

UPDATE: Colorado Mom Says Son Reported Abuse in Foster Care and CPS Sent Him Back for More

BY MEGAN FOX AUGUST 12, 2019



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Cynthia Abcug's son has been out of her care for over 80 days. Seven-year-old Michael* was taken from his mother's care when Douglas County CPS took him alleging that Abcug "may be exaggerating his medical condition." Medical reports do not corroborate the county's claim. Abcug was also denied due process in several ways leading up to, and after, the removal of her son. That evidence can be seen in [previous reporting on this issue here](#). She was finally allowed to see her son after 66 days of separation and she said he begged to be returned home. Her court-appointed supervisor, paid for by the county, instructed her she was not allowed to give him any comfort items or tell him she loves him during her visitation.

Since then, she has seen him two more times. The first time, Michael had a black eye. The second time he complained to her that his "sphincter hurt." When she asked him what a sphincter is, he reportedly told her, "it's my butthole and my foster family taught me that." The supervisor in the room, Maureen MacLaughlin, a counselor contracted with the county to supervise visits, overheard this exchange and told Abcug it concerned her. Unfortunately for Michael, it did not concern her enough to stop him from being returned to the same foster family that same day. Abcug does not know if this was reported by MacLaughlin or anyone else at Douglas County CPS.

Calls to Ruby Richards, the child welfare administrator, MacLaughlin, and Douglas County attorney John Thirkell went unreturned. PJM obtained a copy of an email sent by Abcug's attorney to the county detailing the concerns and demanding an investigation.

Approximately 8-9 days ago, Ms. Abcug observed that [redacted] had a black eye. Ms. Abcug got two explanations about this injury: 1) the boy hurt himself playing at camp, or 2) he hurt himself while roller skating.

During Ms. Abcug's most recent visit with [redacted], he came up to his mother and said "my sphincter hurts." [redacted] didn't even know what the word "sphincter" meant prior to entry into the foster care system - never mind complaining of pain in that region.

While these incidents in isolation may be explained as mere bumps and bruises that arise in a child's life, the fact that they happened so close in time leads a reasonable person to conclude that something more is going on here - and that something more is likely child abuse.

As you are counsel for the Douglas County Department of Human Services, you are now put on notice that there are reasonable grounds to believe that there is child abuse going on in [redacted's] case. The department is a "mandatory reporter" under Colorado law. CRS 18-6.5-108. We insist that this matter be investigated by an appropriate law enforcement agency and the results reported to us. Thank you.

The fact that a child specifically said his bottom hurt and no one bothered to take him to a doctor to find out if he has been abused while in foster care is outrageous. Does anyone believe that if the child had reported the same thing to a teacher while he was still living with his mother that he would have not have been seized immediately from her care? Why is the standard so different for reporting abuse in foster care? How was he sent back to the home where the abuse may be happening?

Currently, Michael is still with the foster family, where he says he was hurt, and Douglas County Colorado CPS will not respond to press inquiries. Sadly, they don't have to, either. CPS agencies regularly hide behind "the privacy of the child" to cover up the incompetence and abuse happening in their own departments, courtrooms, and foster care. Time and time again, children are abused in foster care to the tune of four times greater than in their own homes. This was reported by Johns Hopkins University [in a study called "Child Maltreatment in Family Foster Care," back in 1993](#) but still, children are regularly farmed out to these living arrangements, where their abuse is ignored, unreported, or hidden.

In Michael's case, he was safe at home. In fact, Douglas County CPS reported that both children were "safe at home with mom" on their own report and left Michael's older sister at home with her mother, where she still is today. To take a child out of a safe home and place him in a home where he is four times more likely to be abused is a crime. Will anyone pay for it?

**The minor child's name has been changed for privacy reasons.*