herself or to anyone else, who has family ready and willing to care for her, can be abducted from her family and transported to a place where she has no contact with anyone she knows?

Connie Reguli was prepared for court last Friday, but the

hearing was cancelled with very little notice. There is no word on when the next hearing is.

How You Can Help

Tennessee Governor Bill Haslam may be reached at (615) 741-2001, or contacted [here](#).

Senator Jon Lundburg represents the district in Tennessee where Tara's conservatorship case is involved with the chancery court and where her boys are being held. He may be reached at (615) 741-5761, or contacted [here](#).

Representative Bud Hulse is the Representative for that district. He may be reached at (615) 741-2886, or contacted [here](#).

See related story:

Disabled Parents Losing Right to Parent their Own Children in America while Foster Parent Recruitment Seeks "Imperfect Parents"

* This article has been updated since it was published to omit a mistake about Claire Addlestone's college degree, which was originally reported, incorrectly, to be in education. There is also a dispute as to who actually picked up Tara, and how far she was driven.

7-Year-Old Sister of Down Syndrome Baby Euthanized by Vanderbilt Hospital Still Not Returned to Family - State Wants Her Adopted



June 8, 2018, marks the one-year anniversary of Baby Steffen's death. Photo source - [Reunite the Rivenburgs](#) Facebook page.

by **Health Impact News/MedicalKidnap.com Staff**

Friday, June 8, 2018, marks the 1-year anniversary of the tragic death of medically kidnapped Baby Steffen Rivenburg at Vanderbilt Hospital, under the care of Tennessee Department of Children's Services (DCS). His big sister, Annalise, remains in foster care and DCS is, again, trying to terminate parental rights.

There will be a march and candlelight vigil in Baby Steffen's honor on Friday, June 8th, at the Nashville State Capitol building, followed by a Saturday afternoon event with several speakers discussing judicial accountability, family integrity, and other issues important to families. The public is invited to attend.

Baby Steffen's story was one of the most heart-wrenching stories that we have covered at *Health Impact News*, and there still remains no justice for the family.

At times, over the past year, it appeared that Annalise might be coming home.



The family is still fighting to bring Annalise home. Photo source – Reunite the Rivenburgs Facebook page.

However, about 2 weeks ago, the family received a letter in the mail telling them to be in court on Monday, June 11, because DCS intends to file to terminate parental rights and

accuse parents Steffen Rivenburg Sr. and Patricia Thornberg of “dependency and neglect.”

See their original story:

Medically Kidnapped Baby Scheduled for Execution TODAY!

The grounds to TPR remain the same as they were in the beginning. As we reported in the first article:

His parents missed 3 doctors appointments due to car troubles. Each one was rescheduled. One of these was for a voluntary visit with a Down Syndrome clinic.

Annalise missed some school in the meantime. Patricia and Steffen Sr. were in the process of searching for an “umbrella school” – a homeschool cover school that they could use in order to legally homeschool in the state of Tennessee. They recognized that the baby’s heart condition and upcoming surgeries created conditions under which homeschooling would work better for their family.

We spoke with grandmother, Lisa Rivenburg, who is the unofficial spokesperson for the family. She said that, though the parents have done everything that has been asked of them by DCS, Annalise is still not home. The family is devastated by the letter.



Annalise crying with her mother at Baby Steffen's funeral. Photo source – [Reunite the Rivenburgs](#) Facebook page.

They currently have no attorney. They have talked with many possible attorneys, but without money, no one will take the case. Most lawyers told them that they “don't handle” DCS cases.

They recently found one attorney who sounded very confident that he could get Annalise back, until they discussed money. He needs \$4,500 to represent them. They don't have it. Lisa tearfully told us:

There's nothing else to sell.

The Rivenburg family is facing what many families face when their children are taken by the system – they do not have the money to fight the system, a system that has unlimited funding at its disposal, paid for by tax dollars.

This is a major reason that the poor are disproportionately represented in the numbers of families whose children are taken away from them to be placed in foster care and/or adopted out to strangers. They simply don't have the money to fight back.

They want to file a malpractice lawsuit based on the results of Baby Steffen's private autopsy, but they cannot find an attorney willing to go pro bono against Vanderbilt and DCS.

Court on Monday, June 11th, will be before the same judge who ruled that Baby Steffen could be taken off of life support over the wishes of his parents, Judge Wayne Shelton of the Montgomery County Juvenile Court in Clarksville, Tennessee.

It will take a miracle to bring justice to this heartbroken family and bring Annalise home.

March and Candlelight Vigil on Friday, June 8th, in Nashville at 2 p.m.

From the Tennessee JAM (Judicial Accountability Movement) for Families Facebook event page:

Baby Steffen Rivenburg was killed while in DCS custody June 8, 2017. This event has been scheduled to coincide with the anniversary of his tragic death. His story was covered extensively by Terri LaPoint on MedicalKidnap.com –

[*Tennessee Family Seeks Lawsuit for Malpractice, Negligence, and Wrongful Death Over Down Syndrome Baby Taken Off of Life Support*](#)

We are planning to meet up [in] downtown Nashville at 2:00 p.m. Friday, June 8, and march on the sidewalk on Charlotte Pike from the Supreme Court Bldg. 401 7th Ave. N, Nashville, to the Capitol, to the Historic Courthouse then across the Woodland Street Bridge to the Juvenile Justice Center 100 Woodland St., Nashville, 37213.

At 8:00 p.m. June 8, we will be having a candlelight vigil in remembrance of Baby Steffen and all the people who have died or who live in constant pain because of judicial corruption. We can reconvene at the sidewalk between Legislative Plaza and the Capitol Building.

I want this to not only be a remembrance of a tragic death, but also a celebration of family.



Photo source – [Reunite the Rivenburgs](#) Facebook page.

According to the organizers of the event:

What happened to Baby Steffen was the most horrible abuse by court order I have ever heard of. People need to understand what happened and that we have to rein in the judges.

Lisa Rivenburg requested that supporters wear blue and yellow, in honor of Down Syndrome.

More information about Friday's events can be found at the Facebook event page – Nashville March on the [TN Capitol and Candlelight Vigil here](#).

Saturday Educational Event

Tennessee JAM (Judicial Accountability Movement) will be hosting a free event the following day, which will bring

together speakers involved in various aspects of the family rights movement. The public is invited to attend.

One of the speakers is Lisa Belanger, a Massachusetts attorney and contributor to *Health Impact News* on the topic of the medical kidnapping of senior citizens and guardianship abuse.

She began her fight against this corruption when her own father was medically kidnapped. While she still fights for him, she now fights for other families and has become a leading voice on the topic of adult medical kidnapping.



Attorney Lisa Belanger. Photo [source](#).

See:

[Massachusetts Senior Citizen and Attorney Medically Kidnapped – Estate Plundered – Represents National Epidemic](#)

Adults Medically Kidnapped: 3X More than Children in Foster Care – \$50 BILLION in Assets Seized

Tennessee JAM For Families has issued a press release about the event:

Date- June 9, 2018

Time -12:30-4:30

Location -Nashville Public Library, Goodlettsville Branch,

2025 Rivergate Pkwy, Goodlettsville, TN 37072

The purpose of the event is to support family integrity and strong communities by identifying and exposing problems in our judicial system and other areas of government, and by developing and implementing solutions to those problems. We encourage citizens of all ages to join us in our efforts to effectively address these issues that, either directly or indirectly, affect us all. Our collaborative efforts echo the timeless lessons by Dr. Martin Luther King,

“Those who love peace must learn to organize as effectively as those who love war.”

This event is “family friendly” and there will be childcare and activities available for young children and light refreshments will be served.

Presenters:

-Terri LaPoint, from Alabama, is a passionate advocate for families and for pro-life issues. She writes for Medical Kidnap, a division of Health Impact News, working to reunite families and expose injustice that is destroying families all across America. She is a contributing author to the book, *Medical Kidnapping: A Threat to Every Family in America*. <http://www.MedicalKidnap.com>

-Lisa Belanger, Attorney-at-Law from Massachusetts, addressing court interference in the relationships between adult children and their elderly parents, or the “medical kidnapping” of adults. <http://www.FreeMarvin.com>

-Victoria Onorato From Chicago, IL., Victoria Onorato will be speaking on judicial corruption that is destroying our families and our country; how we need to work together to protect our children and stop the judicial abuse; and how to encourage reunification and healing. <http://www.FamilyLegalActionFoundation.com>

-Connie Reguli, Attorney-at-Law, LawCare Family Law Center in Brentwood, TN, <http://TennFamilyFaw.com/> and founder of the Family Forward Foundation, which is a national organization dedicated to the rights of familial integrity, and the rights of parents and children to be free from unreasonable intrusion of the government, as protected by the Fourteenth Amendment of the United States Constitution. Connie will be speaking on “How Federal Funding Corrupts the Child Welfare System” and “Advocacy In Child Welfare and Family Courts” <https://FamilyForwardFoundation.com>

-Tammy Bennett-Daughtry, MMFT, is the Founder and CEO of Co-parenting International, Nashville, TN, launched in January 2004 as a resource to address the critical impact of co-parenting on children of divorce. Since 2004, co-

parenting seminars, evening classes, newsletters and one-on-one sessions have helped change thousands of lives.

Co-Parenting Works! Working Together to Help Your Children Thrive is Tammy's newest book on the critical topic of co-parenting.

<https://CoParentingInternational.com/>

-Jay Daughtry, MMFT (Center for Modern Family Dynamics) from Nashville-will be speaking on GRIEF AND LOSS

The Center for Modern Family Dynamics is a counseling-based organization committed to the restoration, support and edification of individuals and families. We offer mental health services, products and seminars to adults, children, and families; we also focus on pre-marital therapy, single parent support, remarriage and stepfamily, divorce adjustment, and co-parenting between mom's house and dad's house. <http://ModernFamilyDynamics.com/>

-Brian Kinter (JAM Judicial Accountability Movement) from Ohio. The Judicial Accountability Movement (hereafter, "J.A.M.") Is a professional, politically neutral, national activist organization headquartered in Springfield, Ohio. The J.A.M. work towards accountability of and from our judiciary, in a concerted effort educating everyone on equal gender rights and a system of fairness that benefits all, by ensuring a fair, unbiased, competent and responsible judicial system. <https://www.facebook.com/groups/jam2016/about/>

-Mattie Shay Mitchell, Nashville, TN, with Liam Changed the World, Their Mission: To fund medical bills for sick children in hospitals, and provide basic hospital needs. They will also fund funerals, flowers, and headstones for children who pass

away. <http://www.LiamChangedTheWorld.com>

-Lydia A Hubbell, Nashville, TN, Facilitator. Working to help bring people of all ages together to restore and maintain the integrity of the legal system and to support the right of families to be free from unwarranted government interference. Tennessee JAM (Judicial Accountability Movement) TennJAM.com and CCLJA (Children Campaigning for Liberty and Justice in America) CCLJA.org

Musical Guest

Joyce the Voice, a singer/songwriter from CT, writes a mixed genre of songs to Live, Love, Laugh and Protest by. She has dedicated about 1/3 of her songs to be for the promotion of the Family Rights movement and for healing of herself and for others. She is co-administrator of the Facebook group, with Lydia A. Hubbell, called "Music and Arts for Parental Rights and Alienated/Foster Care Children".

For more information, see the Facebook event page [here](#).

Tennessee Court Seeks to Terminate Parental Rights for Young Sister of Down Syndrome Baby Euthanized by Vanderbilt Hospital



The Rivenburg need a miracle to bring Annalise back home.
Photo source: [Reunite the Rivenburgs](#) Facebook page.

by **Health Impact News/MedicalKidnap.com Staff**

It has been just over a year since the death of Baby Steffen Rivenburg Jr. at the hands of Vanderbilt Hospital, Tennessee Department of Children's Services (DCS) and Judge Wayne Shelton's court. Since his tragic, senseless death, his family has been fighting DCS and the court for custody of Baby Steffen's older sister, Annalise.

See original story:

Medically Kidnapped Baby Scheduled for Execution TODAY!

On Monday, July 9, parents, Steffen Rivenburg Sr. and Patricia Thornberg, will again go to court over custody of Annalise. Maybe. They were supposed to have court on Monday, June 11. When they went to court that day, they were told that court was cancelled.

They again went to court on June 19 for a scheduled foster care review board hearing. When they arrived on that date, they were told that court was changed to July 23. They later received documents in the mail telling that that court was to be held on July 23.

Quite by accident, they learned that the July 23 hearing has been moved to Monday, July 9. Steffen's mother, Lisa Rivenburg, the unofficial family spokesperson, told *Health Impact News* that they called the court this past Monday, July 3, about filing some paperwork. That was when they learned that their court date had moved up 2 weeks. If they hadn't called the courthouse, they never would have known about the date change.

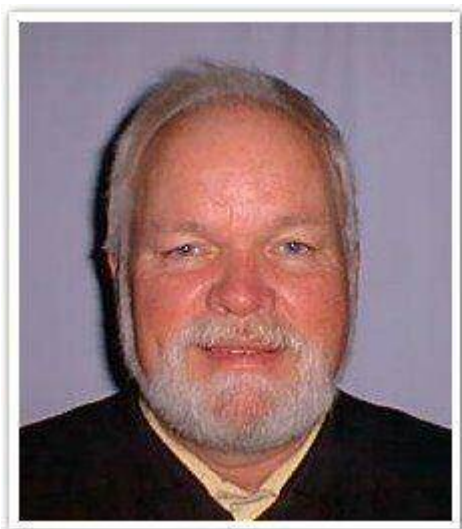
The hearing will presumably address motions filed by DCS, including a “Motion to Ratify Per Plan and Motion to Review Permanency” for Annalise.

On June 11, 2018, DCS filed for termination of parental rights over Annalise. The family has 30 days to respond to the TPR filing. They hope to address the filing in court on Monday, July 9.

This behavior by the courts is but one example of many told to us by parents who are fighting for their children. It is not at all uncommon for the dates and times for visitation, doctors appointments, and court hearings to change – all without any notice to the parents. It is another reason, on top of many, that parents and grandparents are immensely frustrated with the child welfare system.

The consequences of not stumbling onto the date changes can be devastating. In the case of a Termination of Parental Rights (TPR) hearing, “failure to appear” can result in parents losing custody of their child – forever.

Lisa Rivenburg says that they have been working night and day to prepare paperwork. They are working pro se, representing themselves in court. The judge will be the same one who presided over the death of Baby Steffen last summer.



Judge Wayne C. Shelton. [Image source.](#)

The hearing is scheduled for 10:30 a.m. at the Juvenile Court of Montgomery County in Clarksville, Tennessee. When Lisa spoke with someone from the court, she says that they told them to be early and that the hearing would likely go quickly. This calls into question the ability of the family to have their side be heard and to assure due process. Lisa believes that:

They've already made up their minds.

The entire situation seems vastly unfair to her. She brought up the situation at the border and the masses of American people who are fighting against the separation of parents and children. Parents who try to enter the country illegally seem to be able to raise money quickly and to gather massive crowds fighting for them.

Where are these American people for us?



Last year a court was able to rule against parents and allow Vanderbilt doctors to terminate the life of Baby Steffen. Now the same court is faced with the request by DCS to terminate the family connections of his big sister Annalise. Photo source: Reunite the Rivenburgs Facebook page.

I just don't understand how they get away with this.

She and her family vow never to give up fighting to bring Annalise home:

What level of cognitive dissonance do these people have that

*they kill my grandchild and now they take the remaining child?! **They cannot have Annalise!***

Some advocates were planning a rally at the Clarksville courthouse for July 23. The Rivenburgs hope that some people will be able to come to the courthouse this Monday morning instead.

June 8 marked a year since doctors pulled the plug on Baby Steffen and injected him with a fatal dose of propofol, the “Michael Jackson drug.”

See:

[Family Seeks Answers on Baby’s Death – Threatened Arrest for Trying to Record Last Moments of Life](#)

Prayer Vigil in Honor of Baby Steffen

Advocates and mourners gathered at the Nashville capitol that evening for a solemn Candlelight Vigil. They came from places like Ohio, Florida, Alabama, North Carolina, Massachusetts, and Connecticut to show their support for the Rivenburg family and grieve the loss of Baby Steffen’s life.



Nashville March on the Capitol and Candlelight Vigil TN JAM for Families 6/8-9/18

Photo source – [YouTube video](#) by Joyce Catalano.

The Rivenburg prepared a written statement that was read at the vigil:

On behalf of the Rivenburg family, we would like to thank all of you for coming today and those that have traveled many miles to be here as well as those who worked to put so much effort into making today happen.

Without all of you, who have been there for us, who have helped guide us, who have prayed for and with us, who have heard our pleas, our cries and our story through others, today would just be a distant memory, although not so distant for us, as we still live it every day.

Sadly, there are others like us. They have also experienced unimaginable loss in some way.

The loss of a child by death is a hard cross to bear. Parents

should never have to bury their children.

The loss of a child living, or a parent, as even our elders are being taken from us, and to not be able to see them, equally so.

Children, parents and families are suffering daily and at times there feels like no hope is available to undo all that has happened.

To all of you who have said we are a sign of strength and hope to you, know that you are a sign of strength and hope to us as well. Your beacon of light in our darkest moments is forever appreciated.

*Today as we remember **BABY STEFFEN RIVENBURG JR.**, let us also remember all the children and family members that were and are forever taken and let us continue to be the voice for the ones who have none or who have lost theirs.*

May we continue to help one another, pray for and console one another and stand up for ourselves and each other and we continue to move forward to heal and make change.

*Let us also celebrate the life of **BABY STEFFEN RIVENBURG JR.** and the joy he brought to his family and others in just the small amount of time he was here.*

Thank you again for coming today.

How You Can Help

The public is invited to come to the Montgomery County Juvenile Court at Two Millennium Plaza, Clarksville, TN,

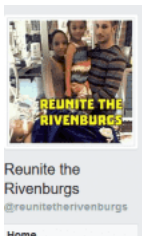
37040 on Monday, July 9, at 10:30 a.m.

Tennessee Governor Bill Haslam may be reached at (615) 741-2001 or contacted [here](#). Governor Haslam is also on [Facebook](#).

The Senator for their district is Dr. Mark Green. He may be reached at (615) 741-2374 or contacted [here](#).

Their state Representative is Representative Joe Pitts. He may be reached at (615) 741-2043 or contacted [here](#).

Supporters have set up a Facebook page for the family called [Reunite the Rivenburgs](#).



Parents of Down Syndrome Baby
Euthanized by Vanderbilt
Hospital Expose Lies of Social
Workers in Court



Photo from [Reunite the Rivenburgs Facebook Page](#).

by **Health Impact News/MedicalKidnap.com Staff**

Could things start to be turning around for the Rivenburg family? At stake in the most recent court hearing was the termination of parental rights for the parents of Annalise Rivenburg, the big sister of deceased Baby Steffen.

While their family and many supporters around the world waited and prayed, Steffen Rivenburg, Sr. and Patricia Tornberg walked into Judge Wayne Shelton's Clarksville, Tennessee, courtroom on Monday, July 9, 2018.

See:

[Tennessee Court Seeks to Terminate Parental Rights for Young Sister of Down Syndrome Baby Euthanized by Vanderbilt Hospital](#)

They had been in that courtroom many times, and every time they felt like they were walking into a lions den, facing attorneys, social workers, doctors, Guardian ad Litems (GALs), and a judge, all of whom seemed determined to tear them and their family apart.

This time, however, it was different. Grandmother Lisa Rivenburg, spokesperson for the family, told *Health Impact News*:

It was epic!

The judge LISTENED to the kids [Steffen, Sr., and Patricia] this time!

This is the first time, since their children were taken from them by the Department of Children's Services (DCS) on February 2, 2017, that the family has felt that they were listened to in court.



Lisa with her granddaughter Annalise.

Photo provided by family.

They don't know why things changed, but they see this as a huge answer to prayer.

Annalise is still not home with her family, but her parents' parental rights have not been severed. For now, she remains in the foster home that she was placed in by DCS, but she is not up for adoption.

The family has been frustrated with ineffective counsel from attorneys appointed by the court. Their voices have long been silenced, but not this time.

The parents represented themselves pro se on Monday. They came armed with a Writ of Habeas Corpus, a Motion to Compel for Discovery/Disclosure Inspection, and an 80-page Sworn Declaration of Facts, listing the facts of their case.

A complaint that we hear almost daily at *Health Impact News* is that the parents' side is not heard in court, and exonerating evidence of the parents' innocence fails to be presented by attorneys.

This appears to be the rule, rather than the exception, to the great frustration and heartbreak of parents all over the United States who cannot comprehend the injustice that they find meeting them in family and juvenile courts.



Annalise continues to ask her family when she can come home. Photo provided by family.

Many advocates have spoken of the importance of getting such facts and evidence on the court record. Numerous parents, who ultimately went to court pro se, have said that a way that they have found to get such information on the record is to file some kind of declaration, statement, or affidavit of facts with the court, detailing their side of the story and presenting corrections to information that is inaccurate that is presented by social workers and/or

doctors.

Steffen and Patricia represented themselves on Monday, and in the words of Steffen's mother Lisa, "they fought back" and "challenged the lies of DCS."

Judge Shelton extended their time to fight to get their daughter back, reportedly telling them to come back to court in September, with an attorney next time. There are to be 2 additional days of hearings in November, during which the judge reportedly wants DCS to be under oath when they testify.

Lying and Fabrication of Evidence by Social Workers Common in Child Protective Services Cases

Unfortunately, it is a common practice for social workers to lie in court and on reports. In the groundbreaking case heard in 2017 by the 9th Circuit Court of Appeals, a panel of judges ruled in *Preslie Hardwick v. County of Orange* that social workers do not, in fact, have the right to lie in order to take children from their parents.

See:

Judges Reject Orange County's Claim That Social Workers Didn't Know Lying In Court Was Wrong

<https://youtu.be/nZaoLxmFTkI>

In the same year, Representative Kelly Townsend of Arizona battled her fellow lawmakers over legislation that would provide basic, common sense measures for parents fighting

the state for their children, including telling social workers that they couldn't lie about parents, fabricate evidence, or withhold exculpatory evidence, and that they did indeed have to follow the 4th Amendment of the Constitution and obtain a court order or warrant in order to seize a child in the absence of true emergency circumstances.

See:

[Arizona Lawmakers Block Bill To Protect Parents From Dishonest Child Protection Social Workers](#)



Arizona Rep. Kelly Townsend. Image courtesy [Arizona Daily Independent](#).

The only part of Rep. Townsend's measures that made it into the final bill was the part about the 4th Amendment. (See law text [here](#).)

Lawmakers rejected the provisions stating that social workers could not lie about parents, fabricate evidence, or withhold evidence that is favorable to the parents.

As incredible as that is, most states haven't even made it that far yet.

Family Holds on to Hope

The Rivenburg family are thankful for the glimmer of hope they saw in court.

Like every other family whose story we have covered at *Health Impact News, Medical Kidnap* division, the Rivenburgs simply want the opportunity for their side of the story to be heard and to present evidence refuting what DCS has said about them.

They believe that if that can happen, and if the judge rules justly on the evidence (something that cannot be taken for granted given the [depth of judicial corruption](#)), Annalise will come home.

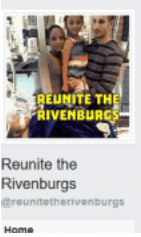
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Supporters have set up a Facebook page for the family called [Reunite the Rivenburgs](#).



See their family's original story and continuing coverage:

[Medically Kidnapped Baby Scheduled for Execution TODAY!](#)

[Baby Scheduled to go Off Life Support Responding to Family – Rally and Court Date on Monday Morning](#)

[Civil Rights Abuse? Judge Only Gives Parents 24 Hours to Find Doctor Before Baby is Removed from Life Support](#)

[Family Seeks Answers on Baby's Death – Threatened Arrest for Trying to Record Last Moments of Life](#)

[Judge Who Ordered Baby Steffen to be Removed from Life Support Orders Sister be Placed for Adoption](#)

[Tennessee Family Wants Daughter and Sister of Deceased Baby Steffen to Come Home](#)

[Tennessee Family Buries Baby Steffen as Social Workers Stop Photos – Sister Still in Foster Care](#)

[Tennessee Parents of Baby Steffen Jailed While Appearing in Court and Questioning Drug Test](#)

[Tennessee Sister of Baby Steffen Traumatized Seeing Dad Arrested During Chuck E. Cheese Visit](#)

[Tennessee Family Seeks Lawsuit for Malpractice, Negligence, and Wrongful Death Over Down Syndrome Baby Taken Off of Life Support](#)

[7-Year-Old Sister of Down Syndrome Baby Euthanized by Vanderbilt Hospital Still Not Returned to Family – State Wants Her Adopted](#)

Tennessee CPS Attorney Connie Reguli Arrested for Defending A Mother's Constitutional Rights to Due Process



Attorney Connie Reguli standing up for the rights of families. [Image from Facebook.](#)

by **Brian Shilhavy**
Editor, Health Impact News

Attorney Connie Reguli turned herself into authorities in

Brentwood, Tennessee today (July 17, 2019) after learning that there was a warrant out for her arrest. She was released the same day without bail, on her own recognizance.

Attorney Connie Reguli is well-known to the readers of *Health Impact News* and our MedicalKidnap.com website. She is the head of the [LawCare Family Law Center](#) in Tennessee, and also the founder of the [Family Forward Project](#), which advocates for the rights of parents and children nationwide on matters related to abuses in Child Protective Services and Foster Care.

She is a frequent speaker nationally, and educates legislators on matters related to family law and child welfare. She has been practicing law defending the Constitutional rights of parents for over 25 years.

Yesterday she received a phone call informing her that there was a warrant out for her arrest, encouraging her to turn herself in rather than having police come in to storm her office or home to arrest her.

After informing her Facebook followers of this fact, [Raymond Schwab](#), a military veteran and father who had his own children medically kidnapped in Kansas ([more info](#)), called Reguli and [interviewed her](#) the night before she turned herself in where she explained the case related to the warrant.

Video no longer available.

Attorney Reguli begins by stating that she has:

never broken the law and never been arrested for nothing. I

am 67 years old, I've never had a DUI... never had a single criminal charge.

And here we are because I tried to get a parent due process, which means notice and opportunity to be heard.

I am now going to be criminally charged for that.

At a recent legislative session in Tennessee before a committee that provides oversight for Tennessee's Department of Children Services (DCS) Attorney Reguli says:

I told them that this system is so broken, and that parents' rights are being violated, that nobody will stand up for them. There's no oversight, there's nobody looking over their shoulder.

I've been an attorney for 25 years. I know the law. I know what Constitutional rights are for parents, and I have been a thorn in their side.

Reguli explains that the heart of the case involved with her criminal charge revolves around ex parte orders being used by DCS to take children out of homes, where no emergency exists, and sometimes, they don't even have a valid court order signed by a judge to do so. With ex parte orders, there is no hearing before a child or children are removed from the home.



Attorney Connie Reguli (right) with her client Wendy Hancock.

She goes on to explain that she represents a mom in Dekalb County, which is a small rural area about an hour away from where she lives. She has known and represented the mom, Wendy Hancock, for several years.

She's been harassed by the Department of Children Services many many times. They've gone to school and pulled her kids out of class and harassed her.

In 2015 when they came after her, I represented her in court, and they dismissed the case with an email. I mean once I got in the case and I said they were violating the Constitution, and I was drilling him down to get me records and set the case for hearing, they sent me an email and said the case was dismissed.

In 2017, however, they allegedly started harassing the mom again.

This time, I called the DCS worker up on the phone and I recorded it, and this is what pissed them off in this case. I recorded it, and I said "Deedee," Deedee Miller, that's her name, Deandra Miller, I said "I want you to know that I represent this mom and you are not to call her again. You are to call me."

And she goes, "I don't think I can talk to you," and she hung up on me.

I posted that recording on our Facebook Group, [The Family Forward Project](#). I put it up there, that this is what it is like to talk to a DCS worker when you have counsel.

In 2018 there was allegedly another referral against the mom, Wendy Hancock, and again Reguli tried to work with the case worker, but this time she would not even take her call. She left a message stating she wanted to work with the department on behalf of her client and come up with a

“safety plan,” a fact she says is not in dispute.

Because an investigation had been started, Reguli called the detective.

I say “don’t talk to my client again without me present.” He said “Okay.”

She asked the police detective if there was any emergency she needed to know about, and he allegedly said “no.” This was on a Friday, August 10, 2018.

On Monday morning, according to Reguli, she called the court and asked the clerk if anything had been filed against her client yet, and they said “no.”

They finally did file a case at 3:43 p.m. that Monday, just minutes before the court closed at 4 p.m.

She asked the clerk to fax her the file, and the clerk reportedly said “sure.”

But after waiting some time, Reguli called back and was informed they could not fax it to her, and that she needed to drive out to Dekalb County courthouse to retrieve it.

Being over an hour and a half away, Reguli had to take a half day off just to drive out there.

They had not served my client. I did not know at that time, but they had already had another hearing behind her back. They didn’t call her and tell her they had a hearing. They didn’t call her and tell her they had filed anything.

They did everything ex parte.

Reguli goes on to explain the order from DCS to remove the children was not even signed by a judge in their county. They went to a different county to get the ex parte emergency order, and even then Reguli states that the order was not even signed by the judge.

These kangaroo courts, this donkey justice system that is going on – there is not another type of litigation that goes through this.

If I have a contract case, and I want to go get a restraining order against somebody or some other business, I have to file the document with the court, and then it goes to the judge, and then the judge makes the decision.

This being able to cart your documents off by DCS workers to another county, under the claim that they've got some feakin emergency – it has got to stop!

Reguli goes on to explain that the rationale behind ex parte orders is to deal with emergency situations where there is no time to wait for a court to convene and hear the case. The standard is supposed to be: "There is a risk of irreparable harm before a court hearing can be held."

But DCS workers abuse the system by using ex parte orders to immediately remove children from homes when there is no emergency.

They're making these ex parte orders on anonymous tips, on

vague allegations that they have no substance, they're doing no investigation.

Concerning the case where she is being charged with criminal charges of “Facilitation of Custodial Interference and Accessory after the Fact” Reguli states:

They made allegations that mom was a drug dealer. They never showed mom was a drug dealer. And that was last August.

The kids are home with mom. And DCS dismissed their case.

I filed four different complaints with the Department of Children's Services, showed them all the violations. They had taken these children, they had shipped them 300 miles away in foster homes in which there were needles, and bars on the windows in a culturally inappropriate setting that was totally not the setting that foster care was supposed to be.

They have been in six placements in less than a year.

They told these kids that they would never go home to their mom.

Retaliation Against Attorney for Exposing Corruption?

When asked if she thinks this criminal charge against her is retaliation, Reguli states:

Absolutely. And they know in this case it is a federal “case” – it has civil rights violations, it is a civil rights lawsuit waiting to happen. And in Tennessee we have a very short statute of limitations. I already have the complaint about 80 percent drafted. This is just a distraction to steal my time..

So we’re going to make it a distraction for everybody.

When we have a preliminary hearing, I’ll get cameras in the courtroom, and we’ll video tape it.

I’m going to have my opportunity to cross examine some of these people, including the judges, the caseworkers, the police officers – we’ll get them up there and cross examine them.

Because there was never a finding that this mom was a drug dealer. And that was their whole basis for running off and snatching these kids.

Based on her phone call with the police, Reguli knew that they were charging the mom with “Custodial Interference” and charging her, as the mom’s attorney, for “facilitating a crime.”

And yet, the case had already been dismissed, and the children were already back home with the mom.

Reguli then goes on to give her perspective as to why they are so upset with her to the point of filing (bogus) criminal charges.

Here’s another reason they are mad at me. So, I record

everything. I have Olympus digital recorders that plug into your computer. I carry them with me all the time. I lay them down on the desk. There is no secret. Everybody knows it.

When I go into a courtroom, I lay a recorder on the table.

When we had a hearing on February 26th, I got my recorders out on the table, we take a short break to do something, and I left my recorder on. I just left it on. I didn't turn it off as I walked out.

I came back in, and we finish what we are doing.

When I get back to my office, I'm downloading my audios and I was trying to find something on my audio.

So I pull up my audio, and I realized what I had done by keeping it on.

Well, during the break, the DCS attorney and DCS workers were talking smack about me. Along with the court officer, the judge's court officer who works for the sheriff department, is talking smack about me and my client. They're sitting over there giggling and laughing it and I posted that online as well.

They are livid about that. They're absolutely livid that they're basically saying that the barrier to reunification is Connie Reguli.

Well, that shows you that it was personal right then.

This was a personal vendetta.

[Watch the entire video here.](#)

Post Arrest Interviews



Attorney Connie Reguli at the Brentwood Police Department.
[Image from Facebook.](#)

Today, Attorney Connie Reguli turned herself in to the authorities due to a warrant for her arrest. The judge apparently did not consider her a threat to society, because at the arraignment she did not require any bail, but released Reguli on her own recognizance.

Bail for the mom, Wendy Hancock, was set to only \$1000.00, meaning she only had to put up \$100.00 to get out.

News Channel 5 in Nashville interviewed Reguli after she got out of jail. Fox 17 also apparently interviewed her.

View video [here](#).

In a Facebook live video post, Reguli explains how she and Wendy were handcuffed and chained to a wall while in jail today.

Reguli calls out those who will be named in her lawsuit:

Deedee Miller, we got your name and number, you are defendant #1.

The civil suit will be coming down.

They did this by sealed indictment. I used to be a district attorney, and there was this joke from all the defensive attorneys, that you can indict a ham sandwich.

Because all they do is go in and tell their side of the story. They are supposed to expose the exculpatory evidence that's present in the case. If not, it's a Constitutional violation. It is called "negligent investigation."



Detective Lori Russ. [Image source.](#)

Detective Lori Russ, negligent investigation. Did you know about that? Do you know what ex parte orders are? Do you know what jurisdiction is?

Yeah, we're talking now. There's no more gag orders. I know they think that if we indict them, then they won't talk about it, because we'll use these videos in criminal court.

Reguli then goes on to talk about how they are going to request a jury trial now that this is in criminal court, and the allegations and corrupt practices of DCS will be exposed.



Wendy Hancock and her daughter.

Yeah, good. Because we're going to have a jury trial. And we're going to invite all the DCS people in. We're going to invite people in to talk about the money.

Because you know what, in criminal court, there is this thing called Mens Rea. And it is what your mental perception is of what's going on. And custodial interference, guess what? Fear that the child will be subject to harm is a defense.

We know what happens to children in foster care. And in this case we know what DID happen to children in foster care.

So being afraid of your children going in foster care is real.

Sending children to the homes of strangers, that's real.

Knowing that DCS can have your children vaccinated with HPV vaccines behind your back, that's real. ("They did that to her" says mom.)

Failure to take care of her other medical needs, that's real.

Moving children to six different homes in 10 months, and four schools, that's real. That's harm.

If a parent moved their child to six homes and four schools in one year, what do you think DCS would say?

Taking children to parties where they're smoking pot and drinking booze (the first 10 days they were in foster care) – do you think there is a real fear of your children going into foster care?

Good job Deedee Miller. We're not going to forget you.

Detective James Cornelius, with the Smithville City police, when I told you not to talk to my client without me present, I meant it!

And when you took her into custody, and started interrogating her, and did not do a full Miranda warning, and you had already been told NOT to interview my client without me present, you think there might be a little 5th Amendment issue there?

And let's talk about "Custodial Interference." So Detective James Cornelius, you knew where her son was, and you refused to tell her, on August 10th, and she had full custody of her child, and you refused to tell her?

And then Deedee Miller, you took her son to live with his drug dealer for the weekend?

Call to Action

Attorney Connie Reguli is requesting the public to take a stand and say “enough is enough!”

She is requesting the public call the following people to protest against this travesty of justice and abuse of power.

[Williamson County District Attorney's Office](#), Phone: 615-794-7275

Email DCS customer service:

UBS Tower, 10th Floor 315 Deaderick Street Nashville, TN 37243 (615) 741-9701 email: DCS.Custsrv@tn.gov

Contact Mary Littleton who is supposed to be head of legislative oversight:

425 5th Avenue North Suite 634 Cordell Hull Bldg. Nashville, TN 37243 Phone: (615) 741-7477 Fax: (615) 253-0279

Attorney Arrested in Tennessee Refuses to be Gagged - How One Woman Dares to Take a Stand Against Child Kidnappings by CPS



UPDATE 7/22/2019

The day after we published this story, Attorney Reguli posted on Facebook a copy of a Motion For A Gag Order that she apparently just received.

AT FRANKLIN, TENNESSEE

STATE OF TENNESSEE)

VS.)

CASE NO. W-C)

WENDY DAWN HANCOCK &)

CONNIE REGULI)

Defendants)

MOTION FOR A GAG ORDER

Comes now the State of Tennessee by and through Kim R. Helper, d
District Attorney General of the Twenty First Judicial District of the State of
would move this honorable court for a gag order prohibiting the parties in t
talking to the media or the public regarding this case. As grounds for this mo

[Source Facebook.](#)

by **Brian Shilhavy**
Editor, Health Impact News

They arrested a 67-year-old grandmother who has been practicing law for 25 years and advocating for the rights of families, fully intending to intimidate her and silence her, as she exposes the corruption in Tennessee family courts where parents are denied due process of law in the seizure of their children.

What has happened instead, is that Tennessee's corrupt Department of Children Services (DCS) has given attorney Connie Reguli a national platform she did not previously have, to expose the abuses happening not only in Tennessee, but all across America in child welfare proceedings, which we have exposed here at *Health Impact News* over the years as a U.S. taxpayer-funded [child trafficking business](#).

This child trafficking business uses foster care as the [#1 pipeline for feeding children into sex trafficking](#), and also [uses children in foster care for drug trials](#) to develop and market new pediatric drugs and vaccines, as two of the more unsavory reasons why a steady supply of children are needed in the nation's foster care and adoption system.

The system in place, the American foster care and adoption system, is legal, as it was setup by Congress. It needs to be de-funded and dismantled, which is no easy task given that the system employs hundreds of thousands of people, and brings in billions of dollars of revenue to the states. Each state has a quota of how many children must be put into foster care to receive federal funding, and keep the system alive.

The *process* of how children are taken out of their families and put into the system, however, is seldom, if ever, legal. And this is the part of the system Attorney Reguli is exposing in Tennessee. It is a system that kidnaps children, and trafficks them.

Time to Take a Stand for the Constitution

There is plenty of case law that already exists showing that social workers, law enforcement, and judges in family courts all across the U.S. routinely violate the Constitutional rights of parent and children in the vast majority of cases when children are taken away from their parents by Child Protective Services and put into foster care and adopted.

In Texas, for example, which has one of the nation's largest child protection and foster care systems, district judge Janis Graham Jack [ruled against the State of Texas](#) in December of 2015 stating that the Texas foster care system was

unconstitutional. In her 255 page ruling, Judge Jack stated:

Texas's PMC (Permanent Managing Conservatorship) children have been shuttled throughout a system where rape, abuse, psychotropic medication, and instability are the norm. (See: [Judge Condemns Texas Foster Care System that Abuses Children as Unconstitutional.](#))

In the most recent legislative session (2019) in Texas, a law was proposed to prevent social workers from altering case records, so widespread is the practice of falsifying records in order to justify removing children from their homes. (See: [New Proposed Texas Bill would Stop Child Protective Services from Falsifying Records.](#))

In October 2016, Child Protective Services attorneys in Orange County California tried to argue to the 9th Circuit of Appeals that it was acceptable for social workers to lie about parents in order to take their children.

The 9th Circuit judges did not buy the argument, and ruled against the social worker. (See: [Judges Reject Claim That Social Workers Didn't Know Lying In Court to Remove Children Was Wrong.](#))

Nationwide, less than 15% of children removed from their homes are removed because of abuse, where their lives are in danger. And even among those 15%, which is even lower in some states, many of those cases are never substantiated, even though the children may never be returned to their families.

Because so many of these families are poor, few ever get proper legal representation such as the kind that Attorney

Reguli provides to her clients.

A recent [large-scale study](#) showed that when parents have proper legal representation, far fewer of them lose their children to the child welfare system. (See: [Parents Routinely Denied Legal Representation in Child Abuse Cases: More Likely to Have Children Medically Kidnapped by the State.](#))

Think about the ramifications of that for a minute. It means that most of these parents have done nothing illegal to warrant them having their children ripped out of their families and put into the homes of strangers, where statistics show they have a greater chance of suffering from sexual abuse and medical neglect than if they had remained with their families, even if those families had problems.

It also means the system is corrupt, probably due to the financial incentives to remove children from their homes and put them into the foster care and adoption system, and uses unconstitutional means to keep the system viable, such as denying parents their constitutional rights such as the right to representation, and due process of the law.

But the system is also powerful, and there are few who dare to stand up to it, risking not only their careers, but potentially their very lives as well.

Attorney Connie Reguli has done the nation a huge favor by exposing the rationale behind her criminal charges, and presenting her case publicly. She is doing all the “wrong” things for all the right reasons.

Any attorney would advise their client not to “tip their hand” by laying out their legal argument ahead of time, giving their opponent an opportunity to prepare their case

against their legal strategy, especially in a public forum.

If you watch her video below, you will get a great overview of Constitutional law and how the current child welfare system operates almost entirely outside the boundaries of the U.S. Constitution.

Attorney Reguli is putting her own personal freedom and safety aside to use this opportunity to educate the American public on the nationwide failures of a system ripping families apart and destroying the lives of America's children.

I am sure she is not unaware of the case just to the south of her, where Arkansas [Senator Linda Collins-Smith was found murdered](#) in her home recently, cutting short her efforts to investigate abuses in the Child Welfare system.

Reguli wants the nation to know why, for perhaps the first time in the U.S., a family law attorney was arrested and charged with criminal charges while representing her client in a family law matter.

They may have intended to silence her, but the bucket of water they thought was going to douse the flames of her resistance turned out instead to be a bucket of gasoline that just fueled her resistance even more.

Just a couple of days after her arrest, she went to the public once again during a [Facebook Live broadcast](#) to present her case, and the abuses that are ripping families apart.

And these videos are not going away. They have been copied far and wide, and any attempt by the social media giants to censor this will fail.

We encourage our readers to copy them as well, because it is time for America to wake up and listen to what this attorney is saying regarding the sad affairs of child welfare today, and the gross abuses of the U.S. Constitution. As the late [Georgia Senator Nancy Schaefer](#) said before she was murdered, the system is too corrupt to reform.

<https://youtu.be/jtFnN9xcb90>