

Re: Senate Finance Committee Hearing “Youth Residential Treatment Facilities: Examining Failures and Evaluating Solutions” on Wednesday, June 12th, 2024 at 10am

Sasha Oates

June 7<sup>th</sup>, 2024

Dear Senate Finance Committee,

My name is Sasha Oates, and I am a survivor of residential treatment facilities as well as a former employee of a UHS hospital. I am testifying about the abusive and neglectful conditions I experienced in a youth residential treatment facility in response to the Senate Finance Committee’s hearing titled “Youth Residential Treatment Facilities: Examining Failures and Evaluating Solutions.”

I was placed in Provo Canyon School at the age of 14 due to issues with mental health and self harm. During my time there, I experienced many instances of abuse. I was sexually assaulted by a staff member, restrained in a violent manner that led to multiple injuries, isolated in a concrete room without clothing or my eyeglasses or even a bathroom, gassed by mixed cleaning chemicals that caused permanent scarring in my lungs to the point I was taken to the hospital. I was called a number, 316, instead of my name. I was dehumanized and forced to stand or sit in stress positions. I was forcibly tube-fed, one of the worst experiences of my life multiple times. I was over-medicated, including chemical restraint, and forced through conversion therapy. This treatment had a profound negative impact on me, including nightmares, chronic asthma from the scars in my lungs, severe PTSD, and a loss of self.

In addition, as one of my first jobs as an adult, I was employed as a mental health technician for a psychiatric hospital owned by UHS. At the time, I was unaware of the connection between my former placement and my then employment. I only worked there for half a year, but in that time many things stood out to me. There was a dangerous lack of staffing, for both staff and patients. Restraints were used often and deescalation, though taught, was rarely used. I saw ignoring of medical issues and complaints, including someone going through severe withdrawal without regular nursing checks. The nursing supervisors actively discouraged mandated reporting of child abuse and I had to go around once to report

something. I also felt compelled to report a sexual assault on one patient by another, and was chastised by my employers. I left when my own physical health prevented me from continuing to work, though they tried to insist on me continuing my shift despite losing consciousness and hitting my head. The lack of care applies not only to their patients, but to the entire facility.

I felt compelled to share my story to prevent any child from suffering like I have, for every child to feel safe.. I want the Committee to understand the real-life consequences of inadequate care and oversight in residential treatment facilities.

To prevent these negative experiences, I believe the Senate Finance Committee should consider implementing stricter regulations and oversight of youth residential treatment facilities. This includes mandatory reporting of abuse, transparent data collection, increased staff training on trauma-informed care, regular and unannounced inspections, and ensuring that all facilities provide adequate mental health and educational services. Additionally, there should be accessible channels for residents to report abuse without fear of retaliation

Thank you, Chair Wyden, and members of the Senate Finance Committee, for reading my testimony. I hope that my story and the stories of others like me will inspire you to take immediate action to protect vulnerable youth in residential treatment facilities. I hope you will pass the Stop Institutional Child Abuse Act (S. 1351) and follow that legislation up with additional reform policy to ensure all youth are safe from abuse, neglect, and preventable death in youth residential treatment facilities.

Sincerely,  
Sasha Oates

Senate Finance Committee Hearing “Youth Residential Treatment Facilities: Examining Failures and Evaluating Solutions” on Wednesday, June 12th, 2024 at 10 a.m.

Sabrina Young

6/7/2024

Dear Senate Finance Committee,

My name is Sabrina Young, and I am a survivor of the adoption system, and the Troubled Teen Industry specifically, “Charity Haven Girls Home,” “Victory Acres Girls Home,” “Bethel Academy,” “The Rebekah Home for Girls,” “New Beginnings Girls Academy,” and “Reclamation Ranch.” I am testifying about the abusive and neglectful conditions I experienced in these youth residential treatment facilities in response to the Senate Finance Committee’s hearing titled “Youth Residential Treatment Facilities: Examining Failures and Evaluating Solutions.”

I was placed in Charity Haven when I was 11 and then transferred after three months by Charity Haven to Bethel Boys & Girls Academy at the age of 12. A year later, I went home for three months, during which my adoptive mother, Mary, died. A week later, I came home from school and found my bags packed by my Aunt, who said I was to return to Bethel Girls Academy; I was 13 at that time. I remained at Bethel for a year and then was transferred by Bethel Staff to Charity Haven's sister school, Victory Acres. Due to the abuse allegations, Victory Acres was shut down six months later, so I was picked up by my Aunt and driven back to Charity Haven. Afterward, I was taken to my next program, The Rebekah Home for Girls, which has a long history of abuse allegations and battles with Texas regulators. I was then sent to Rebekah Homes' new facility known as New Beginnings Girls Academy, where I was sleep deprived and my right to attend school and shower privileges were revoked for months on end. I was then transferred to Reclamation Ranch in Tennessee and then relocated to Alabama before it was eventually shut down after a raid.

I was sent away because my adoptive family was abusive and exploitative toward me and my three siblings. As soon as we started to talk about what home life was like, my adoptive mother found it was easier to get rid of us all. I was sexually abused when I was 10, and I started to wet the bed. My adoptive mother made me sleep in the urine-soaked sheets and rubbed my face in them. I wasn’t allowed to shower and often went to school smelling like urine. She sent me to go live with my Aunt who just didn’t want the responsibility of taking care of me. Yet it didn’t prevent her from claiming me on her taxes the entire time I was in the programs. When I was 15, she died, passing the guardianship to her mother, who did the same thing: she kept me in the programs until I turned 18.

I attended more programs than most people ever do, and I was severely abused in each and every one of them. During my time there, I experienced significant incidents of abuse, neglect, and mistreatment. I could easily fill an entire book with all of the abuses I suffered - as a matter of fact, I am in the process of writing my book (Dear Renisha) on this very subject. I am an author, and there are so many more authors out there with books detailing the abuses we suffered in these facilities (I would be happy to provide books upon request of the committee).

At different times, I was beaten, sexually abused, starved, force-fed, and locked in an isolation room for months as they played preaching sermons and music through the speakers. I was forced to do ridiculous amounts of calisthenics and work long hours of manual labor, often until I passed out. I was forced to

hold other girls down, duct tape them, and watch both girls and boys get beaten. I was even forced to beat other girls at the direction of the staff. I suffered from the inappropriate use of restraints, unnecessary and highly invasive strip searches, a lack of adequate mental and medical health services, poor nutrition, and copious amounts of other psychological and physical abuse. This treatment had a profound negative impact on me, including complex PTSD, loss of trust in caregivers, poor education, and many other personal issues.

However, it's not just me who was affected by this program; this experience has also affected the next generation of my family. We tend to raise our own children the way we were raised, and I constantly have to fight the urge to do what was done to me. I refuse to give my children the same abusive upbringing that I had, but I know for many survivors, the cycle of abuse still continues.

No child should ever have to endure the things that I went through. I have spent years paying for a therapist to help me heal from the trauma that these programs inflicted on me. I refuse to let my pain affect my loved ones, so I am constantly reaching out to others to help ensure I don't pass it on. Most former troubled teen survivors don't have these resources, and that scares me.

I felt compelled to share my story to help spread awareness, prevent future abuse, highlight the severe shortcomings in these facilities, influence policy change, raise awareness of how the adoption and foster care system dumps children into this industry, and seek accountability for what these programs do to children. I want the Committee to understand the real-life consequences of inadequate care and the consequences of insufficient oversight in residential treatment facilities.

Approximately, over one-third of the Troubled Teen Industry is made up of foster kids and rejected adoptees. It shouldn't be this easy to get rid of a child that already comes from a displaced and dysfunctional environment.

As a Direct Support Professional in the state of Ohio, I have realized in my 15-year career that there is more oversight and rights within the developmental disability community than there is in the Troubled Teen Industry. The history between the two is very similar when it comes to institutionalized abuse in facilities. But we still haven't found solutions to this in the Troubled Teen Industry. This has to change.

To prevent these negative experiences, I believe the Senate Finance Committee should consider implementing stricter regulations and oversight of youth residential treatment facilities. This needs to include mandatory reporting of abuse, transparent data collection, mandatory State and National background screenings for all employees, ensuring that only qualified professionals work in these facilities, increased staff training on trauma-informed care, regular and unannounced inspections, and ensuring that all facilities provide adequate mental health and educational services, create an abuser registry for facilities found guilty of abuse, neglect, or as recent events have shown us, even death of children in their care. Additionally, there should be accessible channels for residents to report abuse without fear of retaliation.

Thank you, Chair Wyden and members of the Senate Finance Committee, for reading my testimony. I hope that my story and the stories of others like me will inspire you to take immediate action to protect vulnerable youth in residential treatment facilities. I hope you will pass the Stop Institutional Child Abuse Act (S. 1351) and follow that legislation with additional reform policies to ensure all youth are safe from abuse, neglect, and preventable death in these treatment facilities.

Sincerely,  
Sabrina K. Young

Attachments:

Provided below is the link to Ohio Department of Developmental Disabilities to help give an example of the oversight implemented within DD community to prevent abuse & exploitation.

<https://dodd.ohio.gov/forms-and-rules>

Provided below is additional information within these links regarding the programs I attended and the mistreatment we suffered including previous lawsuits against the facilities.

<http://www.heal-online.org/bethelsuits.htm>

<https://www.nytimes.com/1979/05/22/archives/texas-demands-that-preacher-shut-girls-home-linked-to-abuse-im.html>

<https://law.justia.com/cases/texas/supreme-court/1984/c-3265-0.html>

<https://www.tampabay.com/news/publicsafety/religious-exemption-at-some-florida-childrens-homes-shields-prying-eyes/1258390/>

[https://www.al.com/spotnews/2008/11/boys\\_removed\\_from\\_reclamation.html](https://www.al.com/spotnews/2008/11/boys_removed_from_reclamation.html)

<https://www.thedailybeast.com/articles/2016/06/12/rapes-daily-beatings-and-no-escape-christian-school-was-hell-for-these-boys>

[https://falloftheguardians.com/Bonus\\_Content/Research-and-Advocacy.html](https://falloftheguardians.com/Bonus_Content/Research-and-Advocacy.html)

---

Re: Senate Finance Committee Hearing “Youth Residential Treatment Facilities: Examining Failures and Evaluating Solutions” on Wednesday, June 12th, 2024 at 10am

Kayetta Hammond  
6/12/2024

Dear Senate Finance Committee,

My name is Kayetta Hammond, and I am a former resident and intern of TEEN CHALLENGE. I am testifying about the abusive and neglectful conditions I experienced at Teen Challenge, a youth residential treatment facility, in response to the Senate Finance Committee’s hearing titled “Youth Residential Treatment Facilities: Examining Failures and Evaluating Solutions.”

I was placed in Teen Challenge Kansas City Girls Academy at the age of 14. I was sent there because I had been struggling with self-harm, depression, anxiety, PTSD, and was also experimenting with my sexuality and gender.

During my time as a resident and briefly an intern of Teen Challenge I witnessed and experienced the following abuses.

- Residents being sat on, tackled, restrained, stroked, squeezed, pinned down, caressed, kissed, bruised
- Residents being forbidden to touch each other, exchange handmade gifts, show too much affection, get too close in friendship
- Residents being forbidden to make eye contact with others, look outside windows, show emotional expressions
- Residents being forced to sleep in their own urine as punishment for stress-induced bedwetting, residents being forced to soil themselves during the day due to limited bathroom Privileges. Bathroom time was very controlled including being made to count while going to the bathroom, having a limited amount of time to go, limited toilet paper sheets, and sometimes being watched.

- Residents being forced to eat rotten, burnt, expired, moldy, stale, and otherwise questionable food (cow tongue, liver), even when vomiting at the tables.
- Residents being stripped naked and locked in rooms while in nothing but shackles.
- Residents being forced on a restrictive diet of 1 can of vegetables and 1 piece of moldy bread as punishment, water fasting as punishment encouraged
- Residents self harming and self poisoning to escape without receiving medical treatment, residents being forced off prescribed medications and going thru withdrawals without support, residents falling ill and not allowed rest or medical care, residents fainting and experiencing seizures without medical aid, residents getting lice other sicknesses and having to treat each other
- Residents being restricted menstrual products, not allowed pain relief from cramps, no rest for debilitating cramps, toilet paper being limited to 4 squares, pap smears being performed without parental supervision, being forced off birth control that was used to manage medical conditions
- Residents regularly experience symptoms of Malnutrition and electrolyte deficiencies such as headaches, weakness, shortness of breath and muscle cramping. Most residents lost weight due to the restrictive diets. Some residents were force fed to make them gain weight.
- Sickness was rampant. Staff work masks to prevent getting illness from us but did not provide care. On more than one occasion the whole house experienced food poisoning.
- Produce and milk/eggs were considered luxuries, most of the food received was donated despite the high tuition cost. We were frequently told how dire our food situation was.
- Overcrowding was prevalent, anywhere between 12-30 girls sharing a single bathroom, 6-30 beds in cramped rooms, 50+ residents in a facility without enough bedrooms or food to accommodate.
- Unpredictable and unreasonable punishments for benign behaviors

- Sleep deprivation, being forced out of bed on random nights, residents being dragged outside in the pouring rain in the middle of the night for military style drills, being forced to stand in circles for hours past midnight in great room, being forced up late listening to worship music, being forced up late cleaning the house
- Isolation, locked in a room alone, cut off from contact from parents, monitored calls where you weren't allowed to tell parents the truth
- Physical Labor was a requirement of advancing the program, residents often had bruises and blisters, sunburns as sunscreen wasn't provided, suffered heat stroke, ice baths sometimes needed to prevent hospitalization
- Forced conversion, conversion therapy. You cannot leave without converting to christianity. You cannot leave without reading the entire bible and hand-writing summaries of each chapter. Punishments include writing thousands of lines of scripture repeatedly.
- Strange cult-like group activities such as mock slave auctions, worship circles, hours long chapel sessions, exorcisms, indoctrination into believing in demons, induced hysteria
- The building had a rumor about being "haunted" that was perpetuated by staff who claimed they could see demons and spirits. Many residents would have hallucinations and staff would tell them they could see it too.
- Receiving little counseling or therapy, residents being forced to counsel each other, big sister/little sisters, room leaders
- Journals and artwork being censored or intentionally destroyed. Mail being tampered with, censored or withheld.
- Staff members taking advantage of residents by bribing them with soda/real food to do manual physical labor for them or local religious groups.
- Sexual/physical assault occurring and being covered up
- Lesbian, bisexual and transgender residents were explicitly targeted and subjected to extra punishment and abuses



- Residents were not allowed any personal devices or any form of entertainment. No phones, music players, laptops, cameras, headphones, books, playing cards, art/posters, letters from friends or photos of friends.
- Speech heavily restricted. Residents only allowed to speak during designated free time which was very limited. When speaking residents could not speak of anything negative or talk about past life or relationships outside the program. Residents could only talk about the program or Jesus or random mundane nonsense.
- Staff frequently had favorites. Favorites to groom, play with, and train to become future staff. And also favorites to break down, give disciplines to, and otherwise target.
- When turning 18, girls would be made to leave the facility with no help or would be dropped off at the homeless shelter with nothing.
- School time was very limited to only a few hours. We used computers but didn't have enough for everyone to use so two groups would switch from morning to afternoon. Many residents never graduated high school or fell behind on classes and had to retake a grade when they got out.

Some disciplines received were as follows:

- Restriction (of Privileges) - Shoes, sentimental/personal items, makeup, lotion, body spray, talking, food rations. Everyone starts the program on restriction.
- Relationship Restriction - Being forbidden to speak to, look at, or stand anywhere near a person. This could be due to lesbian behaviors or simply because you get along too well with someone.
- Iron Sharpens Iron - Being forbidden to speak to, look at, or stand anywhere near anyone except for one person. This was usually forced on two residents who weren't getting along, particularly where one is bullying the other, leaving the victim to be subjected to further bullying behavior while in social isolation.
- Standing - Sitting is a privilege, When on Standing punishment, you only are allowed to rest when it's time to sleep. Leaning against the wall for support is not allowed. Whole group standing punishments were common. Shoes and socks were to be removed if you are on standing.

- Silence - Being able to communicate during the limited free times is a privilege. There was a time where the whole house was on silence for a month.
- Restriction - Short for "Restriction of Privileges". You would lose access to all outside contact with your parents. No special treats. No outside time. No personal items. No makeup or jewelry or self expression. Restriction could be limited to one thing or many things.
- Signs - Being forced to wear humiliating signs that say things like "Liar".
- Skirts - Being forced to wear ugly dress or skirt. Usually assigned to run risks or too boyish.
- Shackles/Chains - Handcuffs and ankle shackles.
- Kingdom - Restriction/Standing/Silence/Signs/Skirt/Shackles all combined. Plus no shoes. Hand-washing clothes is required. Clothes would be limited to three sets, including underwear.
- Unique Punishments - Bonus punishments were tailored to the individual. Scrubbing the bus with a toothbrush to teach humility. Wearing a leather backpack full of rocks.
- Drills - Wall sits, push-ups, burpees, carrying gallons of water, etc.

These people thrived off the power over us helpless girls. Under their mercy we were starved, disregarded, our humanity taken, our spiritual path distorted, and our mental health never sane again. Their eyes lit up when they saw you in fear or crying, they purposely humiliated and degraded you for reasons big and small. Disregarding your past, your trauma, or even you as a person. They saw dollar signs, and wanted to keep people there as long as possible. Brainwashing girls into thinking the cult was the best thing that happened to them, making the girls treat other girls who **KNEW IT WAS ABUSE** worse, snitching on them and purposely making their program harder, and extending time for them even.

This treatment had a profound negative impact on me and I am still deprogramming the brainwashing and programming they put into my brain. I am afraid to look at people in the eyes.

Staff would regularly look in your eyes and tell you they could see your sin. One resident was forced to wear sunglasses at all times because her eyes were too lustful. One time, a staff member looked at me in my eyes and told me she could see the demons possessing me.

I struggle with religious delusions.

I believe that I am demonically possessed or that I am the antichrist. I believe god himself is deliberately orchestrating my life to force me to submit to his will. I have frequent intrusive thoughts about hellfire, hell, purgatory, whatever you call it.

I have an eating disorder.

Every day is a struggle. I was forced to eat food that had disgusting textures until I vomited at the table, I was starved when I couldn't stomach an egg salad sandwich, later in my program I begged them to let me fast as much as I could and it was strategically planned based on the menu for the week that was planned and if there was a food I truly couldn't stomach. I learned how to wash anything disgusting down with water, just slam it down, but there were some foods where even that wasn't enough.

I struggle with basic hygiene and self care.

Mundane activities like cleaning, handwashing dishes, being indoors for too long, being around crowds for too long, the smell and taste of many foods, eating, showering, exercise, and more trigger me and I'm constantly in a state of terror for no real reason except that my body remembers being in that place.

I began to experience derealization. Any time spent off the campus threw me for a loop, and I realized that every time I re-entered the facility I was entering a new reality separate from the rest of humanity. Common sense, law and order, and basic human privileges were completely erased and rewritten with a new order and new reality and social contract.

In the program I learned to dissociate from real issues such as panic attacks, bodily pains, etc. I neglect my own care and subconsciously block out pain and discomfort. I struggle to communicate my medical needs with loved ones and healthcare providers.

After returning home I began suffering from severe agoraphobia and didn't leave my bed or home for many years. I've missed flights, I think they remind me of flying back there alone after my first home pass at 12 months. I cried so hard every time.

I never graduated high school. I never went to prom or had a normal high school experience. The world changed rapidly when I was inside the program. My parents decided to move across the country a few months after I returned home – and they had already moved houses during my time in the program. They packed up my things. I never got to see my bedroom again. I didn't even get a private bedroom again. I returned home and instead shared a bed with my high needs autistic baby brother. I never got to reunite with my friends. When we moved across the country we were homeless and living on the mercy of church members, my family was split apart to different houses, all strangers. My access to technology was severely restricted so I wasn't able to stay in touch with everyone I had been dying to see once I got out.

To this day I struggle with a crippling fear of abandonment. I was left on the ground begging for my parents countless times, unable to stand under the weight of my living terror. They refused to believe me and refused to take me home. I was threatened with more time added to my program if I didn't stop telling them about how bad the program was. But for my parents to refuse to believe me and abandoning me there time and time again traumatized me in a way that's unfathomable.

I can't have normal relationships with people. I can't trust people. I keep many things hidden/concealed. I can't trust them to tell them the truth. Even getting close to people puts me at risk of them making up lies to spread about me, because their closeness to me makes me complicit and them an expert of everything I do. It only took me once in the program having someone lie about something I did for me to learn that the only way I could survive was to live beyond reproach, completely embrace the ideology of the program and become someone of such strong conviction and character that anybody who dared lie and try to get me in trouble with staff would only be seen as a farce. I still live this way, unable to open up to friends or be vulnerable, terrified to touch them or say the wrong thing and they'll think I'm some sort of pervert or degenerate or monster.... It's so isolating and painful to live this way, terrified of everyone I meet, waiting for them to betray me. It's safer to stay alone, nobody can use anything against me, if they have nothing of me...

With people who may bring me harm, I resort to fawning, as we had to try hard to get the staff to love us so they would have mercy and let us advance the program. I am overly friendly and personable in situations where I am in danger.

So often they destroyed my art and censored my writings and made me give up things that spoke the truth of what happened and gave me consequences for my honesty in my writings. To this day I still self censor, speak and write in code, keep things as vague

as possible, because words, are forever, they can be used against you, especially if it's in writing. As someone who has always loved to write, having my voice stolen from me renders me....speechless. There are no words.

I was dehumanized and broken. They broke me, they really did. I fought the program for a long time, as long as they would let me, until they made it clear I had to get with the program or I would be there forever...I had no idea my parents were facing bankruptcy and running fundraisers for the program.

I have little control over my nervous system. I spend my every waking moment being triggered by the most mundane of tasks and having to navigate the full body sensations that occur and do preventative measures to keep it from disrupting my day. I cry constantly and completely fall apart when something doesn't go as expected.

I felt compelled to share my story because children are still suffering in that very same facility today. Additionally, I want the government to have record of the fact that Teen Challenge abuses their status as a religious facility and is allowed to go completely under the radar. There is no protections for children. Children are deprived of basic human rights in this country and we as a society are not doing enough to protect our kids. Hundreds of thousands of children are being subjected to institutionally-organized torture and brainwashing TODAY. There are states where children and parents are given the option between juvenile detention and Teen Challenge by a state-appointed judge, and I would urge every single parent out there to NEVER choose Teen Challenge. I also want the Committee to understand the real-life consequences of inadequate care and oversight in residential treatment facilities.

To prevent these negative experiences, I believe the Senate Finance Committee should consider implementing stricter regulations and oversight of youth residential treatment facilities. This includes mandatory reporting of abuse, transparent data collection, increased staff training on trauma-informed care, regular and unannounced inspections, and ensuring that all facilities provide adequate mental health and educational services. Additionally, there should be accessible channels for residents to report abuse without fear of retaliation.

Thank you, Chair Wyden, and members of the Senate Finance Committee, for reading my testimony. I hope that my story and the stories of others like me will inspire you to take immediate action to protect vulnerable youth in residential treatment facilities. I hope you will pass the Stop Institutional Child Abuse Act (S. 1351) and follow that legislation up with additional reform policy to ensure all youth are safe from abuse, neglect, and preventable death in youth residential treatment facilities.

I would like to finish my testimony with a poem that I wrote ten years ago.

A girl was sexually abused in the dorms,  
and I never slept soundly after.  
My first punishment was wall sits,  
but it's not like I had to stand for half a day -  
though some girls did.  
Unable to rest when ill,  
mocked for fainting episodes and sickness,  
and no medication to bring down that fever.  
cramping. walking. Charlie horse.  
Malnutrition.  
humiliated and forced to wear ugly dresses  
because I was a tomboy, and a bit boyish,  
and I may or may not have kissed a girl.  
(i didnt want them to know. but my parents told them.)  
i was exorcised of spirit of homosexuality eventually  
(so why did everyone still think i was a lesbian?)  
Some nights I'd wake up to a whistle blast  
screaming  
in the middle of the night for "boot camp",  
and I remember giving one girl my socks  
because i knew it would be cold outside  
and they had taken all hers away.  
Forced fasting, forced praying, forced smiling,  
and only three changes of clothing  
no socks. no shoes.  
and hand washing your underwear in a sink.  
Mocked by staff constantly,  
belittled when crying or depressed.  
Scrubbing floors with toothbrushes,  
no touching or hugging or high fiving,  
and constant fear of making mistakes and being punished.  
The rules will betray, even if you learn them by heart,  
it will not save you.  
Being forced to eat rotting, burnt, and moldy food as punishment,  
or being forced to eat nothing at all.  
I knew at least fifteen girls who wet their pants  
because those in charge said "no".

No music no hobbies no happiness,  
not even letters to my friends.  
I never got to see them again.  
My parents moved to Arizona.  
I won, I did it mom and dad, I completed the program  
so why am I crying in the closet  
so nobody can hear my sobs  
or wipe away my tears?  
Nothing.

...

These are my memories,  
these are all real.  
I've never again taken fresh white sliced bread for granted,  
or aspirin or music or chicken noodle soup.

Sincerely,  
Kayetta Hammond

Testimony from Jaylene Lewis on behalf of Anonymous "E.Q"

Hello,

I am submitting this for a survivor, E.Q., who wishes to remain anonymous.

Thank you, Jaylene Lewis

## **Personal Experience at Wilderness and Spring Ridge Academy**

Aug. 2014 – July 2016 (age 14-16)

The purpose of documenting my experience is to highlight the contrast between the sunny ideals sold to parents and the stark reality of the treatment we received there. While my experience may be in the past for you, I live with the consequences of it every day.

I experienced the following during my time at Spring Ridge Academy:

Fear, terror, abandonment, suicidal thoughts and plans, emotional manipulation, grooming by staff, isolation, staff acting as therapists with no training or licensing, over sedation with Seroquel and other unknown substances, heatstroke from working outside with no access to water or shade, forced not to speak as a punishment, also forced to speak in inappropriate group therapy sessions, which included "attack therapy", we were



also forced to say the things that they wanted to hear and convince them of our sincerity, we were threatened with punishments, starvation, isolation, or juvenile hall if we rebelled or told anyone what was happening, our parents were told to ignore our concerns and thus our pain, LGBT+ students were forced to repress their true selves and pretend to be straight, I was not considered feminine enough and forced to wear makeup and clothes that did not reflect my true self, trainings and workshops were based directly on the previous cult organizations such as Synanon, that the owner and her former husband previously were involved in, **the techniques were not evidenced based, and have now been documented as brain washing and torture.**

My story has many similarities to the account of Spring Ridge Academy survivors Candace Cason and Raelyn K. There are many additional narratives from a multitude of other former residents who were also subjected to **unregulated inhumane tactics, humiliation, physical and psychological intimidation, shaming, unlicensed practitioners, overmedication, medical negligence, and fraud.**

A recent lawsuit, Sweidy v. Courtney, corroborates and documents these types of events that occurred at Spring Ridge Academy.

In addition, my autistic tendencies were exploited against me with no accommodation for my individual needs. The cruelty of this experience remains with me today.

Thousands of desperate parents have been duped and defrauded by the Troubled Teen Industry (TTI). Hundreds of thousands of teens have been through the grinder of these institutions, ending up worse than they were before, some with lasting damage leading to C-PTSD, and some ending their own lives. Many have gone on to document or share their experiences, and to advocate for new regulations, and oversight.

Thank you for your time,

E.Q.

Anna Gozun

9 June 2024

Re: Senate Finance Committee Hearing “Youth Residential Treatment Facilities: Examining Failures and Evaluating Solutions” on Wednesday, June 12th, 2024 at 10am

Dear Senate Finance Committee,

I am here today as a concerned citizen, mother of three, wife, advocate and survivor of abuse in the Troubled Teen Industry. For over a year, I volunteered with a prominent Youth Rights organization, where I witnessed countless testimonies of abuse and neglect, requested and sifted through data from multiple state agencies across this nation. I actively participated in investigations into these facilities and aided in bringing to light the abusive practices from the East to West coasts. Most recently, a horrible case where a precious 12-year-old boy died in North Carolina facility. This was not the first death in that specific facility, but we need to ensure it is the last. My heart was absolutely broken attending the funeral virtually, as someone who experienced the desperation and hopelessness you feel. Terrified, trapped, silenced.

I am testifying about the abusive and neglectful conditions I experienced in a youth residential treatment facility I stand before you today to emphasize the urgent need for legislation that protects the rights and well-being of children in the United States in response to the Senate Finance Committee’s hearing titled “Youth Residential Treatment Facilities: Examining Failures and Evaluating Solutions”. As the Senate Financial Committee, your role is crucial in driving change and ensuring the safety of vulnerable children across the United States.

Allow me to share my personal story to shed light on the gravity of this issue. My experience at Trinity Teen Solutions, a ranch and residential treatment facility in Wyoming, was a nightmare of abuse, forced labor and human trafficking. The Woodwards, the owners of this facility, along with their extended family, have a long history of subjecting children to physical, emotional and sexual torment, while silencing those who dare to speak out against them. When I was 16 years old, I was woken up by two individuals around 5:30am. They were standing over my bed and demanded I go with them. To where? I did not know. “We can do this the easy way or the hard way”. I complied, yet they placed a boot on my leg and belt around my waist so I may not run. They took me from Texas to Wyoming.

During my time there, I experienced cruel and unusual punishments, including, but not limited to months in isolation, and being tied to animals (dogs, goats) or other girls. We routinely faced food and sleep deprivation, forced labor- day and night regardless of if we were injured or

sick. We experienced emotional abuse and humiliation, lack of medical care, lack of hygiene, we had no ability to contact the authorities, and contact with our family members was routinely monitored and altered or halted completely. Girls were held against their will over 18 without a court order. We could not befriend fellow girls without severe punishment. Everything down to bathroom usage was so severely restricted that many were forced to defecate or urinate in their pants.

Additionally, communication with the outside world was strictly controlled, leaving us feeling trapped and voiceless. Our attempts to reach out to our parents were intercepted, letters were withheld, and we were threatened with severed communication if we did not comply. This deliberate isolation perpetuated the cycle of abuse and prevented us from seeking help. We had absolutely no access to law enforcement.

I, along with dozens of other survivors of Trinity, filed police reports against them in 2019. Despite WY DCFS being aware of the abuses, they were unsuccessful in stopping the Woodward's actions through these means. The investigation, last I heard, is still ongoing. I am now a lead plaintiff in a federal TVPRA class action lawsuit against our abusers (Sherman, Gozun and Nash vs. Trinity Teen Solutions et al. Filed November 2020), in which the the US Department of Justice is an interested party, and I am actively seeking justice for myself and other survivors of the facility I was in. While Trinity Teen Solutions has been closed since 2021 after the media coverage of our case, hundreds of thousands of children have experienced significant abuse in similar facilities across the US. This calls for urgent action and advocacy for change.

My primary objective is to protect children from abuse and ensure that no more lives are shattered by the horrors we endured. Even if our efforts can save just one person from experiencing the pain and trauma we endured, it will be worth it. Abuse is not therapy.

It is crucial for the Senate Financial Committee to recognize the detrimental impact of exploitation and abuse on vulnerable children.

No child should endure such exploitation and fear. I went there struggling with ADHD, and anxiety. I left with severe PTSD and both of my ankles needing surgery from the forced labor and continual injuries sustained with the forced labor and trafficking.

The Troubled Teen Industry is not limited to any religious group. Trinity Teen Solutions marketed itself as a Catholic program, exploiting religion to attract parents seeking assistance for their troubled children and avoid oversight. Similar disciplinary centers exist in other countries, regardless of religious affiliation. This highlights the global nature of the problem and the need for international cooperation and awareness.

In conclusion, I implore you, the Senate Financial Committee, to take immediate action in enacting further legislation, and funding for investigations to protect children in youth residential treatment facilities. We need stricter regulations, comprehensive oversight, and swift and severe accountability for those that abuse children in these facilities. No child should endure

the horrors inflicted upon us, and that we hold the memories of daily in our adult lives, and it is our responsibility to ensure their safety, dignity, and right to a nurturing environment. The Stop Institutional Child Abuse Act is a great step in the right direction.

Together, we can create a safer and more compassionate society for our children, our future.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Anna Gozun

Re: The Senate Finance Committee Investigation into Youth Residential Treatment Facilities

Abigail Hines (Chosen name Spencer Gordon, he/him/his)  
June 12th, 2024

Dear Senate Finance Committee,

My name is Spencer Gordon, and I am a former patient at North Spring Behavioral Healthcare (UHS) in Leesburg, Virginia, and YouthCare (Acadia) in Draper, Utah. I am testifying about the abusive and neglectful conditions I experienced in these youth residential treatment facilities.

I was placed in **North Spring** at the age of 14 in the summer of 2017 until early 2018 due to repeated suicide attempts because of bullying at school and parental abuse. I was on the Charlie unit, the younger girls unit. They had motion sensors to see if we got out of bed, but mine overlapped my bed and would go off if I so much as rolled over in my sleep. I do not remember exactly what night it was, but one night in my first week there I was crying and couldn't sleep. I was unknowingly setting off my alarm, so they ripped me out of bed and brought me to the "swing wing," the area they took kids who were being violent; or "swinging [punches]." I am not sure if the nickname originated from staff or students to begin with, but both students and staff called the area the swing wing. When we got there, they accused me of setting off my alarm intentionally even though I had no clue it was going off. I was sitting on the floor of the swing wing, rocking back and forth, when I decided I wanted to lay on the floor. So, I rolled to my side, and started laying down. They then put me in a restraint. I had no clue why I was being restrained until the next day – while going over the incident report – I was informed I was allegedly hitting my head on the floor. I don't think my head even touched the floor, but if it did, it certainly wasn't forceful. They used a two-person restraint, one that was already known to be unsafe. One staff held my legs straight while another held my arms behind my back and pushed me down. I asked them to lighten up, that they were hurting me, and they told me to "stop resisting." The only resistance was from the tendons in my knees being pushed further than they were made to be pushed; and it's not like I was able to stretch beforehand. The next day I was told the restraint lasted either 20 or 30 minutes; I can't remember which but I know it was one of those two.

My bed was infested with stinkbugs. I remember waking up from a nap and seeing one less than an inch from my face. I blew on it, it didn't budge. I was so accustomed to them by this point that I just rolled over and went back to sleep.

They took me off my birth control pills when I got there. I'm not even sure why, maybe they thought they were being used to prevent pregnancy rather than medical. I had a full, incredibly painful, 7-day heavy period a few days after being taken off my pills, then diluted blood for about 30 days. The 30 days were far lighter than a period, but also heavier than spotting. I'm not sure if it was mixed with vaginal fluid or cervical mucus, but the blood was somewhat translucent, which is how I assume I escaped anemia. My mother had to contact them several times before they finally put me back on my birth control.

When I first got there, they took me off all my nausea medications and put me on fish oil pills. I would vomit multiple times per day. If I had eaten 2 hours prior, the vomit would look 10 minutes old. This was clearly an allergic reaction, but they threatened to put me on unit restriction if I didn't take my fish oil pills. Unit restriction took away one's access to school. School has always been important to me, so I decided I would vomit repeatedly so that I could get an education. I stayed on the pills for months until I vomited in front of my mother during a pass and she noticed that the vomit did not look like it should have and demanded they take me off the pills.

I once squeezed my breast and lactation came out of it. I asked a nurse if this was normal, and she told me yes, not to worry about it. Galactorrhea is not normal, it was a side effect from my meds. But, I didn't concern myself with something I thought was normal until 2 years later when I showed a different nurse at YouthCare. An OBGYN tested me and found my prolactin levels were very high, high enough to cause osteoporosis. YouthCare was able to get my levels lower, though they still wanted them higher than average. Unfortunately, because I was lactating at all times for 2 years, nothing would make them stop lactating. I experienced galactorrhea until I removed my mammary glands when I was 20; 6 years. I will probably develop osteoporosis at a younger age than usual.

One night at North Spring we were told to sit in our assigned chairs and stay silent, not told why. Then I heard a siren. Then another, and another. If we opened our mouths staff would "shhh" us before noise could even come out, but we exchanged several looks of confusion. Soon you could hear talking in the hallway outside of our unit. You could hear the white noise of walkie-talkies, but they clearly weren't on the same channel as the staffs' walkies. We stopped taking new intakes the next day. I wasn't told until weeks later what happened when my mother admitted that a child was killed during a restraint on my phone call with her. The same restraint I was put in for no reason. It still hurts that she knew I was restrained, knew it could be fatal, and still decided not to pull me. When I got out I Googled the incident. I didn't recognize Jeremiah's name, but I remembered his face. We were on different units, but we'd pass by in the hallways often

enough for me to recognize him. He used to walk with an unnaturally wide gait because he thought it made him look cool. It didn't, it made him look silly, but everyone did something they thought was cool that wasn't when we were 15. He had a bright smile that would encourage anyone to smile with him, even when I was actively crying. I barely knew him, and I still miss him.

I was placed in **YouthCare** at the age of 16 until a few weeks before my 18th birthday due to repeated suicide attempts and Gender Dysphoria. This was June 5th, 2019 until December 18th, 2020. It felt – feels – like a slap in the face since it was Pride month and 3 days before my grandfather's birthday. My grandfather was my biggest supporter and the only person I truly felt loved by growing up. YouthCare took off my pre-existing diagnosis of Gender Dysphoria and diagnosed me with Borderline Personality Disorder in an under 2 hour intake. They used BPD to justify how I wasn't really trans, I was just faking it for attention and because individuals with BPD tend to "copy societal trends." People with BPD are not known to copy societal trends, they are known to copy their romantic partner or other "favorite person." One should also rarely diagnose a 16-year-old with BPD as many of the symptoms of BPD are the same as the symptoms of being 16, and I didn't even have many of the symptoms they alleged I had. My current therapist now says with full confidence that I am not BPD, have never been BPD, and agrees that they were intentionally using a highly stigmatized disorder to discredit any claim I made of abuse or being trans. One of my listed issues in my intake documents says "Spencer considers herself a male." My notes used my chosen name as my mother signed a document stating my name would be Spencer, but almost all of my notes used she/her pronouns because there is no legal requirement to use any specific pronoun and the therapists considered me to be a girl. Even notes from the "lgbtq group" they had use she/her pronouns for me.

My intake documents list under my trauma history that when I was 14 I had "rocks (pebbles)" thrown at me. They were not pebbles, they were rocks, but even if they were pebbles there was no point in including that for any reason short of invalidating my trauma. I once told my therapist, Emily, that my stepmother's abuse was more traumatizing than my ex-boyfriend raping me. I don't recall the exact words she used, but she did not hide that she was judging me for being more traumatized by my stepmother. Not only does trauma affect everyone differently, but my stepmother used to lock me in the basement with no food, no electronics, and no outside communication, just the same books I read over and over again including but not limited to "Sexual Homicide: Patterns and Motives" by Douglas et. al. every other weekend for a year and a half. I don't think it is horribly surprising that could be more traumatic than rape for some people. My ex would rape me weekly, but the night before he dumped me he raped me and my best friend at the same time. Emily told me, "I'm not saying it's your



fault because it is never the victims' fault, but you could have prevented it." This was 4 and a half years ago, but the memory is seared into my mind and I am 90% confident these were her words verbatim, and 100% certain they were at least an accurate representation of what she did say. She intentionally wanted me to blame myself for Rachel being raped, to feel guilt over someone else's actions, and I am not really sure why to this day.

Emily once told me that when my depression was cured I'd likely detransition. Most of the conversion therapy they did was subtle because if I caught onto what they were doing I would oppose it, but this stuck with me based on how overt it was. Emily also tried to convince me that any complaint of abuse or bullying was me "victim stancing;" ie playing the victim. I wasn't being bullied, I was actually the problem and the other students were in the right to exclude me or call me names. I was told this both in individual therapy and in group therapy in front of the other students. I've reconnected with many of the kids since then and many have apologized for bullying me. I have, sincerely, told them it wasn't their fault because Emily was encouraging them to bully me; and their apologies immediately discredit Emily's claims. I was often bullied for being trans, told I wasn't "really trans" and had feminine aspects of my appearance – many of which I had no control over – pointed out by my peers. I believe her goal was to make it clear I would never be loved or respected unless I detransitioned.

YouthCare put me on 200mg of Geodon. They also put me on 1mg of Klonopin to counteract the tardive dyskinesia from the Geodon. The FDA only approved up to 80mg of Geodon twice a day, not 200mg all at once, and only for Bipolar or psychosis. I was neither bipolar nor psychotic, nor did YouthCare ever diagnose me as such. One time they didn't refill my Klonopin and I went 4 days without it. By day 4 my entire body was shaking so hard and shaking my vocal cords with it that people couldn't understand what I was saying. Geodon also made my breasts grow as it raised my prolactin levels, a side effect I question if was chosen deliberately since I was a trans man (female-to-male).

YouthCare policy didn't "reward" self-harm with bandages or even topical antibiotics. One nurse even described a bandage as a "badge of honor" to me. I was frequently made to display uncovered second-degree burns – done by rubbing an eraser on my skin until the dermis was exposed – to direct sunlight. I was once made to play basketball outside with an uncovered wound, and a peer solely on accident whacked my arm while trying to get the ball from me.

One time I asked to send a letter to Nancy Pelosi, Don Beyer, and Jennifer Wexton. Beyer was my representative and I went canvassing for Wexton in 2018 and helped her

get into office. Pelosi was House Speaker at the time. Emily refused to send my letter because “Nancy Pelosi isn’t on your contact list.” The first amendment protects my right to “petition government for redress of grievances,” and since they’d send mail to my mother, this was intentionally limiting my rights rather than just the 10 cents it would take to mail the letter. We were also punished if we called fellow students their preferred pronouns without therapist approval. They limited our freedom of speech and replaced it with enforced transphobia and required disrespect. Of course, I had therapist approval to be called he/him, but students, staff, and therapists were never punished for calling me she/her.

I once had a skin infection on my knee that was progressively getting worse. Anytime I asked for medical care I was accused of “attention seeking” and lying about how much it hurt. I was not lying, but even if I was, there were visible signs of infection. There was a period of time where the skin surrounding the infection was blue. They finally got me to a doctor weeks later once red lines were spreading down my calve from the initial wound, but also made sure to inform the doctor that I would be lying about the severity my symptoms. So, the doctor put me on incredibly weak antibiotics, and it got worse the next day. I was forced to do physical activities during the Parent Days event, and in excruciating pain, I decided to sit down without permission. I opened the bandaid and saw that the infection was green, purple, brown, and white, all at the same time. My mother came and sat with me and saw the wound, then promised me she’d take me to a doctor. Unfortunately my mother and I carpoled to the location, so we had to wait for our driver to be ready to leave. While my mother and I were seated the recreational therapist, Nicki, walked over, and chastised me for sitting out. My mother had to tell her my leg was too infected for me to keep participating. When I finally got to the doctor and they cleaned the wound out, the infection was 10mm in diameter and 5mm deep. This likely started as an ingrown hair, there was no reason for it to get this bad if I was given medical attention sooner. I still have a scar from it 4 years later, and probably will for life. Interestingly, Nurse Carrie came up to me later apologizing. She informed me that Nicki, Emily, and other therapists working Parent Days asked if I would be able to participate. She told them I *could*, but it would be incredibly painful. She told me her intent was to acknowledge that my leg wasn’t broken and could bear weight if needed... but that it would be way more painful than anything a medical professional would suggest pushing through. Nicki, Emily, and everyone involved knowingly and deliberately wanted me in agonizing pain.

Due to frequent understaffing in the nursing department, I was usually only able to get ibuprofen about once every 12 hours. Even when we had enough nurses, they only gave ibuprofen once every 8 hours and acetaminophen every 6. I frequently handled ovarian cysts, a pain sometimes compared to appendicitis, without any pain meds. They

wouldn't let me lay down in my room or even on the couch, so I would lay down on the floor in the corner in fetal position, in too much pain to do so much as drink water. Staff didn't hesitate to make it clear that "allowing" me the floor was a privilege as they considered it sexually suggestive to lay down.

If you were considered a self-harm risk you would be strip searched nightly and had your body closely checked by two people for wounds. Both were staff, not nurses, not medical professionals. You were also put on line of sight, so one person would watch you while you showered, when you used the bathroom. When showering we were expected to wear a bathing suit so that staff could avoid a lawsuit or criminal charges. I would not be able to adequately wash my body because YouthCare was afraid that their adult staff would watch me, a minor, cleaning myself and view it as sexual. We had a limit of 10 minutes twice daily to do all of our hygiene.

The food left us malnourished. One time a staff member, Jerry, served us raw chicken. We were also once forced to go on a 7-hour hike, and I passed out later that night because I was not eating enough to sustain a 7-hour hike. My blood pressure when I was conscious enough to notice things but still too out of it to talk or move was 62/39. I am 100% certain this is what the BP machine read as I had a faint haze of remembering that number and checked with the nurse the next day, the memory solidifying with my own astonishment that it was half of what it should be. I am not sure how low it was when I was fully unconscious. The next day the same Jerry and his friend whose name I can't recall told me about how someone called a code while I was passed out. Apparently a peer was hitting his head against the wall, but when they first arrived they assumed I was the code. They started yelling at me, sprawled out on the ground to stop "zero-stating," a term they used for when a student chose to do nothing as an act of rebellion. Another staff saw them and clarified that the code was in the other room, and everyone just left me there, on the floor, unsupervised, while experiencing syncope. It was very uncomfortable for me to hear this story from them because they seemed to find it funny, not horrifying like I did. From talking to both students and staff the following days I was able to gather that it seems they were understaffed and genuinely couldn't attend to me at that time, but if my blood pressure was no higher than 62/39, that is a medical emergency and I either needed to be attended by a YouthCare nurse or have someone call 911 so I could be attended by EMS.

We were not allowed to see our psych reports. I eventually requested my records, saw the report, and immediately understood why. The doctor doing my psych report blatantly lied. I told her I first experienced Gender Dysphoria when I was 8 years old when I learned about human sexual dimorphism. I was an only child, had no brothers, and prior to this point had assumed all humans had genitals like mine. I'm not sure how I would

have explained women having breasts and men not, but I certainly didn't expect to have breasts someday. I thought boys and girls were haircuts, and I had long hair, so I guess I was a girl. The logic is questionable, but I was 8. Once I learned there was a sex different than mine, I immediately felt dysphoric, wanted to be a boy, but thought I was just a weird cis girl who wanted to be a boy. When I was 15 I was finally allowed social media and learned that Gender Dysphoria is a thing, that cis women don't want beards and penises, that I was trans. I finally understood who I was, came out to my boyfriend, but stayed otherwise closeted. When I was 16 I told a doctor my mother "would not accept me as trans." What I meant was that if I came out, hypothetically, she wouldn't accept me. He thought it meant that I already came out and she refused to accept me. I do not blame him as it was genuinely an accident and miscommunication, but he outed me to my mother. My psych report did not say any of that at all. What it said was that one day I downloaded Instagram and decided to be trans to fit in with a "trend." It said that I have only identified as trans for the past few months, that my doctor outing me was me coming out intentionally and was a spur-of-the-moment "I decided to be trans today" rather than years of Dysphoria and a year knowingly in the closet. It also stated that cis girls with autism tend to have neuroanatomies closest to cis men, that trans men have neuroanatomies closest to cis men, so I probably was just a confused autistic girl rather than a trans man. I am still flabbergasted that the doctor defined transsexualism, agreed I fit it perfectly, and used that as proof that I was not trans, somehow.

One staff was fired for being a white supremacist and then rehired because no one else would work there. He also frequently told students the COVID-19 vaccine had a government microchip in it to track him. If you Google "justin youthcare" while in Utah and likely elsewhere, his Facebook profile is on the first page. His wife looks concerningly young based on his career choice, especially since they had a kid a few months after getting married; but her profile doesn't have her age so I can't prove anything. We did hear a story about a girl who was the victim of statutory rape from a staff member. The story was shared amongst the students, but staff would also tell us this happened. Staff also didn't hesitate to tell us that if we misbehaved enough they would send us to Provo Canyon and how Paris Hilton was raped at Provo Canyon so we would never want to go there. They were indirectly threatening us with being raped as punishment. That would be insidious regardless of who they were threatening, but especially so since most of us had histories of sexual trauma, and all were minors.

The education was abysmal. I was given a computer with a poor online school program and told to teach myself. English used printed paper, but I was still told to teach myself. My human anatomy course didn't teach the reproductive system, and didn't even teach the urinary system because it has cross-sectional diagrams of flaccid penises to illustrate how the urethra connects to the bladders and so forth. We had a different

“teacher” for each subject, but they’d usually stand at the front of the room and watch us. I had to teach an 9 year old trans girl math because the computer program didn’t teach math as low as her level and the teacher would rather use me as free labor than leave her throne at the front of the room. Some electives, gym, and Spanish were actually taught to us, but for core classes we were usually just left to our own devices short of the occasional reward reading of a play or watching a movie,.

Emily eventually went to private practice and I got a new therapist, Amy. I continued with her after I left YouthCare. When I asked her to write me a letter approving a hysterectomy, she ghosted me. I emailed her private practice email, I emailed her YouthCare email, texted her, nothing. When I got my records I found she misgendered me with she/her pronouns in all her notes. She knew I was trans. I had shown a consistent history of Gender Dysphoria and had been on testosterone for almost a year. Instagram suggested her account to me as “Someone you may know,” and I found she follows a lot of LDS influencers. She didn’t want to write my letter not because I wasn’t trans, but because who I am was against her religion. She is allowed to have her personal beliefs, but part of her license is agreeing that those beliefs won’t impact her treating me. My current therapist is atheist but is still willing to work with my Rabbi to best help me. She ghosted me because her refusal to write my letter was a flagrant violation of ethical guidelines, so it was easier for her to run away than to tell me “no” to my face.

When it was becoming abundantly clear that I wouldn’t detransition before I turned 18 they convinced my mother to move me to Utah in hopes that the discrimination I face in Utah County would do what they couldn’t. I’ve had to move apartments twice because my “randomly assigned” roommates committed hate crimes against me. I’ve had my pride flags destroyed 25 times. I have difficulty finding jobs due to employment discrimination. I am yelled slurs from cars every 2 weeks to a month. I had a bomb threat which promised to kill us called into the place I work, Mosaics Community Bookstore and Venue, because we were hosting an all-ages drag show. One person told me to my face that trans people should go to conversion therapy not knowing I was trans or had already been there. Another person told me my mother was right to send me to conversion therapy, that he would do the same if his kid ends up lgbtq, and that I should not be allowed around children. Someone tried to hit me with their car 11 months ago. In November of 2022, a guy I went home with told me “I’m straight, unlike you pushy queers” and I realized if I didn’t play my cards carefully he would kill me.

These treatments had a profound negative impact on me, including multiple diagnoses of PTSD from the ordeal, flashbacks, hypervigilance and jumping at sudden noises, tardive dyskinesia that persists even though I’ve been off all antipsychotics for 3 years,

6 years of galactorrhea that was only stopped through surgical intervention, a distrust in my family, a rapist targeting me when I was 15 due to said distrust in family making me vulnerable, missing out on getting a prom, and never getting driver's ed. I was also at one point getting recruitment emails from Brown and Columbia, but those went away as I had no ability to do extracurriculars and my GPA plummeted due to the poor schooling. It also left me with very few resources in a place where I'd face frequent discrimination in housing, employment, schooling, as well harassment walking down the street or in my own home.

My stay at YouthCare was funded by Blue Cross Blue Shield Federal Employee Program. My stay at North Spring was funded in part by APSVA public schools and in part by Medicaid.

I felt compelled to share my story to ensure no child ever has to go through what I went through. I want the Committee to understand the real-life consequences of inadequate care and oversight in residential treatment facilities.

To prevent these negative experiences, I believe the Senate Finance Committee should consider implementing stricter regulations and oversight of youth residential treatment facilities. This includes mandatory reporting of abuse, transparent data collection, increased staff training on trauma-informed care, regular and unannounced inspections, and ensuring that all facilities provide adequate mental health and educational services. Additionally, there should be accessible channels for residents to report abuse without fear of retaliation.

Thank you, Chair Wyden, and members of the Senate Finance Committee, for reading my testimony. I hope that my story and the stories of others like me will inspire you to take immediate action to protect vulnerable youth in residential treatment facilities. I hope you will pass the Stop Institutional Child Abuse Act (S. 1351) and follow that legislation up with additional reform policy to ensure all youth are safe from abuse, neglect, and preventable death in youth residential treatment facilities.

Sincerely,  
Spencer Gordon

Re: The Senate Finance Committee Investigation into Youth Residential Treatment Facilities

Christina "Chrissy" Clark-Atkins

06/04/2024

Dear Senate Finance Committee,

My name is Christina "Chrissy" Clark-Atkins, and I am a survivor of one of Acadia's facilities formerly known as Peninsula Village and now known as Village Behavioral Health. I am testifying about the abusive and neglectful conditions I experienced in their youth residential treatment facility.

I was placed in Peninsula Village, now known as Village Behavioral Health, at the age of 16 (1996-1997). I was experiencing severe emotional and psychological abuse at home and as a side effect I started losing an extremely unhealthy amount of weight due to being too nervous to eat as my stomach felt sick all of the time. At the time I asked for help, I was 5'10" and 95 pounds. I approached a guidance counselor at my school and informed her of the abuse I was experiencing at home, how I felt sick all of the time, and I really wanted some help to calm my stomach and start gaining weight again as I was experiencing some very distressing issues secondary to it. I expressed my fear of my abusive parent trying to control my therapy and control all narratives around me, and how I needed some help free of their control. She recommended an in-patient stay at Peninsula Hospital. I was told it was to be 2 weeks with individual and group therapy and medication help should I need it. I agreed as I trusted therapists and was trying to find some way to help myself. I stayed at their hospital facility for 2 weeks and then was discharged to Peninsula Lighthouse, their outpatient facility, to continue to monitor medications, continue therapy, group therapy, and possibly family therapy. I felt like I was doing better. However, what I did not know was that I put myself into a system that can be easily corrupted by the very person who was perpetuating my abuse. My abusive parent began to call the staff and my assigned psychiatrist and lie about my behavior to them. She would often do this on the phone in front of me preceding the phone call with the threat of having me locked away for years. I was terrified. Being from Knoxville, TN, I had heard rumors about Peninsula Village and how horrible it was. She continued to terrorize me with these threats and, while at my outpatient therapies, would often monopolize some of my treating psychiatrist's time with outlandish stories of my behavior at home. My treating psychiatrist then gave me an ultimatum: Gain 5 pounds in 1 week or we are sending you away to Peninsula Village. Given that my anorexia was not body image motivated and induced by anxiety through abuse, I failed to gain the weight. My abusive parent took the opportunity to be extra harmful to me that week as well to help guarantee my failure.

During my time there, I experienced no real mental health care. The program had 2 sections at the time. You started in the STU unit (Special Treatment Unit), which is their indoor lockdown facility. Upon my intake into the program, we had to write personal inventories of our bad behavior and drug inventories of what we had used. At first, I thought that if I really tried to be honest and work hard that they would see that I really did want help but my abuser had manipulated the system to put me here. I was brutally honest in both, but I had not done many of what they considered "bad" things.

When I turned in both inventories, they read them and threw the pages at me and called me a liar. I was angry, hurt, confused, and devastated. I realized then and there that I was not in a place that cared about my wellness. I refused to raise my hand and do a check-in with them 10 minutes later because I was so angry. We were made to sit on beds all day in silence, so my refusing to check in was just crossing my arms and shaking my head no. That is when I experienced my very first PCI (physical control intervention), which is physical restraint. The counselor pressed a button around her neck which set off an alarm all across the indoor and outdoor units. I, at 16 and 95 pounds, was suddenly yanked off my bed and thrown face down and laid on by 3 adults. Then more came piling through the door. I was so scared. I could not believe what they were doing to me. I was confused. I had about 5-6 adults by the end fully holding me down and pressing their collective weight on me. Then, I was suddenly stuck with a needle and injected with something into my hip, which I later found out was likely Thorazine, to sedate me. I was screaming what are you doing? What are you giving me? They never told you. We were not allowed to know what medications they were giving us and not told what you were taking or why, you just had to swallow your pills or risk another physical restraint. I had to rewrite both of my inventories and had to make up things I never did. I used things I saw on TV and drugs I had heard about to write my stories. They finally accepted them after that. You were further dehumanized by not being allowed to have clothes. You started in hospital gowns, which were uncomfortable and didn't always quite cover you. The next step was scrubs. You had to earn these, and then at last you could earn your clothes. The way in which you moved up in these 3 levels of the indoor part of the program was based on peer bullying not support. To be "successful" in their program, you had to participate in this bullying during group therapy sessions and a consequences period of the day. During the consequences time, you would tell on each other. It did not matter if you did what you were being accused of or not, you just had to remain silent, take it, and accept the consequence. In order to move ahead, you had to do this to others. There was no opting out. They encouraged us to victim blame each other for the abuse that was perpetuated on us by our abusers. There was no safe space for our feelings here. There was another girl in our unit that was constantly acting out. At one point, shortly after I arrived, they had restrained her to a bed by leather straps to the arms and legs. She had been screaming and we couldn't sleep, so they made us stand in a circle around her and tell her how awful she was. I didn't want to participate, but it was clear I had to. The counselor told me that if I didn't that I would probably end up like her. Since I was on eating disorder precautions, I had to shower with the curtain open and use the bathroom with the door open so they could watch me. Being watched while showering, urinating, and defecating was beyond humiliating and degrading. They claimed it was to make sure I didn't throw up. I had anorexia, not bulimia. I never threw up my food. I was also not allowed to look in the mirror the entire time I was in the facility, but that was true for all of the girls, not just me. They put me on a high-calorie diet and threatened me with IV nutrition and other things if I didn't eat it all. My abuser purposefully didn't tell them I was allergic to milk, so I was made to drink whole milk every day, which caused me to feel sick all of the time. If I complained about how badly my stomach hurt, they accused me of attention seeking and I was punished, so I just had to suffer in silence. You learned quickly in there that if you were hurting, felt sick, or had any complaints not to tell them. Anything that was wrong with you was met with accusations of attention seeking and an encouragement of your peers to bully you. As I stated before, we were made to sit on our beds in silence most of the day. We had some brief exercise at our beds in the morning, but there was no going outside. The only time we were allowed to speak



to our peers was during the 2 group therapy sessions daily, and maybe during one extracurricular during the day. The rest of the time we sat in silence. If you were caught looking out of the window, you were punished. If you looked around the room, you were punished. If you fell asleep because you were on new unknown medications causing this side effect, they woke you up and you were punished. If you were in a bed cubicle facing another person, you had to do everything you could to not look at them while also not looking around the room, etc. You basically just looked at your legs all day. There were 2-3 staff on the floor at all times. They stood up on something that was higher than our cubicles so they could watch us at all times, and they could hand out consequences for all of our imagined transgressions they accused us of. We had "school" on Tuesdays and Thursdays. This "school time" consisted of us continuing to sit on our beds in silence while this woman who I guess was a teacher gave us individual assignments as we were all different ages and grades. If you had any questions, she would come to you but then admonish you for attention seeking if you didn't understand something or the assignment itself. You learned quickly not to ask questions of her. If you needed help, you were not going to get it. You just had to do the assignment wrong and suffer through the bad grades and more admonishment for not paying attention or being a diligent student. You could also be punished by the staff for attempting to manipulate the teacher, which meant asking too many questions. Everything you were required to do there, making beds, teeth brushing, showering, urinating, defecating, cleaning, was timed. If you could not accomplish these tasks in the ridiculously short times allotted, you were punished. During my time in the STU unit, I witnessed physical restraint by staff, people being tied to beds with leather arm and leg restraints by staff, constant staff bullying of us, not allowing us to use the toilet facilities outside of allotted bathroom times, and more. In the STU unit was what they called the "Quiet Room". The Quiet Room was a fully padded room with one window and nothing else. We were threatened with being put into a straight jacket, which they referred to as "the burrito", shot with drugs, and left in there if we misbehaved. I witnessed them threatening others with being sent to a worse place than the one we were in if we didn't cooperate. I really thought that my experience couldn't get any worse and then I was "graduated" to the outdoor cabin part of the program.

I was in the Moose Clan cabin. It was a transitional cabin for those they felt needed to keep extra watch on. When I came to my cabin, they were on something they referred to as "blackout". This meant that the group was not able to get to different activities on time regularly and thus had become so dysfunctional that all normal activities were stopped. Despite me not being there when this happened, I was made to be punished with them. I learned that we were to do our laundry once a week, but because of being on blackout, we could not use the washer and dryers. Instead, in the middle of winter, they filled wash basins with cold water from the garden hose and given washboards and soap to wash our clothing outside in the cold. It was extremely painful as your hands would turn blue and then purple from the cold air and water until they finally went numb. We had to sit in our cabins with our backs to each other and not speak all day until our group therapy sessions twice a day. Even when normalcy in the cabin returned, it was not much better. We were constantly given physical punishments. They would assign 25-75 push-ups at a time, and this was multiple times a day on top of all of the other physical labor they made us do. Under the guise of needing to maintain a supply of wood for the fires in our cabins, they required us 3 times a week to roll giant tree trunks off of a pile and then saw them using a 2-person pull saw. If you weren't on saw

duty, then you had to maul wood. We were made to do this for hours on top of the physical punishments. Even though we couldn't speak to each other but a couple of times a day, we were allowed to speak to the staff if you raised your hand and they actually allowed you to speak. One of the punishments was called silence. When you were on silence, you were not allowed to speak to anyone including the staff, so you couldn't ask to use the restroom or for anything else you needed. One of the exercise punishments was called a "geloha", which is commonly known as a burpee. I was accused by staff and peers multiple times that day of imagined issues, and by the end of the day I had 150 burpees I had to do before I went to bed. This is on top of the physical labor, the group physical punishments, and the individual other physical punishments I had received that day. I made it through maybe half before I couldn't get up. They kept yelling that if I didn't finish that I would have to start over. I was so physically exhausted that my body seemed to just shut down. I could not move. For that, I was being uncooperative and I was physically restrained. We were kept in a constant state of pain and physical exhaustion. My body hurt all day every day. They did not care. If you complained that something hurt, you were accused of attention seeking behavior and punished. We had a sand bucket we had to carry from one place to another. It was an old metal pail full of sand. They claimed we needed to carry it everywhere for safety reasons in case one of the fires in any one of the cabins got out of control. It was beyond heavy and there was nothing but a wire for a handle. It would cut into the skin of your hand. Then having to saw or maul wood or do any other physical activity with your hand became excruciating. The cabins had no AC and an iron wood furnace for heat in the winter. The worst physical restraint I personally experienced happened after I was frustrated one day. I was put on silence. We were digging something up in front of our cabin and I really had to use the restroom. I raised my hand but the staff ignored me. I waved my raised hand and pointed to the bathroom, and they added another hour of silence to my punishment bringing it up to a total of 11 hours (sleep time didn't count towards your silent time). In my frustration and desperation to use the bathroom, I threw my shovel on the ground and started pointing at the bathroom with both arms without saying anything. This prompted them to hit the alarm and I was promptly tackled by the staff. By this point, the force of the tackle and the pressure of the people on me caused my bladder to involuntarily release and I urinated all over myself, the ground, and some of them in the process which made them angry. I had 5-6 adults on top of me, and because I urinated, they decided to move me onto the deck of the cabin. They placed me facedown in a puddle of dry mud on the cabin deck. I couldn't breathe. When I took a breath in through my nose, it would fill with this dirt. I moved my head sideways to take a breath and they slammed my head into the deck. This happened 4-5 times and every time I moved my head to breathe they slammed my head into deck. At that point, I was woozy from the head trauma and the lack of air and could not fight any longer. Thankfully, they moved me to roll me into the straight jacket and then carried me into the STU unit where I stayed in that straight jacket in the padded room for a couple of days. In my entire time there, I had only 2 family therapy sessions. I was able to complete one, but the second one was after this incident. We were not allowed to tell our parents about our daily abuse or they would end the session. By the time I had my second session months into the program, I did not care anymore. I didn't care what they did to me. I had several goose eggs across the top of my head and my dad was extremely upset after seeing this. I told him that they slammed my head into the ground repeatedly and they ended the session. It lasted all of 5 minutes. I was punished for that but I didn't care. I didn't care what else they did to me at that

point. I would rather die than continue to allow them to abuse me and from that point on I refused to cooperate with them. I was released a few weeks after that.

To say this treatment had a profound negative impact on me is an understatement. This changed the entire trajectory of my life. I could not finish high school because my school told me that my educational credits there meant nothing. I had intense PTSD including nightmares, night terrors, extreme anxiety, trust issues, social anxiety, things I still suffer from to this day, although it is not as intense as it once was. I do not trust therapists. I have had a difficult time seeking help as I do not trust any therapist who would willingly recommend these places as I feel they cannot be legitimate if they do. It damaged my relationships with my family, and my abuser was never held accountable for what she did to me. At the time I went in '96-'97 mental health care like this was still highly stigmatized and I couldn't really tell anyone what I went through because everyone in this area knew that if you were sent to Peninsula Village that you must have been a horrible child who deserved it or you must be a crazy person and to stay away from you. I felt so alone for so long.

I felt compelled to share my story to prevent this from ever happening to another child again and to shed light on what others and I experienced, raise awareness, and to hold Acadia and other places like it accountable for the abuse they perpetuated on all of us. I also hope turning my testimony over will be healing for me. I want the Committee to understand the real-life consequences of inadequate care and oversight in residential treatment facilities.

To prevent these negative experiences, I believe the Senate Finance Committee should consider implementing stricter regulations and oversight of youth residential treatment facilities. This includes mandatory reporting of abuse, transparent data collection, increased staff training on trauma-informed care, regular and unannounced inspections, and ensuring that all facilities provide adequate mental health and educational services. Additionally, there should be accessible channels for residents to report abuse without fear of retaliation.

Thank you, Chair Wyden, and members of the Senate Finance Committee, for reading my testimony. I hope that my story and the stories of others like me will inspire you to take immediate action to protect vulnerable youth in residential treatment facilities. I hope you will pass the Stop Institutional Child Abuse Act (S. 1351) and follow that legislation up with additional reform policy to ensure all youth are safe from abuse, neglect, and preventable death in youth residential treatment facilities.

Sincerely,  
Christina "Chrissy" Clark-Atkins

June 12, 2024

The Honorable Ron Wyden  
Chairman, Committee on Finance  
United States Senate  
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Mike Crapo  
Ranking Member, Committee on Finance  
United States Senate  
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chairman Wyden and Ranking Member Crapo:

Think of Us and 11:11 Media thank you for your continued oversight of youth residential treatment facilities. Unfortunately, every year, states place tens of thousands of children in institutions and group homes. These government licensed facilities lack meaningful oversight and rake in tens of millions of dollars in taxpayer funds.

We reached out to our networks and asked those who had been placed in youth residential treatment programs and congregate care facilities to share their experiences with us. To date, we have received **77** responses from across the country. We share their voices with you as a reminder of the urgency for congregate care reform, the impact your work has, and to help you develop strong policies informed by their experience.

We have reviewed each comment in detail and wish to uplift the lived experiences insights of young people on residential group homes. The testimony reflects the diversity of these experiences as shared by the respondents. While some had positive experiences or were able to use the experience to grow personally, many more experienced facilities that were focused on profit and control instead of healing. Most left with lifelong emotional scars instead of tools to build better futures.

Nearly every comment mentioned the quality of living conditions at facilities. The quality of food, clothing, and overall care varied significantly across different facilities. While many respondents reported poor living conditions, inadequate clothing, and substandard food, some experienced satisfactory living conditions and care, although this was less common. One individual shared that "The food was often expired, and the clothes provided were old and didn't fit well." However, others reported that "the living conditions were decent. We had enough to eat, and the staff made sure we were warm."

Education and academic support are essential to a young person's future. However, much like the quality of facilities and basic needs, educational opportunities were inconsistent across experiences with some facilities providing adequate resources and others falling short. Many

youth struggled to continue their education due to lack of academic support and inadequately trained teachers. One adult, now in their 50s recalled, “Many teachers were unlicensed, some with no teaching experience or training at all. Inadequate supervision of the kids and an education environment that was not conducive for learning.” Those who had positive experiences often stated that they did so because they were self-driven.

Access to and quality of healthcare and mental health services—the primary justification for use of institutional care—was also extremely variable. Many respondents reported unmet healthcare needs and inadequate mental health support. “I was never asked how are you feeling or are you ok? They just assumed that since I’m older I didn’t feel anything and/or that I shouldn’t be so ‘soft’”, recalled a young adult. Another highlighted the need for mental health support by specially trained staff, “There was no real mental health support. We need therapists who understand our backgrounds.” Across the comments, many individuals also called out the lack of personalized care, highlighting that they were subjected to one-size-fits-all approaches that failed to address their unique challenges and circumstances.

Only a few individuals received proper medical care and mental health services. One mother wrote in on behalf of her son who died in care. She shared,

“Aaron had untreated hypertension while in there. Two days before his death they gave him blood pressure meds. Before that time no meds for it. Went in January 16th. Died February 2nd from a dural sinus thrombus [sic] (blood clot)...It took my boys life. I have PTSD since then. I have dreams nightly. Aaron would be here today if the RN had sent him out when he told her he had a bad headache that morning. She gave ibuprofen and sent him on his way. He was brain dead before noon.”

Troublingly, many youth reported experiences of harsh punishments, neglect, and abuse. A former resident of Second Nature recalled,

“...you can be put on a “solo.” You have to build your own shelter, make your own food, and not speak to anyone. One girl in my group was on a solo for eight weeks. She was not allowed to speak to any of us for eight weeks, including on Christmas.” Too many respondents shared that they were often told they were worthless by staff, including one that recalled being told, “...that I didn’t mean anything to anyone I was worthless as far as they were concerned...” Many also raised specific practices that policy can address, including being forced to shower and use the bathroom in full view of staff and residents, lack of access to regular and private communications with parents, and the use of extended isolation as punishment.

The long-term impact of institutional placements on life and well-being was profound. Many youth experienced lasting psychological effects, difficulty building trust, and challenges in transitioning back to family-based care and independent living. One touching quote captured the sentiments shared by many, “I can no longer connect with other people. I can empathize and

build one way connections with other people, but on my end, it feels like there's a plexiglass barrier between me and everyone else.”

No matter their experience, most respondents called on policymakers to reform the current system by improving oversight and requiring staff training. Respondents called on policymakers to ensure there is regular and consistent oversight of facilities, akin to the requirements for other sectors that care for children, such as licensing, continuing education requirements, staff ratios, regular inspections and a system to lodge complaints. In calling for oversight, many commenters shared that they encountered staff members that were untrained and ill-equipped to handle the complex needs of the youth in their care. One young adult recalled, “My therapist was brand new. She had no idea what was going on or how to meet with someone with trauma and PTSD.” Another highlighted the inconsistency of treatment, sharing “I barely saw my therapist assigned to me. This happened to a lot of us, but others would get indicated therapy more than once a week. Nothing was consistent. Most of the “therapy” & “group therapy” felt more like “attack therapy”.”

One commenter accurately summarized the general sentiments youth with experience in these facilities, saying,

“the profit motive and lack of oversight have created perverse incentives for programs to prioritize control and conformity over genuine care and therapy. Policymakers have the power and the moral obligation to end this predatory industry and ensure that every child receives the safe, compassionate, evidence-based care they deserve. We need strict federal regulations, rigorous oversight, and a fundamental shift towards trauma-informed, community-based interventions. The lives and futures of countless young people hang in the balance. It’s time for policymakers to act, before one more child has to endure the hell that I and so many others have survived.”

In addition to the wise words above, we must note that this work is only one front in the struggle to build the best child welfare system possible. To do so we must invest in building conditions where every child can heal, develop, and thrive within a family—ideally their own. This includes expanding support for kinship care, allowing children to be raised by those who know and love them. Support for families is a sentiment echoed by many of the commenters. We must offer specialized training and financial support to caregivers who need it so they can help their children grow safely and confidently and we must leverage public dollars to strengthen the network of local organizations, services, and support systems that help children and families in need. Our goal should be supportive environments where families can access help easily and quickly within their own communities. These solutions are smarter, safer, and more cost efficient for children and families.

We stand ready to support your efforts to ensure that taxpayer dollars are utilized responsibly to provide children with quality care that helps them heal and grow. It is unconscionable that any child is harmed ever, and it is especially egregious when it is done in a facility funded by public dollars. Every instance is a failure on our part to protect vulnerable children. We urge you to

take action quickly. We agree wholeheartedly with the one respondent who shared what should be a guiding principle for this care,

“Children deserve to be loved and cared for no matter where they're living. We were not bad kids. We were not defective. We deserved love and support just as much as every other child out there. What we needed was MORE love and support, not less. We needed people who genuinely had our best interests at heart.”

We have attached the full comments received for your review so that you, too, can learn from their experiences and their expertise. Additionally, as an organization that believes in the power of lived expertise to create more effective policy and practice, we also urge you to consider including ongoing lived expert feedback loops in oversight of facilities to ensure that you are hearing from those who these facilities impact most. Please do not hesitate to reach out to us if you have any questions or would like to continue this important conversation.

Sincerely,

Sixto Cancel  
CEO and Founder  
Think of Us

Paris Hilton  
11:11 Media

### **Individual Testimony**

*In order to protect the privacy and confidentiality of those who gave testimony, all submissions have been de-identified. Each submission has been assigned a unique identification number to ensure anonymity. No personally identifiable information is included in this testimony.*

ID: 1

Age: 33

**How old were you when you were sent to the institutional placement(s)?** 15

**What was the name of the institutional placement(s)? Did you experience this placement while in foster care?** Wediko, Gateway Academy, Second Nature Duchesne, and Logan River Academy

**We understand that sharing your experiences can be difficult, and we appreciate your courage in doing so. Would you be willing to share with us about your time in youth residential treatment facilities? What were some of the aspects of your living conditions, including the quality of food, clothing, and overall care you received?** Yes, I actually have a video testimony but I'm not sure that can be submitted to the Congress.

The living conditions varied from program to program. At wediko the living conditions were absolutely horrendous. We stayed in cabins with eight other boys, there were serious mosquito infestation issues and I was left with bites all over my arms and legs (which nothing was done about).

Gateway was a brand new facility when I got there and was like a construction site in the backyard. It was pretty clean when I was there though because it was brand new. I only lasted there about 3 weeks though. I can't remember the food here.

At second nature we lived under tarps inside of a sleeping bag and we had to go on grueling 5 to 10 Miles with 80 lb packs on our backs. I tried to run away once and they made me sleep under a tarp that was weighed down by two adults on either side of me for about a week. It was not pretty to say the least. The food was very limited. We mainly had oatmeal beans and rice and summer sausage. I believe we also got trail mix. And to talk about the care. It was terrible. I was kidnapped from Gateway Academy and taken to second nature. From there, I was forced into a strip search against threat of restraint and later I was forced to take a testicular cancer examination against my will. Where the nurse who happened to be about 75 years old inappropriately touched me. It was a pretty scarring incident.

Logan River Academy had its issues with moldy bathrooms and the like. We lived in rooms 4 per room. The food was pretty awful. The care was terrible. They had these rooms called Devo which I heard were just a rebranding of what investment was at Provo. Kids would be stuck up there for months at a time being. Forced to sit up in structure on their chairs. If anybody acted up they would throw them in observation which was basically a solitary confinement room. There were also issues with cover-ups. They would limit our contact with the outside world and anytime something went on in there that I felt was an injustice they would threaten me with " program manipulation" which was a class IV for speaking out. The place was terrible. People were very anti-semitic to me and when I complained about it the staff just laughed at me. I'm going to leave a link to my testimony because I don't really think I can go through this mentally again and that's why I created it.



Video Testimony: <https://youtu.be/hfpth82KgYk?si=Y4cO6YBafAaPGz3C>

**We know that maintaining education can be challenging in different living situations, and we value your input on this matter. Were you able to continue your education and receive the academic support you needed while living in the youth residential treatment facilities? Please share your experiences, including any challenges or successes you encountered.** Not at Gateway Academy but thankfully I did not last there very long. There was school at Logan River Academy but it was very basic and I was taking classes I had already taken in middle school.

**Describe your access to health care, mental health support, and other services you needed while in youth residential treatment facilities. Were your needs adequately met?** We had therapists and then we had this old psychiatrist named Robert Crist who would come in once a month, but other than that I would say it wasn't very good. I remember one time specifically where I got a pretty severe case of the stomach flu and they forced me to be around everybody. I eventually got to go to the nurse's office and she just force fed me Pepto-Bismol. Needless to say, it wasn't the best idea to send me back into the cafeteria after that because I immediately threw up a pink substance in front of everybody in the trash can at the cafeteria. I would say it was kind of mentally scarring because I was very embarrassed about this incident.

**Your safety and well-being are extremely important, and we are committed to understanding your experiences. Did you feel safe during your time in youth residential treatment facilities? If you experienced any instances of abuse, neglect, or overly harsh punishment, please share what you feel comfortable discussing.** No, I did not feel safe. At Wediko, I was tricked into going there because my first experience was being restrained until I complied with staying there. I got restrained multiple other times for offenses such as not wanting to go to the drama activity.

Later on in my experience I got gooned from Gateway Academy to second nature and that was pretty scary and scarring. At second nature I was restrained once because I tried to run.

At Logan River Academy on my first day I witnessed a kid get thrown through a wall. Which really put the fear in me and made me comply with everything that was asked of me because I didn't want to be physically assaulted by college football players who happened to work there.

**We understand that your experiences in youth residential treatment facilities may have had a lasting impact on your life. Your insights are valuable in helping us understand these effects. How have your experiences in youth residential treatment facilities affected your life and well-being, both during your time there and after leaving care? Please share any ways these experiences have influenced you.** Yes they have. I've been diagnosed with cptsd and they have severely impacted my ability to function, hold down a job and just feel accepted. I always feel like everybody's scheming against me or judging me because of my time in residential treatment.

**If you could tell policymakers one thing about youth residential treatment facilities and what needs to change, what would it be?** For one there needs to be more oversight over restraints. Also, there needs to be a better system to hold staff members who are abusive accountable. I think there needs to be a Megan's law type list where abusers are not allowed to work at new facilities. There also needs to be a way to hold the ownership groups accountable. Far too often their programs are shut down for abuse and then reopened under a new name.

---

ID: 2

Age: 27

**How old were you when you were sent to the institutional placement(s)?** 14

**What was the name of the institutional placement(s)? Did you experience this placement while in foster care?** Kinder shelter, depelchin, RTC and yes I experienced all these places before I turned 18

**We understand that sharing your experiences can be difficult, and we appreciate your courage in doing so. Would you be willing to share with us about your time in youth residential treatment facilities? What were some of the aspects of your living conditions, including the quality of food, clothing, and overall care you received?** Yes of course! My care overall in the residential treatment facilities was actually decent because I was around 17 when I went there. I was there because of going to jail in another shelter and my cps level went up. So I went into this RTC with a goal. However I saw and witnessed many youth being physically abused and mentally abused. I had several conversations with youth in that RTC that they were raped and emotionally abused as well!

**We know that maintaining education can be challenging in different living situations, and we value your input on this matter. Were you able to continue your education and receive the academic support you needed while living in the youth residential treatment facilities? Please share your experiences, including any challenges or successes you encountered.** I was there only in the summer from May until mid August.

**Describe your access to health care, mental health support, and other services you needed while in youth residential treatment facilities. Were your needs adequately met?** My needs were not met in terms of these aspects. I was never asked how are you feeling or are you ok? They just assumed that since I'm older I didn't feel anything and/or that I shouldn't be so "soft"

**Your safety and well-being are extremely important, and we are committed to understanding your experiences. Did you feel safe during your time in youth residential treatment facilities? If you experienced any instances of abuse, neglect, or overly harsh punishment, please share what you feel comfortable discussing.** I honestly didn't feel safe at all. While I was there I was assaulted by another youth that was living there and I was shocked and scared. The staff didn't do anything about it and when I was assaulted I didn't fight back because I was FOCUSED on dropping my cps level so fighting back would've only made me stay there longer. I will say it's made me more passive moving forward though and it caused a huge depressive effect for a while within myself. Because it was a consistent theme of me getting abused and not being able to do anything about it because I cared about the end goal and though in the end I came out fine the PROCESS was difficult. Because I didn't feel heard nor seen. Let alone feeling understood.

**We understand that your experiences in youth residential treatment facilities may have had a lasting impact on your life. Your insights are valuable in helping us understand these effects. How have your experiences in youth residential treatment facilities affected your life and well-being, both during your time there and after leaving care? Please share any ways these experiences have influenced you.** Me being assaulted, he threw a very heavy and large rock at me and it hit me in the face. I will say it's made me more passive moving forward though and it caused a huge depressive effect for a while within myself. Because it was a consistent theme of me getting abused and not being able to do anything about it because I cared about the end goal and though in the end I came

out fine the PROCESS was difficult. Because I didn't feel heard nor seen. Let alone feeling understood. And I almost took my life several times after that because I couldn't get my power back!!!!

**If you could tell policymakers one thing about youth residential treatment facilities and what needs to change, what would it be?** The requirements that's associated with the hiring of staff and add more REQUIRED training in order for them to be considered eligible to continue working there and/or get the position.

---

ID: 3

Age: 27

**How old were you when you were sent to the institutional placement(s)?** 17

**What was the name of the institutional placement(s)? Did you experience this placement while in foster care?** Wingate Wilderness Therapy, Montana Academy

**We understand that sharing your experiences can be difficult, and we appreciate your courage in doing so. Would you be willing to share with us about your time in youth residential treatment facilities? What were some of the aspects of your living conditions, including the quality of food, clothing, and overall care you received?** My time at these troubled teen facilities was nothing short of a nightmare. I was in therapeutic programs for 2.5 years. That's over two years of not being allowed to have any autonomy whatsoever. I was forced to sleep in the basement and was told I "knew why" when I did not. I was put on "solo reflection time" which meant if I spoke or anyone spoke to me we would get in trouble. My parents were told anything I said to them was an attempt to manipulate them. The psychological damage I experienced is life altering. Please don't allow this to happen to any more children.

**We know that maintaining education can be challenging in different living situations, and we value your input on this matter. Were you able to continue your education and receive the academic support you needed while living in the youth residential treatment facilities? Please share your experiences, including any challenges or successes you encountered.** No. I am constantly feeling the impact of not receiving adequate education.

**Describe your access to health care, mental health support, and other services you needed while in youth residential treatment facilities. Were your needs adequately met?** No. We had a nurse practitioner who would always assume we were faking. It took days of showing any symptoms to be taken seriously for any ailment

**Your safety and well-being are extremely important, and we are committed to understanding your experiences. Did you feel safe during your time in youth residential treatment facilities? If you experienced any instances of abuse, neglect, or overly harsh punishment, please share what you feel comfortable discussing.** No. I was forced to sleep in the basement for a week. I was forced to remove a dead tree stump by myself. I was forced to isolate myself.

**We understand that your experiences in youth residential treatment facilities may have had a lasting impact on your life. Your insights are valuable in helping us understand these effects. How have your experiences in youth residential treatment facilities affected your life and well-being, both during your time there and after leaving care? Please share any ways these experiences have influenced you.** I have night terrors nightly thinking I'm either evening taken back or that I'm back. I am constantly fearing that any small mistake will result in my entire life being ripped away from me again. I do not trust anyone who is in a leadership role above me.

**If you could tell policymakers one thing about youth residential treatment facilities and what needs to change, what would it be?** These need to be abolished. It's all for profit.



ID: 4

Age: 30

**How old were you when you were sent to the institutional placement(s)?** 14

**What was the name of the institutional placement(s)? Did you experience this placement while in foster care?** Yes, foster care. Placed at Grandfather home for children in Winston Salem NC

**We understand that sharing your experiences can be difficult, and we appreciate your courage in doing so. Would you be willing to share with us about your time in youth residential treatment facilities? What were some of the aspects of your living conditions, including the quality of food, clothing, and overall care you received?** I was placed in a level three “therapeutic facility” for teen girls when I was fourteen. My twin sister and I were placed together after only two weeks in foster care. We had no prior history with DSS and no behavioral concerns. We were subjected to forced labor with the threat of separating us, as well as forced to live in a “no touch” facility, so we (twin sisters) couldn’t even touch.

**We know that maintaining education can be challenging in different living situations, and we value your input on this matter. Were you able to continue your education and receive the academic support you needed while living in the youth residential treatment facilities? Please share your experiences, including any challenges or successes you encountered.** I was able to go to school, but was forced to move schools and not allowed to continue in any extracurricular activities (including sports, which I had always participated in and found comfort in.

**Describe your access to health care, mental health support, and other services you needed while in youth residential treatment facilities. Were your needs adequately met?** I was forced to take medication for adhd that I did not wish to take while placed in the facility. Without the medication, I was still doing well in school, and I was forced to be sedated with extremely high doses of stimulant medications that led to a dependency in college.

**Your safety and well-being are extremely important, and we are committed to understanding your experiences. Did you feel safe during your time in youth residential treatment facilities? If you experienced any instances of abuse, neglect, or overly harsh punishment, please share what you feel comfortable discussing.** I always felt safe from sexual abuse or physical harm- but the emotional abuse and forced labor as well as the continuous threats of sibling separation were devastating. The punishments for simple teenage behaviors were exaggerated and there was absolutely no push for normalcy.

**We understand that your experiences in youth residential treatment facilities may have had a lasting impact on your life. Your insights are valuable in helping us understand these effects. How have your experiences in youth residential treatment facilities affected your life and well-being, both during your time there and after leaving care? Please share any ways these experiences have influenced you.** Throughout my time in care, I learned not to trust my team of social workers, guardian ad litem etc. After nearly two years of living my youth in a locked facility, my social worker admitted that we were only placed in the facility because of a lack of safe foster homes for teen sibling groups together.

As an adult, I'm a GAL and foster parent. I have three foster children or GAL cases affected by congregate care. It's deeply disturbing how similar the care is, and how little has changed in 15 years.

**If you could tell policymakers one thing about youth residential treatment facilities and what needs to change, what would it be?** Oversight is absolutely mandatory. State and federal funding go to placing children and youth in foster care in congregate care facilities every year simply because of the lack of foster families and resources for children with mental health concerns. These funds are being absolutely abused and there are no clear regulations on what these facilities do to serve children. If nothing else; I hope this discussion brings to light the absolute monstrosity of a system we have created and inspires someone to create change locally or federally.

---



ID: 5

Age: 20

**How old were you when you were sent to the institutional placement(s)?** 17

**What was the name of the institutional placement(s)? Did you experience this placement while in foster care?** Stillwater Academy. I was not in foster care.

**We understand that sharing your experiences can be difficult, and we appreciate your courage in doing so. Would you be willing to share with us about your time in youth residential treatment facilities? What were some of the aspects of your living conditions, including the quality of food, clothing, and overall care you received?** We were staying in a building in South Jordan Utah but would be sent home to one of 20-30 different houses at night. We had uniforms which were t-shirts and thin sweatshirts with Stillwater's logo on them and these couldn't be replaced if damaged. We were barely fed if a housing parent ran out of food for us and some houses would give us old or moldy food to eat. received little to no care, my therapist was not licensed at the time I was there.

**We know that maintaining education can be challenging in different living situations, and we value your input on this matter. Were you able to continue your education and receive the academic support you needed while living in the youth residential treatment facilities? Please share your experiences, including any challenges or successes you encountered.** We had school classes but as a senior in highschool living with people as young as 12 the classes were curated towards the youngest so my classes consisted of watching youtube videos and taking notes on subjects i learned in middle school.

**Describe your access to health care, mental health support, and other services you needed while in youth residential treatment facilities. Were your needs adequately met?** absolutely no access to health care, before I was sent here I was in the hospital 3 times a week for my weight which I was told my treatment would be continued at Stillwater but we didn't even have an insight nurse. There was a kid I lived with whose teeth were rotting out of his head and was only taken to the dentist after 2 months of complaining. People would be missing their meds for days at a time and our therapists/social workers were only there for a check.

**Your safety and well-being are extremely important, and we are committed to understanding your experiences. Did you feel safe during your time in youth residential treatment facilities? If you experienced any instances of abuse, neglect, or overly harsh punishment, please share what you feel comfortable discussing.** I watched a girl get thrown into a shelf by a staff member at least double her size for possibly insinuating a fight with another client, they were both bickering and calling each other names. food was taken away from us, depending on your punishment you weren't allowed to talk or communicate at all with anyone at times or they wouldn't allow you to look out the windows or look up when walking from the building to a car.

**We understand that your experiences in youth residential treatment facilities may have had a lasting impact on your life. Your insights are valuable in helping us understand these effects. How have your experiences in youth residential treatment facilities affected your life and well-being, both during your time there and after leaving care? Please share any ways these experiences have influenced you.** now that's it been 2 years I have trouble building relationships with the people around me, i feel as though my job isn't stable because it's something I enjoy I worry they will

fire me simply because I like it, I have a hard time standing up for myself, I have anxiety talking to someone alone or making new friends. I cannot lie and feel the need to go out of my way to correct myself if I've lied even by mistake. If I'm at an airport I have panic attacks, I have nightmares and PTSD episodes about the time in Stillwater constantly. Since I've been in Stillwater I've been suicidal which was not a problem prior to attending. I am suspicious of everyone around me and no longer trust anyone, especially people I don't have a relationship with. I can't watch or listen to anything regarding the troubled teen industry without having panic attacks or getting extremely distressed.

**If you could tell policymakers one thing about youth residential treatment facilities and what needs to change, what would it be?** Even if a place seems good from the outside, think about how for every 1 child in that facility is giving this institution 10k a MONTH. Why is the building not in pristine condition, why do we only have 1 set of clothes and pjs, if they're easily making 100k a month, why isn't any of that money being used on the clients. There is no good facility within the troubled teen industry, lots of kids' programs are extended so that the owner can continue making money off them.

---

ID: 6

Age: 46

**How old were you when you were sent to the institutional placement(s)?** 16

**What was the name of the institutional placement(s)? Did you experience this placement while in foster care?** Casa by the sea then Academy at Ivy Ridge. No, I was not in foster care.

**We understand that sharing your experiences can be difficult, and we appreciate your courage in doing so. Would you be willing to share with us about your time in youth residential treatment facilities? What were some of the aspects of your living conditions, including the quality of food, clothing, and overall care you received?** Awful conditions, terrible food, had to wear skirts and walk in snow, overall care could be compared to the institutions from the 1800-1900s, just horrid abuse

**We know that maintaining education can be challenging in different living situations, and we value your input on this matter. Were you able to continue your education and receive the academic support you needed while living in the youth residential treatment facilities? Please share your experiences, including any challenges or successes you encountered.** The education was a total joke

**Describe your access to health care, mental health support, and other services you needed while in youth residential treatment facilities. Were your needs adequately met?** I was overly medicated for sometime which made my experience even worse, getting in trouble for not being able to function. Regular medical care was not provided.

**Your safety and well-being are extremely important, and we are committed to understanding your experiences. Did you feel safe during your time in youth residential treatment facilities? If you experienced any instances of abuse, neglect, or overly harsh punishment, please share what you feel comfortable discussing.** Never felt safe, was never safe. Suffered abuse for 2 years, all forms of abuse. All punishment was overly harsh and very inappropriate, from mental, physical, sexual, emotional, all extremes.

**We understand that your experiences in youth residential treatment facilities may have had a lasting impact on your life. Your insights are valuable in helping us understand these effects. How have your experiences in youth residential treatment facilities affected your life and well-being, both during your time there and after leaving care? Please share any ways these experiences have influenced you.** It basically ruined my life. It has haunted me day and night ever since. I do not function normally. I suffer greatly. I can not stop reliving the trauma

**If you could tell policymakers one thing about youth residential treatment facilities and what needs to change, what would it be?** They ruin children for life. The abuse is silenced, and we never recover

ID: 7

Age: 22

**How old were you when you were sent to the institutional placement(s)?** 13-19

**What was the name of the institutional placement(s)? Did you experience this placement while in foster care?** Not in foster care. McLean southeast ART, saint vincent's, pembroke hospital, arbor fuller, metro west hospital, union, Franciscans, Worcester recovery center and hospital, Walden, chamberlain, carney

**We understand that sharing your experiences can be difficult, and we appreciate your courage in doing so. Would you be willing to share with us about your time in youth residential treatment facilities? What were some of the aspects of your living conditions, including the quality of food, clothing, and overall care you received?** One place I was at had 5 of us sleeping in a small room on bunk beds. It was an old plantation in the middle of the woods. I had been rationing my conditioner to wash my hair and body for months after leaving a state hospital. One place my bed was a restraint bed, there were spots of blood all over my walls and I had a camera watching me 24/7. I wasn't allowed clothing, and was given paper clothes that ripped frequently. I wasn't allowed underwear or socks so my feet were black from dirt. I had gone at one point 3 and a half months without getting fresh air. Was not allowed outside for the whole time.

**We know that maintaining education can be challenging in different living situations, and we value your input on this matter. Were you able to continue your education and receive the academic support you needed while living in the youth residential treatment facilities? Please share your experiences, including any challenges or successes you encountered.** No. Most places had "tutoring" or 2 hours of doing random busy work to get credit. One place had somewhat of a school, but most of the teachers were not able to teach us because they were so understaffed and had to do other things.

**Describe your access to health care, mental health support, and other services you needed while in youth residential treatment facilities. Were your needs adequately met?**

**Your safety and well-being are extremely important, and we are committed to understanding your experiences. Did you feel safe during your time in youth residential treatment facilities? If you experienced any instances of abuse, neglect, or overly harsh punishment, please share what you feel comfortable discussing.** No, I was never safe. I spent the better part of 3 and a half months tied to a bed. I was drugged for the majority of it. At one place my roommate was known by the school to have plans to kill everyone there. He tried to kill 2 people there, poisoned their food and held scissors to their throat. The school did nothing, I had once heard the clinical director say loudly "I have a school shooter here." I had witnessed many fights, saw kids with blood spurting out of their arms after hitting an artery. I was put on 1-1s where I had to be watched 24/7. I would have old men watch me in the shower and use the bathroom. They wouldn't let me close the curtain so they would just stare at my naked body. I had heard staff yell at patients. There was a doctor who would break hipaa and talk about other patients, including names, traumas they had been through. It was regular for the staff to talk about sex in different ways with the kids, usually in a joking way. I spent 2 1/2 years within a state hospital, when I had just turned 18 they began threatening to send me away to adult state hospital for life. I never did any criminal behavior.

**We understand that your experiences in youth residential treatment facilities may have had a lasting impact on your life. Your insights are valuable in helping us understand these effects. How have your experiences in youth residential treatment facilities affected your life and well-being, both during your time there and after leaving care? Please share any ways these experiences have influenced you.** I have been out of any programs for about 4 years. I am still learning how to not live in an institution, and recovering from all the trauma with a therapist weekly. I am disabled, on ssdi and living in subsidized housing. I have trouble making relationships with other people. I suffer from disabling mental illness because of it.

**If you could tell policymakers one thing about youth residential treatment facilities and what needs to change, what would it be?** Kids need to be safe. Restraints of all kinds should be banned.

---

ID: 8

Age: 37

**How old were you when you were sent to the institutional placement(s)?** 11

**What was the name of the institutional placement(s)? Did you experience this placement while in foster care?** Charity Haven Home for girls , Victory Acres , Bethel Boys & Girls Academy, The Rebekah Home for girls / New Beginnings Girls Academy, Reclamation Ranch

**We understand that sharing your experiences can be difficult, and we appreciate your courage in doing so. Would you be willing to share with us about your time in youth residential treatment facilities? What were some of the aspects of your living conditions, including the quality of food, clothing, and overall care you received?** Yes , the conditions were deplorable, my family never sent money for my care so I often went without. Staph broke out once . We never went to the doctors/ clinics. Our education was not accredited so our diplomas are useless. We were forced to do child labor , we were brainwashed and beaten . Locked in isolation rooms that blasted preaching sermons , food deprived, sleep deprived, kids were forced to fight each other for sport .

**We know that maintaining education can be challenging in different living situations, and we value your input on this matter. Were you able to continue your education and receive the academic support you needed while living in the youth residential treatment facilities? Please share your experiences, including any challenges or successes you encountered.** Yes . I'm adopted and I qualified for free college in Florida but my diploma wasn't accredited in the state of Florida so I moved to Ohio where they accepted it as a homeschool curriculum and was able to go to community college. But still missed out on an opportunity of a lifetime.

**Describe your access to health care, mental health support, and other services you needed while in youth residential treatment facilities. Were your needs adequately met?** No, they didn't believe in doctors or medicine.

**Your safety and well-being are extremely important, and we are committed to understanding your experiences. Did you feel safe during your time in youth residential treatment facilities? If you experienced any instances of abuse, neglect, or overly harsh punishment, please share what you feel comfortable discussing.** I didn't not feel safe . I'm surprised I'm still alive . I was forced to pick cotton in Mississippi at bethel . It grew near the church property. I saw things no child school ever has to see . Boys forced to box in a ring for money for the drill instructor. Boys forced to hold on to an electric fence while standing in a puddle of water . Boys beaten , Pitt bulls sicced on them . Girls forced to fight each other , a girl got hit in the face with a 2x4 . Another girl had boot marks and bruises from where D.I Knott stomped on her back .

**We understand that your experiences in youth residential treatment facilities may have had a lasting impact on your life. Your insights are valuable in helping us understand these effects. How have your experiences in youth residential treatment facilities affected your life and well-being, both during your time there and after leaving care? Please share any ways these experiences have influenced you.** I have PTSD . The programs were not helpful and I struggled navigating through adulthood . Thrust into the world with no real life skills , social skills , navigating relationships with others. Took me a long time to learn things I should have already been taught 18, the programs environment and abusive tactics made it hard for me to thrive I was left with no critical thinking

skills and vulnerable. My family dynamics were overlooked. I came from an extremely abusive environment prior to the programs . My adoptive mother abused me and my 3 siblings and sent us all away . I was 11 and stayed in 5 different programs for 6 years while my Aunt claimed me on her taxes after my adoptive mother died and she sent my adoptive father to a mental institution. I was nothing more than a paycheck , she also claimed foster Care benefits on my behalf . My brother Chris was sent to Doizer school for boys where they found 100 bodies buried on the school grounds. He was there from 94-96 . That was our adoptive mothers way to hide the abuse by saying we were bad kids , I remember her kicking my brother out of the house at 9 & 10 years old and reporting them as runaways and calling the cops when they tried to crawl through the window to get food and shelter.

**If you could tell policymakers one thing about youth residential treatment facilities and what needs to change, what would it be?** Oversight over Religious based programs and institutions

---

ID: 9

Age: 38

**How old were you when you were sent to the institutional placement(s)?** 17

**What was the name of the institutional placement(s)? Did you experience this placement while in foster care?** Sun Hawk Academy in St George, UT. I was not in foster care.

**We understand that sharing your experiences can be difficult, and we appreciate your courage in doing so. Would you be willing to share with us about your time in youth residential treatment facilities? What were some of the aspects of your living conditions, including the quality of food, clothing, and overall care you received?** There were supposed to be only 4 people to a room (2 sets of bunk beds) but there were normally 6 (2 people sleeping on mattresses on the floor). Each room had one bathroom (toilet+shower) and all of us had to shower or use the toilet with the door open. We were also required to sing the birthday song the entire time we were in the bathroom regardless of what we were doing. I don't know of anyone who got anything but cold showers the whole time I was there, too many kids and insufficient hot water heaters. One of the toilets backed up and water containing feces filled the halls as well as several of the rooms. Students were made to clean it, and since it wasn't done professionally the entire building stank for weeks. It was the middle of summer in southern Utah and the smell was gag inducing. Eventually they had to have it cleaned since there were parents coming to tour the building and they didn't want them to know what we lived in. Staff were underqualified at best and many seemed to genuinely enjoy mistreating, manipulating, and punishing the residents.

**We know that maintaining education can be challenging in different living situations, and we value your input on this matter. Were you able to continue your education and receive the academic support you needed while living in the youth residential treatment facilities? Please share your experiences, including any challenges or successes you encountered.** I don't remember. I spent a lot of time in solitary and as a result I wasn't in the classes very often. Once I got out my highschool accepted the credits from the Academy and I was able to graduate.

**Describe your access to health care, mental health support, and other services you needed while in youth residential treatment facilities. Were your needs adequately met?** I was heavily medicated throughout most of my time at Sun Hawk. In addition to the regular medication I had taken since childhood and still take, I was put on several other prescription medications at the direction of a doctor who would come to the building specifically to write prescriptions for the students. I don't know what medication I was on but I do know that the results were unpleasant for me and I regularly tried to refuse my medication.

One of the most horrific things we were put through were intensive extended therapy sessions called "seminar". Over the course of 3 days we were not allowed to sleep, made to perform intentionally mind numbing tasks for hours at a time, and forced to participate in extremely humiliating group therapy.

On the first day we were assigned a character and made to wear a costume representing that character. There was a word (most were very insulting) written on a sign that we had to wear around our necks for the duration of the seminar. On the final day, once all the kids were severely sleep deprived and disoriented, one by one we were made to stand in front of the rest of the people taking part in the seminar (as well as several members of the therapy team) and essentially "confess" until we had a full on breakdown, after which we were forced to dance to a song which was connected to our assigned



character as a celebration for "finally being honest".

I don't remember my character, costume, word, confession, or song; I have blocked it completely. But I do vividly remember watching another girl trying to dance to Banana Rama "I'm your Venus" in a grass skirt while sobbing, with a huge sign that said "WHORE" around her neck. She was 15 years old, had been in that facility for over a year, and had gone through seminar multiple times.

**Your safety and well-being are extremely important, and we are committed to understanding your experiences. Did you feel safe during your time in youth residential treatment facilities? If you experienced any instances of abuse, neglect, or overly harsh punishment, please share what you feel comfortable discussing.** I didn't ever feel safe there. I constantly got in trouble for minor mistakes, most of which were probably due to the fact that I was severely depressed, frightened, and miserable. The punishments that I received were beyond reasonable responses to my behavior and could easily be classified as abusive. Most of the instances are blurry, there's a lot of my time there I don't remember.

I routinely saw kids physically restrained to the point of abuse by staff members and it was well known that some staff were much more likely to get physical with us than others. I was drug out of our library by the collar of my shirt by an extremely large and strong adult man who then threw me into a wall, and before I recovered pinned me on my stomach while kneeling on my back with all of his weight and holding my arms behind me. I remember screaming, telling him I couldn't breathe and gasping for air but he never moved. The next thing I remember was being in the solitary room, where I stayed for several days, only leaving when I was escorted by that same man to use the bathroom. I was 17 year old girl who weighed 110 lbs and all I had wanted was a book.

I was regularly assigned to trail clearing detail as punishment for not doing things the way they wanted. During these details we would be driven out to areas in southern Utah to clear trails of debris. It was hot, the tools we had to carry were heavy and we were wearing full sweats. We got a single nalgene bottle of water for the whole day of manual labor in the desert.

**We understand that your experiences in youth residential treatment facilities may have had a lasting impact on your life. Your insights are valuable in helping us understand these effects. How have your experiences in youth residential treatment facilities affected your life and well-being, both during your time there and after leaving care? Please share any ways these experiences have influenced you.** I wasn't a drug addict or alcoholic going into Sun Hawk but in order to appease my therapists I told them horrible things that I had actually never done. It was ironic that the only way to avoid being punished for not "being honest" was to tell lies, but when I told them the truth I was punished because they said I was covering up my drug use, my supposed promiscuity, my misdeeds.

When I got out of that place I was broken. I no longer trusted my family, I couldn't even stand to be near my parents since they had put me there. I hated myself for what I had turned into in that place, hated myself for not trying to run, for allowing myself to be mistreated, for not fighting back more. My friends didn't recognize who I had become, and couldn't understand what I had experienced. I was out and I was alone.

I was so angry and bitter, hate just oozed out of me and coated everything I touched. When I wasn't furious I was ashamed and that scared me because the shame made me feel like I wanted to die. I tried to kill myself twice that year.

**If you could tell policymakers one thing about youth residential treatment facilities and what needs to change, what would it be?** What happened to me isn't a unique story for those of us unfortunate enough to have lived in these facilities. The trauma we carry with us after experiencing these places is complex and lasts a lifetime. I still have occasional nightmares and it's been over 20 years.

That this is still happening today is beyond my comprehension. How many families have to be destroyed? How many people are going to waste years of the lives constantly reliving abuse that they suffered as children at the hands of totally unqualified adults? if they are lucky enough to get those years, if they didn't die in one of these places or take their own lives after getting out of one. It's criminal that this has been allowed to continue, it has to stop.

---

ID: 10

Age: 31

**How old were you when you were sent to the institutional placement(s)?** 14

**What was the name of the institutional placement(s)? Did you experience this placement while in foster care?** Diamond Ranch Academy

**We understand that sharing your experiences can be difficult, and we appreciate your courage in doing so. Would you be willing to share with us about your time in youth residential treatment facilities? What were some of the aspects of your living conditions, including the quality of food, clothing, and overall care you received?** There were 8 girls to a little small outhouse like building. We call them ostrich pens, you had 4 bunk beds, 2 sinks, 1 toilet and shower. Staff slept in front of the each ostrich pen door to make sure kids couldn't run at night.

Food was abysmal enough to sustain us but never enough to fill or fuel us, during our homeless phase of which mine lasted for most of my time there because I refused to conform, we were given baby puke consistency oatmeal with no sugar, a slice of bread a slice of plastic cheese and a glass of milk. Lunch and dinner were always rice and lentils with some kind of dehydrated veg and maybe a protein... maybe. Clothing was a standard uniform, t shirts in awful easy to see colors however if staff wanted to punish you they would make you wear winter clothes in the summer or summer clothes in the winter. Laundry was done once a week.

We were not allowed to talk, walk, make any noise, look up or at people, or touch even just for a hug. I had basically 0 physical contact unless it was abuse by staff or other students my entire stay, we could not even move our body defiantly which meant whatever the staff wanted it to mean. If you looked up, smiled, stretched your body in any way, giggled, laid down. Pretty much any movement you do you had to raise your hand and wait for staff to ask you what you needed and then give permission, there was never any daydreaming or aimless wandering or even just finding a spot to sit and relax. You also were not allowed to be out of line of site of a staff member or it was assumed you were attempting to run. You also lived outside for your Homeless aka O&A phase before you were allowed to be an inside girl. It was complete and total control and I felt helpless. My third day I broke down crying for my dad/wanting to go home and the staff laughed at me and said you are never leaving, your parents don't want you, you need to take responsibility for your actions.

Any time I asked for help or to talk to my dad I was told to shut up, suck it up and that its not that bad.

I was 14 and I needed love not abuse!

I was on suicide watch during part of my stay so I was stripped down 3 times a day and searched by both female and male staff. You would have to shower in front of staff as well. Then I was woken up every 30 mins and full body strip searched at night. This went on for as long as they felt it needed too. There was no real reason for it but to humiliate you and break your mind.

We had a judicial system at DRA and you got cited by staff during the week of you got too many cites you didn't move up. So you could work your bottom off to move up and at the end of the week you find out Sally had a bad day on Monday and didnt like that you looked like you were daydreaming for 2 seconds that morning and put you over the threshold to move up. It really messes with you.

You were also encouraged and rewarded for snitching on other kids if they did anything that did not conform to the program. I have lived in constant fear and anxiety from age 14.

**We know that maintaining education can be challenging in different living situations, and we value your input on this matter. Were you able to continue your education and receive the academic support you needed while living in the youth residential treatment facilities? Please share your experiences, including any challenges or successes you encountered.** No not really, they put you in a room with other kids face and put some books in front of you. To my understanding the girls that "graduated" later found out it was a fake diploma and had to retest after they got out. All the books are heavily censored you won't read about any riots or uprisings, they don't want to put those ideas in your head. In fact I have never seen school books like the ones we used anywhere else in the world

There was plenty of LDS material though and we were allowed full access to that, in fact they encouraged it.

**Describe your access to health care, mental health support, and other services you needed while in youth residential treatment facilities. Were your needs adequately met?** Regarding care, medically I was sexually abused by the Doctor there. He performed cervical screenings ie pap smears, body and breast exams regularly on girls who have been sexually active in the past. It was all very invasive and I was medically restrained while this happened because I resisted each time and questioned its validity. I was there for a few years and I cannot remember every instance with the Doctor just that it happened more than once, unfortunately I was heavily over medicated with what I suspect was horse tranquilisers and would snap back to consciousness in different locations around the facility with no knowledge of how I got there. I am still working through the trauma today.

With Therapy care I only just found out my therapist was not licensed until 2010 so I have no idea what "care" I received in 2006 to 2008. I had suspected it wasn't proper because I was forced to write a letter absolving a family member of my childhood SA saying I lied, I only did it because they told me I could go home the next day. From then on the letter was held over my head any time I tried to speak up about the abuse I was receiving from staff. Any other therapy was just phone calls with my parents which were heavily monitored.

My mental health was not addressed i was diagnosed by a non licensed therapist with BPD, Major depression, adhd and NPD and I found out in my 20s that I am actually Autistic. Where most of my "behavioural issues" stem from.

We were regularly physically restrained by full grown adults.

One thing that stuck with me was you didn't hang around the Owners kids ever unless you were part of the brainwashed club, one of the owners Sons enjoyed twisting girls who were "defiant" arms the wrong way to the point where it felt like it was going to break. He would laugh as we screamed out in pain, sobbing and calling for our parents.

I had seen kids thrown against walls, the floor, sat on. Those were usually the kids who had no one back home who cared about them.

The whole place was very sexist all the staff mostly the male staff breathed down our necks or love bombed the girls, it was sick. Some asked us inappropriate questions about our sex lives and would call us derogatory names when mentally abusing us with this knowledge.

**Your safety and well-being are extremely important, and we are committed to understanding your experiences. Did you feel safe during your time in youth residential treatment facilities? If you experienced any instances of abuse, neglect, or overly harsh punishment, please share what you feel comfortable discussing.** No I did not at all, there was sexual, physical and mental abuse during my entire stay, I feel like that's outlined above. I was there so long I had given up on ever getting out. Some of the staff encouraged bullying, I woke up multiple times to people standing over my bed, dragging me out of bed to do strip searches. Witnessing abuse to my friends and there was nothing I could do about it.

I was regularly isolated from the group for being defiant and put on Unemployment which was just being homeless again.

I was over medicated and sexually abused by staff, I still suffer from flashbacks, night terrors, panic and anxiety attacks.

We were food deprived like crazy. I was constantly hungry my entire time there.

I also have 3 auto immune disorders, Graves, Fibro and coeliac of which caused frequent need of restrooms due to what I was being fed. Which I was denied frequently and there were times where I felt I was about to relieve myself in my pants.

With my auto immune disorders I should only consume red meat, salt and water. I was given 0 red meat at this facility so I suffered greatly.

We were also forced to do extensive calisthenics and pass impossible physical tests. One time I was so exhausted I fell down a flight of stairs we were being forced to run up and down and I got a Self Harm Citation which if I hadn't already been in unemployment, would have sent me straight back to the outside.

**We understand that your experiences in youth residential treatment facilities may have had a lasting impact on your life. Your insights are valuable in helping us understand these effects. How have your experiences in youth residential treatment facilities affected your life and well-being, both during your time there and after leaving care? Please share any ways these experiences have influenced you.** I was a good kid before I left. Never did drugs, drank or really anything you would consider bad.

DRA was a holding cell for me paid for by my bio mother. I was tortured, lived in constant fear and anxiety my entire time.

After I left I was "good" for a while. After finally breaking free from the brainwashing I started doing drugs, drinking having sexual encounters, and sneaking out like unfortunately most of us do when we survive that hellscape.

I developed tomophobia from DRA which is a crippling fear of medical intervention of any kind. I have almost died several times because of this fear when all I needed was IV fluids. I have not been able to have a cervical screening without breaking down into an utter mess before, during, and/or after. I cannot be physically restrained in any way.

I got myself tested and found out I am Autistic so I am still learning how to function properly.

I can't let people touch me anymore and I was a big hugger/cuddly kid. The only people allowed to touch me are my husband and children. Even then sometimes that is too much.

I have been through so much trauma that things like peoples family dying or people in minor pain just do not phase me and that makes me sad.

I did anything to get away so I signed up for the Army and met a guy who I married at 17 so I could get away from my biological mothers grasp because I was terrified I would be sent back to DRA.

My first marriage failed he ended up abusing me and I became even more of an addict. We had 3 kids but I lost them because I had to check into rehab and get better, my ex and mom used this to thier advantage.

My bio moms family wanted to get me a Conservativeship and lock me up when I divorced my first husband. I had a primal reaction packed up my stuff and got out of dodge. I am currently living in the UK on a human rights visa for right to have a family (I had a daughter here) and freedom from torture and I am absolutely terrified of going back to the states because my biological mothers side of the family still wants to lock me up!

My ex is raising our kids with my bio mom and they will also not let me have my kids during the summer because they are afraid I will kidnap them or let me talk to them without one of them monitoring the conversation.

This industry does not only affect the teens who went there or the parents who were tricked. It can also affect the Survivors children.

Another thing that affects me in survivors guilt. More than half of the kids I knew during my ENTIRE stay are either dead or in jail. The ones "doing well" are "doing well" in spite of that place or have blocked it out and I don't blame them.

I think the only reason I survived with even a semblance of my personality is because I am Autistic.

**If you could tell policymakers one thing about youth residential treatment facilities and what needs to change, what would it be?** The whole industry is like a business. Which I know sounds dumb because of course its a business however thats not what I mean and it shouldn't be run like a business when kids all around well being are concerned.

The parents are customers and the children are the product. Why are parents able to just sign away their children's rights? That should not be allowed.

Why do these facilities need to be so far removed from civilization? Why are the towns in these remote locations allowed to take bribes from these places?

Why are children not allowed unfiltered access to thier parents? If a place really was as good as it says it is why wouldn't kids want stay? What are they trying to hide?

If my dad had known or was I was given the opportunity to tell him he would have pulled me immediately with no questions asked.

Why are we using more abuse or "tough love" as many put it to "fix" kids? How is this acceptable? Why are we not addressing the parents and the home environment?

What good does sending a kid away do when the environment they will be returning to has not been treated by these so called "Leading experts" what good does that do?

How many times do kids have to be abused or end up dead while at these programs or after before we realize this just doesn't work and we need to change?

My final Question for policymakers is how can you sit there and know this is happening, read all these stories. That children are being abused in this way, trafficked and do absolutely nothing, what exactly does that say about you?

---

ID: 11

Age: 40

**How old were you when you were sent to the institutional placement(s)?** 14-15, 17

**What was the name of the institutional placement(s)? Did you experience this placement while in foster care?** Casa by the Sea and Carolina springs Academy. No

**We understand that sharing your experiences can be difficult, and we appreciate your courage in doing so. Would you be willing to share with us about your time in youth residential treatment facilities? What were some of the aspects of your living conditions, including the quality of food, clothing, and overall care you received?** We were strip searched when we entered forced to sleep on a mattress on the floor until they found room placement for us. They took away all of her personal belongings they gave us used clothes two pairs of sweats that we had to hand wash because there was no laundry. The girls were constantly getting yeast infections. We slept in a bunk beds lined up against the wall in a double wide from end to end I'm pretty sure there were way more of us than should have been if there were an inspection. Girls often got sick scabies, lice, massive food poisonings, when we first moved into the double wides from the hotel at Casa by the sea I remember the electricity was not grounded and when I went to go take a shower I got electrocuted multiple times when I touched the handle, turning it on then again off. We were watched going to the bathrooms and only were allowed 5 min showers. I WAS PHYSICALLY ASSAULTED and put in painful restraint positions thrown to the floor if I got emotional or stepped out of line or spoke my mind. we were forced into isolation no speaking until we "proved ourselves by leveling up" but menial things were consequences. These "restraint" positions involved having your arms twisted behind your back and laying you on the floor chin digging into office carpet for days until your chin would go raw. A large Mexican woman would sit on my back and laugh and talk crap.

**We know that maintaining education can be challenging in different living situations, and we value your input on this matter. Were you able to continue your education and receive the academic support you needed while living in the youth residential treatment facilities? Please share your experiences, including any challenges or successes you encountered.** That was maybe one teacher for the whole facility and you would have to sign up on a sign up sheet to get any educational support but it was all self-study. We were either giving outdated books about life family careers or an old geography biology book. Education was a major joke we had no teachers and had to try to teach ourselves. The years I lost in the programs made academics much harder for me in the future and set me back for many challenges and I was definitely set back much further than my peers educationally. I'm 40 years old with only an associates degree and struggled hard with biology and chemistry and still haven't learned calculus ever. I was stunted out of a proper education bc of the lack of education I was given.

**Describe your access to health care, mental health support, and other services you needed while in youth residential treatment facilities. Were your needs adequately met?** There were no license Mental Health Counselors. We were pretty much put in isolation. All of our Communications to our families were monitored. You are forced to be on silence I was pretty much on silence for a year except when I had permission which was seldom but just to ask for things like to go to the bathroom to go from sit to stand for very basic things. I would be very lucky to be able to get to speak with others in group settings with permission but it was very seldom most days I was in isolation staring at a ball in a cubby listening to books on tapes or inspirational speakers but like we were listening to the same videos over and over and over we would watch the same movies over and over and over. And we were expected to



write about these things everyday. So it was redundant mental tasks day in and day out. We were absolutely not given mental health care if anything it was the opposite of that. I struggle with ADD that was never treated and severe CPSTD and anxiety to this day. And the funny thing is that even though there were no license Mental Health professionals when I was there they still managed to put me on psychiatric medications. I had never taken Xanax before but they put me on Xanax most likely to subdue me.

**Your safety and well-being are extremely important, and we are committed to understanding your experiences. Did you feel safe during your time in youth residential treatment facilities? If you experienced any instances of abuse, neglect, or overly harsh punishment, please share what you feel comfortable discussing.** Absolutely not. We lived in constant fear of mental consequences, constant isolation neglect. I would be in isolation for like a week or two at a time. Once I was put into restraint position for up to 5 days. I had a large Mexican woman sitting on my back for a day. I had carpet burn in my chin I was thrown to the ground arms Twisted behind my back. And this is for stepping out of line and speaking without permission. Physical abuses were often and common practices and well constant isolation 95% of the one year I was in Ensenada, Mexico.

**We understand that your experiences in youth residential treatment facilities may have had a lasting impact on your life. Your insights are valuable in helping us understand these effects. How have your experiences in youth residential treatment facilities affected your life and well-being, both during your time there and after leaving care? Please share any ways these experiences have influenced you.** I was stunted emotionally and not given a proper education. We were forced to eat disgusting foods and swallow our own throw up, which if we did not eat we were punished with restraint and isolation. We were manipulated and they forced out peers to police us for power and privileges like candy bars, jeans, shoes, access to nicer accommodations. It created a severe distrust of others intentions, which shifted my mindset significantly. When I left Casa by the sea I had severe GI problems I had an ulcer at 15 years old. My ADD was never addressed or treated. I was dulled out of psychological meds I never received before like Xanax. Being in the program gave me very severe CPSTD. Having been isolated in the program for years gave me abandonment issues and also major distressed in others and there has been so much to overcome and still trying to work on all of that but ultimately with my family it caused resentment at the abandonment and more mental and emotional strains on our relationships. There was absolute nothing good that came from any of my times in the programs. There were no benefits to my emotional, mental, physical, or social wellbeing.

**If you could tell policymakers one thing about youth residential treatment facilities and what needs to change, what would it be?** The WWSAP programs were abusive and left kids in isolation to fend for themselves and police each other. None of what occurred in these places were okay in any way. Residential Treatment Centers should not be out of the country. Residential Treatment Centers should be run by license mental health professionals. These places were not that at all. They were cruel, demeaning, and psychologically damaging.

---

ID: 12

Age: 23

**How old were you when you were sent to the institutional placement(s)?** 16

**What was the name of the institutional placement(s)? Did you experience this placement while in foster care?** Out of home care was at Geauga Youth Center. Chardon, OH

**We understand that sharing your experiences can be difficult, and we appreciate your courage in doing so. Would you be willing to share with us about your time in youth residential treatment facilities? What were some of the aspects of your living conditions, including the quality of food, clothing, and overall care you received?** At the time I identified as a gay male, so I was not aloud to room with someone and had to have my own. The food was not always the best as most of it came from the food bank. they did not have clothing for residents but could present for a clothing voucher to a store when needed.

**We know that maintaining education can be challenging in different living situations, and we value your input on this matter. Were you able to continue your education and receive the academic support you needed while living in the youth residential treatment facilities? Please share your experiences, including any challenges or successes you encountered.** At the beginning I was not able to attend in public school and went to an alternative school in the finished basement of the group home. While I was able to finish classes quicker and at my speed I was not able to be in a normal school like my peers which only made me feel worst.

**Describe your access to health care, mental health support, and other services you needed while in youth residential treatment facilities. Were your needs adequately met?** My needs were typically always met except when I was in crisis and they couldn't handle me and no one took it serious

**Your safety and well-being are extremely important, and we are committed to understanding your experiences. Did you feel safe during your time in youth residential treatment facilities? If you experienced any instances of abuse, neglect, or overly harsh punishment, please share what you feel comfortable discussing.** I felt safe there.

**We understand that your experiences in youth residential treatment facilities may have had a lasting impact on your life. Your insights are valuable in helping us understand these effects. How have your experiences in youth residential treatment facilities affected your life and well-being, both during your time there and after leaving care? Please share any ways these experiences have influenced you.** My 18th birthday I moved into a homeless shelter and was in an out of a place to live for the next 3.5 years.

**If you could tell policymakers one thing about youth residential treatment facilities and what needs to change, what would it be?** The funding needs to be increased as people have needs that need to be met.

ID: 13

Age: 43

**How old were you when you were sent to the institutional placement(s)?** 13; 15-16

**What was the name of the institutional placement(s)? Did you experience this placement while in foster care?** Thomas J.S. Waxter Children's Center; Good Shepherd Center

**We understand that sharing your experiences can be difficult, and we appreciate your courage in doing so. Would you be willing to share with us about your time in youth residential treatment facilities? What were some of the aspects of your living conditions, including the quality of food, clothing, and overall care you received?** The living conditions at these facilities were horrible. I was placed in living quarters with violent criminals. I was regularly strip searched and watched in the shower. I was not able to have access to a razor for personal hygiene. I went many days without eating because I do not eat meat and there were no alternative options provided for me. At one of the facilities, I was forced to wear a re-used uniform that still had stains on it. I was also only allowed outside for a small time each day, and I was regularly withheld from sunlight and fresh air.

The overall care that I received at these facilities was also far from standard. The staff would regularly spend their time talking on the phone or going outside for a cigarette, and meanwhile the girls at these facilities were getting into violent fights, overdosing on prescription drugs, and trying to run away or commit suicide.

**We know that maintaining education can be challenging in different living situations, and we value your input on this matter. Were you able to continue your education and receive the academic support you needed while living in the youth residential treatment facilities? Please share your experiences, including any challenges or successes you encountered.** There was an education system at these facilities, and they worked with the educational board to provide the necessary educational credits for educational advancement following release. However, the education provided was an absolute joke. I rarely had to study and was able to pass all the classes. I was not challenged in any way or provided with any mentorship at this crucial age in my development.

Prior to attending these facilities, I had been kicked out of every type of school available - private school, public school, alternative school, and even had difficulties in home school. In this setting, I was forced to pass the classes in order to be released - and so that is what I did. While I am fortunate that the educational board worked with my situation so that I could obtain the necessary credits needed for advancement, I now realize that my problems in school were in large part the result of my neurodivergent diagnosis, and I do think that instead of dealing with this problem (because I always scored exceptionally high on intelligence tests and was able to demonstrate the ability to get an 'A' in classes that captured my interest), the teachers instead just sent me away as a problem child - and that ultimately landed me in youth residential treatment facilities.

**Describe your access to health care, mental health support, and other services you needed while in youth residential treatment facilities. Were your needs adequately met?** While I did have access to health care, mental health support, and other services while in youth residential treatment facilities, the quality of services fell far below the standard of care. I was regularly psychologically and emotionally abused by staff, subject to aggressive and manipulative therapy tactics, forced to take medication for a

diagnosis that was later found to be incorrect, and subjected to an overall mental health environment that to this day has made me apprehensive of therapists and psychiatrists.

**Your safety and well-being are extremely important, and we are committed to understanding your experiences. Did you feel safe during your time in youth residential treatment facilities? If you experienced any instances of abuse, neglect, or overly harsh punishment, please share what you feel comfortable discussing.** I did not feel safe during my time in youth residential treatment facilities. I was placed in living quarters with violent criminals, forcibly restrained, pushed and shoved by staff, forced to take medication against my will for a diagnosis that was later found to be incorrect, locked in solitary confinement, prevented from getting fresh air, denied contact with family members, and was overall subject to relentless physical, psychological, and emotional abuse.

**We understand that your experiences in youth residential treatment facilities may have had a lasting impact on your life. Your insights are valuable in helping us understand these effects. How have your experiences in youth residential treatment facilities affected your life and well-being, both during your time there and after leaving care? Please share any ways these experiences have influenced you.** My experiences in youth residential treatment facilities have affected my life and well-being. During my time in care, not only was I subjected to a great deal of abuse, but I was also forced into an environment that prevented me from living a normal life with my peers. This had a profound impact on my life after leaving care. For many years, I suffered from severe post-traumatic stress disorder, and I would literally drink to black out in order to forget what had happened to me. I have tremendous difficulty dealing with situations where I feel my freedom or independence is under attack - it takes my mind to a whole other level. I have difficulty relating to others or feeling that I belong anywhere or as a part of any group, and this has had a negative impact on relationships - both personal and family. I also have been subjected to a great deal of shame, as I was always taught my "past" was something not to be discussed or acknowledged.

At least on a positive note, they say hindsight is 20/20, and I have absolutely learned my lesson to not make the same mistakes that I had made in the past that led me to being institutionalized as a teenager. I have also taken action to address my neurodivergent symptoms, so that I can now be a high functioning person in our society.

**If you could tell policymakers one thing about youth residential treatment facilities and what needs to change, what would it be?** Children need to live with their family in all possible instances. The trauma caused to children by taking them away from family is severe, and the lasting impact is something that those children will carry with them for a lifetime. In those instances where placement into a youth residential treatment facility cannot be avoided, we need greater oversight to make sure that children are placed into a safe environment that can adequately meet their needs.

---

ID: 14

Age: 22

**How old were you when you were sent to the institutional placement(s)?** 17

**What was the name of the institutional placement(s)? Did you experience this placement while in foster care?** Methodist Children's Home

**We understand that sharing your experiences can be difficult, and we appreciate your courage in doing so. Would you be willing to share with us about your time in youth residential treatment facilities? What were some of the aspects of your living conditions, including the quality of food, clothing, and overall care you received?**

**We know that maintaining education can be challenging in different living situations, and we value your input on this matter. Were you able to continue your education and receive the academic support you needed while living in the youth residential treatment facilities? Please share your experiences, including any challenges or successes you encountered.** Honestly my experience was good. I just wanted us to have more freedom. Felt like we were birds locked in a cage. Watching the world from the inside of our cage.

**Describe your access to health care, mental health support, and other services you needed while in youth residential treatment facilities. Were your needs adequately met?** Yes, my needs were met.

**Your safety and well-being are extremely important, and we are committed to understanding your experiences. Did you feel safe during your time in youth residential treatment facilities? If you experienced any instances of abuse, neglect, or overly harsh punishment, please share what you feel comfortable discussing.** I felt safe even though there were times I didn't.

**We understand that your experiences in youth residential treatment facilities may have had a lasting impact on your life. Your insights are valuable in helping us understand these effects. How have your experiences in youth residential treatment facilities affected your life and well-being, both during your time there and after leaving care? Please share any ways these experiences have influenced you.** I haven't been affected by this experience. I just learned a lot from those that were looking after me.

**If you could tell policymakers one thing about youth residential treatment facilities and what needs to change, what would it be?** They should allow those who are capable to have some freedom. Like hanging out with friends and going to the mall.

---

ID: 15

Age: 18

**How old were you when you were sent to the institutional placement(s)?** 17

**What was the name of the institutional placement(s)? Did you experience this placement while in foster care?** Ascend Healthcare Residential, No

**We understand that sharing your experiences can be difficult, and we appreciate your courage in doing so. Would you be willing to share with us about your time in youth residential treatment facilities? What were some of the aspects of your living conditions, including the quality of food, clothing, and overall care you received?** I went to a girls trauma/substance abuse house. They had a strict schedule every day was filled with “therapy”, every hour we would have a different group. No naps, you cannot sleep unless it is sleeping time which is from 9:30pm-6:30am. No free time. Twice a day they would give us a 4oz bag of chips or pretzels (which they actually took away for “health reasons”). We were required to wait 20 minutes to ask for a second plate of food, regardless of the size of the first plate. Meal time was only 30 minutes long, the other 30 minutes were dedicated to “chores”. They replaced butter with olive oil for every meal, and typically would feed us low calorie foods. We were also required to ask for anything we needed including to get up and use the bathroom, and the staff can/will deny you just because they’re in a bad mood. The “mentors” who were the ones watching/controlling us 24/7, admitted they had almost no requirements for working there. One had admitted she was severely depressed and suicidal at the beginning of her job. Another would actively disclose information about her abusive relationship and family to us. We received 2 hours of scheduled 1:1 therapy, and 2 hours of zoom family therapy each week. We mostly talked about why they sent me there, and what they wanted me to change. Other than this we were given 5 minutes a day on the phone with our parents, where a mentor would write down what we said to our parents word for word, but not what they said back. Which is odd because their claim was they needed notes in case someone got upset so they could figure out what was said that made the child upset. I also had witnessed a therapist tell a 15 year old’s mother that she should kick her out of the house if her addiction got bad.

**We know that maintaining education can be challenging in different living situations, and we value your input on this matter. Were you able to continue your education and receive the academic support you needed while living in the youth residential treatment facilities? Please share your experiences, including any challenges or successes you encountered.** Our school consisted of two hours a day, mostly given an online program by our original school, but it’s not very enforced. Some girls were encouraged to pursue a GED, some were set on Schoology programs or similar ones. There was no requirement for the work you had to do, or goals set.

**Describe your access to health care, mental health support, and other services you needed while in youth residential treatment facilities. Were your needs adequately met?** They were told I have a heart condition called Postural Orthostatic Tachycardia Syndrome. This is a condition that also affects your nervous system, and requires you to consume extra sodium & rest due to fatigue or fainting. In my first week there after being “escorted”, I was so anxious I couldn’t eat. I told them I had severe sensory issues. They told me they could not accommodate this because I didn’t have a diagnosis. They refused to let me eat anything other than the 3 options of food being grilled cheese, peanut butter and jelly, or the food they served. I did not eat, and told them I would eat if they gave me something I could stomach. I then asked them for saltines, because I could feel that I may pass out. They denied me saltines because I “hadn’t eaten real food” and instead brought me a salt shaker, and insisted I eat straight salt. I denied this

for obvious reasons. As expected I passed out. They kept saying, if I eat a sandwich then I can have some saltine's. I started convulsing due to my blood pressure, and was still denied anything to even eat the salt with. Oddly, even when I did get my diagnosis of Autism Spectrum Disorder, they still refused to accommodate any other food. Yet, they would take other girls to the store to buy food so they would eat.

**Your safety and well-being are extremely important, and we are committed to understanding your experiences. Did you feel safe during your time in youth residential treatment facilities? If you experienced any instances of abuse, neglect, or overly harsh punishment, please share what you feel comfortable discussing.** We were required to do physical work at least 2 hours a day on the farm, and if you didn't do your part (for any reason) the other girls would have to, and the staff would encourage them to be upset with you. We also had 3 workout centered classes a week and mandatory 3 hour hike each Thursday (sometimes through clearly dangerous terrain in rain boots), plus a mandatory 30 minute hill climb hike on Sunday. We were required to wash the staffs plates, and bag portioned food for the night staff in cause they got hungry, they usually would fall asleep during the night hours regardless. If you don't follow rules or have a panic attack they will separate you from the group and then every 5 minutes they will ask if you are ready to go back in. If this escalates to an "outburst" they separate the rest of the group and tell them you're dangerous, will lie about you throwing things/threatening people, and then tell you the group is scared of scared of you. Once a week, they have "process group" where we are told to "confront" each other in a "healthy setting", if nobody confronts anyone, we sit there until someone does because it's "unhealthy". We must follow a scripted sentence that consisted of naming the person, what they did to upset you, and how it made you feel. Then the person must respond in a scripted sentence, state that they understand they upset you, and then describe how they feel after being confronted.

**We understand that your experiences in youth residential treatment facilities may have had a lasting impact on your life. Your insights are valuable in helping us understand these effects. How have your experiences in youth residential treatment facilities affected your life and well-being, both during your time there and after leaving care? Please share any ways these experiences have influenced you.** Before I left for my residential in March of 2023, I was in recovery from self harm. When I was sent home in May of 2023, I was in a manic state, but had been told I was "better". Upon coming home I got into a very violent relationship, and was assaulted many times. I was under the impression I was invincible now, due to being isolated with no freedom for so long. I now a year later still suffer from chronic nightmares of being "escorted" again every single night. My relationship with my parents has a long way to go before it is repaired, and I am currently in intensive therapy breaking down the programming that I was taught to shut down my emotions.

**If you could tell policymakers one thing about youth residential treatment facilities and what needs to change, what would it be?** Being taken away from your real support system and family, and stripped of your rights for several weeks or months is not therapy, it's trauma.

---

ID: 16

Age: 27

**How old were you when you were sent to the institutional placement(s)?** 10

**What was the name of the institutional placement(s)? Did you experience this placement while in foster care?** Sunshine residential group home

**We understand that sharing your experiences can be difficult, and we appreciate your courage in doing so. Would you be willing to share with us about your time in youth residential treatment facilities? What were some of the aspects of your living conditions, including the quality of food, clothing, and overall care you received?** Living in residential treatment felt like living in boot camp.

There were strict rules and mandatory cleaning at the start of waking up. Food was not always accessible due to locked cabinets and refrigerator. I remember always “over” eating at meal times since I believed I could not eat until the next meal was prepped. Living in a group home made me feel like I couldn’t be myself or “silly” because it was seen to staff as a “incident” report.

**We know that maintaining education can be challenging in different living situations, and we value your input on this matter. Were you able to continue your education and receive the academic support you needed while living in the youth residential treatment facilities? Please share your experiences, including any challenges or successes you encountered.** Since living in a group home

I struggled with my education. I moved quite a bit, at least 5-6 Times. The reason I was moved, was due to case managers attempting to move me to a permanent homes and when they did not work out, I was placed in a new group home. This caused me to “catch up” during my sophomore year which forced me into a charter schools. Even when I finally caught up and did graduate on time, I realized I could not go to a university due to lack of credit in a certain areas. ASU advised to go to a community college first.

**Describe your access to health care, mental health support, and other services you needed while in youth residential treatment facilities. Were your needs adequately met?** Health care as I recall

was available, but I believe was too young at the time to remember the accessibility. I do recall plenty of counseling sessions that case management forced me into. I believe in allowing young people to ask if they need help in certain areas vs just assuming there needs and making them do things that they may not agree with. This happen a lot with me since I was so young coming into group homes

**Your safety and well-being are extremely important, and we are committed to understanding your experiences. Did you feel safe during your time in youth residential treatment facilities? If you experienced any instances of abuse, neglect, or overly harsh punishment, please share what you feel comfortable discussing.**

**We understand that your experiences in youth residential treatment facilities may have had a lasting impact on your life. Your insights are valuable in helping us understand these effects.**

**How have your experiences in youth residential treatment facilities affected your life and well-being, both during your time there and after leaving care? Please share any ways these experiences have influenced you.** Since moving forward in life, I’ve realized there is so much that differs my life to people I’ve come across. When getting adopted at 16 I had to learn to be more open with a family dynamic and that wasn’t easy. In my teens my adopted family accepted that some outings I did not want to attend but than other siblings in the home would question me not coming. This would cause arguments and fights but years later I’d come to love spending family time with every one. As an adult I



have a hard time losing close people to me, this includes mentors who I've worked with. Those connections don't always stick after treatment is over.

**If you could tell policymakers one thing about youth residential treatment facilities and what needs to change, what would it be?** Allow more accessibility to normal activities. Provide an open environment to speak on behalf of them selfs. This may include providing adequate training to staff members

---

ID: 17

Age: 36

**How old were you when you were sent to the institutional placement(s)?** 16

**What was the name of the institutional placement(s)? Did you experience this placement while in foster care?** Cinnamon hills youth crisis center

**We understand that sharing your experiences can be difficult, and we appreciate your courage in doing so. Would you be willing to share with us about your time in youth residential treatment facilities? What were some of the aspects of your living conditions, including the quality of food, clothing, and overall care you received?** Living conditions were horrible emotional abuse physical abuse always in a state of constant fear nothing was optional everything was forced mandatory if you failed to do anything you were sent to refocus room or the isolation room where the worst things took place the food was crap as an adult I know now it did not meet any nutritional requirements.

**We know that maintaining education can be challenging in different living situations, and we value your input on this matter. Were you able to continue your education and receive the academic support you needed while living in the youth residential treatment facilities? Please share your experiences, including any challenges or successes you encountered.** Schooling was not easy most children there had disabilities with learning me included that did not accommodate for your disabilities

**Describe your access to health care, mental health support, and other services you needed while in youth residential treatment facilities. Were your needs adequately met?** My needs were not adequately met all the support and healthcare was garbage the mental health support always turn to you being in the wrong the year the victim playing the victim which isn't right we were troubled kids we weren't playing the victim while there we were the victims towards the end most were broken both mind heart and soul like walking hollow shells of one's former self and I'm sad to say that that has never gone away sticks with you for life

**Your safety and well-being are extremely important, and we are committed to understanding your experiences. Did you feel safe during your time in youth residential treatment facilities? If you experienced any instances of abuse, neglect, or overly harsh punishment, please share what you feel comfortable discussing.** I did not feel safe one bit from constant emotional abuse psychological mind games brainwashing and physical abuse I don't know of any children that felt safe while they were there while I was there and I'm sure it hasn't changed any. In one instance I remember being sent to the isolation room where I started to get upset and the staff put me in what I would like to call and angled restraint which basically the child is held in the air to 45° angle with his or her toes touching the floor while one staff held your head to staff held your arms one staff held your torso and two staff held your legs needless to say in that position for extended period of time you start to go tingly or numb in the legs and the second you can't hold yourself they say you're fighting or resisting and they jerk you around aggressively resulting in broken bone my hand to be precise not to mention the spinal issues I have now from such said restraints.

**We understand that your experiences in youth residential treatment facilities may have had a lasting impact on your life. Your insights are valuable in helping us understand these effects. How have your experiences in youth residential treatment facilities affected your life and well-being, both during your time there and after leaving care? Please share any ways these**

**experiences have influenced you.** My experience from my 2 years stay there and the trauma I endured is something I'll take to the grave because I can never get over it how can you your brain still developing as a child and because what I endured there it is affected my life so much from relationships trust issues paranoia and fear lingers never goes away and sad to say it affects my parenting in some areas which isn't fair to my children so I do the best I can to be the best I can for them to shove my trauma way down for them which in all reality nobody should have to do

**If you could tell policymakers one thing about youth residential treatment facilities and what needs to change, what would it be?** If I had to say anything to these people or the policy makers I'd say close them all down there's too much room for abuse of children and they're not conducive for any healing or growth for any child.

---

ID: 18

Age: 24

**How old were you when you were sent to the institutional placement(s)?** 13

**What was the name of the institutional placement(s)? Did you experience this placement while in foster care?** TRAILS in North Carolina, Sedona Sky Academy in Arizona. Not in foster care.

**We understand that sharing your experiences can be difficult, and we appreciate your courage in doing so. Would you be willing to share with us about your time in youth residential treatment facilities? What were some of the aspects of your living conditions, including the quality of food, clothing, and overall care you received?** TRAILS took place almost entirely in the woods of North Carolina. We camped rain or shine, no matter the temperature. Sometimes they would move us to other locations to keep us in a yurt or a cabin for a couple nights, and that was the only time we got to shower. I showered 5 or 6 times in 109 days. I turned 14 at TRAILS and they made us do a 1 mile hike right after we woke up as my birthday celebration, then we hiked 12 miles up a mountain. We weren't supposed to know where we were, when we were going places, or what time it was. We wore the same clothes for weeks on end and only had one pair of clothes to switch into when they'd wash our clothes every three weeks or so. We never got the right sizes of clothes back and we couldn't mark our clothing. One time they hiked us out into a valley right before a rainstorm that flooded the valley and we had to hike out at midnight after setting up camp in the rain in the dark. All our stuff got soaked through and several girls tripped and fell with their packs on on the way out in the dark in the rain. Our packs were usually 50 pounds or more depending on how many girls were in the group. We usually hiked more than 10 miles a day. We only ate dried food and I didn't receive fruit or vegetables for 109 days except the three times staff used their own money to buy us a head of broccoli or a summer sausage to share between up to 14 girls.

Sedona Sky Academy had better food like a school cafeteria. We had to do our own laundry using facilities on campus. We did stay in rooms with bunk beds and up to three roommates. The quality of living was better but I knew some girls were having their communication heavily censored and a lot of us had one or two incidents where male staff tried to groom us or said something inappropriate in front of large groups of us. We were all tired and worn out from the heat all the time on campus but still did a lot of outdoor activities even in the heat of the day. It could be unbearable, my skin burned even if I put on sunscreen regularly as directed on the bottle. I often felt dizzy no matter how much water I drank because we couldn't have any other types of beverages so I was low on electrolytes often. We were supposed to see a nutritionist and a psychiatrist but they were both useless because the facility just fed us whatever they wanted anyway and the psychiatrist would just keep you on whatever meds you were on when you arrived even if you weren't comfortable taking them, or increase your dose. The nurses didn't care if you were in pain and I saw them tell one girl she was being dramatic about her period pain and deny her even advil while she was doubled over on the floor sobbing and bleeding so heavily she had to change every hour. The house staff were vindictive and would take sides between the girls when we fought, and several girls including me would get penalties on our program due to rumors that a clique of girls made up.

**We know that maintaining education can be challenging in different living situations, and we value your input on this matter. Were you able to continue your education and receive the academic support you needed while living in the youth residential treatment facilities? Please share your**

**experiences, including any challenges or successes you encountered.** I continued my education but I was only a freshman in HS so it wasn't anything difficult. The girls in the grades above me had a lot of struggles because teachers often weren't good at explaining material or helping them, and the house staff didn't know how to help us on certain subjects. No one ever got shamed outright about it but some girls with reading comprehension issues or dyscalculia were prevented from advancing in their programs because teachers decided they just weren't listening or trying in school when they were just not being given proper assistance. There were a couple teachers who were really good who we loved very much and those couple teachers were the only reason some girls graduated at all.

**Describe your access to health care, mental health support, and other services you needed while in youth residential treatment facilities. Were your needs adequately met?** Healthcare and mental health support was hard to come by at TRAILS. One girl got food poisoning because the staff took her to take a mental health test and gave her food that was too rich for her stomach because we only ever ate dried food, so we just sat in camp for two days and listened to her throw up every twenty minutes or so. They kept doing that too, every time a girl got to leave camp to go take a test they'd give you real food and you'd be so desperate to eat it but throw up within six hours afterwards. It was like a psychological experiment.

One time this girl didn't think she could hike anymore because she was sore and hurting and recovering from an eating disorder so she sat down on the trail. They made us basically shame her so she'd get back up instead of trying to check on her, they didn't believe she was being truthful and just treated her like she was lazy even though we'd been hiking for four days straight and she'd never hiked before. Then they got mad at us that night because we didn't have any supplies for starting fires, which we were supposed to have collected on our own, but we'd been hiking for four days and we were all just 14-16 year olds who were tired and scared and upset. It was insult to injury because they were supposed to be helping us but if anything they were doing the opposite of providing us mental health care when we were in crisis or injured.

**Your safety and well-being are extremely important, and we are committed to understanding your experiences. Did you feel safe during your time in youth residential treatment facilities? If you experienced any instances of abuse, neglect, or overly harsh punishment, please share what you feel comfortable discussing.** No, I didn't feel safe. Staff regularly punished us for things that were just mistakes. Bigger mistakes or actual bad decisions could mess up your whole program and you'd have to start over. You couldn't vent to your family or tell them about the grooming some of the staff did because communication was censored in writing and over the phone staff would just tell your parents you were having a breakdown and that "troubled teens" tend to lie when they're upset to get what they want. I never suffered any physical abuse thankfully but staff would absolutely yell at and shame you for things and just punish you like you were their own kid. It got really personal. Plus if they weren't mad at you they'd be talking about their messy lives and basically using us as little teenage therapists and it was confusing because we wanted to be there for them but we were also teenagers in a mental health facility.

**We understand that your experiences in youth residential treatment facilities may have had a lasting impact on your life. Your insights are valuable in helping us understand these effects. How have your experiences in youth residential treatment facilities affected your life and well-being, both during your time there and after leaving care? Please share any ways these experiences have influenced you.** I still have nightmares about being sent back 10 years later. Every single night. Being there brought me from having depression/anxiety to having full blown Cluster B personality disorder and OCD, with CPTSD as a layer over top of all that. It's awful. I've managed to get my life on the rails but it was not thanks to these places. My parents were indoctrinated by them and so

when I came home they still wanted to keep this super structured “therapeutic” environment, which meant largely isolating me from friend groups that I was already an outside from because they had pulled me out of school to send me away so everyone had thought I died. The home environment became hell because they wanted me in therapy every week plus family therapy with someone else plus the structured home environment, little contact with friends, it was like I never left the program that traumatized me. Being there with all those girls who had real genuine trauma and problems made me so much worse and we were ALL treated badly and we would have 30 girls on campus having simultaneous breakdowns and fights. It was awful and scary and then I just had to leave and I never got to talk to any of those girls again or see them again. I still search for some of my friends but it’s like some of them are just gone and I fear the worst. I still have problems talking about my feelings and being vulnerable. I never had that issue before, but these programs incentivized conformity and masking your emotions so that you wouldn’t be picked out for punishment or grooming. So when I got out I stayed clammed up. I’m claustrophobic now and I can’t find a place to settle and call home because I always feel like I’m stuck there, like someone is keeping me there. I don’t feel right in my skin, I feel like I can never do anything right. No matter how much I’ve tried to heal that sense of wrongness underlies everything i do and it has since I left the program.

**If you could tell policymakers one thing about youth residential treatment facilities and what needs to change, what would it be?** Screen the heck out of the owners. Make it genuinely unpleasant to own a for-profit program targeting teens mental health. Every dollar should go back to the kids and to staff training, endlessly. If they want to make money off of kids, that’s a problem.

---

ID: 19

Age: 42

**How old were you when you were sent to the institutional placement(s)?** 13-16 1995-1998

**What was the name of the institutional placement(s)? Did you experience this placement while in foster care?** Provo canyon school

**We understand that sharing your experiences can be difficult, and we appreciate your courage in doing so. Would you be willing to share with us about your time in youth residential treatment facilities? What were some of the aspects of your living conditions, including the quality of food, clothing, and overall care you received?** Yes. I have been interviewed for the podcast trapped in treatment with Rebecca and Caroline cole

**We know that maintaining education can be challenging in different living situations, and we value your input on this matter. Were you able to continue your education and receive the academic support you needed while living in the youth residential treatment facilities? Please share your experiences, including any challenges or successes you encountered.** No, I did not graduate high school I revely have been admitted to csu for the masters program in art history. I re established my education in 2020

**Describe your access to health care, mental health support, and other services you needed while in youth residential treatment facilities. Were your needs adequately met?** No. I was drugged horribly

**Your safety and well-being are extremely important, and we are committed to understanding your experiences. Did you feel safe during your time in youth residential treatment facilities? If you experienced any instances of abuse, neglect, or overly harsh punishment, please share what you feel comfortable discussing.** No Provo was a horrible place where I was sexually abused at 13 and witness horrible things to children by adults and “doctors”

**We understand that your experiences in youth residential treatment facilities may have had a lasting impact on your life. Your insights are valuable in helping us understand these effects. How have your experiences in youth residential treatment facilities affected your life and well-being, both during your time there and after leaving care? Please share any ways these experiences have influenced you.** I have learnt to become a better parent and be more attentive to my children. Rather than giving up it's important to parent.

**If you could tell policymakers one thing about youth residential treatment facilities and what needs to change, what would it be?** The people who work in these places must be paid more and have training and licenses. The facilities must be under strict checks like a hospital or other place maintaining health and safety of all children and workers.

ID: 20

Age: 22

**How old were you when you were sent to the institutional placement(s)?** 16

**What was the name of the institutional placement(s)? Did you experience this placement while in foster care?** yes/ Epworth

**We understand that sharing your experiences can be difficult, and we appreciate your courage in doing so. Would you be willing to share with us about your time in youth residential treatment facilities? What were some of the aspects of your living conditions, including the quality of food, clothing, and overall care you received?** Some aspects of my living conditions would be that the girls that was around me were nasty, they didn't clean nor did the people that was over us. They were very dirty, and I would tell they didn't care. They food wasn't always good it was basically school lunch, but I was thankful for a meal. They would lock the refrigerator and we could only really eat one thing like If I eat a pack of noodles, I couldn't eat anything else till lunch time or dinner time. we had to cook everything in the microwave. They only gave us 100 dollars to get clothing in shoes so like if I didn't come there with anything which I really didn't have anything at the time I'm not saying It had to be the best or give us a lot more money but at least get a decent pair of shoes I would have to get crocs or slides. The overall care I received was not it at all a disgrace.

**We know that maintaining education can be challenging in different living situations, and we value your input on this matter. Were you able to continue your education and receive the academic support you needed while living in the youth residential treatment facilities? Please share your experiences, including any challenges or successes you encountered.** No, I was not able to really receive my education, I was still in school but at home basically but I have adhd so that wasn't so great they couldn't even put me in school. I hated it, I couldn't focus on anything because sometimes it would be too many people or it was so much going on. I would say my success is that it motived me to do better so I could be able to make a change in the system.

**Describe your access to health care, mental health support, and other services you needed while in youth residential treatment facilities. Were your needs adequately met?** MY needs were not met at all, I talked about how everything was getting to me, and girls were bullying me. The lady at the time that worked there told me that I was basically tripping and lying because she knew the girls.

**Your safety and well-being are extremely important, and we are committed to understanding your experiences. Did you feel safe during your time in youth residential treatment facilities? If you experienced any instances of abuse, neglect, or overly harsh punishment, please share what you feel comfortable discussing.** No, I did not feel safe at all. I almost got in two fights becasue the girl said I needed to give her my food. The other one was because i didn't want to smoke got called a punk and etc. I told and nothing happened

**We understand that your experiences in youth residential treatment facilities may have had a lasting impact on your life. Your insights are valuable in helping us understand these effects. How have your experiences in youth residential treatment facilities affected your life and well-being, both during your time there and after leaving care? Please share any ways these experiences have influenced you.** While I was in care, I learned how to build structure in my life it gave me a foundation to start addressing the issues that led me to the facility in the first place. After leaving



care the lack of constant supervision and support initially felt overwhelming. However, my coping skills and resilience I developed during my time in the facility helped me navigate this transition more smoothly than I might have otherwise. I became more aware of the importance of healthy boundaries and communication. Long term effect for me would have to be my drive for advocating for youth. My experiences gave me a passion for helping others facing similar challenges. The challenges I faced in care and the skills I developed have made me more resilient and adaptable. I can handle life's ups and downs, and I approach new challenges with a problem-solving mindset and a sense of determination. My time in youth residential treatment facilities significantly shaped who I am today. While the journey was not easy, the experiences, skills, and insights I gained have had a lasting positive impact on my life and well-being.

**If you could tell policymakers one thing about youth residential treatment facilities and what needs to change, what would it be?** runaways we have a lot of those.

---

ID: 21

Age: 53

**How old were you when you were sent to the institutional placement(s)?** I was hired to teach at a treatment facility in 2022

**What was the name of the institutional placement(s)? Did you experience this placement while in foster care?** Change academy lake ozark (Calo) in Missouri

**We understand that sharing your experiences can be difficult, and we appreciate your courage in doing so. Would you be willing to share with us about your time in youth residential treatment facilities? What were some of the aspects of your living conditions, including the quality of food, clothing, and overall care you received?**

**We know that maintaining education can be challenging in different living situations, and we value your input on this matter. Were you able to continue your education and receive the academic support you needed while living in the youth residential treatment facilities? Please share your experiences, including any challenges or successes you encountered.** We absolutely could not provide adequate education services to the kids at Calo. Many teachers were unlicensed, some with no teaching experience or training at all. Inadequate supervision of the kids and an education environment that was not conducive for learning. We expressed our concerns many, many times to leadership within Calo as well as embark ( the parent company). Many kids have spent as much as half their high school years at Calo and it's nearly impossible to learn anything while there due to the lack of behavior management, lack of structure and lack of skilled employees.

**Describe your access to health care, mental health support, and other services you needed while in youth residential treatment facilities. Were your needs adequately met?** As a teacher, I witnessed a severe lack of mental health support for the kids. They spent most of their time in the care of poorly trained, unskilled 'coaches' for which there seemed to be little qualification requirements. Kids were bullied, physically and sexually abused by other kids. I cannot speak to abuse by coaches to kids. I did not see that, but I know there have been many incidents in which staff have been let go for certain behaviors. What I saw was a generally caring staff highly incapable of managing kids with serious emotional disabilities. There is a severe lack of qualified employees to properly take responsibility for these kids for such a long period of time. Always understaffed. Not enough supervision to keep so many kids safe. Babies as young as 9 exposed to older teenagers, some with predatory behaviors. Also so many kids are able to run away from there, it's not secure. I reported my concerns many times before resigning my position, including to the Missouri school violence hotline and my Missouri state representative. As have many other teachers/ staff employed by Calo. Calo does provide adequate food and shelter and nursing in my opinion.

**Your safety and well-being are extremely important, and we are committed to understanding your experiences. Did you feel safe during your time in youth residential treatment facilities? If you experienced any instances of abuse, neglect, or overly harsh punishment, please share what you feel comfortable discussing.** As a teacher, I did not feel safe because there were many violent students there and not enough staff to supervise them. The kids are not safe due to the lack of supervision. There are many physical and sexual abuses that take place there. Sexual activity between boys on the boys side and girls on the girls side. And taking place in their team homes. Physical attacks take place continuously throughout the facility and the incident reports are often rewritten and vague. I reported this

and addressed it with leadership. It happens often and to one of my own incident reports. Other staff have reported the same thing.

**We understand that your experiences in youth residential treatment facilities may have had a lasting impact on your life. Your insights are valuable in helping us understand these effects. How have your experiences in youth residential treatment facilities affected your life and well-being, both during your time there and after leaving care? Please share any ways these experiences have influenced you.** The kids coming out of Calo are without a doubt leaving with more trauma than they came with. My 17 months of employment at Calo makes me highly suspicious of the quality of care at any teen residential treatment center. I will speak out and advocate for both the kids AND staff who have had the misfortune of spending time in an RTC. They are ALL being exploited. Schools need to be made aware of what they are sending these poor kids to. What you see in the marketing brochures is not what it is. As a licensed special education teacher, I am a mandated reporter and I stand behind everything I have said.

**If you could tell policymakers one thing about youth residential treatment facilities and what needs to change, what would it be?** They need much more stringent oversight. For some reason they seem to be flying under radar and I am shocked that a facility such as the one I worked at is allowed to continue the way that it does.

---

ID: 22

Age: 49

**How old were you when you were sent to the institutional placement(s)?** 13

**What was the name of the institutional placement(s)? Did you experience this placement while in foster care?** College Hospital Cerritos, CA & Heritage Schools, UT. Not foster care.

**We understand that sharing your experiences can be difficult, and we appreciate your courage in doing so. Would you be willing to share with us about your time in youth residential treatment facilities? What were some of the aspects of your living conditions, including the quality of food, clothing, and overall care you received?** I was taken to College Hospital in 1988 at the age of 13 due to a suicide attempt. I had been experiencing major depression and other issues related to severe early childhood abuse from a family member and another individual outside the family. My time there was a pretty horrific experience, many instances of excessive physical restraint (including 5 point restrains), use of isolation and medication (thorazine) as punishment. "Therapies" included group confrontation (basically attack therapy), group regression therapy (This was actually a combination of regressive psychotherapy and attachment therapy in a group setting) which was physically abusive as well as humiliating. The types of issues kids had in the unit were extremely varied. One kid they brought in after I arrived was diagnosed with MPD and had put him self through a plate glass window. He had massive mood and personality shifts and would attack other kids and staff. But the approach that the facility took was one size fits all. Eventually, I was transferred to IOP at CHC. I don't remember how long that lasted but while I was there I had pneumonia one day (My rather insane mother sent me anyway) and we went outside in the chill and I passed out falling on top of another kid and breaking my foot and right forearm. Took a very long time before I was seen by a doctor and I had to hobble back into the building on my own when I came to. They fed us here, typical hospital grade food, about what you'd get from a public HS in SoCal in the 80s. The clothes were our own, but had heavy restrictions on what we were allowed to have (in patient) or wear (IOP). Overall the experience left me emotionally scarred and horrified. I had been forced under threat of violence to relive my early CSA out loud in front of others I didn't even know and that information was then used against me in other groups. I was made to feel that I was responsible and accountable for my experiences as a young child and that I had no right to "impact" my parent the way I was.

After CHC IOP I did not go back to the High School I had only just started when I attempted to end my life. Instead I was sent to a place that is now closed (I don't know if this school was TTI, so I haven't included it in the list here) called Claremont Academy (was in Garden Grove, CA and then Huntington Beach, CA). I don't remember which location it was when I went. I was only there for a few months, I do remember it having a "therapeutic" tint to it and other kids that were there had also been through a lot. In April of 1989 I was coming back from lunch when I saw a white cargo van parked outside the class I was heading back to. When I walked into the class, the teacher, and administrator and two gigantic, burly guys in dark tactical clothing were in the class room. And they had a cast saw. My foot had healed by then, but my forearm was still healing at this point. Initially I tried to bolt, but they blocked the door and cornered me in the class room. Realizing there wasn't much of a chance of me getting out of there, I capitulated. They cut off my cast in the classroom, they thought it was funny and were laughing about it. They put my arms behind my back and handcuffed me. I was then put in the back of the cargo van I had seen earlier where a bag my parents had packed was already present. They took me to some office park, no idea where and walked me into an empty office with no windows, just a plastic chair in the middle of the room. They sat me down, and walked out of the door, locking it. I was still in cuffs. This was some time in the afternoon. Many hours later that came back and told me we were headed to the airport (LAX). They made absolutely

no secret of it while we were at LAX. I must have looked like a captive fugitive to others at the airport. This was early in the morning, like after midnight. I think it may have actually been closer to 2 am, but can't be sure on that. Once we boarded the flight, we were all the way at the back of the plane, last row. Nobody else was on the flight that I can remember so I thought that was really weird. They uncuffed me and moved the cuffs to the front and then handed me a three ring binder and told me I needed to read and memorize the rules before we got to SLC. I should mention that during this entire time, I was given no food or water, was not allowed out of their site for a moment and they hooked their hand into my pants waistline in the back while we were not on the plane.

Once we were in Utah, I was just exhausted and wanted to sleep. They let me do that on the van ride from SLC airport to Provo. When we got to Heritage my bag was taken to another room and I was led upstairs to a set of isolation rooms. They took off the cuffs, took my shoes and belt and tossed me in and locked the door. A staff member came to the window after and told me to get some rest, that I was going to need it. The lights never went off in this tiny room. It was maybe 5' x 5'. At the time I was 5'10" and could not lay down on the floor. There was no bed, no pillow, no blanket. Just this nasty carpet floor that smelled like rubber and pine sol. This would not be my last time in this room, far from it. I am sorry but I cannot go into all of the detail on this yet as I am still processing some of these things in real therapy with EMDR and IFS. I can say I was there for 8 months and after my experience at CHC, there was no way I was talking about anything early childhood or why I tried to off myself. I did play along for about 3 months and made it to level 4. But then something flipped and I stopped playing along. I started getting very angry about what I was going through and how I had gotten there. I tried to explain this to my "therapist" but was told I was just a manipulator that only cared about myself. So you can see where that goes with the isolation room (they called this crisis or SS). Eventually they had one of the units converted into a crisis unit that was basically a larger version of the little rooms. I have repressed memories of that unit and my time in there and have not yet gotten to that part in therapy. I have recurrent vivid nightmares of that little room where the smell is present and overwhelming and when I wake I can still smell it, I usually wake up sobbing and shaking from these. Therapy has helped a lot here. There were many staff that seemed to enjoy and even look for opportunity to get physical with the kids. Most of our unit staff were BYU football players that had no psych training, licensing, or education. Some did, but they were the exception. My "Therapist" was an M.Ed. in Educational Psychology and was not equipped to deal with actual psychological problems at all. Not that Heritage took this approach anyway. The approach here was one of blaming things on substance abuse and my poor behavior. On that front, I had only ever tried pot once at that point, when I was eleven, didn't even have an effect. I had started smoking cigarettes when I was twelve, because well, that freaking Jeep that Camel was giving away was awesome and I wanted one. We had school 4 days a week for 10 hours a day on Mondays, Tuesdays, Thursdays, and Fridays. I did well on any subject that was self study, especially math. "Teacher" led not so much. The reason I put this in quotes is that most of these "teachers" were untrained, incompetent, or just plain checked out. This experience marked the end of any real interest in academics for me, I just learned to teach myself. The recreational therapy was a complete joke. Yes they took us water skiing, on scummy Utah lake, that has and had then agricultural runoff pouring into it. Yes, they had equine "therapy", but what this really amounted to was creating forced labor roles for kids to take care of sickly horses they were boarding as a commercial venture on the side. Yes we went camping once, but in reality this was a test case for a future wilderness therapy joint venture they launched with another TTI company in 1990. The food here was absolutely atrocious. I ended up losing a lot of weight while I was there as I changed my diet to veggies and things that were hard to screw up in the kitchen. I tried the meat once and threw up in my mouth, walked over to the garbage can and let it out in front of everyone. I got a demerit for that. Meaning I lost points and that could affect my level and what I was able to buy at the student store. All basic necessities like toiletries were only available through the student store. If you were NP (No privs, lowest level possible) you got nothing. One kid stunk so bad on my unit due to being on NP for so long that I gave him

a stick of deodorant and bought another for myself. I got a demerit for that too. I think this is when things started flipping for me in how I responded to Heritage. The injustice of it all just started becoming so apparent. Near the end Tom, my therapist at Heritage, latched onto a very real problem I had of codependency with my mother. He made this a thing when it came time for me to go home. He was trying to get me extended for longer. I think my parents at least had the presence of mind to see that and didn't fall into it. Regardless I went home in December of 1989. It has taken me 35 years to come to grips with any of these experiences and even acknowledge that they happened and that they were wrong. I still have trouble with the cognitive dissonance that I feel at my core like I deserved it with my cognitive mind understanding that I did not. I am just starting with EMDR and IFS therapies to actually heal from all of this.

Shockingly (to me, now, at least), before I "woke up" I went to a known TTI facility (that also provides adult services), as an adult in 2018, seeking legitimate help. The humiliation I felt, and kinda still do, about this hit me hard. Something that is so clear to me in the present and wasn't in 2018. But their approach was a near carbon copy of what I had experienced in my childhood. They loaded me up on all kinds of meds while I was there. My wife thinks that contributed to the stroke I had in 2019.

I often wonder if I will ever be or feel "normal" in my lifetime. But that's why I am doing real therapy now. Thanks for reading if you made it this far.

**We know that maintaining education can be challenging in different living situations, and we value your input on this matter. Were you able to continue your education and receive the academic support you needed while living in the youth residential treatment facilities? Please share your experiences, including any challenges or successes you encountered.** Not really, the education program at Heritage was kind of a joke. We all felt that way and talked about it regularly. As I said above, we had school 4 days a week for 10 hours a day on Mondays, Tuesdays, Thursdays, and Fridays. I did well on any subject that was self study, especially math. "Teacher" led not so much. The reason I put this in quotes is that most of these "teachers" were untrained, incompetent, or just plain checked out. This experience marked the end of any real interest in academics for me, I just learned to teach myself. I am now a highly certified cyber security professional with nearly 30 years of experience. But even though I work for a university and have a senior level technical position, I do not have a bachelors degree. I always seem to experience a freeze response when I get moving towards that. I have half of my credits for my degree but have been on pause for a long time now.

**Describe your access to health care, mental health support, and other services you needed while in youth residential treatment facilities. Were your needs adequately met?** Well I mentioned my forearm and foot being broken and the instance where the Heritage transporters cut off my cast. I also had dental work done while there that they told me my parents wanted done. They did the work without Novocaine, pretty sure I passed out at one point. The pain was unimaginable. I have had a lifelong absolute terror of dentistry since. Probably going to have them all removed and do implants at some point.

There wasn't any real mental health support, it was very punitive and punishment oriented at both facilities. CHC created new and lifelong issues for me, Heritage exacerbated those and added their own.

I don't think my actual needs were ever even considered.

**Your safety and well-being are extremely important, and we are committed to understanding your experiences. Did you feel safe during your time in youth residential treatment facilities? If you**

**experienced any instances of abuse, neglect, or overly harsh punishment, please share what you feel comfortable discussing.** No, I never felt safe. I haven't felt safe since. I cannot sit with my back to the door of any place in public. I cannot handle large crowds, or tightly packed indoor areas. I went to dinner with my wife to a sports bar a couple of weeks ago and it was so packed and loud I couldn't take it. I have lived most of my life waiting for the other shoe to drop. I have never planned much into the future because I have always felt that was pointless because I wasn't going to live that long anyway. I kept smoking into adulthood, knowing it would kill me eventually and being ok with that, like some sort of long term, slow suicide. I did quit in 2018 and switched to vape, but had to go back to cigarettes while at La Amistad. switched back immediately after.

**We understand that your experiences in youth residential treatment facilities may have had a lasting impact on your life. Your insights are valuable in helping us understand these effects. How have your experiences in youth residential treatment facilities affected your life and well-being, both during your time there and after leaving care? Please share any ways these experiences have influenced you.** It's really hard to break it up like this, sorry. I have tried to express a lot of this in the other entry areas. My experience impacted every aspect of my life and guided it into adulthood. I have a deep fawn, then flight response to anything overwhelming. I have never stayed in anyone place for more than a couple of years. Trust is a non-existent thing for me with nearly everyone. I do not keep relationships. When the flight response has kicked in my response has been to cut, run, burn everything. This has gotten better since I met my wife of nearly 10 years, together for 12. But even this relationship has been fraught with extreme peaks and valleys. I'm just incredibly lucky that my wife is a truly empathetic, compassionate individual. Qualities I am still struggling to show to my self.

**If you could tell policymakers one thing about youth residential treatment facilities and what needs to change, what would it be?** Centralized oversight, national legislative control and governance. This has been going on for far too long and too many blind eyes have been turned to the lifelong impact, injury, and needless suffering and even death of far too many children in this country. We should be absolutely ashamed of ourselves as a society for allowing these atrocities to not only happen, but persist in the name of protecting revenue flow for a predatory, abusive, and callous industry.

A public apology to the children of this country for the last 70 years for allowing this wouldn't be bad. And while I don't need or want this, making victims financially whole (a very large percentage of survivors have extreme trouble meeting their own needs in adult life as a result of the long term impact) as restitution would go a long way in convincing survivors that somebody actually still gives a damn.

---

ID: 23

Age: 14

**How old were you when you were sent to the institutional placement(s)?** 13

**What was the name of the institutional placement(s)? Did you experience this placement while in foster care?** The barry robinson center

**We understand that sharing your experiences can be difficult, and we appreciate your courage in doing so. Would you be willing to share with us about your time in youth residential treatment facilities? What were some of the aspects of your living conditions, including the quality of food, clothing, and overall care you received?** I was on a plane, going to what I thought was a sanctuary, to help me, understand me, "fix" me. That couldn't have been farther from the truth.

I was stripped nude for "safety". then

I walked into my new dorm for the next few months. Cameras were everywhere, then they looked through my suitcase, took away most of the things inside, even if I needed them for my health. I couldn't close the bedroom or bathroom doors, I couldn't be in my bedroom unless I was sleeping. I couldn't walk without permission. Couldn't call my parents, couldn't be myself without punishment.

Later that year I switched dorms. In the new one, the doctors wouldn't listen to me at all, they watched me use the bathrooms, made me sign a contract so they could take away my stuff if I broke down. The staff purposely irritated us so we could be there longer. Yell at us for crying, changing rules and telling us we're lying when they did, told us that we were manipulating them, that we were the problem, that we couldn't handle the real world, that we were bullying them, That were broken, when none of us were.

**We know that maintaining education can be challenging in different living situations, and we value your input on this matter. Were you able to continue your education and receive the academic support you needed while living in the youth residential treatment facilities? Please share your experiences, including any challenges or successes you encountered.** Yes and no, not the same support but u was able to learn

**Describe your access to health care, mental health support, and other services you needed while in youth residential treatment facilities. Were your needs adequately met?** No, my therapist was terrible and they didn't provide adequate medical help

**Your safety and well-being are extremely important, and we are committed to understanding your experiences. Did you feel safe during your time in youth residential treatment facilities? If you experienced any instances of abuse, neglect, or overly harsh punishment, please share what you feel comfortable discussing.** No, they would send my stuff home if I cried

**We understand that your experiences in youth residential treatment facilities may have had a lasting impact on your life. Your insights are valuable in helping us understand these effects. How have your experiences in youth residential treatment facilities affected your life and well-being, both during your time there and after leaving care? Please share any ways these experiences have influenced you.** I don't know, not good though



**If you could tell policymakers one thing about youth residential treatment facilities and what needs to change, what would it be?** Just, to get rid of it. The building is too old and cockroaches were everywhere.

---

ID: 24

Age: 28

**How old were you when you were sent to the institutional placement(s)?** 16

**What was the name of the institutional placement(s)? Did you experience this placement while in foster care?** Topeka Trails PRTF. Yes

**We understand that sharing your experiences can be difficult, and we appreciate your courage in doing so. Would you be willing to share with us about your time in youth residential treatment facilities? What were some of the aspects of your living conditions, including the quality of food, clothing, and overall care you received?** I am more than willing. It was Co-ed. After an initial lump payment for basic living essentials, we were given 35 dollars a week for food, clothes, et cetera as well as 10 dollars for quarters. Basically, it was a fend for yourself kind of environment. So most of us were in trouble with the law for stealing food from Wal-Mart. The staff had issues. My first night there, one of the female staff was terminated for engaging in sexual activities with the youth and they found her in a bath tub with several of the youth. If there wasn't space in a vehicle, I rode in the trunk. There were other instances but these were just a few extreme instances.

**We know that maintaining education can be challenging in different living situations, and we value your input on this matter. Were you able to continue your education and receive the academic support you needed while living in the youth residential treatment facilities? Please share your experiences, including any challenges or successes you encountered.** I wasn't able to continue my after school athletic activities because there wasn't support for it. And there wasn't enough resources for education because we didn't have internet. We had one landline computer for 14 youth with no schedule for times. And then the staff used it all the time because it was how they processed logs.

**Describe your access to health care, mental health support, and other services you needed while in youth residential treatment facilities. Were your needs adequately met?** The classes offered there were minimal at best. We were responsible for scheduling our own appointments.

**Your safety and well-being are extremely important, and we are committed to understanding your experiences. Did you feel safe during your time in youth residential treatment facilities? If you experienced any instances of abuse, neglect, or overly harsh punishment, please share what you feel comfortable discussing.** Nope. It was like a jail environment in terms of everyone's mentality. Fights everyday with the staff egging us on. We had a little gang where I was an enforcer so I took on two people at a time or choked someone out. I've got an x shaped scar on my palm from a kid gunning for my throat. One kid got set on fire. Another kid, she carved herself hard-core in the legs. Any time we didn't do what the staff wanted, we'd get our quarters taken so one time I was told to go do job applications with no digital access. My bus quarters were taken so I couldn't ride the bus. So I walked 20 miles in 100 degree heat. Another time I got picked up by the police for walking on the highway.

**We understand that your experiences in youth residential treatment facilities may have had a lasting impact on your life. Your insights are valuable in helping us understand these effects. How have your experiences in youth residential treatment facilities affected your life and well-being, both during your time there and after leaving care? Please share any ways these experiences have influenced you.** I've got scars physically and mentally. Holidays and birthdays spent alone. I interned at my jail as a teacher, and I didn't recognize one of my students. He was my best friend

from that group home. I always check every shadow in case someone tries to get a jump on me because that fight mentality doesn't go away.

**If you could tell policymakers one thing about youth residential treatment facilities and what needs to change, what would it be?** We were kids. And yet we're thrown into this pipeline of homelessness, incarceration, and death. We aren't offered chances to be successful and I'd hope this helps gets more eyes on us who are and we're discarded and forgotten.

---

ID: 25

Age: 24

**How old were you when you were sent to the institutional placement(s)?** 11

**What was the name of the institutional placement(s)? Did you experience this placement while in foster care?** N/A

**We understand that sharing your experiences can be difficult, and we appreciate your courage in doing so. Would you be willing to share with us about your time in youth residential treatment facilities? What were some of the aspects of your living conditions, including the quality of food, clothing, and overall care you received?** Yes. It's a lot to type.

**We know that maintaining education can be challenging in different living situations, and we value your input on this matter. Were you able to continue your education and receive the academic support you needed while living in the youth residential treatment facilities? Please share your experiences, including any challenges or successes you encountered.** Yes, I was able to continue school in college and recently graduated.

**Describe your access to health care, mental health support, and other services you needed while in youth residential treatment facilities. Were your needs adequately met?** Yes.

**Your safety and well-being are extremely important, and we are committed to understanding your experiences. Did you feel safe during your time in youth residential treatment facilities? If you experienced any instances of abuse, neglect, or overly harsh punishment, please share what you feel comfortable discussing.** Not all the time.

**We understand that your experiences in youth residential treatment facilities may have had a lasting impact on your life. Your insights are valuable in helping us understand these effects. How have your experiences in youth residential treatment facilities affected your life and well-being, both during your time there and after leaving care? Please share any ways these experiences have influenced you.** Not really the type to just trust new people anymore.

**If you could tell policymakers one thing about youth residential treatment facilities and what needs to change, what would it be?** Financial and health needs need to improve.

---

ID: 26

Age: 23

**How old were you when you were sent to the institutional placement(s)?** 8

**What was the name of the institutional placement(s)? Did you experience this placement while in foster care?** There's too many to name and yes it was during my time in foster care

**We understand that sharing your experiences can be difficult, and we appreciate your courage in doing so. Would you be willing to share with us about your time in youth residential treatment facilities? What were some of the aspects of your living conditions, including the quality of food, clothing, and overall care you received?** The clothing was thin, the food was either raw or small portioned, and I lived in a constant state of fear from my peers as well as staff.

**We know that maintaining education can be challenging in different living situations, and we value your input on this matter. Were you able to continue your education and receive the academic support you needed while living in the youth residential treatment facilities? Please share your experiences, including any challenges or successes you encountered.** I only got education during high school and even then the work was always way under my grade level.

**Describe your access to health care, mental health support, and other services you needed while in youth residential treatment facilities. Were your needs adequately met?** Unless my life was in immediate danger then my health problems weren't classified as important. I was overly medicated with psychotropic medications(yes more than one). Which made it harder to function and wean off the years of being medicated. Honestly I was no different than the drug addict at the time.

**Your safety and well-being are extremely important, and we are committed to understanding your experiences. Did you feel safe during your time in youth residential treatment facilities? If you experienced any instances of abuse, neglect, or overly harsh punishment, please share what you feel comfortable discussing.** No I didn't feel safe. Staff would abuse their authority to do whatever they want and I was always in fight mode with those I was forced to live with.

**We understand that your experiences in youth residential treatment facilities may have had a lasting impact on your life. Your insights are valuable in helping us understand these effects. How have your experiences in youth residential treatment facilities affected your life and well-being, both during your time there and after leaving care? Please share any ways these experiences have influenced you.** After I left I would steal and hoard food, eat like my life depended on it, constantly apologize for everything, and hide my pain due to years of being ignored.

**If you could tell policymakers one thing about youth residential treatment facilities and what needs to change, what would it be?** This isn't a pity party. I don't need nor want your honeyed word nor do I want you to comfort me. You wanna help? Then start using that sliver-tongue of yours to get your people together and start putting some actions behind your words.

---

ID: 27

Age: 27

**How old were you when you were sent to the institutional placement(s)?** 13

**What was the name of the institutional placement(s)? Did you experience this placement while in foster care?**

**We understand that sharing your experiences can be difficult, and we appreciate your courage in doing so. Would you be willing to share with us about your time in youth residential treatment facilities? What were some of the aspects of your living conditions, including the quality of food, clothing, and overall care you received?** Majority of the facilities I was in felt like a prison. Food was terrible. We weren't provided with clothing, just with what we've come with.

**We know that maintaining education can be challenging in different living situations, and we value your input on this matter. Were you able to continue your education and receive the academic support you needed while living in the youth residential treatment facilities? Please share your experiences, including any challenges or successes you encountered.** I've always excelled in school but junior year, while being in a residential program, I was constantly suspended and eventually ended up getting expelled. This was due to staff and students treating 'group home' kids differently. It was harder to get the help I needed as we are usually put on the back burner.

**Describe your access to health care, mental health support, and other services you needed while in youth residential treatment facilities. Were your needs adequately met?** My needs were always met but I feel as that they were met due to being able to advocate for myself.

**Your safety and well-being are extremely important, and we are committed to understanding your experiences. Did you feel safe during your time in youth residential treatment facilities? If you experienced any instances of abuse, neglect, or overly harsh punishment, please share what you feel comfortable discussing.** I've always felt safe.

**We understand that your experiences in youth residential treatment facilities may have had a lasting impact on your life. Your insights are valuable in helping us understand these effects. How have your experiences in youth residential treatment facilities affected your life and well-being, both during your time there and after leaving care? Please share any ways these experiences have influenced you.** Growing up in the foster care system has influenced me to advocate for those still in the system. A lot of people do not have the experience and sometimes those kids just need one person to understand exactly what they have or are going through. One main thing that has stuck with me since aging out is that not everyone is against you. I have grown multiple relationships with adults that were once staff and they have played a huge role in mine and my children's lives.

**If you could tell policymakers one thing about youth residential treatment facilities and what needs to change, what would it be?** More training and advocacy. Hiring individuals who truly care.

---

ID: 28

Age: 41

**How old were you when you were sent to the institutional placement(s)?** 14 years old

**What was the name of the institutional placement(s)? Did you experience this placement while in foster care?** WWASP: Brightway. Tranquility Bay. Spring Creek Lodge.

**We understand that sharing your experiences can be difficult, and we appreciate your courage in doing so. Would you be willing to share with us about your time in youth residential treatment facilities? What were some of the aspects of your living conditions, including the quality of food, clothing, and overall care you received?** I was human trafficked, against my will, through state lines, as well as out of the country at the age of 14 years old. My family was preyed on by the WWASP organization. My family thought I would receive education, experience extracurricular activities, have a safe living environment and have access to therapy. The promotional information was almost entirely false. I instead lived under constant mental abuse, verbal abuse, physical abuse, neglect and was tortured.

The living conditions were poor. There was no hot water and at times there was no water to flush toilets, bathe in a shower, brush my teeth or wash clothes (by hand). Diseases like scabies spread because of this. At times I had to try and clean myself off with a hose if there was enough water, and wore dirty clothing. Some kids 'bathed' in an unmaintained pool that was lined with a thick layer of scum. The facility was unsanitary and an adequate supplies were not made available.

Meal time had taped recordings that were supposed to be remembered at a later point in the day. The food was low quality and inexpensive, despite the high tuition, and often consisted of half rice and a lot of boiled cabbage. Juice and milk were both powdered. Any bread provided was often soggy. Kids were also forced to exercise a minimum of two hours a day in the sun. When I left, I was emaciated.

Other than sleeping, I was forced to wear a uniform 24/7, and over time the condition of those uniforms became poor. Kids were not allowed to wear shoes with backs in some facilities. If flip flops or backless sandals broke, they would either be duck taped together or kids would go without shoes of any kind, sometimes for weeks.

Staff, for the most part, were not trained to work with children. From my understanding, the wages were low for most of the staff because WWASP rarely had anyone with credentials working at their facilities. Strategically, WWASP would often set up in areas where they could be the main employer of the area. Abuse occurred and was typically not questioned or reported because of this dynamic.

I, along with others, was forced to go through large group awareness trainings (which they called seminars), which was done in effort to brainwash children into compliance. I, along with others, were forced to participate in brutal confrontational feedback on a regular basis, which was a part of daily life there. There was no method used that was therapeutic. I also was forced to work there, as a minor, without pay. Kids were made to be the janitorial staff, do hard work projects, be the day to day staff over other kids, and staff of their seminars.

My communication was limited and monitored, including to my family, and I had no access to report abuse to outside agencies.

**We know that maintaining education can be challenging in different living situations, and we value your input on this matter. Were you able to continue your education and receive the academic support you needed while living in the youth residential treatment facilities? Please share your experiences, including any challenges or successes you encountered.** I was not able to receive the academic support I needed because WWASP did not offer a typical classroom environment. WWASP sold this to parents as 'kids not being held back by other students' when in reality, there was no formal instruction. The books kids were supposed to read at WWASP, at their own pace, often did not amount to an accredited diploma. Some were kept from education entirely due to extended periods of isolation. Many survivors came home and had to redo their education or try to obtain a GED, because outside institutions did not accept unaccredited 'coursework.'

**Describe your access to health care, mental health support, and other services you needed while in youth residential treatment facilities. Were your needs adequately met?** I had almost no access to healthcare or mental health support at WWASP. Brightway claimed to be a hospital, but it appeared to of had no individualized plan for treatment for children in their care. (Source: 'Utah Adolescent Hospital Shut / Case of troubled Oakland youth triggered scrutiny' By Henry K. Lee, Reporter. March 19, 1998). Most, if not all students who went there were 'recommend' to WWASP facilities.

**Your safety and well-being are extremely important, and we are committed to understanding your experiences. Did you feel safe during your time in youth residential treatment facilities? If you experienced any instances of abuse, neglect, or overly harsh punishment, please share what you feel comfortable discussing.** I did not feel safe at any point in WWASP. In addition to what I mentioned earlier, I would like to elaborate that children had their days structured and monitored 24/7, like prisoners, and were not allowed to sit, stand or speak without permission. They walked in lines. They were not allowed to cross their legs, and were told what to do with their eyes, such as looking down or not looking out the window. Boys had their heads shaved and the girls had to wear their hair up. I did not have access to a qualified professional within WWASP to cut my hair in the two years I was there. Many kids were not allowed to shave or groom themselves.

Kids were often restrained at WWASP, even those who were not violent. I heard screaming on a regular basis of kids being restrained, and some kids had chemicals used on them such as pepper spray. Even non-violent kids were isolated and forced to lay on the floor, in stress positions. At one point I was isolated because I refused to continue to sit and listen to taped recordings for hours. After being in a stress position on the floor, on a towel, for hours, for many days, I tried to stand up. I was restrained by several staff members, who twisted my arm behind my back and tackled me to the floor, grinding my joints and bony parts into the tile floor.

**We understand that your experiences in youth residential treatment facilities may have had a lasting impact on your life. Your insights are valuable in helping us understand these effects. How have your experiences in youth residential treatment facilities affected your life and well-being, both during your time there and after leaving care? Please share any ways these experiences have influenced you.** I was first sent to WWASP nearly 30 years ago. I am still uncovering the damage from the trauma I experienced at WWASP. I initially came home with Stockholm syndrome, and panic issues. My experience affects my ability to trust people, and maintain healthy relationships. I have C-PTSD. It made my mental health worse. There have been many people who survived the troubled teen industry and later died from suicide, or from drug or alcohol disorders because they knew no other way to cope with the trauma they experienced in their youth. Trauma experienced in youth is carried with



a person for the rest of their life. It makes them more susceptible to further abuse, and to physical health issues.

**If you could tell policymakers one thing about youth residential treatment facilities and what needs to change, what would it be?** The history of the troubled teen industry had some of its start with a program called 'The Seed,' which was supported in the 1970's with funding from the government. In 1974 a federal investigation that found methods used at The Seed were comparable to brainwashing. The Seed no longer had government funding, but its methods continued, and other programs came to fruition using similar and other controversial ideas regarding the treatment of teenagers. This has gone on for far too long.

In the TTI, if abuse is actually exposed, often times the facility is closed and reopened under a different name. Often times the reopening is by the same people, with many of (if not all of) the same staff and sometimes even in the same location. So far there has profitability, not accountability.

There are laws that are meant to protect human rights. Kids deserve to have their human rights protected, and to not be trafficked and tortured in the guise of treatment. More needs to be done not only to keep kids at home in their own communities, but to keep kids safe from predatory practices.

---

ID: 29

Age: 20

**How old were you when you were sent to the institutional placement(s)?** 15

**What was the name of the institutional placement(s)? Did you experience this placement while in foster care?** I experienced eleven institutionalized placements while in foster care. Some of these facility names were: Open Door Youth Shelter, Child Place, the Children's Bureau (now named Firefely), Oaklawn, Open Arms Christian Ministires, and Wellstone.

**We understand that sharing your experiences can be difficult, and we appreciate your courage in doing so. Would you be willing to share with us about your time in youth residential treatment facilities? What were some of the aspects of your living conditions, including the quality of food, clothing, and overall care you received?** When I re-entered foster care at the age of fifteen due to a failed adoption, I was immediately placed into a congregate care facility because no foster home or kinship placement for me could be found. This event of going into foster care within itself was extremely traumatizing, not even including the trauma that would be incurred from being locked into a facility when I had done nothing to warrant the conditions other than not having a family. Since I was considered an "emergency placement", I was constantly moved from facility to facility once the emergency court timeline had run out. I commonly carried my personal belonging in trash bags, losing family photos, personal items, and things of value along the way, never to be seen again. In total, I spent 811 days in congregate care. My time in institutionalized settings was extremely traumatizing, with lasting effects on my mental health and relationships. In these facilities, institutionalized measures were taken to provide regulation, incurring a placement I do not believe to be fit for any child. For months, I slept on blue mats on the floor, with four kids to a room. Staff became our parents but without the nurturing love or freedom of a family. I was exposed to consistent sexual misconduct, violence, and suicidal incidents. Every facility was different and genuinely provided different levels of care to me in regards to treatment and how the facility was set up and operated. The food we were given was often utilized on a privilege basis. For instance, you could only have juice in the morning if you had a certain number of "positive" behavioral points from the day before. "Positive" behavioral points were given for tasks such as making your bed or doing your chores on time. If you had not achieved a certain number of points, which was always at staff discretion, you were given water only. This same philosophy was utilized for anything considered to be "extra" such as candy, soda, chips, or food outside of what was being regularly served. In my lived experience opinion, the incentivization of food was cruel. For years, I didn't sleep in a real bed, use a real mattress, or have access to an actual kitchen due to the ways these faculties were often industrialized.

**We know that maintaining education can be challenging in different living situations, and we value your input on this matter. Were you able to continue your education and receive the academic support you needed while living in the youth residential treatment facilities? Please share your experiences, including any challenges or successes you encountered.** I was a freshman in high school when my time in institutionalized care started. I had always been a straight A student and known I wanted to pursue higher education after graduation. Living in group homes and facilities while maintaining my education was extremely difficult. Because of my moves between institutionalized placements, I switched high school five times, with one of my facilities barely offering any schooling at all wherein they utilized an online program to educate the youth in their placement which barely covered age-appropriate material. The work was not individualized, and I found it extremely disheartening as a driven student. Through my other in-person high schools, my GPA was affected due the transition between weighted classes such as AP or dual credit courses. While this may seem insignificant, as a student driven by

academic success, it was emotionally hard to transition between schools that weighted classes differently and to see my GPA drop due to a change in location. In addition to this, group home and institutionalized placements felt survival based. It never felt like anyone cared that I was getting A's in my class. They only seemed to care that I didn't fail. This same approach was taken when it was finally time to apply to colleges as a senior in high school. No one really focused on helping me fill out applications or review my essays- they looked to the next youth because the staff knew I would at least graduate- which is the bare minimum.

**Describe your access to health care, mental health support, and other services you needed while in youth residential treatment facilities. Were your needs adequately met?** I would say that my access to health care and mental health support was adequately met while in facilities. Due to the legal restrictions and requirements around healthcare for foster youth, I think that they were highly focused tasks. I feel that my access to these supports was often generalized, with certain health events during my time in care not being taken seriously but in general, I maintained continuous mental and physical health evaluations. For mental health, being in a residential facility perpetuated the mental health struggles I was already having. Many of the youth I was with, including myself, were struggling with self-harming behaviors or suicidal ideations. Being in this environment surrounded by other people consistently struggling with similar things created a very challenging environment to heal in.

**Your safety and well-being are extremely important, and we are committed to understanding your experiences. Did you feel safe during your time in youth residential treatment facilities? If you experienced any instances of abuse, neglect, or overly harsh punishment, please share what you feel comfortable discussing.** In general, I did not feel safe during my time in youth residential treatment facilities. At my first-ever congregate care facility, there were five fights within my first three days. I quickly learned to walk with my back to a wall and consciously be aware of my surroundings at all times. It was no way for a child to live. Punishments in these facilities were tough. In my experience, there was almost nothing left to take away from us- we already only had ten minutes on the phone to talk to our family each day, we didn't have TVs, extracurriculars, and couldn't just outside whenever we wanted. Simple things such as food were used for punishment, such as only being able to eat a peanut butter sandwich for dinner if you were in trouble instead of getting to eat the same thing as the rest of the group. There was also rules of "silence" when in trouble such as not being able to speak for a certain number of hours due to the severity of the behavior, with nighttime sleeping hours not counted. For example, not doing your chore would be five hours of silence versus getting into a fight may be forty. These punishments felt cruel, and if you were caught speaking, your time on silence would restart. Other instances of punishments included chores such as scrubbing the stairs with small objects like a toothbrush or difficult tasks such as scraping disgusting things from a trashcan.

One overly harsh punishment I would like to highlight and draw attention to is often not referred to as a "punishment" but poses as an extreme abuse of power: restraints and trazodone shots. During my time in congregate settings, a substance that youth called "booty juice" was often employed in instances of high stress or tension. However, I witnessed many instances where a child was injected with a sedative in a situation that didn't pose harm. These shots were often used to threaten youth because if you didn't comply, you would be injected with a syringe full of a sedative, and sleep the rest of the day involuntarily. these instances were both traumatizing to witness and first-hand experience. The abuse of power for physical restraints and medicine was inhumane.

While in these facilities, there were times I struggled with my mental health. Sometimes this would result in being placed on a "one-to-one" where I had to be monitored at all times, including when I showered, changed, or used the bathroom. There were multiple instances within a specific facility where I was paired

with a male staff to be my “one-to-one”, which resulted in being watched by an adult male when I showered. I never felt comfortable in these instances, but I didn’t have a say in the gender of the staff that I was assigned.

During my time in these facilities, there were instances of sexual abuse among residents with staff; though, I was never a personal victim and wish to uplift the individuals who were.

**We understand that your experiences in youth residential treatment facilities may have had a lasting impact on your life. Your insights are valuable in helping us understand these effects. How have your experiences in youth residential treatment facilities affected your life and well-being, both during your time there and after leaving care? Please share any ways these experiences have influenced you.** I left my final congregate care facility just three months before turning eighteen. Shortly after, I transitioned to college.

My time in congregate care still haunts me to this day. I am still scarred with the memories of myself and my peers in these facilities being restrained, injected involuntarily with medicine, and abused by staff power. The memories that stayed with me from these facilities are vivid and heartbreaking. I remember my excitement when after YEARS of congregate care, I could finally sleep in a real bed again. I could eat real food again. I could sleep in on a Saturday, and participate in normal childhood activities like seeing a friend or going to a football game.

It took me a long time to distance myself from the institutionalized procedures and schedules of congregate care such as ten-minute timed showers and constantly being monitored. These facilities took away much of my understanding of relational health, which I am still trying to rebuild with friends and family.

**If you could tell policymakers one thing about youth residential treatment facilities and what needs to change, what would it be?** My time in congregate care still haunts me to this day. Before becoming a foster youth, I had no clue about the conditions under which children in these facilities lived. My number one recommendation for policymakers is to take a deep dive into the real-life practices and procedures of these facilities and reflect on whether these practices are ethical. From my experience in these facilities, I would conclude that congregate care facilities including residential treatment facilities are NEVER suitable for long-term care for a child.

If I could change one thing, I would promote normalcy in these settings. Require residential treatment facilities to document how they maintain ethical and routine methods of normalcy. Require them to encourage relationships with family and friends between their youth. Ensure all education is attainable and accessible- no unnecessary moves or gaps in education. Allow access to extracurriculars and community events to promote healthy growth, happiness, and time management. Ensure basic needs such as food, clothing, and mental support can NEVER be used as a method of punishment. Enforce normalcy in these facilities because EVERY child deserves a chance.

---

ID: 30

Age: 41

**How old were you when you were sent to the institutional placement(s)?** 15

**What was the name of the institutional placement(s)? Did you experience this placement while in foster care?** Casa By the Sea/ teen challenge/ WWASP

**We understand that sharing your experiences can be difficult, and we appreciate your courage in doing so. Would you be willing to share with us about your time in youth residential treatment facilities? What were some of the aspects of your living conditions, including the quality of food, clothing, and overall care you received? Where to start???** I was woken up at around 3 am by three hugh white men and was told I was going to a school in Mexico. I refused and was taken by force, handcuffed and thrown in the back seat and driven down to Ensinada Mexico. When I got there I seen one of my girlfriends and the first things I was told was I couldn't speak English and I couldn't talk to any of the girls in my family unless given permission. I was there for three years. I experienced heavy abuse. They starved us, i didn't talk to my family for over a year because they made the program so hard to advance to upper levels. Every month they were conning my parents out of hundreds of dollars. The girl I spoke of Jade Janks was just convicted of first degree murder. I am now a 41 year old single mother who is on methadone, after I left the program I fell even harder trying to numb myself with anything I could get my hands on. I have a drug felony which makes it so hard to find a job now days. Every day is a struggle for me. I want Jason and Dase to PAY FOR RIPPING OFF MY FAMILY AND SELLING A LIE. SOMEONE HELP US SURVIVORS PLEASE. I DISERVE COMPENSATION ALONG WITH EVERY OTHER KID ABUSED IN THESE HORRIBLE PLACES. TEEN CHALLENGE AND WWASP NEEDS TO GET SUED AND SHUT DOWN!!!!

**We know that maintaining education can be challenging in different living situations, and we value your input on this matter. Were you able to continue your education and receive the academic support you needed while living in the youth residential treatment facilities? Please share your experiences, including any challenges or successes you encountered.** My highschool diploma they gave me is FAKE

**Describe your access to health care, mental health support, and other services you needed while in youth residential treatment facilities. Were your needs adequately met?** No absolutely NOT

**Your safety and well-being are extremely important, and we are committed to understanding your experiences. Did you feel safe during your time in youth residential treatment facilities? If you experienced any instances of abuse, neglect, or overly harsh punishment, please share what you feel comfortable discussing.** I was abused sexually, physically, starved, manipulated and brainwashed. It was a nightmare

**We understand that your experiences in youth residential treatment facilities may have had a lasting impact on your life. Your insights are valuable in helping us understand these effects. How have your experiences in youth residential treatment facilities affected your life and well-being, both during your time there and after leaving care? Please share any ways these experiences have influenced you.** I have been in and out of residential programs and jail my whole life.

**If you could tell policymakers one thing about youth residential treatment facilities and what needs to change, what would it be? SHUT THEM ALL DOWN!**

---

ID: 31

Age: 19

**How old were you when you were sent to the institutional placement(s)?** 15

**What was the name of the institutional placement(s)? Did you experience this placement while in foster care?** Diamond Ranch Academy

**We understand that sharing your experiences can be difficult, and we appreciate your courage in doing so. Would you be willing to share with us about your time in youth residential treatment facilities? What were some of the aspects of your living conditions, including the quality of food, clothing, and overall care you received?** It was really excited I had a lot of downs that still come to my mind till this day which isn't good they did take care of the clothing and everything but mental health was not good over there

**We know that maintaining education can be challenging in different living situations, and we value your input on this matter. Were you able to continue your education and receive the academic support you needed while living in the youth residential treatment facilities? Please share your experiences, including any challenges or successes you encountered.** No

**Describe your access to health care, mental health support, and other services you needed while in youth residential treatment facilities. Were your needs adequately met?** My friend died because she had an infection and the staff wouldn't get her the medical attention she was asking for. They ignored her and she died from sepsis

**Your safety and well-being are extremely important, and we are committed to understanding your experiences. Did you feel safe during your time in youth residential treatment facilities? If you experienced any instances of abuse, neglect, or overly harsh punishment, please share what you feel comfortable discussing.** No

**We understand that your experiences in youth residential treatment facilities may have had a lasting impact on your life. Your insights are valuable in helping us understand these effects. How have your experiences in youth residential treatment facilities affected your life and well-being, both during your time there and after leaving care? Please share any ways these experiences have influenced you.** Horrible

**If you could tell policymakers one thing about youth residential treatment facilities and what needs to change, what would it be?** Everything

---

ID: 32  
Age: 20

**How old were you when you were sent to the institutional placement(s)?** 13-17

**What was the name of the institutional placement(s)? Did you experience this placement while in foster care?** Uinta Academy, University Neuropsychiatric Unit, Elevations RTC. I was not in foster care.

**We understand that sharing your experiences can be difficult, and we appreciate your courage in doing so. Would you be willing to share with us about your time in youth residential treatment facilities? What were some of the aspects of your living conditions, including the quality of food, clothing, and overall care you received?** I was abused at Uinta Academy and Elevations RTC. At Uinta Academy I was underfed, gaslit, humiliated or ignored by staff, put in physical restraints that were undocumented, punished with hours, days, or weeks of manual labor, conditioned to suppress my emotions, and was not able to communicate privately with anyone outside the facility. I was punished for crying, told that I was faking my suicidal ideation, and labelled as a manipulative attention-seeker. Queer students were not permitted to come out or discuss their identities. I was forced to sleep on the living room floor with all of the lights on, sometimes without a pillow or blanket. Staff would follow me into the bathroom and watch me use the bathroom and shower. I remember my friends and I scrubbing the kitchen floor with toothbrushes and raking moldy hay in the hay barn as a punishment. Usually outdoor labor took hours with minimal breaks for water or rest. We cleaned the house for hours every day and all day on Saturdays. Staff read my journals, read my letters to my parents, and monitored every phone call. This isn't everything.

At Elevations RTC I was emotionally and physically abused. I was put in physical holds that were intended to cause pain and were not necessary. I was dragged across the floor and my arms were twisted behind my back on multiple occasions. I was encouraged to snitch on my friends or my level could be taken away. Kids constantly got sick and spread illness, and I was there during the Elevations COVID-19 outbreak in 2020. I saw countless kids in my dorm attempt suicide, many requiring treatment at the hospital. We had bed bugs for almost an entire year. I contracted an infection in my fingernail which needed to be drained at the hospital since I didn't get it properly treated for weeks. I was again labelled as a manipulative attention-seeker by staff. I was socially isolated as punishment. I was placed in a small time out room at least once that I can remember. I was body checked/searched countless times. I was watched by staff in the shower. This isn't everything either but I hope it helps.

**We know that maintaining education can be challenging in different living situations, and we value your input on this matter. Were you able to continue your education and receive the academic support you needed while living in the youth residential treatment facilities? Please share your experiences, including any challenges or successes you encountered.** I completed my entire high school diploma in the tti, which took away countless social and developmental opportunities that I would have had if I had gone to a normal high school. I still grieve for this loss but I am grateful that I was able to get my diploma at all.

**Describe your access to health care, mental health support, and other services you needed while in youth residential treatment facilities. Were your needs adequately met?** I did not see a primary care doctor the entire 3.5 years I was in the tti. I saw one dentist who said that I had a cavity when I really didn't.



**Your safety and well-being are extremely important, and we are committed to understanding your experiences. Did you feel safe during your time in youth residential treatment facilities? If you experienced any instances of abuse, neglect, or overly harsh punishment, please share what you feel comfortable discussing.** I did not feel safe. I was constantly being emotionally mistreated and I could be punished for anything at any moment. It felt like I had to shut down every emotion and instinct in my body so that they couldn't find anything to punish me for. I was punished once for saying my own name because the staff member thought that I had said a swear word and didn't believe me when I said that I hadn't. I also was subjected to abusive practices in the bathroom, which I will not discuss here but still affect me on a daily basis three years after leaving the tti.

**We understand that your experiences in youth residential treatment facilities may have had a lasting impact on your life. Your insights are valuable in helping us understand these effects. How have your experiences in youth residential treatment facilities affected your life and well-being, both during your time there and after leaving care? Please share any ways these experiences have influenced you.** I developed PTSD from my stay in residential facilities. It affects me every day. I still have a hard time showering or being in the bathroom, and I feel paranoid and on edge most of the time. It is extremely difficult for me to feel the full range of my emotions because I was conditioned to suppress them for so many years. It is difficult to cry, or even know what I'm feeling. I used to have lots of nightmares but thankfully that has gotten better recently. I have problems with authority and trust. I almost never feel safe.

**If you could tell policymakers one thing about youth residential treatment facilities and what needs to change, what would it be?** Sending a child away long-term is NEVER appropriate and will always cause more harm than good. It might seem like there are no other options but there is always an alternative to abusing mentally ill teenagers. There always is.

---

ID: 33

Age: 26

**How old were you when you were sent to the institutional placement(s)?** 15

**What was the name of the institutional placement(s)? Did you experience this placement while in foster care?** Heartlight ministries, clearview, wingate, turning winds and provo canyon school. I was not in foster care.

**We understand that sharing your experiences can be difficult, and we appreciate your courage in doing so. Would you be willing to share with us about your time in youth residential treatment facilities? What were some of the aspects of your living conditions, including the quality of food, clothing, and overall care you received?** Yes i would be willing. i experienced sexual, verbal and mental abuse. the living conditions were not great. i had a uti for months and the staff refused to take me to the doctor. the clothes were not good quality. we were forced to share bras. we were given finger food. and we were not allowed to talk to our families at times. i didn't receive good care at all. i left with more trauma and ptsd then when i arrived.

**We know that maintaining education can be challenging in different living situations, and we value your input on this matter. Were you able to continue your education and receive the academic support you needed while living in the youth residential treatment facilities? Please share your experiences, including any challenges or successes you encountered.** kind of. we didn't have any tutors if we were struggling. and i really needed that. so the support wasn't great.

**Describe your access to health care, mental health support, and other services you needed while in youth residential treatment facilities. Were your needs adequately met?** i didn't have any access to health care in treatment. mental health care wasn't great either. i was sleeping with one of my therapist to get access to things like food and family phone calls. my needs were not met. my mental and physical health declined while in treatment.

**Your safety and well-being are extremely important, and we are committed to understanding your experiences. Did you feel safe during your time in youth residential treatment facilities? If you experienced any instances of abuse, neglect, or overly harsh punishment, please share what you feel comfortable discussing.** i never felt safe in treatment, especially at provo canyon school. i was forced to write a sentence thousands of times, carry a hula hoop with me at all times, sit facing a wall for hours, forced to do sexual favors with staff. i also saw other girls get similar or worse treatment.

**We understand that your experiences in youth residential treatment facilities may have had a lasting impact on your life. Your insights are valuable in helping us understand these effects. How have your experiences in youth residential treatment facilities affected your life and well-being, both during your time there and after leaving care? Please share any ways these experiences have influenced you.** a month after leaving treatment, i overdosed, had my first seizure and died. i continued to use drugs for years after treatment. and my parents never believed what i went through. everyone thought i was lying about what happened to me. i still have ptsd from treatment. but my husband has helped me get through a lot of it.

**If you could tell policymakers one thing about youth residential treatment facilities and what needs to change, what would it be?** treatment facilities should be there to actually help people and not

to just make money. they should hire people that have real qualifications and not just everyone that applies. the amount of staff that quit after seeing what really happens in treatment is beyond comprehension. if you really want to help struggling teens, then offer them help. don't lie to parents and tell them what they want to hear just so you get their money. and if something is happening to you at that treatment facility, listen to them. don't use the victim of lying for attention. and there should be consequences for the abuser. i didn't have any of that in treatment. i was called a liar and my abusers got away with it and are still living their lives without consequences.

---

ID: 34

Age: 24

**How old were you when you were sent to the institutional placement(s)?** 16

**What was the name of the institutional placement(s)? Did you experience this placement while in foster care?** Solstice East

**We understand that sharing your experiences can be difficult, and we appreciate your courage in doing so. Would you be willing to share with us about your time in youth residential treatment facilities? What were some of the aspects of your living conditions, including the quality of food, clothing, and overall care you received?** When I was first there I was overmedicated to the point of chemical restraint, given multiple antipsychotics at the same time and given benzodiazepines three times a day. I was put in isolation three times in a basement. It was a small windowless room, and there were two staff members there at all times. I was not allowed to go outside or go to school when I was in the basement, and I did not see any sunlight. I had to clean a moldy bathroom with hand soap when I was down there. I was down there for days at a time, and at one point was on communication-block while I was in the basement so I could not speak to staff. I couldn't talk, I couldn't read books or listen to music, I couldn't do anything but "therapeutic assignments" for multiple days while being isolated in a windowless room. I was forced to sleep with my hands above my head for two nights. Apart from the basement, on a daily basis the students could be subject to ridicule and embarrassment by their peers or by staff. There was a group called "feedback group" where residents would essentially pile onto other residents with a barrage of critiques, and we were forced to endure it. For 9 months I could not use the bathroom with the door closed, and there was always a staff standing outside. They kept me there for 15 months and continued to create issues to encourage my parents to keep me there. There was a constant threat of being phased down and being kept there longer, or being sent to wilderness if we did not comply.

**We know that maintaining education can be challenging in different living situations, and we value your input on this matter. Were you able to continue your education and receive the academic support you needed while living in the youth residential treatment facilities? Please share your experiences, including any challenges or successes you encountered.** I managed to complete high school, but my quality of education was very poor. I had to teach myself calculus from a textbook and had three calculus test the entire year, all of which I failed, but they passed me. I had to apply for college while I was there which was very difficult but I was luckily at the "phase" where I was allowed supervised internet access for about an hour a day.

**Describe your access to health care, mental health support, and other services you needed while in youth residential treatment facilities. Were your needs adequately met?** I did not trust my therapist, and she shared information from our therapy sessions with other staff, with my parents, and with students in group therapy. It was difficult to access medical care. I got injured during a restraint and was forced to sleep with my arms above my head, I now have nerve damage in that arm almost 8 years later.

**Your safety and well-being are extremely important, and we are committed to understanding your experiences. Did you feel safe during your time in youth residential treatment facilities? If you experienced any instances of abuse, neglect, or overly harsh punishment, please share what you feel comfortable discussing.**

**We understand that your experiences in youth residential treatment facilities may have had a lasting impact on your life. Your insights are valuable in helping us understand these effects. How have your experiences in youth residential treatment facilities affected your life and well-being, both during your time there and after leaving care? Please share any ways these experiences have influenced you.** I have PTSD, nightmares, and trust issues. It is difficult to receive treatment because of my history of therapeutic abuse.

**If you could tell policymakers one thing about youth residential treatment facilities and what needs to change, what would it be?** These are for-profit facilities that cut corners and employ non-evidence based tactics to prey on parents and use vulnerable children as cash cows. The NCDHHS investigated the RTC I was sent to and noted severe neglect, but the facility continues to operate. The facility changed its name in order to avoid bad publicity. These companies need to be held accountable for the damage they have done to thousands of children and their families. They wreak financial havoc upon vulnerable families and traumatize children. Any company that is connected with programs that have been shut down for abuse and neglect need to be completely shut down. All of the companies being investigated as well as the parent company of my program, Family Help and Wellness, need to be permanently shut down. The foundation of for-profit troubled teen facilities is fraught and no reputable program can be built upon its framework. The basis is coercion, not therapy.

---

ID: 35

Age: 37

**How old were you when you were sent to the institutional placement(s)?** 17

**What was the name of the institutional placement(s)? Did you experience this placement while in foster care?** Diamond Ranch Academy. No.

**We understand that sharing your experiences can be difficult, and we appreciate your courage in doing so. Would you be willing to share with us about your time in youth residential treatment facilities? What were some of the aspects of your living conditions, including the quality of food, clothing, and overall care you received?** I was physically assaulted by young men for not following the rules followed by weeks of complete isolation and food deprivation (only fed leftovers from night before). Forced to stare at a wall all day even holidays while circling a bubble sheet every 5 minutes when the timer beeped. Lots of intense labor outside in the desert heat; could not : talk, use the restroom, use a chair, listen to music, watch tv, communicate with peers. Cheap clothes, cheap toiletries, cheap food, no mirrors, 24/7 supervision.

**We know that maintaining education can be challenging in different living situations, and we value your input on this matter. Were you able to continue your education and receive the academic support you needed while living in the youth residential treatment facilities? Please share your experiences, including any challenges or successes you encountered.** I was not able to complete my education. due to the lack of professional teachers and repetitive multiple question assignments. We were individually responsible for progressing in our own subjects.

**Describe your access to health care, mental health support, and other services you needed while in youth residential treatment facilities. Were your needs adequately met?** There were no professional attention in our medical nor our mental needs, only medication for the prescribed.

**Your safety and well-being are extremely important, and we are committed to understanding your experiences. Did you feel safe during your time in youth residential treatment facilities? If you experienced any instances of abuse, neglect, or overly harsh punishment, please share what you feel comfortable discussing.** I was brutally restrained several times by the son of the owner, Rick Dias, and other members of the male staff unexpectedly. Several witnessed the horror of blood and bruises followed by weeks of severe punishment and isolation.

**We understand that your experiences in youth residential treatment facilities may have had a lasting impact on your life. Your insights are valuable in helping us understand these effects. How have your experiences in youth residential treatment facilities affected your life and well-being, both during your time there and after leaving care? Please share any ways these experiences have influenced you.** I have lost a few of my former survivors that graduated from the program and after reconnecting with several others I realized how traumatic all of our experiences were. Our voice has finally been heard.

**If you could tell policymakers one thing about youth residential treatment facilities and what needs to change, what would it be?** These programs have destroyed thousands of young lives, mine included. If there is some kind of justice in this world we would need to start by hiring accredited

therapists and educators behind these programs that truly understand the pain behind the actions of these children. It is a cry for help so I ask to just do no harm and protect our future.

---

ID: 36

Age: 38

**How old were you when you were sent to the institutional placement(s)?** 13-15 years old

**What was the name of the institutional placement(s)? Did you experience this placement while in foster care?** Doctor Franklin Perkins School

**We understand that sharing your experiences can be difficult, and we appreciate your courage in doing so. Would you be willing to share with us about your time in youth residential treatment facilities? What were some of the aspects of your living conditions, including the quality of food, clothing, and overall care you received?** I was sent to Perkins in 1998 after spending two months on a psychiatric ward following a suicide attempt. I lived in an all girl's dorm, and went to school. There were activities both indoor and outdoor, field trips, events. There was a level system. New Beginnings for new students, levels 2-5 for privileges. Level 1 was punitive, New Horizons gave you the most freedom but was rarely achieved. Classes were fine but the curriculum was once size fits all that did not prepare me for returning to public school. No outright physical or sexual abuse happened, but they were quick to restrain if you were violent, trying to self harm, or just non-compliant. If they had to restrain you, they put you in a quiet room with hard floors and held the door shut for one to take hours. No sexual abuse, but it could be a sexually charged environment from time to time with the students and staff. There was a certain amount of emotional and psychological abuse from some staff members, though there were some who were nice and put a stop to it. One or two were known for voyeurism when it was shower time. One concerning incident was when I had a sinus infection and was put on Bactrim. I have a Sulfa drug allergy and I started having a reaction. They gave me Benadryl but still insisted I take the medication. I almost went into anaphylaxis. If my mother hadn't come to visit me and raise the alarm I probably would've had a serious medical emergency. I tried to run away, and was physically wrestled to the ground, and taken by cop car to a crisis center, where I was evaluated and hospitalized. I was hospitalized twice at the program. After my year and a half residency, I spent time there as a day student before finally leaving in 2000. My mother had to fight to pull me, because they didn't want to lose the money my hometown was paying for me to go.

**We know that maintaining education can be challenging in different living situations, and we value your input on this matter. Were you able to continue your education and receive the academic support you needed while living in the youth residential treatment facilities? Please share your experiences, including any challenges or successes you encountered.** I did receive an education, though it was inadequate for my educational level. I really struggled to catch up when I went back to public school.

**Describe your access to health care, mental health support, and other services you needed while in youth residential treatment facilities. Were your needs adequately met?** There was health care, but the staff were ill-prepared for medical emergencies.

**Your safety and well-being are extremely important, and we are committed to understanding your experiences. Did you feel safe during your time in youth residential treatment facilities? If you experienced any instances of abuse, neglect, or overly harsh punishment, please share what you feel comfortable discussing.** It depended on the staff members. Some were excellent and empathetic caregivers, some were indifferent or too inexperienced, and some were inappropriate and/or emotionally cruel to/with the students.



**We understand that your experiences in youth residential treatment facilities may have had a lasting impact on your life. Your insights are valuable in helping us understand these effects. How have your experiences in youth residential treatment facilities affected your life and well-being, both during your time there and after leaving care? Please share any ways these experiences have influenced you.** It's made me want to be a better advocate for my son's mental health. That I have to speak up for him should any caregiver or teacher or health care professional ever practice something that could be considered questionable or abusive. I'm so glad I have found Unsilenced, it has made me feel less alone about my experiences. I hope more survivors can find peace with their experiences.

**If you could tell policymakers one thing about youth residential treatment facilities and what needs to change, what would it be?** The students come before profit. Take classes, stay educated so that you learn how to treat children and teenagers with mental health issues. That no child deserves to be abused or neglected for any reason. That these places need regulation and transparency, so that these survivor stories will stop being a well-kept secret. To truly understand the kids and teens in these places, that they're not bad or troubled kids, they're just kids.

---

ID: 37

Age: 36

**How old were you when you were sent to the institutional placement(s)?** 15

**What was the name of the institutional placement(s)? Did you experience this placement while in foster care?** Catherine Freer Wilderness Therapy(X2), Bridges Boys Academy, Lockdown facility in Gladstone, Oregon, Provo Canyon School

**We understand that sharing your experiences can be difficult, and we appreciate your courage in doing so. Would you be willing to share with us about your time in youth residential treatment facilities? What were some of the aspects of your living conditions, including the quality of food, clothing, and overall care you received?** The worst part of it all was the initial kidnapping on December 13 2003. Then I did two treks in the Cascade mountains where I almost froze to death. Out there at the end everyone spent the last four days completely alone. From there I went to bend Oregon. I ended up running from that facility through the desert. I went to a complete lockdown facility in Gladstone Oregon after that. They used solitary cell where you'd be strapped to a table. From there I was sent to Utah to Provo canyon School. That was the worst place. On top of corporal punishment, solitary confinement, sedation, and psychological warfare was a daily thing. Blanket party's water boarding and group punishment was a regular. They employed people unqualified for there positions. I came home fifteen months later. This was a quick summary because it's hard to type this on my phone when I'm crying.

**We know that maintaining education can be challenging in different living situations, and we value your input on this matter. Were you able to continue your education and receive the academic support you needed while living in the youth residential treatment facilities? Please share your experiences, including any challenges or successes you encountered.** I passed high school in 6months via cheating. Got a masters degree in manipulation.

**Describe your access to health care, mental health support, and other services you needed while in youth residential treatment facilities. Were your needs adequately met?** I have no trust in doctors today because of the unqualified ones pretending to be doctors at these facilities.

**Your safety and well-being are extremely important, and we are committed to understanding your experiences. Did you feel safe during your time in youth residential treatment facilities? If you experienced any instances of abuse, neglect, or overly harsh punishment, please share what you feel comfortable discussing.** I was scared kid the whole way through. I give credit to becoming aggressive and the use of violence, because kids would get raped and I didn't. I carry myself the same way to this day.

**We understand that your experiences in youth residential treatment facilities may have had a lasting impact on your life. Your insights are valuable in helping us understand these effects. How have your experiences in youth residential treatment facilities affected your life and well-being, both during your time there and after leaving care? Please share any ways these experiences have influenced you.** These facilities traumatized me. They robbed me of my innocence, stripped me of my youth, and stole my identity. These facilities turned me into a person capable of violence. Everyone who gets close to me I harm, I am a felon and I have little to no relationship with my family. I struggle with thoughts of suicide, CPTSD, hypervigilance, major depressive disorder, etc... DAILY....for life.... Because of these facilities.

**If you could tell policymakers one thing about youth residential treatment facilities and what needs to change, what would it be? Shut them down.**

---

ID: 38

Age: 20

**How old were you when you were sent to the institutional placement(s)?** 16, I have been sent to many of these abusive places but today I am only going to share about one to limit emotional stress.

**What was the name of the institutional placement(s)? Did you experience this placement while in foster care?** Chamberlain international School

**We understand that sharing your experiences can be difficult, and we appreciate your courage in doing so. Would you be willing to share with us about your time in youth residential treatment facilities? What were some of the aspects of your living conditions, including the quality of food, clothing, and overall care you received?** I have unfortunately been to many of these facilities. Today, to save time and emotional stress, I will be speaking about one. Our living conditions were awful. My "therapeutic" boarding school never had any real inspections while I was there. We were in MA and I personally witnessed the inspector come in, test the water, and leave. That was all she did. To prepare for inspections, we were forced to clean the homes we were assigned to clean them up and down. They withheld our dinner until we finished. All inspection preparation was done using child labor. Inspections should not be planned. The house manager was given cash to use on essential items for us. Many house managers would pocket some of the money and not use it all on us. Grocery shopping was done at Walmart and the absolute cheapest food was bought. The food was not good and many of us struggled with eating disorders. We were denied any snacks, causing many of us to fall back into our eating disorders. When I left chamberlain, I fell to the lowest weight I had ever been at both from my time there, my retriggered eating disorder, and my CPTSD from the facility making me unable to eat. There were locks on the fridge and all the cabinets. Staff could punish us by denying us food, there was no way for us to get food without staff. We were not fed enough, not at all. Often times students would only receive a maximum of 2 meals a day and no snacks, and some could have it worse than that. There was an instance where my friend broke open one of the food cabinets for another girl in the house who was very hungry and just wanted a snack. Both girls and anyone who spoke up for them were severely punished. Many of us contemplated suicide that night. We brought clothes from home or whatever facility we were coming from. There was one instance though during a restraint my clothes were ripped off my body for everyone on campus to see. It was very public and humiliating. There was no care at chamberlain. It didn't exist. If you self-harmed, you were told you were attention seeking. Later in my stay, they participated in planned ignoring to me without even informing me and so I just started cutting myself whenever, it was my only way to cope with the abuse they were causing me, and they could not have cared less. It was very emotionally damaging for me to literally have all the staff on campus ignore me. And before they started planned ignoring me, they would really violently or inappropriately restrain me constantly. Chamberlain has a pattern of behavior with classifying all their students as attention seeking and the emotional damage that has caused me is impossible to put into words. That's how chamberlain "cares" for their students.

**We know that maintaining education can be challenging in different living situations, and we value your input on this matter. Were you able to continue your education and receive the academic support you needed while living in the youth residential treatment facilities? Please share your experiences, including any challenges or successes you encountered.** I received no proper academic support or participated in any academics at any facility I attended. At chamberlain in particular, there was no school. Instead, they colluded with my high school and put a bunch of fake stuff on my transcript. Classes I've never heard of, much less taken. My grades were fake, the transcript is fake, we

didn't do any schooling. They lied and my high school (Evanston Township High School) also lied on my transcript. The damage this has had on me is immense. I was forced into accepting my diploma by my high school, who knew what was going on at chamberlain and did nothing to stop it. I pleaded with them to get me out and they responded by excluding me from my own meetings. They offered no alternative way to finish out my education and claimed it was finished at chamberlain. They wanted me to sign a nda for pennies that could only be applied towards classes for the next two years and my mental state was much too unstable after leaving chamberlain for me to do schooling at the time. I therefore had to accept a high school diploma without the education. I then proceeded trying to make my way in the world without an college education. I worked many low paying and very bad jobs. I was finally able to apply to school recently and got in. I have yet to understand just how badly my missing high school education will affect me in college, but I'm sure you can imagine that it has not set me up for success. I want to stress that many of these faculties do not provide an education, they just straight up lie.

**Describe your access to health care, mental health support, and other services you needed while in youth residential treatment facilities. Were your needs adequately met?** No, absolutely not.

Therapists literally never met with their clients. I had a friend and her therapist met with her literally once a month. Sometimes less. Literally therapists just did not meet with their clients. All the therapists were terrible. Abusive to their patients. They would hang out with each other and do arts and crafts and eat and gossip about us and say bad things about the students at chamberlain. They had plenty of time for that but no time apparently to meet with patients. I cannot even emphasize how bad these therapists were. The talking bad about students was severe. They broke HIPPA constantly and would constantly speak to each other, other staff, and to other students about privileged information about their clients. They would bully and taunt us. One therapist bullied a student about their weight accusing them of being pregnant. Therapists had inappropriate boundaries with their clients and crossed lines that should never be crossed. I had extreme trauma from psychiatric facilities and everyone at the program was aware. They started calling the police and ambulances on me for absolutely no reason and they would lie to the police about me. They had learned that because of my trauma with paramedics and police officers that I would instantly go into a traumatic state and start fighting and struggling and running. Anytime I heard sirens my fight or flight immediately would take over. I wouldn't even be in control of my own body. There was nothing I feared more in the world than going back to a psychiatric unit. I had been brutally abused and nearly killed at previous hospitals, so naturally I had severe trauma surrounding it. Chamberlain took a joyous pleasure in lying to the police and sending me off with no warning. I was never told before they called the police and paramedics to jump scare me. There was one time where I was watching a Christmas movie with my housemates and trying to learn a song on my ukulele when all of a sudden, all these cops and paramedics come in and say where's Ella? I instantly attempted to sprint away as my PTSD and fight or flight took over. I was tackled to the ground and put into a restraint where I was fighting for my life. Whenever the cops and paramedics would come they were awful. I was attacked, had my face shoved into the dirt, and they would emotionally abuse me and say awful things to me. I had a paramedic intentionally put into restraints incorrectly to make me uncomfortable and said "how do you like that" he said awful things to me as I was sobbing and then all of a sudden starting like rubbing my shoulder and back and touching me which I did not appreciate after what he had done to me, violating my boundaries. Chamberlain called the police and paramedics on me too many times, just like this without any valid reason to warrant their involvement. The police and paramedics were often abusive as well as the entire process being used as a way to abuse me. At the er I would be abused/mistreated and I would spend my whole time there fighting the system trying to get them to release me back to chamberlain rather than admit me because I had a deathly fear of these psychiatric hospitals. Sometimes I would be admitted and other times I would stay in the er for lengthy amounts of time losing my mind and being mistreated by abusive nurses. I cannot express the emotional damage it had on me that at any moment, any time, I could turn around and there would be police officers and paramedics coming to throw me into restraints.

There was one time, two therapists had placed me into a restraint at chamberlain and I wasn't really struggling, but for some reason they sent like all available staff over and threw me into a restraint on the ground where I started freaking out a little. I self-harmed at chamberlain a lot to cope with the abuse. Self harming was a maladaptive coping skill I had picked up while being abused as a child, and being abused brought up really severe self injurious behavior in me. It was the only thing that I felt calmed me down in abusive situations. So I don't want to imply that there wasn't a reason to restrain me in this particular situation, I personally disagree that restraints or ignoring are either a proper way to deal with it, but the problem was the improper restraining of students, improper use of them, and in this situation it was what they did afterwards. Chamberlain claims to be able to deal with self harm and in fact specialize in it. They placed me an unnecessary restraint since I was already in one, and they took whatever I had found on the ground or wherever away from me and eventually I calmed down. They let me out of the restraint and I had no idea that they had called police and paramedics. They knew at this time and during my whole time there about my PTSD with these things. I turn and I saw the police and paramedics walking towards me and my fight and flight took over. I went blind. I guess I ran into the bushes and my therapist ran after me grabbing me and I guess he got control over me. My memories are spotty due to the traumatic state I was in. The cops and paramedics were fighting with me I guess (can't remember) and they got me tied down to the gurney. I really cannot remember. I just remember looking down at my hands after ripping out of the restraints because that's how bad the trauma they were causing me were. I basically turned into the hulk. My entire body and mind thought I was dying. I was screaming for my life. My therapist later joked about this moment to me asking me how I got out of the restraints. The staff watched me struggle. Still to this day I don't understand why this situation needed to escalate like this. I had something dull I had picked up on my way from class or something or maybe I had grabbed a thumb tack. I had cut myself maybe like 3 times and I was not someone who cut for shock value, I never went deep. I simply wanted to calm myself down. My wounds did not need stiches and could have been simply dressed by the nurses on campus, not that they ever did that for me when they caught me self harming, but that would've been an adequate way to address the situation. They ignored self harm all the time or would restrain the student and not call police and paramedics all the time. The 2 therapist's had the situation under control, it was like chamberlain was trying to escalate the situation instead of deescalate. Why did they let me out of the restraint knowing my past history and also having called police and paramedics on me before, they had personally witnessed my reaction. It is my strong belief that chamberlain recognized the reaction I had to these situations and how crazy insane it made me look when I reacted like this. I believe this situation especially emphasized to chamberlain that they didn't even need a reason to call them on me, because I would affirm whatever lies they told with my traumatic reaction. And so I believe after this situation chamberlain proceeded to call them on me for lies so they could "build a case" against me. That way if I ever tried to sue there was records of me acting like this that would affirm whatever chamberlain wanted to say. I cannot prove that, but it seems it and they just simply enjoyed my suffering seems to be the only two possible explanations for why watching a Christmas movie and playing ukulele warrants police and paramedic involvement. These are two situations I've talked about, and I do not have it in me to type out the many other times chamberlain abused there power on me and abused police and paramedic services. While self harm may sound very scary to those who don't understand it, please understand chamberlain was supposed to specialize in dealing with these types of issues. If they were to call the paramedics every time one of their students self harmed (that's how frequently it happened), then they would need to have their own private ambulance service on stand by 24/7. They would need several. A trained therapist and staff should be able to properly deescalate the situation. What I needed was a therapist who met with me consistently that did not cross boundaries with me (we will get into that), a clinician on call to be accessible by students if in crisis, proper supervision by non-abusive staff members, a safe and stable environment, and literally I just needed to not be abused. I was sent away from an abusive household, because the abusive household was causing my self harm and suicidality, and so putting me in another abusive environment was not the answer.

**Your safety and well-being are extremely important, and we are committed to understanding your experiences. Did you feel safe during your time in youth residential treatment facilities? If you experienced any instances of abuse, neglect, or overly harsh punishment, please share what you feel comfortable discussing.** No, I did not feel safe. There is too much to write out but I will do what I can. To start, the emotional abuse. Staff would say terrible things to you and about you behind your back and spread rumors. I was told to kill myself, that I belong in a padded room, that I was an attention seeker, that I had a crush on my therapist (we will get to that), that I was going to get my therapist fired, that I was coming onto my therapist, and more. Just anything nasty that they could say they would. Staff enjoyed putting us down and reducing us to nothing. They would get into our heads to the point where I started actually believing the things they said. I still hear their voices in my head calling me an attention seeker and I have to fight with my own brain about it. I would start asking myself, am I doing this for attention? I didn't think I was but maybe they are right. They drove us insane. My memories are so hard, because they are still partially buried due to the trauma. I remember reacting to awful things they said, but not exactly what they said. There were even other students coming up to me telling me awful things that had been said behind my back, and I guess it upset me so bad I can't remember what exactly it was the staff had said. The gaslighting was unreal. I started to believe my own memories were false. I literally started to question my whole life. Every action I made I would actively be playing their voices through my head. I lost control of my behavior because I had literally been turned against myself. I started disassociating so bad and lost control. Every single day of my life I was being told I was someone that I was not. I was told I was attention seeking, but not just that they wanted to emphasize that as my whole being. I was attention seeking. That was it. I didn't mean anything to anyone I was worthless as far as they were concerned, and my only purpose was to attention seek. And they told me that every day of my life. I lost my sense of self. I was dehumanized, and completely disassociated from even feeling like a human. There were no adequate boundaries between staff and students, especially female and males. My therapist consistently crossed boundaries with me. It ended up traumatizing me so bad I don't know that I can get into it too much here. But let's be very clear that he was the one responsible for maintaining those boundaries, for keeping his hands off of me. Not me. I was a child. I didn't know what was happening to me. I didn't understand the "comfort" I thought I was receiving from a grown man would traumatize me. I was just scared. He manipulated me into thinking I could trust him. "Yeah I was the one who called the police on you but they made me do it". Things like that. Pretending he was my friend, that I could trust him. And then when people got wise to him he just left me screwed. He used me. He spun the narrative that I was attached to him, but he was attached to me just as much as I was to him. The reason I was attached to him was he attached himself to me in the first place. I was 16-17, he was like 30 or 31. I was not responsible to tell him to keep his hands off of me. I did everything I could. I still remember his smirk when I tried to talk to him about what staff and students were gossiping and saying on campus. They were saying I had a crush on him. It was causing me so much shame and embarrassment. Children are not responsible for the maintenance of appropriate boundaries with the opposite sex. A girl does not come onto a grown man. And as a therapist, he should have understood the emotional damage and physical damage he was doing on me by blurring the lines and being inappropriate. I already covered the food earlier, that was traumatizing. The use of restraints as punishment, traumatizing. Spitting nasty things in your face while restraining you improperly. Abusing police and paramedics to hurt you/invalidate you, that was traumatizing. Taking coping skills away they also took our food and meals away. The other students on campus. Chamberlain would just accept anyone. I don't know whose genius idea it was to combine male students with past struggles with sexual offenses with girls, but that person needs to be in jail. It was probably the owner, who also has a sketchy offshore bank account and is a very sketchy and creepy person. My dear friend got sexually assaulted on campus by another student. One guy on campus got very obsessed with me. He one time got restrained by staff while going to rape me. They decided to switch his therapist to my therapist, the same therapist who was clearly crossing boundaries with me,

great idea. This kid would hang his dick out and walk around flashing everyone. He like just started committing sex offense after sex offense at the school. It took them forever to kick him out. Sex offenses were committed by both students and staff. It was just the wild west. There was an extreme drug problem at chamberlain. Staff participated in this problem, both supplying drugs to students, letting them use, and encouraging it. They could restrain me for self-harming but drugs were fine. The campus was not safe. The boys they let into the school were not safe. Some of them were fine, it wasn't all of them. But it was bad. A sexual assault also happened between two girls in our house. We thought one girl sexually assaulted the other, but then a therapist (of course, because why would a therapist be professional), broke HIPPA with the girl that had spoke to her about it and in detail told us the entire sexual assault. Like all the details, and claimed it was the other girl. So then we couldn't trust our own housemates and were living in fear of someone doing the same to us. We lived with another girl who was a straight up psychopath. She at one point tried to edge us on to go into the woods and try to kill ourselves by telling us she hid a gun out there. I chillingly remember my therapist telling me there was never a gun. She had told us this whole story. She would taunt me about what was going on between me and my therapist, edging me on to talk to her about it. "Well don't you think it's inappropriate that he tackled you onto your bed?" Your going to get him fired. She got very obsessed with my therapist, constantly asking to meet with him. Then something happened and it was told to everyone that she was banned from seeing him. I asked her what and she basically told me it was so messed up that she couldn't say. Given the fact that she was edging me on about the inappropriateness of our relationship I am inclined to believe it was something weird. She would manipulate my friend on campus into telling her things I had told my friend, and staff would come after me. One time her and my friend got me assaulted and placed into a restraint because this girl had made some accusation about me to staff. She would weaponize them against me. She would try to get me to tell her things and then use it against me. Staff never intervened. Another girl in the house would ease drop on what people said and I would catch her listening and then she would go and tell other people and try to turn everyone in the house against each other. When we went to staff nothing was done. Several times we expressed discomfort with living in the same home as psychopaths and rapists. Our concerns were mocked and dismissed. The therapists and staff would gossip and mock the things that happened to us, they couldn't care less. They drove students insane. I met a girl right before I left chamberlain, I heard from her later that she got sexually assaulted there but I didn't hear anything else. It broke my heart, she was such a sweet girl and she fell off the face of the earth. I haven't been able to get in touch with her since. That is very common for this industry. I don't know who victimized her but my biggest fear is my inability to speak up about chamberlain for so many years later has caused other students to be victimized by the same people who victimized me. Now lets talk about the planned ignoring, a fancy word for neglect. The last couple months of my stay instead of restraining me, staff decided to pretend like I didn't exist. This was initiated by the therapist that manipulated and extorted me and crossed physical boundaries with me along with his friends, the other therapists. It makes me sick that I still trusted him and held onto him despite this like a helpless child desperate for the affection he provided. I want to vomit writing about this. My last few months of my stay in between surprise attacks from police and paramedics while I was going about my day I also delt with staff just ignoring me. Not speaking to me, nothing. I was holding very strongly to not wanting to place my problems on my friends so I had no one to process with. Nothing. I started going crazy. My self harm got exponentially worse. This was the worst possible thing for me. I started needing to cut constantly. I had no where to put my emotions and I was trying to not kill myself and the only way I had to cope was to cut. But the abuse was weighing down on me. The issues with my therapist had brought up memories of past sexual trauma but I had no one to trust or talk to. I didn't want to get him in trouble. I was self harming excessively and I started experience outbursts of anger. The ignoring would upset me and so I would just leave class and no one would follow, because I didn't exist to them. I would just start punching stuff and grabbing things and cutting myself. I tried to give myself tetanus in hopes in would kill me. I had no will to live but I knew if I attempted suicide, I would get sent to my biggest fear, psychiatric hospitals. I would break glass and



mirrors and cut myself and punch stuff and kick things. I stopped sleeping towards the end of my stay. I would be awake all night at least 4 days out of the week. Sleep wasn't a thing. I had ventured so deeply into survival mode that I could sleep because I lived in constant fear of my therapist, staff, other students, and paramedics and police. I cut myself, hurt myself, destroyed things, and that was it. I became unable to feel, self-harm stopped working. I was dead inside. I was living in constant fear. Of both emotional and physical harm. I begged God to take me every single day. I knew I was going to die. The damage that the planned ignoring caused was terrible. I just accepted that I was an attention seeker even though I was in fact not. I said to myself oh if I'm such an attention seeker then I'm just going to cut myself whenever. I don't need to hide it. They don't care anyways. I'm just an attention seeker. And so I would cut myself whenever I had the urge. Staff watched me do it. I didn't care. They didn't care. Taking a trip back because my memories are disorganized, like traumatic memories usually are. Earlier in my stay, there was an instance where my house manager (who was very abusive) was shit talking me with another therapist, and the psychopath that was always picking on me. It triggered me so bad I ended up ripping a bathroom door off of the stall. (by the way, I had NEVER in my life struggled with violence or destroying things before I went to chamberlain). I was screaming in emotional pain at what they had said, and I can't remember what they said. It was too painful to remember I supposed. My entire time at chamberlain I was just being preyed upon by other students, staff, and the police and paramedics. The Middleboro police department is definitely corrupt and covering for chamberlain. That's a whole separate thing. I don't understand how they do not do a thing about the school. The amount of sexual assault that has happened and the police do nothing. They participate in the abuse of the patient's chamberlain sends them after. I attempted suicide several times at chamberlain because of the abuse. I am running out of time to keep writing about incidents, but this is just the start. I'm sure you can imagine there is more.

**We understand that your experiences in youth residential treatment facilities may have had a lasting impact on your life. Your insights are valuable in helping us understand these effects.**

**How have your experiences in youth residential treatment facilities affected your life and well-being, both during your time there and after leaving care? Please share any ways these experiences have influenced you.** This is a very important question. A lot of people kill themselves, turn to drugs, end up homeless. What happened to me, I attempted suicide not too long after leaving. Saved up my lithium pills and overdosed. I couldn't handle what had happened and what my brain was doing to me after leaving. I cut a massive gaping hole in my arm on accident, with realizing during a flashback of what my therapist did to me. The PTSD and CPTSD started eating me alive. I would start hallucinating chamberlain staff and vans and I would get panicked and want to start running. I started having constant flashbacks. All of a sudden, my body would seize up into a ball and like a tick I would start saying things. "Please Ella, stop." "Ella you're safe now. Please. You're safe. you don't have to go through that again" or "just kill yourself, please just kill yourself" Like weird stuff like that. It was like the girl from chamberlain came out and started talking. Memories would hit all the time. My brain was broken, and the voices of all the staff would play through my head. I would get flashbacks and my brain would just be like no you were just attention seeking though. It was all your fault. I continued cutting myself, trying to cope. I would have severe breakdowns where my brain would be practically forcing me to attempt suicide and it took every little bit of strength I had to stop myself. I would be hit and overwhelmed with memories and my brain was so freaked out it just was done. It was like you're killing yourself right now I can't take this. And I had to fight so hard. I stopped being able to have any physical contact with any human. I still haven't been able to be in a relationship with someone. I instantly go into PTSD mode anytime someone touches me. I can't have sex or be touched by a man. My body is covered in scars. Everywhere. I have layers of scar tissue on my arms, all over my legs, I have scars on my stomach and thighs and shoulders. People look at me and give me terrible looks. I get judged and so many comments are made. Half of these scars wouldn't be there if it weren't for chamberlain. I can't trust anyone and I haven't been able to trust or process or even make eye contact with a therapist. Therapy is almost more damaging than not going at all. I started

having such severe panic attacks that when I had my first one, I thought I was having a seizure. I became paralyzed, I couldn't speak or move my body. I was dying. My eyes were vibrating. The paramedics came and concluded it was a panic attack. I still to this day get these panic attacks. My brain genuinely thinks it's dying while they happen, and for a time I was having them every day. Imagine dying every single day, over and over again. That was my reality. Sleep. I couldn't sleep. The flashback and panic attacks and nightmares at night was unbearable. I just kept getting prescribed more and more meds because I couldn't sleep. The fear never left me. Nights are still hell for me. I still cannot sleep. There's not a single day where multiple traumatic memories from chamberlain don't come up. And every single day a traumatic memory of what my therapist did to me there comes up. It has not missed a day since I left that place. My life is hell, it is so fucking painful. I didn't get an education, so I'm finally going to college in the fall and I will be way behind and disadvantaged as to anyone else. I had to delay my furthering education, for a while not believing I would get to do it due to chamberlain. My anxiety has gotten so severe I struggle to hold jobs constantly having to change. I have panic attacks and cry constantly at work. I live in fear. Every human is a threat. I treat everyone like they are going to hurt me. I struggle to even have friendships. I want to emphasize that every single day is a fight for my life. I will be driving, and a traumatic memory will come into my brain and it takes all my willpower to not drive my car off the road. I am cold and closed off to people. The only reason I am alive is because I found God and spirituality. Without a purpose, I definitely would've continued trying to end it all. Through a lot of hard work on my own, and being out of an abusive environment, I am now mostly clean from self harm. Sometimes the flashbacks get so bad or I get so scared that I did something wrong that I feel the need to punish myself. It rarely happens though. If I did that on my own without treatment, that shows that the environment I was in was not only not helping me, but making me worse. I have not attempted suicide in about 2.5 years. And all it took was removing me from an abusive environment. So many kids who get sent away are simply having issues because of former or active abuse.

**If you could tell policymakers one thing about youth residential treatment facilities and what needs to change, what would it be?** We need to shut down all the bad ones. They cannot be saved, they cannot change. They are too corrupt, there is no policy that can help them. Places like chamberlain NEED to go. They supposedly "changed" before I went there and look at what happened there. What NC did with trails Carolina is exactly what needs to be done to these places like chamberlain. We need to create strict regulations, unplanned inspections, constant inspections, student interviews without staff or parents present, investigations of ALL allegations, an easy and accessible reporting system for patients. And when the bad places shut down, we can pave the way for new facilities or alternative treatment. There are facilities that maybe can change also. One program I have hope for is Newport Academy, I went to one of the better locations but perhaps they can change with these stricter regulations. But I think this is an emergency, and we need to prioritize shutting down these places. West Virginia passed a law that forced Greenbriar school for girls to shut down. That's perfect. Whatever we can do to get rid of these old corrupt human trafficking schemes, that's exactly what we need.

---

ID: 39

Age: 22

**How old were you when you were sent to the institutional placement(s)?** 5

**What was the name of the institutional placement(s)? Did you experience this placement while in foster care?** I don't remember.

**We understand that sharing your experiences can be difficult, and we appreciate your courage in doing so. Would you be willing to share with us about your time in youth residential treatment facilities? What were some of the aspects of your living conditions, including the quality of food, clothing, and overall care you received?** Yes I'm glad I didn't spend all my time in congregate care, but during my time in it from 5-7 I experienced 4 different placements 2 of those were group homes. My experience living with a white woman was interesting we were very well taken care of but my only issue was hygiene especially my hair I wish she would have been taught something about black hair know in my group homes it felt like a daycare you just lived at. You had breakfast lunch and dinner served to you like a school student and snack time like daycare and a bedtime the felt institutional. Since leaving at a young age I'm glad I wasn't older as know I feel like I would have felt set up for jail.

**We know that maintaining education can be challenging in different living situations, and we value your input on this matter. Were you able to continue your education and receive the academic support you needed while living in the youth residential treatment facilities? Please share your experiences, including any challenges or successes you encountered.** Yes the group home I was in had a bus to take all the kids to school. They did a good job on making sure you were at school every day my problems was the bus rides there was not any other adults outside of the bus rider and sometimes 1 sitting up front so I found myself being exposed to stuff I should have not been exposed to by older kids.

**Describe your access to health care, mental health support, and other services you needed while in youth residential treatment facilities. Were your needs adequately met?** As far as I know I always was taken care of as far as health know mentally no.

**Your safety and well-being are extremely important, and we are committed to understanding your experiences. Did you feel safe during your time in youth residential treatment facilities? If you experienced any instances of abuse, neglect, or overly harsh punishment, please share what you feel comfortable discussing.** The adults there all seemed safe enough it was the older kids if anything to be scared of especially when your young the threats by older youth was real and scary and did not feel safe to express that to an adult.

**We understand that your experiences in youth residential treatment facilities may have had a lasting impact on your life. Your insights are valuable in helping us understand these effects. How have your experiences in youth residential treatment facilities affected your life and well-being, both during your time there and after leaving care? Please share any ways these experiences have influenced you.** I learned to defend myself I say that something all of us learn. I feel like being young made my experience different me and my brother were together but we did have to sleep in separate rooms and I was very paranoid about that because I had already received threats from older kids that I had to sleep with in the same room so when me and my brother was around such as

lunch I had a lot of questions and would be worried as he my little brother outside of that my experience was just interesting was horrible and wasn't great no kid wants to be there every one prefers family.

**If you could tell policymakers one thing about youth residential treatment facilities and what needs to change, what would it be?** More adults and mental health and directly asking youth privately how safe do they feel and change accordingly

---

ID: 40

Age: 18

**How old were you when you were sent to the institutional placement(s)?** 14

**What was the name of the institutional placement(s)? Did you experience this placement while in foster care?** Solstice East Residential Treatment Center (now named magnolia mills school), No

**We understand that sharing your experiences can be difficult, and we appreciate your courage in doing so. Would you be willing to share with us about your time in youth residential treatment facilities? What were some of the aspects of your living conditions, including the quality of food, clothing, and overall care you received?** I spent 23 months at Solstice east, I had three different therapists throughout my time as well as being forced to switch teams because my therapist was moving teams. I had been there so long i was known as "og in the mileau" Which means I had been there longer than every other student, I was og for about 9 months. It was humiliating, I felt like I would be in treatment for the rest of forever. there was no end in sight and I saw kids come and go and come and go all while I stayed. It felt like no one there wanted to see me succeed, I didn't get much assistance with my assignments and it took a very long time to get them. I don't know why but I felt like other kids were getting out quick and getting all their assignments. but not me. I even got phased down for a staffs lies about me while I was there and had to redo half of my work adding months onto my stay. I felt helpless. My 3rd therapist was the residential director of the whole program and had no clients. But when I was being punished with "safety" for the 3rd time in my stay, my second therapist and the director sat down with me and told me "it's not that I'm giving up on you, I just can't help you anymore" and the director told me I was special and she wanted to take me on as her special client. Then they phased me down. It was a very weird experiance and all of these events and instabilities and lack of support in treatment have left me with substantial long term physiological damage. I will never be the same. They killed a part of me that I will never get back.

**We know that maintaining education can be challenging in different living situations, and we value your input on this matter. Were you able to continue your education and receive the academic support you needed while living in the youth residential treatment facilities? Please share your experiences, including any challenges or successes you encountered.** yes, education was fine. I completed freshman year, sophomore year, and junior year while there. we had small classes.

**Describe your access to health care, mental health support, and other services you needed while in youth residential treatment facilities. Were your needs adequately met?** They denied taking me to urgent care multiple times while I had a swollen hand. Forced me to continue skiing on an outing after I hit my head and most likely had a concussion.

**Your safety and well-being are extremely important, and we are committed to understanding your experiences. Did you feel safe during your time in youth residential treatment facilities? If you experienced any instances of abuse, neglect, or overly harsh punishment, please share what you feel comfortable discussing.** no. My rights to speak were taken at multiple times as well as privacy and alone time, that was always a privilege, I was phased down because a staff lied about me, I was chased and told not to speak while having panic attacks. I had a suicide attempt while there and they did not send me to a psychiatric hospital. I had to sleep on a mattress in the common area while on "safety" wasn't allowed to leave the building for over a week. among staff and therapists acting horribly and not having my interest in mind at all.

**We understand that your experiences in youth residential treatment facilities may have had a lasting impact on your life. Your insights are valuable in helping us understand these effects. How have your experiences in youth residential treatment facilities affected your life and well-being, both during your time there and after leaving care? Please share any ways these experiences have influenced you.**

Yes. I have C-ptsd now and my senior year of highschool, (first year out of treatment) I attempted again because it was so hard to transition and I felt awful. I still think about treatment all of the time despite being graduated for two years. I will never not be deeply disturbed from my experiences at solstice east.

**If you could tell policymakers one thing about youth residential treatment facilities and what needs to change, what would it be?** I lost half my teenage years to the troubled teen industry We need to end for profit institutions. I was kept at my program for 23 months despite begging to go home. They used manipulation tactics on my parents to take as much money as possible by claiming I would die if I left. I felt helpless and under immense stress for two years straight. I had no contact with my friends and had to rebuild everything. I don't want anyone else to lose vital developmental years and feel disconnected from their peers for the rest of time. It wasn't fair. I was a child and I deserved better.

---

ID: 41

Age: Aaron Gower age 22

**How old were you when you were sent to the institutional placement(s)?** Aaron age 22

**What was the name of the institutional placement(s)? Did you experience this placement while in foster care?** Ubh denton texas

**We understand that sharing your experiences can be difficult, and we appreciate your courage in doing so. Would you be willing to share with us about your time in youth residential treatment facilities? What were some of the aspects of your living conditions, including the quality of food, clothing, and overall care you received?** Aaron's care was none care.medical neglect and pumped with psych.drugs which made him almost non communicating with his family.

**We know that maintaining education can be challenging in different living situations, and we value your input on this matter. Were you able to continue your education and receive the academic support you needed while living in the youth residential treatment facilities? Please share your experiences, including any challenges or successes you encountered.** Aaron had almost completed 2 yrs college.nothing was provided for him in the CSI unit .(critical stabilizing unit ) they called it.

**Describe your access to health care, mental health support, and other services you needed while in youth residential treatment facilities. Were your needs adequately met?** Aaron had untreated hypertension while in there.2 days before his death they gave him blood pressure meds.before that time no meds for it.went in January 16.died feb 2nd.dural sinus thrombus (blood clot)

**Your safety and well-being are extremely important, and we are committed to understanding your experiences.Did you feel safe during your time in youth residential treatment facilities? If you experienced any instances of abuse, neglect, or overly harsh punishment, please share what you feel comfortable discussing.** Aaron was afraid to use their phone in the day room.

**We understand that your experiences in youth residential treatment facilities may have had a lasting impact on your life. Your insights are valuable in helping us understand these effects. How have your experiences in youth residential treatment facilities affected your life and well-being, both during your time there and after leaving care? Please share any ways these experiences have influenced you.** It took my boys life.i have PTSD since then.i have dreams nightly.Aaron would be here today if the RN had sent him out when he told her he had a bad headache that am.She gave ibuprofen and sent him on his way.he was brain dead before noon.

**If you could tell policymakers one thing about youth residential treatment facilities and what needs to change, what would it be?** Closely monitored changes in physical health and immediately being sent to the hospital to be evaluated.they did not do thus.Aaron died because of it.not mixing potentially harmful medications.vital signs taken on all shifts several times in CSU units.

ID: 42

Age: 36

**How old were you when you were sent to the institutional placement(s)?** 14

**What was the name of the institutional placement(s)? Did you experience this placement while in foster care?** Redcliff Ascent Wilderness Therapy

**We understand that sharing your experiences can be difficult, and we appreciate your courage in doing so. Would you be willing to share with us about your time in youth residential treatment facilities? What were some of the aspects of your living conditions, including the quality of food, clothing, and overall care you received?** The conditions at Redcliff Ascent were nothing short of inhumane. We were denied the most basic necessities and subjected to constant deprivation and neglect. The food, if you could even call it that, was meager and unsatisfying, leaving us in a perpetual state of hunger and malnutrition. We were given threadbare, ill-fitting clothing that did little to protect us from the harsh elements.

But perhaps the most egregious deprivation was the water - or lack thereof. In the scorching Utah desert, water is life. But the water we were given access to was barely suitable for animals, let alone human consumption. We were regularly led to stagnant, contaminated sources, forced to fill our canteens from troughs that reeked of animal waste and decay.

I vividly remember one source, a putrid livestock trough where the bloated carcasses of dead cattle sat rotting and festering just a football field's distance away. The stench was overwhelming, triggering immediate, visceral revulsion. But we had no choice. It was drink or perish.

Even when the water wasn't visibly tainted, it was often infested with tiny, translucent eggs. Left to sit in our canteens, these eggs would hatch into wriggling, repulsive creatures that we had no choice but to ingest. I joke darkly about it today being 'boba tea', but there is no humor in being forced to drink water teeming with parasitic life. It was a violation on the deepest level, a theft of our basic human right to clean, safe water.

The psychological impact of this constant deprivation and contamination cannot be overstated. To be so utterly at the mercy of those who controlled even our most essential resource, to have our thirst and desperation used as tools of compliance and control - it shattered any remaining illusion of the program's benevolence.

The message was clear: our health, our sanity, our very humanity were expendable. The 'care' we received was a farce, a thin veneer masking the abuse and psychological torture that was the true nature of the program. Every aspect of our living conditions, from the rancid food to the infested water to the constant exposure to the elements, was designed to break us down, to strip us of our dignity and autonomy, and to remake us in the image of the program's twisted ideology.

This was not treatment. It was not therapy. It was a systematic destruction of the self, a calculated erosion of all that makes us human. And it started with the very water we drank.

Policymakers and the public need to understand the depth of deprivation and abuse that occurs in these programs, often hidden behind the benign language of 'wilderness therapy' or 'tough love'. The denial of



clean water, of basic sustenance, is not a therapeutic intervention - it is a human rights violation. It is a form of torture, plain and simple.

No child should ever be made to drink from a trough of festering water. No child should have to choose between dehydration and parasitic infestation. No child should be so utterly at the mercy of those entrusted with their care.

This is the reality of the 'treatment' that occurs in facilities like Redcliff Ascent. This is what passes for 'care' in an industry that prioritizes profit and control over the wellbeing of children.

I share these painful, visceral details not for shock value, but because they are the truth. They are the reality that I and countless others have endured. And they are a testament to the urgent need for fundamental reform in how we approach youth mental health and wellbeing.

We cannot allow these abuses to continue. We cannot turn a blind eye to the suffering of children in the name of 'therapy'. We must demand better, for the sake of all the young lives at stake.

The thirst I experienced in the desert, the thirst for clean water, for basic human dignity, for a system that truly cares - that thirst has not left me. It drives me now, in my advocacy and my truth-telling.

And it is a thirst that will not be quenched until every child is safe, respected, and nurtured, in the way that I and so many others were not. The stain and stench of that tainted water is seared into my memory, a constant reminder of how much work there is still to do. But I have to believe that, drop by drop, story by story, we can change the flow of this broken system. We can and we must, before one more child has to know the taste of that terrible thirst.

**We know that maintaining education can be challenging in different living situations, and we value your input on this matter. Were you able to continue your education and receive the academic support you needed while living in the youth residential treatment facilities? Please share your experiences, including any challenges or successes you encountered.** Education at Redcliff was a sham, a box to be checked rather than a genuine priority. We were given the same packets of busywork about survival training. Survival training not far removed from the SERE training we put special forces through, almost like they were training their own tiny army of child soldiers. We all got the same packets, regardless of age or education level, everything felt disconnected from any real learning objectives or individualized support beyond reinforcing the rhetoric. Even more frustratingly, those that wanted to work on their courses were blockaded; little time was ever afforded us to work on these packets between hikes, in retrospect this seems like an excellent way to drag out a stay in these places, further lining the programs pockets with desperate parents fortunes. Staff were unqualified and disinterested, barely going through the motions of "teaching." My own academic needs and potential were completely disregarded. As a gifted student, I was left unstimulated and unchallenged, my mind left to atrophy while my body was pushed to its limits. Any requests for more substantive educational opportunities were met with indifference or outright denial. It was clear that our minds were seen as secondary to the program's aim of behavioral control and conformity.

**Describe your access to health care, mental health support, and other services you needed while in youth residential treatment facilities. Were your needs adequately met?** The neglect of our physical and mental health at Redcliff was unconscionable. Despite the extreme physical demands and psychological stressors we were subjected to, medical care was woefully inadequate. Injuries and illnesses were routinely dismissed or minimized, with staff showing a shocking disregard for our

well-being. One example of this grossly negligent medical care was found in reviewing my journal, an excerpt of an entry from the evening of my 38th day:

Day 38 West Tetons 11/6/2002

3.5 Miles

Another staff change came and gone just like that.

...

...

Right after breakfast I stood up and passed out. I have no idea what happened but I am told that I fell down, my head smacked on a rock and I was twitching.

After just a little my head hurt so much I couldn't even move let alone walk. It didn't stop throbbing till about 20 minutes ago.

...

I shared this with my mother recently and she was appalled learning of this event, as a retired medical professional she was alarmed at the lack of response to this incident, her reply "why weren't you airlifted to a hospital?!". My parents were never told about this potentially life-threatening injury, they just kept hiking me. Even the staff members response to my evening journal entry was indifferent, merely asking if I could write a longer entry the next night.

As an asthmatic child I was allowed to carry my inhaler, eventually, that is once staff got tired of being asked for it. Even with my inhaler because of where we were, a very special kind of dread followed me everywhere, the remoteness of this place left me with the knowledge that each spike of my asthma, could have been my last. Rescue inhalers are a modern miracle of medicine, but they aren't always enough. I could vividly describe times from my youth being rushed to an emergency room for intensive breathing treatments, out at Redcliff, such treatments were so far beyond reach there would be little hope of getting help before I was as blue as the tarps we carried. I lived with that fear every moment of every day, every tickle in my chest brought with it the panic knowing just how far any help was, how alone I was.

Mental health "support" was a cruel joke, consisting of mostly unlicensed staff with no genuine therapeutic training conducting abusive and coercive group or individual "therapy" sessions. Our urgent needs and cries for help were ignored or punished, leaving us to suffer in silence. The message was clear: our health and sanity were expendable in the pursuit of the program's agenda.

**Your safety and well-being are extremely important, and we are committed to understanding your experiences. Did you feel safe during your time in youth residential treatment facilities? If you experienced any instances of abuse, neglect, or overly harsh punishment, please share what you feel comfortable discussing.** I never felt safe at Redcliff, not for a single moment. The constant threat of physical and psychological abuse hung over us like a dark cloud. The isolation was crushing in ways that are difficult to describe in a way that adequately conveys the insidiousness of these facilities and programs. We were alone out there, and no one was ever coming to help us, a fact they reminded us of constantly, the only way out was conformity. To give in to the programming, to sing their song, to play their game.

From the instant I was taken from my home by strangers, I was hauled across two state lines, and dumped in that foreign soulless place. I was subjected to such horrors I wouldn't even begin to comprehend for over two decades. I was stripped not just of belongings, the very clothes on my back, but I was made to do it in full view of a leering adult barking orders at me to squat and cough while I stood before them like prey deep in a predators den.

We were barred from asking questions about the future, they trapped us in a perpetual state of isolated uncertainty.

In the groups, kids were given a number based on the order in which theyd arrived in that group. That number was theirs to shout any time they would be out of sight of staff, like crouching behind a bush or near a tree, one of the most intimate and private moments all of us share, taken and twisted into a sick violation of privacy. If we weren't loud enough, or calling it out often enough they'd come looking, they'd come running.

The staff wielded their power with impunity, subjecting us to cruel and arbitrary punishments for the slightest infractions. I was forced to carry heavy rocks for hours, deprived of sanitary and clean water, and subjected to prolonged isolation and verbal humiliation. The "therapy" sessions were a form of emotional and psychological torture, as we were forced to bare our deepest traumas both in groups and in our journals, all then torn apart. I lived in a state of perpetual hypervigilance, never knowing when the next attack would come. This was not a safe haven, but a prison camp for youth designed to break our spirits where they took our names and gave us numbers.

**We understand that your experiences in youth residential treatment facilities may have had a lasting impact on your life. Your insights are valuable in helping us understand these effects. How have your experiences in youth residential treatment facilities affected your life and well-being, both during your time there and after leaving care? Please share any ways these experiences have influenced you.**

The impact of my experiences at Redcliff has been profound and far-reaching. During my time there, I was stripped of my sense of self, my autonomy, and my basic human dignity. The constant abuse and mind control tactics shattered my trust in adults and authority figures, leaving me with deep wounds of betrayal and abandonment. After leaving, I struggled without realizing why for decades with CPTSD, anxiety, depression, and a host of physical health problems stemming from the prolonged trauma and neglect. Relationships and normal life milestones felt out of reach as I grappled with the weight of my unprocessed pain. It will take years of intensive therapy, self-work, and support from fellow survivors to begin to reclaim my life and my identity. But the scars remain, a constant reminder of the theft of my adolescence and the long road to healing ahead.

**If you could tell policymakers one thing about youth residential treatment facilities and what needs to change, what would it be?** If I could tell policymakers one thing, it would be this: The troubled teen industry is a national disgrace, a systemic abuse of human rights happening right under our noses. These facilities operate with near impunity, hiding behind glossy marketing and loose regulations to perpetrate unspeakable harms on vulnerable youth and families. The profit motive and lack of oversight have created perverse incentives for programs to prioritize control and conformity over genuine care and therapy. Policymakers have the power and the moral obligation to end this predatory industry and ensure that every child receives the safe, compassionate, evidence-based care they deserve. We need strict federal regulations, rigorous oversight, and a fundamental shift towards trauma-informed, community-based interventions. The lives and futures of countless young people hang in the balance. It's time for policymakers to act, before one more child has to endure the hell that I and so many others have survived.

---

ID: 43

Age: 23

**How old were you when you were sent to the institutional placement(s)?** 17

**What was the name of the institutional placement(s)? Did you experience this placement while in foster care?** Solstice West RTC, Rites of Passage NW

**We understand that sharing your experiences can be difficult, and we appreciate your courage in doing so. Would you be willing to share with us about your time in youth residential treatment facilities? What were some of the aspects of your living conditions, including the quality of food, clothing, and overall care you received?** Yes. I was gone June 2017-Aug 2018. At Rites of Passage food was severely restricted and I was hungry on a daily basis. We were often allowed one cup of food for dinner each night. 6-8oz of peas, quinoa, couscous, polenta, or rice and beans. Sometimes we could get a second smaller cup but we were always hungry. We were allowed no salt or sugar. There were 4 spices you could earn using as a privilege (took me 5 weeks to earn) so food was incredibly bland. Breakfast and lunch had to come from our own rations we got once a week. That again was not enough food. It wasn't uncommon for someone to run out of their rations and be hungry for multiple days as you could not share food. We could only communicate with our families in a once a week letter that was read and if they didn't like anything we said they would either black it out or refuse to send it. For the first 2 weeks we did a mix of kayaking and hiking. Some days we kayaked over 30 miles. We were given one trash bag for our backpacks and everyone's items got soaking wet almost every day because it wasn't adequate protection. We hiked anywhere from 4-14 miles a day on average with one stop day. The one stop day was when we were allowed to bathe and wash our clothes in freezing glacial run off rivers. We were only allowed a few drops of soap and could not adequately clean ourselves. When I left I had a severe fungal and yeast infection from a lack of cleaning. Most of our cookware was cleaned with sand in a river and not sanitized. I had to go to urgent care for a very severe 2nd degree burn from a lack of sunscreen. The doctor told me it was as bad as a 2nd degree burn could possibly be. That was only 2 weeks in and I was forced to return to the program on medication with my hand wrapped up and in lots of pain. I also developed what they called minor heat stroke. I can't know for sure because they refused to let me see a doctor. For weeks I was so lightheaded I often felt like I was going to faint, sometimes completely by myself in the middle of the woods. I was so nauseous I could barely eat. I felt like I had a horrible fever and would shake and cry myself to sleep at night. They gave me pepto bismol and told me it wasn't a big deal. Everyone met with 1 therapist once a week for around an hour. We would also do group therapy for around 30min-an hour that one day a week. Neither were helpful at all. The rest of the time we were being watched by "guides." They were all 20 something people with no mental health background. They would give us journal prompts sometimes and we would do "camp council" every note where they picked a topic to discuss but calling that therapy would be ridiculous. It wasn't at all. Most kids didn't genuinely participate because there was no point. This program took every single client that had a family willing to pay. The age range I saw was 11-28 and everyone was grouped together. That included people there for mental health, rebellious behavior, weight loss (yes literally weight loss as their only goal), heroin addiction, running away, and eating disorders. Everyone was given the same program and the 12 year old was in the same group as the 22ish year old heroin addict. It was wildly inappropriate. While I was there the program also decided they wanted to film an advertisement with a media company and a famous actress was going to come up from LA. It is on their website and I am in it. We had to sign forms for it but it was humiliating and embarrassing as I had spent the last 12 years rigorously training to be a professional actress. I already knew of and looked up to the famous actress they brought in and it was so humiliating. The video was fake and took multiple days of us doing fake activities just so they could film it.

I hated it. I was there for 13 weeks total. An educational consultant convinced my parents to then send me to Solstice West RTC in Utah (my family lived in Washington and that is where the wilderness was located). I was sent immediately and it was even worse than my wilderness. I experienced emotional abuse, physical exploitation, sexual abuse, and what I would consider psychological torture. My therapist was named Jeff Lavallee and he was incredibly cruel and homophobic. He would make fun of me by singing songs about my issues while playing his guitar during therapy sessions. He would manipulate me by telling me I was shaming myself when I would say that his words were hurtful towards me. He had a framed photo in his office with his favorite phrase, "tough shit do it anyway." I had one individual therapy session a week and one family therapy session over the phone a week. We had 2 group therapy sessions 4 days a week. None of this was helpful and often included attack therapy. We had an entire group just for attack therapy called feedback group where we had to give constructive feedback to each other. If you didn't participate you would be punished and held back from progressing. We were allowed our own clothes but with an extremely strict dress code on clothes, hair, and makeup that was rooted in LDS beliefs. It was not how my parents would have required me to dress. In my 11 months I know of 3 underage residents that were being sexually assaulted by staff. The staff that watched us outside of therapy sessions were again often 20somethings with no mental health degree. They were allowed to punish us as they saw fit including removing the right to speak, walk, participate in off campus activities, and talk to our families. Outside of the one family therapy session, you could earn a once a week phone call with your parents that was monitored. If you said anything they didn't like, like you were being abused, staff would end the phone call and you would be punished. You could earn short home visits but they were heavily monitored and anything you said negative about the program would be used against you when you returned. I had a school grade dropped on a final test for something I didn't do. Directly because of that I graduated high school not on honor roll. It lowered my average GPA just enough that I was under a 3.5. Food was available but lacking and I often went to bed hungry. I turned 18 while there and signed myself in because my parents were told if I didn't then they should abandon me in Utah and cut me out of their life forever. They were told if I did that then I was beyond help, ungrateful for all they had done, and no longer deserved a family. I would have been brought to a homeless shelter with no resources. That was the only reason I stayed. I was there for 11 months. My parents now say they regret sending me to both and had no idea what was happening. They still don't believe me about how bad it was and we essentially have no relationship. I only see them when necessary and I am a stranger to them. It's very painful.

**We know that maintaining education can be challenging in different living situations, and we value your input on this matter. Were you able to continue your education and receive the academic support you needed while living in the youth residential treatment facilities? Please share your experiences, including any challenges or successes you encountered.** Not really. In wilderness there was none. I got to my RTC in late September. They gave me credit for the 1st quarter of school that I missed the majority of as I tired hard at school when I got there. School at my RTC was a joke. There were 4 teachers and the rest of classes were online through BYU. All classes were easy and not comparable to an actual high school. For example we had English A and English B. Every student was put into one or the other depending on skill, not grade. I feel very bad for anyone who wanted to pursue an academic career after leaving as they did not get an adequate education. The moment I broke in treatment was when I had my final school grade dropped because I had a panic attack that they claimed I faked to get out of doing kitchen team at lunch (I had diagnosed OCD and kitchen team was very difficult for me with the germs). I didn't fake it and they put me in the position to have it. I was pulled out of my class where I was taking my final for my once a week therapy session. Your therapist can pull you at any time, often out of school, and you get no warning when it will happen. That meant I had to finish my final at lunch. I was told I had to stop my final to do kitchen team and it was so overwhelming that I had a panic attack. This final was incredibly important to me and I had worked so hard studying for it. I just wanted to

take my final. I didn't want to have a panic attack at all. The next day I was told I faked it and as a result would have either 50% or 50/100 points, I don't remember which one, taken off my final grade on my test which had a huge impact on the overall class grade. It lowered my overall class grade. I also had to do kitchen team (all dishes used to cook with and eaten off of for 50+ people) by myself every meal until they decided I would be done. This took multiple hours a day and was excruciating. I think it lasted for around 4 days.

**Describe your access to health care, mental health support, and other services you needed while in youth residential treatment facilities. Were your needs adequately met?** No my needs were not met. Every issue I went in with only worsened in their care. Any therapy I received (see previous answers) was not in any way adequate or safe. Anything I said could and would be used against me. When I had to get my wisdom teeth out at my RTC I wasn't allowed any extra privileges for comfort and could not talk to the other girl in my room who also got her wisdom teeth out the same day. We were given a few days of rest isolated to our room and could not speak to each other. Please see the previous answer about injuries in my wilderness program. There was multiple days I was scared I was going to die.

**Your safety and well-being are extremely important, and we are committed to understanding your experiences. Did you feel safe during your time in youth residential treatment facilities? If you experienced any instances of abuse, neglect, or overly harsh punishment, please share what you feel comfortable discussing.** Not at all. At my RTC I knew of the sexual assaults that were happening to residents from staff. I had PTSD from being raped before I got there. I was constantly terrified I would be assaulted. There was so much punishment constantly at both programs. At my RTC I couldn't speak for a week without staff permission listening to my conversations because I was standing next to a resident who made a sexual joke a staff deemed inappropriate. I have so many examples of punishments that were unnecessary and only used to break us down.

**We understand that your experiences in youth residential treatment facilities may have had a lasting impact on your life. Your insights are valuable in helping us understand these effects. How have your experiences in youth residential treatment facilities affected your life and well-being, both during your time there and after leaving care? Please share any ways these experiences have influenced you.** My mental health was bad before, during, and after. I now have serious health problems due to stress. I am ill every day with serious GI issues that I did not have prior to treatment. The only cause doctors can think of is stress. I can't even exercise or really travel now, I am that sick on a daily basis. I have basically no relationship with my family. I have severe CPTSD. I have no friends because I trust no one. I am constantly afraid I will be sent back 5 years later. I deal with suicidal ideation on a daily basis. My therapy costs \$200 a week now to see a trauma EMDR specialist and I see a psychiatric provider also. I am not my real self. I hate my real self. I hate life. I feel no joy because I am afraid it will be taken away again. I have no confidence in myself. I am so good at masking all of this because of the survival skills I learned in treatment (how to repress every emotion) that I work a full time high end job and no one at work knows how much pain I am in. I don't pursue my dreams I worked hard studying to pursue before treatment. I just don't want to be alive anymore and it is directly because of this trauma. I honestly don't know if I will be alive in 5-10 years no matter how hard I try. My life feels like a never ending nightmare and I haven't had fun or a good day in so many years that I can't remember the last time I felt good.

**If you could tell policymakers one thing about youth residential treatment facilities and what needs to change, what would it be?** Please hear us. We are dying and crying out for someone to listen. I am sick of watching my friends die because they can't handle the pain of what they went through in programs. NATSAP is lying to you. All you have to do is dig a little deeper and all of the proof is there but

no one seems to care. Look at how many of them have claims of abuse. It is not one or two, it is hundreds-thousands. They want to manipulate you into allowing them to operate and make billions of dollars a year. Why do you not care? Why are swayed by their money and false reputation? Do we not know that people can have money and status and do horrific things behind closed doors? You not caring hurts every single past kid who went through these programs and every kid still there. You are telling us we deserved this. No one deserves this. I wouldn't wish what I went through on my rapist. I wouldn't wish it on anyone. It destroys lives. Listen to the people who went through it, not the ones in charge. They want to make money, we want to save lives. They have not changed. They have gotten better at covering their tracks. Look at the lack of records available. Talk to the people who went through it. Please we are begging you. The people in charge of these programs have manipulated parents for years and they are doing the same to you. Wake up. If you believe them in the face of every survivor who is telling you the truth, then you should be ashamed of yourself. I gain nothing by lying about my experience. They might tell you different but think about that. What do I have to gain by making this up? I make no money and only feel embarrassed by talking about my trauma. What do they have to gain by making this up? A multi billion dollar industry and their reputation. They don't don't want to be known as child abusers but there is a mountain of evidence that proves they are to this day.

---

ID: 44

Age: 37

**How old were you when you were sent to the institutional placement(s)?** N/a

**What was the name of the institutional placement(s)? Did you experience this placement while in foster care?** Village Behavioral Health

**We understand that sharing your experiences can be difficult, and we appreciate your courage in doing so. Would you be willing to share with us about your time in youth residential treatment facilities? What were some of the aspects of your living conditions, including the quality of food, clothing, and overall care you received?** I was a supervisor and management regularly filled in staff names of individuals who no longer worked there to cover ratio. Children were given Plan B without parents knowledge after they claimed they were forced into sex by male clients. Youth and families were given no knowledge of requirements to "graduate" and staff were not required to monitor for behavioral issues. Children were trapped until insurance refused to continue paying. 2019-2021: Fractured jaw of student hidden from family by CEO Chris Shields. Children hanging from trees while Dan Benedict ignored radio. Mr. Dan B. under current investigation for punching a child. Mr. Jay disappearing off campus with a van full of teenage girls at 10pm. Mr. Reggie touching boys in front of other staff and an autistic child reporting Mr. Reggie pulling his pants down. Nothing out there has changed to this day

**We know that maintaining education can be challenging in different living situations, and we value your input on this matter. Were you able to continue your education and receive the academic support you needed while living in the youth residential treatment facilities? Please share your experiences, including any challenges or successes you encountered.** N/A

**Describe your access to health care, mental health support, and other services you needed while in youth residential treatment facilities. Were your needs adequately met?** The children received little therapeutic treatment.

**Your safety and well-being are extremely important, and we are committed to understanding your experiences. Did you feel safe during your time in youth residential treatment facilities? If you experienced any instances of abuse, neglect, or overly harsh punishment, please share what you feel comfortable discussing.** The children are not safe.

**We understand that your experiences in youth residential treatment facilities may have had a lasting impact on your life. Your insights are valuable in helping us understand these effects. How have your experiences in youth residential treatment facilities affected your life and well-being, both during your time there and after leaving care? Please share any ways these experiences have influenced you.** Yes. I struggle to sleep.

**If you could tell policymakers one thing about youth residential treatment facilities and what needs to change, what would it be?** Mandatory educational requirements for entry level staff. Independent quality assurance, outside of state 'good ol boy' networks.



ID: 45

Age: 18

**How old were you when you were sent to the institutional placement(s)?** 12

**What was the name of the institutional placement(s)? Did you experience this placement while in foster care?** Allendale association and Indian Oaks

**We understand that sharing your experiences can be difficult, and we appreciate your courage in doing so. Would you be willing to share with us about your time in youth residential treatment facilities? What were some of the aspects of your living conditions, including the quality of food, clothing, and overall care you received?** It was scary and difficult especially when you are surrounded by staff who are only there for the money it was hard growing up in a residential treatment facility.

**We know that maintaining education can be challenging in different living situations, and we value your input on this matter. Were you able to continue your education and receive the academic support you needed while living in the youth residential treatment facilities? Please share your experiences, including any challenges or successes you encountered.** Yes I was out in a behavior day school provided by the facility it was hard focusing on my work because when I was struggling a lot of my staff didn't allow struggling and they would go straight to restrain that made me not focused on school and be scared. I'm being restrained rather than doing my schoolwork.

**Describe your access to health care, mental health support, and other services you needed while in youth residential treatment facilities. Were your needs adequately met?** Everything was all right, except since they didn't know if I was gonna stay there for how long they weren't able to give me my braces and then I'm 18. I need them ASAP but now we have to deal with the problem of not being treated when it was needed.

**Your safety and well-being are extremely important, and we are committed to understanding your experiences. Did you feel safe during your time in youth residential treatment facilities? If you experienced any instances of abuse, neglect, or overly harsh punishment, please share what you feel comfortable discussing.** For Allendale I felt comfortable and okay except sometimes when we used to only have one staff in our house and kids used to act up, but in Indian oaks, it was so hard because they were telling me that I wasn't gonna make it. They were treating me badly and not feeding me well as a vegetarian so yeah.

**We understand that your experiences in youth residential treatment facilities may have had a lasting impact on your life. Your insights are valuable in helping us understand these effects. How have your experiences in youth residential treatment facilities affected your life and well-being, both during your time there and after leaving care? Please share any ways these experiences have influenced you.** They resulted in behavioral issues by restraining us and I didn't feel safe every time they used to restrain us because it used to be floor to face and that's not OK.

**If you could tell policymakers one thing about youth residential treatment facilities and what needs to change, what would it be?** More options for dietary needs people who need them because I remember in Allendale they only gave me food for the entire time.



ID: 46

Age: 25

**How old were you when you were sent to the institutional placement(s)?**

**What was the name of the institutional placement(s)? Did you experience this placement while in foster care?**

**We understand that sharing your experiences can be difficult, and we appreciate your courage in doing so. Would you be willing to share with us about your time in youth residential treatment facilities? What were some of the aspects of your living conditions, including the quality of food, clothing, and overall care you received?**

**We know that maintaining education can be challenging in different living situations, and we value your input on this matter. Were you able to continue your education and receive the academic support you needed while living in the youth residential treatment facilities? Please share your experiences, including any challenges or successes you encountered.**

**Describe your access to health care, mental health support, and other services you needed while in youth residential treatment facilities. Were your needs adequately met?**

**Your safety and well-being are extremely important, and we are committed to understanding your experiences. Did you feel safe during your time in youth residential treatment facilities? If you experienced any instances of abuse, neglect, or overly harsh punishment, please share what you feel comfortable discussing.**

**We understand that your experiences in youth residential treatment facilities may have had a lasting impact on your life. Your insights are valuable in helping us understand these effects. How have your experiences in youth residential treatment facilities affected your life and well-being, both during your time there and after leaving care? Please share any ways these experiences have influenced you.**

**If you could tell policymakers one thing about youth residential treatment facilities and what needs to change, what would it be?**

---

ID: 47

Age: 40

**How old were you when you were sent to the institutional placement(s)?** 15

**What was the name of the institutional placement(s)? Did you experience this placement while in foster care?** Family Foundation School

**We understand that sharing your experiences can be difficult, and we appreciate your courage in doing so. Would you be willing to share with us about your time in youth residential treatment facilities? What were some of the aspects of your living conditions, including the quality of food, clothing, and overall care you received?** Yes

**We know that maintaining education can be challenging in different living situations, and we value your input on this matter. Were you able to continue your education and receive the academic support you needed while living in the youth residential treatment facilities? Please share your experiences, including any challenges or successes you encountered.** No

**Describe your access to health care, mental health support, and other services you needed while in youth residential treatment facilities. Were your needs adequately met?** None

**Your safety and well-being are extremely important, and we are committed to understanding your experiences. Did you feel safe during your time in youth residential treatment facilities? If you experienced any instances of abuse, neglect, or overly harsh punishment, please share what you feel comfortable discussing.** No

**We understand that your experiences in youth residential treatment facilities may have had a lasting impact on your life. Your insights are valuable in helping us understand these effects. How have your experiences in youth residential treatment facilities affected your life and well-being, both during your time there and after leaving care? Please share any ways these experiences have influenced you.** Made it awful nightmares lost a lot of friends

**If you could tell policymakers one thing about youth residential treatment facilities and what needs to change, what would it be?**

---

ID: 48

Age: 26

**How old were you when you were sent to the institutional placement(s)?** 16

**What was the name of the institutional placement(s)? Did you experience this placement while in foster care?** Gloversville group home

**We understand that sharing your experiences can be difficult, and we appreciate your courage in doing so. Would you be willing to share with us about your time in youth residential treatment facilities? What were some of the aspects of your living conditions, including the quality of food, clothing, and overall care you received?** Sometimes no food or expired/stale food. Verbally and emotionally mistreated. Lack of medical care.

**We know that maintaining education can be challenging in different living situations, and we value your input on this matter. Were you able to continue your education and receive the academic support you needed while living in the youth residential treatment facilities? Please share your experiences, including any challenges or successes you encountered.** Yes, went to high school

**Describe your access to health care, mental health support, and other services you needed while in youth residential treatment facilities. Were your needs adequately met?** I was denied both mental health and medical care. I needed emergency medical care for an eye infection and group home refused to take me. They stopped giving me medicine I needed and mismanaged my medicine.

**Your safety and well-being are extremely important, and we are committed to understanding your experiences. Did you feel safe during your time in youth residential treatment facilities? If you experienced any instances of abuse, neglect, or overly harsh punishment, please share what you feel comfortable discussing.** No I did not feel safe. The group home manager and some staff were always abusive to us and some of the residents would act out as a result

**We understand that your experiences in youth residential treatment facilities may have had a lasting impact on your life. Your insights are valuable in helping us understand these effects. How have your experiences in youth residential treatment facilities affected your life and well-being, both during your time there and after leaving care? Please share any ways these experiences have influenced you.** Permanent eye damage with lack of vision, PTSD, anxiety

**If you could tell policymakers one thing about youth residential treatment facilities and what needs to change, what would it be?** I was wrongfully placed in group home because of corruption within the DSS system. Stop giving these departments \$ per child, they are abusing the system and destroying children

---

ID: 49

Age: 58

**How old were you when you were sent to the institutional placement(s)?** 16 to 48

**What was the name of the institutional placement(s)? Did you experience this placement while in foster care?** States of nj nh va ct ma me

**We understand that sharing your experiences can be difficult, and we appreciate your courage in doing so. Would you be willing to share with us about your time in youth residential treatment facilities? What were some of the aspects of your living conditions, including the quality of food, clothing, and overall care you received?** Inedible food, threats of gang rape, cannibalism threats, brain damage, public nudity, phone restrictions, restraints and injected drugs, slander, court injustice, theft, vandalism of personal papers, forced insanity, repeated commitments using prior commitments, pet death due to refusal to care by staff, contacting abusers for personal info, attempted forced suicide and repeated privications by professionals,sexual harassment,chemical mastectomy, threats of lobotomy, forced dentures without consent. Exacerbates childabuse and pedophile/ rapes ptsd. Lifetime forced drugging. Huge insurance bills, blacklisting, disinheritance, attacks on full time employment and education, accusations of prostitution, harassments in forced appointments,gaslighting, refusal of justice. Poverty,never married.

**We know that maintaining education can be challenging in different living situations, and we value your input on this matter. Were you able to continue your education and receive the academic support you needed while living in the youth residential treatment facilities? Please share your experiences, including any challenges or successes you encountered.** No

**Describe your access to health care, mental health support, and other services you needed while in youth residential treatment facilities. Were your needs adequately met?** Broken bone untreated, statements of poss scurvy, rickets, chem mastectomies, years of bleeding colon, celibacy. Tooth damage. Poss brain damage. Skin damage.untreated bowel obstructions. Poss weak bones.

**Your safety and well-being are extremely important, and we are committed to understanding your experiences.Did you feel safe during your time in youth residential treatment facilities? If you experienced any instances of abuse, neglect, or overly harsh punishment, please share what you feel comfortable discussing.** Absolutely not. Assaults naked with insanity causing drugs and grand mal seizures, castratiins in restraints. Refusal to allow contact with sane people, phone, mail. Refusal to allow hiking outside. Drugs caused no reading comprehension, decades of sleep deprivation by stress forced insomnia. Suicidality due to staff. Ongoingly false med recs.

**We understand that your experiences in youth residential treatment facilities may have had a lasting impact on your life. Your insights are valuable in helping us understand these effects. How have your experiences in youth residential treatment facilities affected your life and well-being, both during your time there and after leaving care? Please share any ways these experiences have influenced you.** I am a failure due to meducations, gaslighting, blacklisting, false drugs, slander, assaults, inaccurate med recs, decades of usurping my time to argue w providers instead of carrear marriage or college.

**If you could tell policymakers one thing about youth residential treatment facilities and what needs to change, what would it be?** No forced medications, no repeats, no blacklisting. No sex harassment, no gaslighting, vandalism.

---

ID: 50

Age: 30

**How old were you when you were sent to the institutional placement(s)?** 12

**What was the name of the institutional placement(s)? Did you experience this placement while in foster care?** Greenbrier academy for girls , eckerd academy, three springs ,SUWS

**We understand that sharing your experiences can be difficult, and we appreciate your courage in doing so. Would you be willing to share with us about your time in youth residential treatment facilities? What were some of the aspects of your living conditions, including the quality of food, clothing, and overall care you received?** At suws in the three months I stayed there I had 2 showers where we were watched . At suws I have major frost bite where my hands turned black and I didn't receive any medical care , we had to go to sleep with limited clothing on just incase we ran in the middle of nowhere. This us just an example of the horrible conditions I was put through.

**We know that maintaining education can be challenging in different living situations, and we value your input on this matter. Were you able to continue your education and receive the academic support you needed while living in the youth residential treatment facilities? Please share your experiences, including any challenges or successes you encountered.** I received a terrible education

**Describe your access to health care, mental health support, and other services you needed while in youth residential treatment facilities. Were your needs adequately met?** My needs were not met staff were under qualified and gas lit so many of us , took us from our friends and family

**Your safety and well-being are extremely important, and we are committed to understanding your experiences. Did you feel safe during your time in youth residential treatment facilities? If you experienced any instances of abuse, neglect, or overly harsh punishment, please share what you feel comfortable discussing.** I didn't feel safe at all I was scared and alone in a foreign country

**We understand that your experiences in youth residential treatment facilities may have had a lasting impact on your life. Your insights are valuable in helping us understand these effects. How have your experiences in youth residential treatment facilities affected your life and well-being, both during your time there and after leaving care? Please share any ways these experiences have influenced you.** They have left me with social issues, anxiety ,social anxiety and cptsd

**If you could tell policymakers one thing about youth residential treatment facilities and what needs to change, what would it be?** Qualified practitioners , no gas lighting or shoving religious beliefs down people's throat and a lot more access to family and friends

---



ID: 51

Age: 35

**How old were you when you were sent to the institutional placement(s)?** 17

**What was the name of the institutional placement(s)? Did you experience this placement while in foster care?** Heritage Schools Inc SPARK program

**We understand that sharing your experiences can be difficult, and we appreciate your courage in doing so. Would you be willing to share with us about your time in youth residential treatment facilities? What were some of the aspects of your living conditions, including the quality of food, clothing, and overall care you received?** I was given schizophrenia medicine. I walked 2 steps and blacked out. I was put in my bed and sent back to school when I came to. I overheard staff saying I was given someone else's medicine and it could have killed me. I hurt my wrist on a visit off campus and needed a brace. The school took my brace from me. To this day my wrist randomly pops out of place. It is extremely painful. I was put on unit isolation which means I had to sit on a wooden stool with no back, staring at a wall in silence for 4 days until the person who put me there took me off, all while the rest of the unit watched movies and joked around with one another. The food was rotten and if you did not eat you would be put in the hole (a concrete room with a leaky ceiling) for days, weeks or months.

**We know that maintaining education can be challenging in different living situations, and we value your input on this matter. Were you able to continue your education and receive the academic support you needed while living in the youth residential treatment facilities? Please share your experiences, including any challenges or successes you encountered.** I had an IEP written out without my parents present and without an evaluation. Nothing in the IEP was followed. I was given outdated GED packets for my education so I would graduate under their school. I did not receive any instruction. The school claimed I did not pass CHSEE exams when I passed both sections the first time. I did not go to college until I turned 26 because I believed I was too dumb for higher education because the school made sure I knew I was dumb.

**Describe your access to health care, mental health support, and other services you needed while in youth residential treatment facilities. Were your needs adequately met?** I am dyslexic and epileptic. I was not given any aid for these issues. I had an IEP written but nothing was followed and I had a special education teacher look over my IEP and he said it was written wrong and many aspects are illegal. No one who writes IEPs would ever require a student to do everything with 100% accuracy in 6 months.

**Your safety and well-being are extremely important, and we are committed to understanding your experiences. Did you feel safe during your time in youth residential treatment facilities? If you experienced any instances of abuse, neglect, or overly harsh punishment, please share what you feel comfortable discussing.** I did not feel safe. I was afraid of staff because the men in charge of the girls units routinely threatened us with harsh punishment and loss of levels. During recreational therapy I was singled out because I was afraid of heights and falling. I was forced to climb on a 6 ft tall log and trust fall into my units hands immediately after they pushed a girl from that very long when no one was ready to catch her. She landed on her head and was forced to get back in line to continue participating. We did a group activity where we had to get all 10 of us girls in my unit jumping a long jump rope at the same time. If we failed we had to start over one at a time jumping into the rope. I was always first in. We did this for an hour. It got to a point where I collected in exhaustion and punished for not participating.

**We understand that your experiences in youth residential treatment facilities may have had a lasting impact on your life. Your insights are valuable in helping us understand these effects. How have your experiences in youth residential treatment facilities affected your life and well-being, both during your time there and after leaving care? Please share any ways these experiences have influenced you.** Upon entering this facility I was confronted by a man who threatened me and my dad. He said he talked to my dad and he said he didn't want to see me or speak to me. My dad didn't even know I was there. The man said that my dad was stammering and shaking when he spoke to him. My dad has saved me from child molesters a short heavysset man is not going to scare my dad away from saving me. I haven't spoken to my family about my experiences and suffer from flashbacks. I sometimes believe that had I been kidnapped and locked away and tortured my life would have been better.

**If you could tell policymakers one thing about youth residential treatment facilities and what needs to change, what would it be?** Regulate them. I work as a direct support professional for the developmentally disabled. In training we have to watch a documentary done by Geraldo Rivera on facilities set up to lock away and forget about these individuals. I love the people I work with and see potential in them. These troubled teen facilities are just the replacement of the abusive institutions only when we get out there is no one to help us recover.

---

ID: 52

Age: 65

**How old were you when you were sent to the institutional placement(s)?** 14

**What was the name of the institutional placement(s)? Did you experience this placement while in foster care?** Heritage

**We understand that sharing your experiences can be difficult, and we appreciate your courage in doing so. Would you be willing to share with us about your time in youth residential treatment facilities? What were some of the aspects of your living conditions, including the quality of food, clothing, and overall care you received?** The updates sent to my mom were fake. They were the same every month. One called me Michael in each one. My assigned therapist took 3 months off for a family emergency but still pasted the same report monthly repeatedly. They claimed I was having regular scheduled phone calls from her office to my home. My mom pulled me out because of the lying from Heritage.

**We know that maintaining education can be challenging in different living situations, and we value your input on this matter. Were you able to continue your education and receive the academic support you needed while living in the youth residential treatment facilities? Please share your experiences, including any challenges or successes you encountered.** No. They had planned for me to stay there until I turned 18. They sicced DCFS on my mom when she pulled me out.

**Describe your access to health care, mental health support, and other services you needed while in youth residential treatment facilities. Were your needs adequately met?** There was none.

**Your safety and well-being are extremely important, and we are committed to understanding your experiences. Did you feel safe during your time in youth residential treatment facilities? If you experienced any instances of abuse, neglect, or overly harsh punishment, please share what you feel comfortable discussing.** No. I ran away once.

**We understand that your experiences in youth residential treatment facilities may have had a lasting impact on your life. Your insights are valuable in helping us understand these effects. How have your experiences in youth residential treatment facilities affected your life and well-being, both during your time there and after leaving care? Please share any ways these experiences have influenced you.** Lack of trust.

**If you could tell policymakers one thing about youth residential treatment facilities and what needs to change, what would it be?** The staff making the money off California kids are the ones who need 24/7 monitoring. They just lie to the DCFS workers who make the vacation trips to Utah.

---

ID: 53

Age: 31

**How old were you when you were sent to the institutional placement(s)?** 16

**What was the name of the institutional placement(s)? Did you experience this placement while in foster care?** Trails Carolina and Montcalm School for Girls. Not from Foster care

**We understand that sharing your experiences can be difficult, and we appreciate your courage in doing so. Would you be willing to share with us about your time in youth residential treatment facilities? What were some of the aspects of your living conditions, including the quality of food, clothing, and overall care you received?** At Trails Carolina, we had rice and lentils or chili 6 nights a week and shells and cheese the 7th night. We had tortillas with PB&j or tuna 6 lunches a week and hummus and pita the 7th. We had oatmeal or grits with little to no seasoning 6 breakfasts a week and bagels with cream cheese the 7th morning. At Montcalm, most of our meals were frozen Sysco family dinners with little to no nutritional value in them. They frequently looked and tasted like inedible slop and some meals were so bad that we chose to skip dinner those nights. For the first month I was there, we could have a peanut butter sandwich if we didn't want to eat the slop but after that, they changed it so that we had to eat the slop of nothing. Lunches at Montcalm varied and were typically some form of sandwiches. Breakfast varied and the most memorable one was whenever they made scrambled eggs with ham and wrapped it in aluminum foil in the crock pot to keep it warm for an hour or 2 before breakfast. The eggs turned green from the aluminum. Our options were eat the aluminum eggs or eat nothing and face punishment of whatever sort they chose.

At Trails Carolina, our clothing consisted of a pair of sweat pants and a long sleeve tshirt that we wore when we were on base and khaki cargo pants with a long sleeve thermal shirt (in the middle of summer) for when we were in the field hiking, along with a hoodie, 3 sports bras, and 6 pairs of underwear. We could not even roll up our thermal sleeves despite temps being in the 90s in the shade and likely the 100s in the sun. Our clothes were washed a total of 3 times during the 3 months I was there. I was allowed 5 showers during those 3 months and they were each 2 minutes long. We were in the field hiking for up to 3 or 4 weeks at a time, hiking roughly 8 miles a day with 50lb packs on our backs, and then we got a break on base camp for a week or 2, where we camped but only took shorter day hikes on the base camp property.

At Montcalm we had clothes from home. The rules were basically the same as a normal school dress code. We did laundry once a week.

At Trails Carolina I was medically neglected. I had a history of kidney stones bad enough that I had been hospitalized twice in the previous 18 months before I arrived at Trails Carolina. They were fully aware of this medical history. About a month after I got to the program, I started feeling pain around my right kidney that felt like a kidney stone. It was excruciating and they wouldn't listen to me about it. They refused to even consider that I was passing a kidney stone. I was in excruciating pain for 2 weeks begging for medical attention while we were in the field, hiking in the mountains every day. After 2 weeks, I started projectile vomiting and having explosive diarrhea, at which point they called my mother and she made them take me to the hospital. They ended up taking me to 3 different Drs, and kept trying to get the Drs to say that I was lying and hadn't passed a kidney stone. Every single one said that I most likely had passed a kidney stone and I had an infection. The first Dr was at an acute care. They prescribed antibiotics. I didn't receive any. The next one they took me to was the Dr they used in order to approve kids for the

program. He also prescribed antibiotics. I didn't get any. Then on the 3rd day after I was pulled from the field, I was taken to the ER. They did X-rays. They found 3 kidney stones still in my kidneys. They said I most likely had passed one and they saw that I had a kidney infection. They prescribed antibiotics and after that, I finally got the antibiotics and phenazopyridine for the pain I had been experiencing for over 2 weeks. The staff tried to gaslight me and tell me that it was just a basic UTI. They had tried to keep all of the conversations with the medical staff between them and the medical staff, without me being able to hear. The Drs however made sure to say enough in front of me to let me know what was actually going on. They very clearly knew something sketchy was going on and I'm grateful that they all made sure to say things around me that the staff didn't want me to hear. The staff that took me to the Drs told the rest of the staff and the other girls in my group that it was just a UTI and they encouraged everyone to bully me for inconveniencing everyone for such a minor discomfort. They also lied to my parents and told them it was just a UTI.

At Montcalm, my complaints of pain and injuries were ignored. I had undiagnosed EDS that caused me to be injured multiple times there and I received absolutely no medical attention for my injuries. I was forced to continue walking on those injuries and had to continue all activities, including PE.

In both programs, we were mercilessly shamed for everything they could come up with, real or not. They made fun of us for being suicidal or self harming. Bullying was encouraged in verbal and psychological form.

At Trails Carolina, we were allowed to write a letter to our parents each week and we received essentially a form letter in return. The program told our parents exactly what to write to us. I was the only person in my group who ever got to call their parents. I only got to call them because I had chosen not to invite them to my graduation. They were abusive already and sending me to Trails Carolina was the nail in the coffin for our relationship. I got to call them under the condition that I would remain happy and positive. I was told that if I became emotional, they would end the call.

At Montcalm, we sent emails to our parents daily and got a brief, monitored phone call with our parents once a week. We weren't allowed much mail. The only person they allowed to send me mail was a much older man who the school was aware I was having a sexual relationship with. They thought it was "cute." Even on the few home visits I got, communication with my friends was limited. I barely ever saw or spoke to my friends from the time I was sent away until the day I graduated from Montcalm 15 months later.

Some of the teachers at Montcalm were very creepy. One was frequently caught looking up girls skirts if they were sitting in a way where they weren't perfectly keeping their legs closed and covered like a 19th century lady. Another teacher added me on Facebook after I graduated. A few years later while his wife was dying, he would message me inappropriate things that made me feel very uncomfortable. He had flirted with me while I was still at the school, which had already made me feel uncomfortable but it was made so much worse when he hit on me while his wife was dying.

The head of the program at Montcalm had told me that my parents were good people and if they had hit me, it was because I pushed them to it and I deserved it. My parents are horrible and have abused me and my animals since I was a baby. My parents have been lying my entire life about abusing me and more recently, even lying to cover up the fact that my mother tried to murder me. Instead of listening to me when I brought up the abuse, they blamed me for it and gaslit me to the point where I was terrified to tell anyone else about the abuse for years afterwards.

They literally brainwashed us at Montcalm. They drilled into us that every single thing that is wrong with

our lives and our families was our own fault. We were taught that we were demon spawn who were ruining our parents lives. We had to fully accept these beliefs and everything else they told us about ourselves and our lives in order to have any chance at going home before we turned 18. We had daily "groups" which consisted of us taking "accountability" for everything we had done wrong in the past 24 hours and then we also had to share every little thing we had seen someone else do. If we weren't the one that acknowledged the things we had done, we were mercilessly shamed and bullied about how horrible we were for things as minor as getting out of bed a couple minutes late, not having our clothes perfectly folded in our dresser during morning inspection, forgetting to say please or thank you, or sitting improperly on furniture.

The graduation process from Montcalm involved writing essays about everyone's flaws and reading them out loud in group. We had to pick everyone apart and tell them every little detail we could find that was "wrong" with them and it had to be detailed enough or we couldn't graduate.

We were forced to tell "life stories" while we were there, but it was lies. We had to make the story what the staff wanted us to say. They made us change it if we didn't make us look horrible enough. I was forced to take accountability for being a demon from the age of 2. I had to repeatedly tell every single girl who came into the program, that I was a rotten demon from the age of 2 years old and I had only gotten worse. I was an abused child with undiagnosed CPTSD. Instead of diagnosing me or helping me, they made me the villain in my family from the age of 2 years old.

At Trails Carolina, they had our parents write a letter when we got there that we had to read in front of everyone. It went over how horrible we were and what they expected us to do better. My father admitted to strangling my dog in his letter, as if it was normal, and talked about my unreasonable reactions to it, and the staff didn't see anything wrong with it. I was still just an evil child. I hadn't done drugs or run away or cut classes or gotten in any real trouble at any point in my life. I was a good kid being abused by everyone around me. They sent me away because I was constantly suicidal because I wanted to escape the abuse and I didn't just take the abuse when they dished it out. They wanted me to stop fighting back and standing up for myself. That's what the programs did for my parents. That is the service they paid for. They made me complacent so I would just let everyone abuse me without reacting. That is literally one of the biggest tests they made me pass. I had to sit and calmly let them push me into fight or flight for as long as they wanted, without reacting. I had to learn to endure trauma without reacting to my abusers and reacting set me back weeks or months.

**We know that maintaining education can be challenging in different living situations, and we value your input on this matter. Were you able to continue your education and receive the academic support you needed while living in the youth residential treatment facilities? Please share your experiences, including any challenges or successes you encountered.** At Trails Carolina we didn't get any education but we received a PE credit, an art credit, and an English credit. We had no classes.

At Montcalm, the standard classes taught nothing. We learned from outdated textbooks and barely got anywhere in those books. My American history credit is a complete joke, even in relation to what a normal American history class teaches. I didn't make it past the second chapter in the textbook the entire school year and I got a B+. I did normal textbook learning for American History, English, health, and art. They let me do online classes for the other class periods because the regular classes bored me and I hadn't been able to attend the previous 2 years of school due to health problems. I completed 3 years of credits in that year, despite my undiagnosed narcolepsy causing me to sleep through half the time I spent in class. I

learned next to nothing all year but I got to start my senior year with my former classmates when I got home. I had to be dropped down to more remedial classes however because my education had been so lacking despite earning enough credits to be a senior.

**Describe your access to health care, mental health support, and other services you needed while in youth residential treatment facilities. Were your needs adequately met?** I was medically neglected, as I mentioned earlier. We did not receive much mental health support in either program aside from psychotropic medications. At Montcalm we went to an under qualified psychiatrist every other month to get our meds adjusted. She was one of the worst psychiatrists I've ever met. She didn't listen and just wanted to drug us in whatever ways best shut us up and got us to comply with everything.

I do not recall ever seeing a Dr when sick or injured at Montcalm. They had one employed, but we never got to go to him for our illnesses or injuries, aside from 2 instances that I can recall when other girls were allowed to receive medical care from him.

**Your safety and well-being are extremely important, and we are committed to understanding your experiences. Did you feel safe during your time in youth residential treatment facilities? If you experienced any instances of abuse, neglect, or overly harsh punishment, please share what you feel comfortable discussing.** I never felt safe in either program.

At Trails Carolina, I kept breaking down on hikes because my undiagnosed EDS pain was so severe. I would collapse in tears and instead of anyone caring that I was in excruciating pain, I would be screamed at until I got back up and continued hiking and punished by getting held back from moving forward in the program. I learned at that program how to intentionally dissociate from my body to power through unbearable levels of pain because I had no option other than to keep going, no matter how bad the pain got. The more I stopped, the longer I had to stay in the program. So I learned how to use the dissociation that I had experienced since I was a baby, and control it to numb the pain and power through no matter how bad it got.

At Montcalm, I got emotional flashbacks pretty regularly. I'd freak out and hide under desks because I was so terrified. When that happened, they would drag me out by my wrists or ankles and drag me through the halls. One of the things I was forced to learn to do was experience these emotional flashbacks silently. To this day, everyone thinks I'm fine at all times because I was forced to learn how to seem like everything was ok, even at the points where I was the most distressed a person could be. I'm in constant pain every second of every day and I never look like I'm in pain, even when I pass kidney stones. I never look like I'm upset, even now, when I live every day in fear for my life because my abusive parents escalated to attempting to murder me and I therefore never get to feel safe from them. I had to learn how to seem absolutely perfect at all times in order to leave before my 18th birthday.

**We understand that your experiences in youth residential treatment facilities may have had a lasting impact on your life. Your insights are valuable in helping us understand these effects. How have your experiences in youth residential treatment facilities affected your life and well-being, both during your time there and after leaving care? Please share any ways these experiences have influenced you.** I have CPTSD from both my home life and from these facilities. I can't sleep in a bedroom because I have to be able to see my front door when I go to bed. If not, I have repeated emotional flashbacks to being kidnapped and taken to Trails Carolina. I have to take multiple sleep aids or I'll have repeated emotional flashbacks to being kidnapped. I have to have a familiar TV show playing in the background when I go to bed to distract my brain as the meds kick in or I'll have repeated emotional flashbacks to being kidnapped.

It's hard to separate most of the rest of the effects of the programs because the trauma from the abuse and neglect at the programs mixes with the trauma from the abuse and neglect I experienced from my parents.

One big one however is that I can no longer connect with other people. I can empathize and build one way connections with other people, but on my end, it feels like there's a plexiglass barrier between me and everyone else. No one sees it because I'm able to connect enough to make them feel understood and supported. It's all one-way though. Even people who genuinely want to connect with me, don't realize that it's so one sided. They don't see the barrier. I feel so isolated and alone because these programs made me unable to connect with other people in meaningful ways. I have no real friends. I socialize and love being around people. I just can't connect with them the way they can connect with me. Even other survivors are hard to truly connect with, despite the fact that we all survived these hellscape.

We're convinced by these programs that we're worthless and we're not like everyone else. We're taught that other people have a level of humanity that we were born without. We're taught that we're these bad defective brats. We are "othered" to such an extent that even 14 years after my graduation, I can't connect with other people on a meaningful level. I face my life alone because these programs programmed me to do so. I support other people and I care for other people, but I don't know how to let anyone support me because these programs taught me that it's wrong to let others care for me or support me because I don't deserve kindness from anyone. It has been 14 years and I haven't gotten past this.

**If you could tell policymakers one thing about youth residential treatment facilities and what needs to change, what would it be?** Those who want to work in these programs should not work in this industry. The troubled teen industry is built in such a way that it only attracts individuals who want to abuse and exploit children. They're given far too much power and far too little oversight which creates an environment where abusers thrive. They get to live out the scenarios they imagine regarding harming children. They get to feel powerful and superior and they get to unleash all of their aggression because there's no one to stop them. The programs are built to harm children and no matter what degree of abuse is baked into the program guidelines themselves, more abuse than that occurs and is allowed or even encouraged. These programs are designed to harm children and take their parents' money. No aspect of it is designed for the best interests of the child.

Successful treatment programs for kids and teens require compassion, empathy, support, and security. None of these qualities are present in these programs. A successful program would allow a child as much communication with their family as they want. They would allow contact with age appropriate friends and they would ban communication with unsafe individuals like pedophiles. They would provide educational support that helps students succeed in their academic and professional lives. They would encourage comfort within living situations. They would teach self acceptance. They would look into the parents and acknowledge that the parents play a massive role in a child's behavior. They would do everything in their power to identify abuse that children are experiencing at home and attempt to find solutions to that abuse, up to and including removing the child from their parents' custody. In a successful program, children would feel safe. Children would be able to go to staff with their concerns and be heard. They would miss their loved ones but they would otherwise be happy where they were and understand that they truly are in the best place for them. A successful program would feel safe and would feel like a second home. Children can't be expected to heal under distressing conditions.

Nothing about these programs is done right. Children deserve to be loved and cared for no matter where they're living. We were not bad kids. We were not defective. We deserved love and support just as much



as every other child out there. What we needed was MORE love and support, not less. We needed people who genuinely had our best interests at heart. We needed to be seen for who we were, not who our parents told them we were. We deserved to be children, rather than being forced to grow up and become the adults in our families because our parents were too immature and uncaring to raise us right on their own. We deserved better and so does every single child who ever has or ever will be sent to these programs.

These programs are built by abusers, for abusers. The children are trafficked between abusers. The parents pay to traffic their children because 9/10 times, they don't give a crap about their well-being. I have yet to hear a single survivor talk about their parents apologizing for trafficking them. The parents don't regret it. They don't experience remorse. They justify their actions and dismiss the damage they caused by sending their children away. Loving parents don't fall for it.

The industry preys upon children whose parents don't want them around anymore. They try to appeal to the parents who want to get rid of their children, but can't. The ones who regret having them. The ones who didn't think before having children and want an undo button because raising kids is harder than they thought. A large percentage of us were sent away to learn to put up with our parents abuse without fighting back or standing up for ourselves. We were sent away because we had the guts to tell our parents that their actions were wrong rather than just taking the abuse. We were sent away because we saw the value within ourselves and the other people and animals being abused by our parents and weren't afraid to do what we could to try to stop or at least limit the abuse.

This industry was never designed to help children heal. It was designed to make parents' lives easier at the expense of their children. The biggest thing that needs to change about the industry is that the wants of the parents are seen as more important than the needs of the children.

These programs need to put the children first and the adults second. The children are helpless and need help. These programs exploit that vulnerability. Successful programs would try to nurture the vulnerable children, not hurt them, not use them, not "toughen them up." They would care for them and about them. They would see them hurting and help them heal rather than throwing salt on their wounds.

Successful programs would turn out healthy kids with bright futures. Not broken kids with limited futures. Suicide is a common outcome for survivors of these programs. That alone says just how much needs to change.

---

ID: 54

Age: 24

**How old were you when you were sent to the institutional placement(s)?** 14 and 17

**What was the name of the institutional placement(s)? Did you experience this placement while in foster care?** San Juan residential treatment center while with my parents. desert hills treatment center (group home) while in foster care

**We understand that sharing your experiences can be difficult, and we appreciate your courage in doing so. Would you be willing to share with us about your time in youth residential treatment facilities? What were some of the aspects of your living conditions, including the quality of food, clothing, and overall care you received?** I am willing to. All my clothes were my own not provided by facilities. Food was very poor quality it was a lot of processed foods. Overall these facilities didn't do enough to ensure they learned about my history or experience I went through which led them to do improper treatment not helping identify and fix core issues and instead trying to fix surface issues.

**We know that maintaining education can be challenging in different living situations, and we value your input on this matter. Were you able to continue your education and receive the academic support you needed while living in the youth residential treatment facilities? Please share your experiences, including any challenges or successes you encountered.** While they did try to continue educating me in my first facility when I went to high school nothing they were teaching me was counted towards my Diploma and delayed me a lot. The second facility assisted with driving me to test for my GED which I achieved. But after that I was not given opportunity to continue.

**Describe your access to health care, mental health support, and other services you needed while in youth residential treatment facilities. Were your needs adequately met?** They did not give proper care in either facility. It was disorganized and big shifts in the staff left us unable to get adequate support. While my physical needs were met there were not adequate therapists or other services to help me get better.

**Your safety and well-being are extremely important, and we are committed to understanding your experiences. Did you feel safe during your time in youth residential treatment facilities? If you experienced any instances of abuse, neglect, or overly harsh punishment, please share what you feel comfortable discussing.** I felt safe in my first facility. My second thought lacked. They did not know my allergies almost poisoning me on my 18th birthday. There were frequent punishments given to everyone based on actions of others being locked in our rooms even if we hadn't done anything ourselves. Being punished for others running away. During my stay I was forced to go to the grocery store while I was so sick I was unable to stand given to accommodation while dealing with severe pain from having a virus. There were times I was forced to see young kids being held down on hard surfaces by grown men for hours at a time for things as simple as cursing. I also was frequently threatened by staff members and verbally attacked and put down by the same staff.

**We understand that your experiences in youth residential treatment facilities may have had a lasting impact on your life. Your insights are valuable in helping us understand these effects. How have your experiences in youth residential treatment facilities affected your life and well-being, both during your time there and after leaving care? Please share any ways these experiences have influenced you.** These experiences have had a heavy impact during my time in these

facilities and after getting out. For several reasons. During my time at 14 it was better in there then when they released me back to the family that caused my mental health issues. Putting me back into an abusive environment. While when I was 17 getting out was hard to adjust to life outside as I was isolated and mistreated it made it hard for me to trust others. While I started recovering afterwards to this day I still remember the things that happen while I was in there care.

**If you could tell policymakers one thing about youth residential treatment facilities and what needs to change, what would it be?** They need to put more time into each youth and each person needs teams Of people that make discussions. There needs to be more effort into identifying deeper issues instead of focusing on surface issues that only temporarily help the youth. Medication needs to be a last resort in treatments and they need better ways to de escalate a youth in crisis. In a way that doesn't cause more stress and trauma to the youth.

---

ID: 55

Age: 30

**How old were you when you were sent to the institutional placement(s)?** 8

**What was the name of the institutional placement(s)? Did you experience this placement while in foster care?** Plumfield Academy, I was a day student who lived with my parents.

**We understand that sharing your experiences can be difficult, and we appreciate your courage in doing so. Would you be willing to share with us about your time in youth residential treatment facilities? What were some of the aspects of your living conditions, including the quality of food, clothing, and overall care you received?** I was a day student, but visited the residential area to visit my peers sometimes. The living quarters were unobjectionable.

**We know that maintaining education can be challenging in different living situations, and we value your input on this matter. Were you able to continue your education and receive the academic support you needed while living in the youth residential treatment facilities? Please share your experiences, including any challenges or successes you encountered.** The education Plumfield gave us was sub-par.

**Describe your access to health care, mental health support, and other services you needed while in youth residential treatment facilities. Were your needs adequately met?** Whether it be the Doctors, the staff, my therapists, or even my parents, I was the one person nobody listened to about my mental health.

**Your safety and well-being are extremely important, and we are committed to understanding your experiences. Did you feel safe during your time in youth residential treatment facilities? If you experienced any instances of abuse, neglect, or overly harsh punishment, please share what you feel comfortable discussing.** The students were both physically and psychologically dominated. It was normal for staff to initiate restraints by provoking or attacking students, rather than using them to prevent physical harm. One of the times I was restrained, I passed out. They had a toxic culture in which the staff were cowardly enough to feel the need to openly brag about their ability to restrain small children who were outnumbered by adults 5 to 1. There was also obvious sexual abuse going on, since some students attempted to have anal sex even though they hadn't had puberty yet, which is symptomatic of sexual trauma, and there were students who had pictures taken of them with their shirts off and with whipped cream and honey on their faces, though they were not allowed to talk about it. I spent 5 years in that hell, and though I spoke out about it to the staff, to my doctors and therapists, and even to my parents who totally wanted what was best for me, nothing was done about it. Because I was prescribed an antidepressant, people didn't feel the need to investigate. Public funding paid for this.

**We understand that your experiences in youth residential treatment facilities may have had a lasting impact on your life. Your insights are valuable in helping us understand these effects. How have your experiences in youth residential treatment facilities affected your life and well-being, both during your time there and after leaving care? Please share any ways these experiences have influenced you.** I have a very, very difficult time being comfortable around other people.

**If you could tell policymakers one thing about youth residential treatment facilities and what needs to change, what would it be?** Allegations of abuse need to be treated with legitimacy, and should not be disregarded merely because the victim has been initiated into the mental health system. Not all mental patients are incapable of understanding reality, yet the mere fact that I was on an antidepressant meant that no one cared about what was happening. Enabling rape is a form of rape, and thus, disregarding rape allegations based on the assumption that they are delusions is a form of rape.

---

ID: 56

Age: 37

**How old were you when you were sent to the institutional placement(s)?** 15

**What was the name of the institutional placement(s)? Did you experience this placement while in foster care?** Academy at Ivy Ridge

**We understand that sharing your experiences can be difficult, and we appreciate your courage in doing so. Would you be willing to share with us about your time in youth residential treatment facilities? What were some of the aspects of your living conditions, including the quality of food, clothing, and overall care you received?** While I was at Ivy ridge you were given a water bottle to refill with tap water during bathroom trips only. We had three meals a day, and were not permitted any snacks through out the day. If you earned a candy bar (due to your amount of points) you received one on Sunday. We were housed in double bunks (and later quadruple bunks) with limited space in our rooms, about 3ft x 6ft walking area. And if memory serves me right we were allowed 4 sets of uniforms and sweat pants/ shorts for sleeping. Care, was extremely few and far between. In my 21(ish) months I was at the program I did not see a dentist once. I had limited time with an actual psychiatrist or counselor and we were never seen by an actual doctor. At one point in my program I slept in the hall with my mattress on the floor for weeks straight. I don't know what I had but now that I'm older I'd guess it was Lymes, or swine flu. The only care I received during that time was Tylenol, water and the ability to get out of my mattress without permission to run to the bathroom.

**We know that maintaining education can be challenging in different living situations, and we value your input on this matter. Were you able to continue your education and receive the academic support you needed while living in the youth residential treatment facilities? Please share your experiences, including any challenges or successes you encountered.** There was NO actual teaching while I was there. We were giving worksheets and eventually had computer labs the assignments were on. If you struggled you had three chances to pass, by the third time the "teacher" would just give you the answers. At one point there was one ONE "teacher" for over 500 boys. And I'm not even sure he was really a teacher (Mr. Mike), then the facilitators brother and brother in law started helping with "teaching", Mr. Jake Finlinson and I don't remember the other man's name.

**Describe your access to health care, mental health support, and other services you needed while in youth residential treatment facilities. Were your needs adequately met?** Health care. Zero. As previously stated I never saw an actual licensed doctor even when sick. I was sent to the near by Walmart with a staff member once to get prescribed glasses at one point. And I don't recall if I went to an actual dentist or not or if I was just given an antibiotic for a tooth ache that never went away. Counseling was limited and our parents had to pay extra to even have us scheduled. I believe when I was seeing Mr. Hicks it was once a month for 40 minutes.

**Your safety and well-being are extremely important, and we are committed to understanding your experiences. Did you feel safe during your time in youth residential treatment facilities? If you experienced any instances of abuse, neglect, or overly harsh punishment, please share what you feel comfortable discussing.** Safe? Well the building was secure. But your day depending on your dorm dads mood. You NEVER got the benefit of the doubt on anything. Staff would defend staff. I was put in isolation with three cheese sandwiches a day for three weeks and during that time they even made me sleep in the isolation room (OP / intervention room). Amongst the staff, you sometimes even had to worry

about your peers. Since none of us received the care we needed emotions were always high. And staff couldn't separate us or switch students to different families if there was trouble amongst the groups. We just dealt with the cards we were given.

Between sick time, consequences and having ZERO communication with family or anyone I knew neglect was something you got used to.

**We understand that your experiences in youth residential treatment facilities may have had a lasting impact on your life. Your insights are valuable in helping us understand these effects. How have your experiences in youth residential treatment facilities affected your life and well-being, both during your time there and after leaving care? Please share any ways these experiences have influenced you.** Still to this day I wake up frantic most mornings. Still thinking I need to be in line in 30 seconds. I rush everything I do and I am always paying attention to the clock, cause that's how we were trained.

I have issues with authority figures and always feel the need to defend myself and get argumentative. I isolate for weeks or months at a time because I was trained to figure it out myself.

The positives: If I ever see someone being abused, I step in.

I treat people with kindness because I know what it's like to feel like a human and not be heard.

These things are mostly reactions to situations that have been carved into my heart. Cause I'll never sit back and watch the things I've seen ever again.

**If you could tell policymakers one thing about youth residential treatment facilities and what needs to change, what would it be?** OVERSIGHT.

By the correct people.

Tearing kids from their homes and giving them limited communication to their families is NOT the way.

If you have a problem you need to work together to fix those problems. Sometimes separating parties is needed, but it took me 13 months to EARN my first phone call with my father at 15-16 years old, how is that helping me?

---

ID: 57

Age: 44

**How old were you when you were sent to the institutional placement(s)?** 14

**What was the name of the institutional placement(s)? Did you experience this placement while in foster care?** CEDU. Not in foster care.

**We understand that sharing your experiences can be difficult, and we appreciate your courage in doing so. Would you be willing to share with us about your time in youth residential treatment facilities? What were some of the aspects of your living conditions, including the quality of food, clothing, and overall care you received?** I was there for 2 and a half years. My basic needs were met so it appeared safe.

**We know that maintaining education can be challenging in different living situations, and we value your input on this matter. Were you able to continue your education and receive the academic support you needed while living in the youth residential treatment facilities? Please share your experiences, including any challenges or successes you encountered.** The actual schooling was barely a part of the curriculum. It was maybe 1% of the teachings. There was no academic education.

**Describe your access to health care, mental health support, and other services you needed while in youth residential treatment facilities. Were your needs adequately met?** I received such horrible dental work that I have had over a million dollars in surgeries since. I also was forced to attend my mothers funeral with faculty while pretending my loved ones did not exist after being at CEDU one month.

**Your safety and well-being are extremely important, and we are committed to understanding your experiences. Did you feel safe during your time in youth residential treatment facilities? If you experienced any instances of abuse, neglect, or overly harsh punishment, please share what you feel comfortable discussing.** I never held my siblings and cried over our mother's death after being there one month. And I was punished for being held by my mothers life long boyfriend during her funeral when I returned to CEDU.

**We understand that your experiences in youth residential treatment facilities may have had a lasting impact on your life. Your insights are valuable in helping us understand these effects. How have your experiences in youth residential treatment facilities affected your life and well-being, both during your time there and after leaving care? Please share any ways these experiences have influenced you.** I cannot receive any therapy for what we went through because it is never believed or understood.

**If you could tell policymakers one thing about youth residential treatment facilities and what needs to change, what would it be?** In the same way police now have cameras for accountability - that should be utilized for making sure teens are safe if they are placed somewhere.

---



ID: 58

Age: 35

**How old were you when you were sent to the institutional placement(s)?** 15

**What was the name of the institutional placement(s)? Did you experience this placement while in foster care?** Devereaux A.E.P. (League City, Texas).

**We understand that sharing your experiences can be difficult, and we appreciate your courage in doing so. Would you be willing to share with us about your time in youth residential treatment facilities? What were some of the aspects of your living conditions, including the quality of food, clothing, and overall care you received?** One of the things on my intake forms was my diagnosis of Eating Disorders (not otherwise specified). Often times I wasn't in a position to go to the cafeteria, so I would just be offered what was sent to the unit. Most, if not always, I wouldn't eat what was sent because of food aversion, etc. I survived mostly on table crackers & those individual packets of peanut butter. Our showers were not temperature regulated, they just had a button you pushed, & what came out is what you got. Our showers were timed, and I would often go pass my time, & get in trouble somehow. Medical concerns were often neglected. Clothing- we were allowed our own clothing, unless you were on some kind of restriction, then you had to be in scrubs. For me, one of my punishments was that all my belongings & clothing had to be locked in the back storage area, because they were "distracting me from going to sleep." The reality was that I suffered from a form of insomnia since early childhood, & once getting to Devereux, the medication concoction they had me on messed with my sleep patterns more. It made it almost impossible to stay "in program".

**We know that maintaining education can be challenging in different living situations, and we value your input on this matter. Were you able to continue your education and receive the academic support you needed while living in the youth residential treatment facilities? Please share your experiences, including any challenges or successes you encountered.** Our classrooms consisted of different ages, so often times our schoolwork would just be packets. They did try to offer some individual curriculum for those on different levels of education, but did not teach us. It was up to us to do the work on our own. That was very difficult for someone like me to accomplish, but eventually I was able to catch up. When I was supposed to graduate, and they sent my credits back to LAUSD, they accidentally sent the wrong info., and they were going to require me to stay 4 extra months to make up the credits, the credits I already had, but that they sent over wrong. I never ended up graduating, & had to get my G.E.D. on my own after I left.

**Describe your access to health care, mental health support, and other services you needed while in youth residential treatment facilities. Were your needs adequately met?** We were required to have individual therapy once a week. Once I got to unit 3, I barely saw my therapist assigned to me. This happened to a lot of us, but others would get indicated therapy more than once a week. Nothing was consistent. Most of the "therapy" & "group therapy" felt more like "attack therapy". Staff & therapist would often start rumors, or disclose confidential information to our peers to create conflict amongst us. There was also several staff/patient sexual/romantic relationships, which we know was just predatory & grooming behaviors. Instead of coming to the children's protection, they covered these instances up.

**Your safety and well-being are extremely important, and we are committed to understanding your experiences. Did you feel safe during your time in youth residential treatment facilities? If you experienced any instances of abuse, neglect, or overly harsh punishment, please share what you**

**feel comfortable discussing.** I truly feel that most of the abuse I personally experienced at Devereux was more on the medical, emotional, & psychological side of things. I was constantly told, & my parents told as well, that I was manipulative. My medications were messed with often. I was taken off of one of my meds (a very high dose of lithium) "cold turkey" because I was already unit restricted, & in scrubs, and Dr. V. just wanted to see what what happen. Dr. V. also put me on a very high dosage of Chloral Hydrate due to my insomnia which would not become effective until after midnight, and I wouldn't really get to sleep until right before we had to wake up for the day, & do what we needed to to be allowed "in program". Because of the heavy sedative, this made me waking up, & being on time almost impossible ever day, so more often than not, I wasn't "in program". That meant I couldn't leave the unit for the cafeteria, or school, or anything else on the schedule. It felt like a system, I just couldn't get ahead in, until I finally just started cutting into my sleep on my own, so that I was sure to be awake on time. I still struggle with this to this day. Another thing we endured, was constantly having to do army-type drills when staff was upset with us, or having to squat against the wall for periods of time, or doing "six inches" (where you lay on the floor, & hold your ankles up no more, & no less than six inches). In these drills, if one person was "slacking" it would add more time to the rest of us, which would then make us be upset with our one peer who couldn't manage, rather than the staff invoking the abuse. I know there are more things, but I can't think of them right now.

**We understand that your experiences in youth residential treatment facilities may have had a lasting impact on your life. Your insights are valuable in helping us understand these effects. How have your experiences in youth residential treatment facilities affected your life and well-being, both during your time there and after leaving care? Please share any ways these experiences have influenced you.** As stated in the previous answer, my sleep is still impacted to this day. If I have any appointments in the morning, I end up not sleeping all night in fear of not waking up on time/being late. I will literally just lay there with my eyes closed with anxiety, instead of actually sleeping. I now suffer from debilitating anxiety, too. Most of my relationships have suffered immensely because of all the "therapy" they gave us. For years I suffered with substance abuse to try to get myself to sleep, or just subside my anxieties. I never had a substance problem until after Devereux. I was sexually assaulted on a Home Pass by a former student, and I was too terrified to tell my therapist at Devereux to try to process what happened, because I thought they would use it against me to keep me there longer. It took me years before I could address that assault. I was also molested by clients while on campus at Devereux. It took me 15 years to finally be able to seek out therapy on my own for my trauma because I was so scared every IOP, or individual therapist would be like what I encountered in Devereux. And even now, having been in therapy since 2020, I'm still triggered trying to attend these sessions. I was learning to drive before getting sent to Devereux, since leaving, my anxiety has been so bad, I haven't been able to obtain my license, or practice driving without a panic attack. I never got the family I had back before I was sent away. I used to be so close to my family & extended family, but after I returned that bond never repaired, I mourn it to this day, and still do what I can to mend it, only to be disappointed with the results of my efforts. I have nightmares, & wake up with panic attacks more nights then when I don't. I often dream that I'm the age I am now, and still stuck in Devereux desperately trying to convince them to let me out. I'm still triggered by certain images, architecture, smells, bathroom tiles that are similar to Devereux. I have more long term trauma from Devereux, but I can't individually name them at the moment.

**If you could tell policymakers one thing about youth residential treatment facilities and what needs to change, what would it be?** There will never be enough oversight, or regulations on these facilities to stop the different type of abuse happening. This system was not built to ensure the safety of children, & need complete dismantling & reformation. Educational Consultants & those alike should not receive benefits for every child they send away. Kickbacks should be illegal.



ID: 59

Age:

**How old were you when you were sent to the institutional placement(s)? 7**

**What was the name of the institutional placement(s)? Did you experience this placement while in foster care?** -The Phoenix Foundation in Italy(The, Good People)/The Hill -Kentucky Men's Prison/ Provo Utah Boarding School ( midnight assault and kidnapping binding of the face and genitals) at

**We understand that sharing your experiences can be difficult, and we appreciate your courage in doing so. Would you be willing to share with us about your time in youth residential treatment facilities? What were some of the aspects of your living conditions, including the quality of food, clothing, and overall care you received?** Yes

**We know that maintaining education can be challenging in different living situations, and we value your input on this matter. Were you able to continue your education and receive the academic support you needed while living in the youth residential treatment facilities? Please share your experiences, including any challenges or successes you encountered.** Not Really, in any adequate way...but other's did open up to me and we shared. I took courses for continuing education and some training as well. Counseling services were inadequate as the trauma continues.

**Describe your access to health care, mental health support, and other services you needed while in youth residential treatment facilities. Were your needs adequately met?** Respectfully, I made the best of it... The hostile takeover of our village was planned and lessened the liklyhood of those avenues. We were being erased and reerased..

**Your safety and well-being are extremely important, and we are committed to understanding your experiences.Did you feel safe during your time in youth residential treatment facilities? If you experienced any instances of abuse, neglect, or overly harsh punishment, please share what you feel comfortable discussing.** No , I didn't feel safe.. I never gave up hope.. we grow together!

**We understand that your experiences in youth residential treatment facilities may have had a lasting impact on your life. Your insights are valuable in helping us understand these effects. How have your experiences in youth residential treatment facilities affected your life and well-being, both during your time there and after leaving care? Please share any ways these experiences have influenced you.** I have learned to compete under insurmountable odds and I have learned discipline. I have learned to share with others under hostility.

**If you could tell policymakers one thing about youth residential treatment facilities and what needs to change, what would it be?** Please Help

---

ID: 60

Age: 24

**How old were you when you were sent to the institutional placement(s)?** 15

**What was the name of the institutional placement(s)? Did you experience this placement while in foster care?** Second Nature Uintas (UT) and Spring Ridge Academy (AZ). I was not in foster care.

**We understand that sharing your experiences can be difficult, and we appreciate your courage in doing so. Would you be willing to share with us about your time in youth residential treatment facilities? What were some of the aspects of your living conditions, including the quality of food, clothing, and overall care you received?** At the Utah wilderness program, food and living conditions were horrific. When I was first brought (essentially kidnapped by 'transporters') to Second Nature, I was forcibly strip searched with a male in the room. I was then locked in a dark closet for a day. After I was let out I was driven to the middle of the Utah wilderness and dropped off with my group. The first week I was there my sleeping bag was wrapped up with a tarp, so that if I moved/tried to get up in the night the staff would hear the rustling. It was also near impossible to get out of as it was wrapped so tight. Our "tents" were only tarps with paracord. The food we received was dehydrated refried beans, rice, and occasionally oranges, cheese, and summer sausage. Often it was rotten, but we were so hungry we did not care. We would even eat the peels on the oranges. I was about 5'3" 120lbs when I entered the program, and I left at 107lbs. We were made to carry 60lb backpacks for 8-12 mile hikes nearly daily. We had to learn to start fires from nothing but sticks, and if we failed we were put on a "solo" where we were made to set up our own camp far away from the group and you were not allowed any social interaction. If we failed to make fire by ourselves at that point you would not eat. We were never allowed to know what day or time it was. We never had any showers/baths besides wiping ourselves down with a wet rag. We had to defecate in a communal hole that had to be re-dug by one of the girls every time we moved camp. I was out there for 103 days.

Spring Ridge Academy in Arizona was only better because we got to sleep inside as building, although we were never allowed privacy. The food was abysmal, the portions were small. There was a calendar in the kitchen that would mark off when parents were visiting and miraculously the food would be much better on those days.

**We know that maintaining education can be challenging in different living situations, and we value your input on this matter. Were you able to continue your education and receive the academic support you needed while living in the youth residential treatment facilities? Please share your experiences, including any challenges or successes you encountered.** Education at Second Nature was a joke. I think we had to do one sheet of "work" once a week, and it was something akin to a worksheet you would give a first grader. Education at Spring Ridge Academy was quite a bit better (depending on the teacher, some took pride in their work, others just let us watch youtube for all of class), but nothing was organized or accredited. Many girls transferred back to public school after leaving and had to repeat classes/sometimes whole grades due to the programs incompetency in checking the requirements girls in different home states needed to complete.

**Describe your access to health care, mental health support, and other services you needed while in youth residential treatment facilities. Were your needs adequately met?** Any and all communication with parents (mainly letters) at both facilities was monitored and if it was not deemed 'acceptable', the letter would not be sent out and we would be made to rewrite it to make it sound better,

even if it was all lies. My "therapist" at Second Nature, Coady Schueller, said I was lying about the horrific sexual abuse I endured prior to treatment, and convinced my parents I was also lying. I developed a herniated disc from carrying a 60lb pack that I didn't receive treatment for. One of my group members was so suicidal due to the conditions that she threw herself onto the campfire and I had to pull her off. Another group member who had asthma contracted pneumonia and nearly passed away. I saw girls with severe frostbite that turned black, and trenchfoot that smelled awful.

At Spring Ridge Academy, I liked my therapist a lot more. But girls were hesitant to actually unload past trauma as it may prolong their stay. I never truly worked through any of my prior trauma. It was a complete waste of time due to the whole program being so abusive and manipulative. If anything, I left with many more issues than what I arrived with. I had severe night terrors due to prior trauma and trauma from Second Nature, I met with a nurse for 5 minutes who then put me on a high dose of trazadone. It did not stop the night terrors, it just kept me from being able to wake up from them. It was horrible. I was not allowed to stop taking it though. We had to take meds in front of the nurse (who I later learned had zero credentials) every single time and show that we didn't 'cheek' them or hide them under our tongue.

**Your safety and well-being are extremely important, and we are committed to understanding your experiences. Did you feel safe during your time in youth residential treatment facilities? If you experienced any instances of abuse, neglect, or overly harsh punishment, please share what you feel comfortable discussing.** I never felt safe.

At Spring Ridge, we had to go through "trainings" to move through the program to be able to leave. These trainings are based off of the Synanon trainings. They are severely abusive. These trainings use tactics that were developed during the cold war to use on POWs in the Russian gulags. We were made to be sleep deprived. Locked in dark rooms. They blasted loud music. Made to scream at each other, tell each other that we didn't deserve to live, reenact sexual assaults. I could truly write a whole novel about how awful these trainings were. And if you didn't comply, or sometimes even randomly, you were kicked out and made to wait until the next training, which could be 6 months or more at times. You were not allowed to leave without successfully completing the trainings. We were made to do physical labor in the Arizona desert (essentially all of the landscaping on site was done by the girls) without breaks which led to girls fainting. We were also made to do the "Murph" challenge in the summer. Spring Ridge Academy hired incompetent staff, some with criminal records, and some had sexual relationships with minor students. Diplomas were held hostage from students to milk more money out of the parents. All outside contact was monitored, and just like Second Nature, if a letter was deemed "inappropriate", it was made to be rewritten. If we said something "wrong" on a phone call, we would lose those privileges for weeks/months. They also implemented being on "silence" as a punishment, they would take your shoes away and you would not be allowed to make eye contact with anyone, let alone talk to anyone. Some girls did not have social interactions for weeks. At times we were made to wear signs around our necks at all times that said derogatory/disgusting things about us or our character.

**We understand that your experiences in youth residential treatment facilities may have had a lasting impact on your life. Your insights are valuable in helping us understand these effects. How have your experiences in youth residential treatment facilities affected your life and well-being, both during your time there and after leaving care? Please share any ways these experiences have influenced you.** I entered these programs already struggling with mild depression and anxiety, and trauma sustained from childhood neglect and sexual abuse. I left these programs still struggling with these issues, and if anything were made a million times worse. I am diagnosed with C-PTSD, depression, and suffer from memory loss due to abuse inflicted on me. It has affected every aspect of my life and hurt relationships. It has been nearly ten years and I am still suffering greatly.

**If you could tell policymakers one thing about youth residential treatment facilities and what needs to change, what would it be?** Honestly, just shut them all down. Completely start over. I would dare to say at least 80% of the programs that are around are abusive. So many of them rely on the same "teachings" taken from Synanon and/or WWASP. If not, these places ALL need to be investigated, and without warning as they have a habit of 'cleaning' things up if authorities are coming. Children there need to be ASSURED that if they speak their truth, that they will not face abuse from the program for doing so. Thousands of children in this country every day are being systemically abused due to these places.

---

ID: 61

Age: 24

**How old were you when you were sent to the institutional placement(s)?** 14-16

**What was the name of the institutional placement(s)? Did you experience this placement while in foster care?** Fairfax Hospital, Turning Winds Academic Institute, Kootenai Behavioral Health Youth Acute Unit, Youth Care Treatment Center

**We understand that sharing your experiences can be difficult, and we appreciate your courage in doing so. Would you be willing to share with us about your time in youth residential treatment facilities? What were some of the aspects of your living conditions, including the quality of food, clothing, and overall care you received?** There was nothing wrong with the food at Turning Winds, but the girls' food intake was restricted because some parents complained we were getting fat which was due to the antipsychotics they had us on, not our calorie intake since they made us exercise for at least an hour everyday. At Youth Care, the residential staff would make the food hours in advance and leave it sitting out until it was time to eat. At all of the facilities I attended, I brought my own clothes. The living conditions at all of my facilities were adequate.

**We know that maintaining education can be challenging in different living situations, and we value your input on this matter. Were you able to continue your education and receive the academic support you needed while living in the youth residential treatment facilities? Please share your experiences, including any challenges or successes you encountered.** We did not have any school at Fairfax. Turning Winds was not an accredited school while I was there but you could take classes online once you earned the right to use the computer. There was a school at Kootenai Behavioral Health, but after I attempted suicide when they refused to let me call my family for several days, I was put in a seclusion room for the remaining 8 days I was there and no longer allowed to attend school or be around the other kids. Youth Care was an accredited school, but grades were given out based on how well you behaved in class so there wasn't a ton of learning.

**Describe your access to health care, mental health support, and other services you needed while in youth residential treatment facilities. Were your needs adequately met?** I believe I met with a social once during my time at Fairfax. At Turning Winds, we only received therapy once a week and despite what the website said, there was no group therapy besides attack therapy. There was no adequate access to health care at Turning Winds since the closest doctor was an hour and a half away in another stay. At Youth Care, we had therapy 3 times per week as well as group therapy. There was a nurse on site and a psychiatrist, but illnesses and side effects from medications were often ignored. One person developed scabies while there and they didn't take them off premise. I had developed high blood pressure, high blood sugar, high cholesterol, and Nocturnal enuresis from my medications, and instead of reducing the amount of medications they had me on they just added more.

**Your safety and well-being are extremely important, and we are committed to understanding your experiences. Did you feel safe during your time in youth residential treatment facilities? If you experienced any instances of abuse, neglect, or overly harsh punishment, please share what you feel comfortable discussing.** No I did not feel safe in any of my facilities. I was monitored by male staff members in the bathroom, forced to sleep on the floor for months, forced to do manual labor including clearing a trail in a forest which resulted in a saw that was dangling from a tree falling on a kids face, forced to lay in a puddle of my own urine when I developed bedwetting as a side effect of being over



medicated and the staff members refused to let me shower or wash my sheets until the next morning, as well as being restrained twice. I did witness far worse kinds of abuse being done to the other kids including two of the largest male staff members jumping on and tackling a tiny kid to the ground for minor infraction. Throughout all of this, I was unable to tell anyone on the outside since all communication with the outside world was restricted and monitored.

**We understand that your experiences in youth residential treatment facilities may have had a lasting impact on your life. Your insights are valuable in helping us understand these effects. How have your experiences in youth residential treatment facilities affected your life and well-being, both during your time there and after leaving care? Please share any ways these experiences have influenced you.** My memories of these experiences have haunted me every day for the past 8 years

**If you could tell policymakers one thing about youth residential treatment facilities and what needs to change, what would it be?** There are many things that need to change, but the first thing that I think needs to change is that kids need to be able to have unmonitored contact with the outside world so they can report abuse and/or neglect.

---

ID: 62

Age: 40

**How old were you when you were sent to the institutional placement(s)?** 16

**What was the name of the institutional placement(s)? Did you experience this placement while in foster care?** High Impact. No.

**We understand that sharing your experiences can be difficult, and we appreciate your courage in doing so. Would you be willing to share with us about your time in youth residential treatment facilities? What were some of the aspects of your living conditions, including the quality of food, clothing, and overall care you received?** Yes. My journey to outpatient homes and eventually High Impact started because I was bullied in 9th grade and two girls spread an awful rumor about me.

Columbine happened and they spread a rumor that I was going to bomb our school. I had witnesses but the school still said I couldn't come back for 10th grade. I was there on scholarship. This led my stepdad and mom to send me away to High Impact a couple years later at my new public school, just a couple weeks after school started. I was told I was going to California to a therapy boarding school. I was driven across the border to Tecate, Mexico despite my screams of fear and panic. The border guard ignored me. I slept outside on concrete in a military tent with no climate control. I was forced to lie with no pillow in a sleeping bag. The ground was on an incline so every night I rolled from the middle of the tent to the one end. I got in trouble for moving while sleeping. My school books and shoes were taken away from me on day one. I was told I didn't deserve to learn and didn't deserve shoes.

I was provide plain oats for breakfast, rice and beans for lunch and chicken and rice for dinners. I cooked them on an open fire that I started.

I was limited water. When I needed water during our caged laps, I was told I was making excuses for wanting to delay my 1000+laps a day wearing only sandals, while being forced to run for some of them, in the hot desert sun. Wearing only sandals and no water, I was forced to climb up a small mountain. I was punished for not pooping within 2 minutes. I was thrown in a dog cage with no sun protection multiple times. I was forced to undress, be naked while adults watched me use the bathroom and shower.

Showering was using a Home Depot bucket of cold water and dumping it on my body. Clothing was not adequate. I was very cold during the night and overheated almost every day. I wasn't allowed to look at a mirror, use sunscreen, and every bathroom break was timed.

Miguel the operator of High Impact, forced me to strip down and stared at my naked body. I was forced on the last night to sleep in the house, in the same bedroom, next to Miguel and his wife, Alley.

The only learning i was allowed to do were worksheets and listening to AA tapes. I was not a drinker or a partier. Miguel shoved me on the concrete and rocks several times, face down, put me in a hog tie position while he sat on my back. I was forced to confess to things I had never done. I was denied calls to my mom or anyone in family.

I was called fat by the staff Brenda and the other "mamas" as a 16 year old 5 foot 6 inch who weighed 136 pounds. I was called stupid and worthless by Miguel several times. I was punished for screaming when I woke up to two baby scorpions by my head.

**We know that maintaining education can be challenging in different living situations, and we value your input on this matter. Were you able to continue your education and receive the academic support you needed while living in the youth residential treatment facilities? Please share your experiences, including any challenges or successes you encountered.** Absolutely not. First night i arrived late, they went inside my blue rubber bin, and took away all my school books. My teachers back home had given me the assignments so that I wouldn't fall behind.

I had no education at all for the month I was there, unless you count being forced to fill out worksheets after listening to AA tapes. When I did go back to my school at home, my teachers said it was impossible to catch up. One teacher gave me a week to try to do the work. I stayed up for hours and did. My grade before was an A, when I came back it was a D minus. When he saw me turn in a months worth of work, he moved it to a C.

**Describe your access to health care, mental health support, and other services you needed while in youth residential treatment facilities. Were your needs adequately met?** None at all. I was denied treatment for the pain in my back shoulder and neck from would hogtie me and sit on my back. I had indents on my knees from the rocks, blisters from running in sandals, bruises from the punishments, sunburns, and bleeding cracked hands. They would not even give me a band aid or antibacterial creme or sunscreen. I was dizzy from being unable to breathe when Miguel sat on my back.

**Your safety and well-being are extremely important, and we are committed to understanding your experiences. Did you feel safe during your time in youth residential treatment facilities? If you experienced any instances of abuse, neglect, or overly harsh punishment, please share what you feel comfortable discussing.** Never felt safe. The hog tying while Miguel sat on my back. Forced to be naked in front of staff, both men and women, and forced to sleep the last night next to Alley and Miguel's bed in the house.

**We understand that your experiences in youth residential treatment facilities may have had a lasting impact on your life. Your insights are valuable in helping us understand these effects. How have your experiences in youth residential treatment facilities affected your life and well-being, both during your time there and after leaving care? Please share any ways these experiences have influenced you.** Yes, even with therapy, I still have nightmares, claustrophobia, after being called fat, struggled with weight issues and eating issues, my body still hurts at 40 from what they did to me at 16, I lived in fear that I would be sent back or to the other facility where they warned me they'd send me and I'd have bugs crawling under my skin. I spent years thinking I was worthless, became suicidal, didn't understand healthy relationships. I would date controlling types of men, that was familiar to me like Miguel. I was almost murdered in my late 20s and the abuser said the same thing Miguel told me that night.

**If you could tell policymakers one thing about youth residential treatment facilities and what needs to change, what would it be?** Make it illegal to abuse these children.

---

ID: 63

Age: 28

**How old were you when you were sent to the institutional placement(s)?** On and off from roughly 9 years old until I was 15

**What was the name of the institutional placement(s)? Did you experience this placement while in foster care?** Excelsior Youth Center, Tennyson, Gateway, Jenny Brinton Home, plus more

**We understand that sharing your experiences can be difficult, and we appreciate your courage in doing so. Would you be willing to share with us about your time in youth residential treatment facilities? What were some of the aspects of your living conditions, including the quality of food, clothing, and overall care you received?** Clothing was hand me downs nothing was ever new, In a few places we had to wear uniform Black Sweatpants and a blue button up polo shirt Longsleeve in winter shirtsleeve in summer but the black sweatpants were year round despite the weather. We could wear casual clothes for a few hours a day after school but had to wear uniforms to school and uniforms to bed. The food wasn't all that nutritious and limited options. Medical care was not existent severely neglected. At Excelsior I threw up everyday for 8 months and was forced to go to school with a trash bag to barf in I never did see a doctor and the nurse kept saying I was faking it. Come to find out my migraines and stomach issues were very real issues that lead into a later diagnosis of Cyclic Vomiting Syndrome and Migraines some other neurological issues but it wouldn't be found out until I became an adult and emancipated. It was desolate white walls and a lot of isolation a lot of physical abuse ranging in restraints with 4 grown men on top of a small 65 pound frame legs suspended above head face down on the ground with arms suspended and chest pulled up off the ground all there weight pinning you down not being able to breathe. Sexually assaulted by male staff, face slammed to pavement until it was bloody by staff clothing shredded not to see medical care for days and left In a cold dark room with not even a mattress or blanket days before the center nurses would tend to the injuries staff caused. They didn't care about you. A lot of it was more traumatizing the trauma I was meant to try and heal from.

**We know that maintaining education can be challenging in different living situations, and we value your input on this matter. Were you able to continue your education and receive the academic support you needed while living in the youth residential treatment facilities? Please share your experiences, including any challenges or successes you encountered.** I was able to continue education but it felt belittling as I was advanced in a lot of areas but not challenged. In middle school at Excelsior it was often kindergarten/Preschool level work not at the advanced level I was. I excelled best at Art and Choir because the teachers pushed me and let me explore, but math and literature were a joke. I felt stupid because I wasn't challenged and was in advanced classes prior to placement. Teachers and staff assumed we weren't capable of learning because of the unique set of life circumstances we were sadly dealt. By the time I got out and went to Highschool I went from being advanced to being behind and having to catch up.

**Describe your access to health care, mental health support, and other services you needed while in youth residential treatment facilities. Were your needs adequately met?** I was heavily drugged on medication that I didn't need. So many things that never should have been taken together. I experienced so many side effects including seizures from the concoction of over 12 different mental health medications I was on. At one point I was taking Abilify, Prozac, Seroquil, Ritalin, Amitryptaline, Trazodone, Gabapentin, Lamotrigone, Clozapine, Adderal, Lorazepam, and Topamax at the Same time. I was overly medicated and barely functioned was

exhausted all the time and wasn't me. I was sick and fighting side effects including seizures. Later I would find out none of those medications should have ever been mixed together and for Someone who suffered from CPTSD, Depression, and anxiety all that wasn't necessary. Once I left Excelsior and went to a treatment center in my hometown we started to wean off some of those medications it was overkill. Then just before I turned 18 I asked to be taken off the medications it took 3 years to come off all of them but the seizures stopped, I could look people in the eye when speaking, and I could stay awake. There was daily group therapy but it wasn't helpful because it was like your issues didn't matter we weren't valued, seen, or heard. There was also weekly individual talk therapy and weekly family therapy over the phone. Medically I was constantly neglected I had chronic UTIS which weren't treated until I became not cognitively present which was hard to tell if it was the UTI or an effect of being heavily drugged. Outside of being heavily drugged and mandatory therapy all other medical care was neglected.

**Your safety and well-being are extremely important, and we are committed to understanding your experiences. Did you feel safe during your time in youth residential treatment facilities? If you experienced any instances of abuse, neglect, or overly harsh punishment, please share what you feel comfortable discussing.** No! I experienced sexual abuse while being restrained, I experienced getting my face slammed into pavement, and shoulders dislocated by those trusted with my care. I was talked down upon and even educationally treated like a baby, called stupid and retarded by teachers in the centers. Medical neglect, Educational neglect, Physical abuse, and multiple counts of sexual assault were experienced. At the Brinton home I was 9 years old I remember staff fell asleep I. The staff bedroom and I was forced by the older 19-21 year old girls to Watch a horror movie. During this movie the older girls pinned me down on the couch and ripped off all my clothes and put objects inside my anus and vagina while I silently cried because better not make a sound it hurt terribly they took turns and would run there hands down my body and inside of me. I bled for over a month after that but didn't trust anyone or say a word. The whole time this was happening staff was asleep in the next room. They thought I just started my period but they didn't know the truth. I didn't trust them and they wouldn't of believed me anyways the word of a 9 year old over that of the young adults in their care.

**We understand that your experiences in youth residential treatment facilities may have had a lasting impact on your life. Your insights are valuable in helping us understand these effects. How have your experiences in youth residential treatment facilities affected your life and well-being, both during your time there and after leaving care? Please share any ways these experiences have influenced you.** In care it was a nightmare, after care it like a nightmare I can't escape. I often wake up screaming at night from the flashbacks and sometimes physical pain during these flashbacks that only reminds me or brings me back to what happened. I had CPTSD then but it's only worse since leaving. A nightmare that can't be escaped.

**If you could tell policymakers one thing about youth residential treatment facilities and what needs to change, what would it be?** That altogether these places do more harm than good. It's not a place to be children need to be somewhere that feels like family, somewhere where they are loved and nurtured and built up. Not retraumatized over and over again, not in a place that abuses them worse than the abuse they came from. As an adult I still can't escape the nightmare that was congregate care. Congregate care is overcrowded and youth deserve better.

---

ID: 64

Age: 50

**How old were you when you were sent to the institutional placement(s)?** 15

**What was the name of the institutional placement(s)? Did you experience this placement while in foster care?** Provo Canyon School

**We understand that sharing your experiences can be difficult, and we appreciate your courage in doing so. Would you be willing to share with us about your time in youth residential treatment facilities? What were some of the aspects of your living conditions, including the quality of food, clothing, and overall care you received?** I felt like there was mold. The intake unit smelled. I wasn't allowed to go outside for at least my first month there. barely any windows.

**We know that maintaining education can be challenging in different living situations, and we value your input on this matter. Were you able to continue your education and receive the academic support you needed while living in the youth residential treatment facilities? Please share your experiences, including any challenges or successes you encountered.** I had to teach myself because the teachers weren't that helpful or effective. I had to teach myself advanced courses.

**Describe your access to health care, mental health support, and other services you needed while in youth residential treatment facilities. Were your needs adequately met?** Kind of. but I had no input in it. I was forced to take medication that made me feel tired and different. To this day, I don't know what I was given except being forced to take acutane.

**Your safety and well-being are extremely important, and we are committed to understanding your experiences. Did you feel safe during your time in youth residential treatment facilities? If you experienced any instances of abuse, neglect, or overly harsh punishment, please share what you feel comfortable discussing.** I didn't feel safe. I was forced to stand against a wall for weeks. I wasn't allowed to tell my parents about the abuse.

**We understand that your experiences in youth residential treatment facilities may have had a lasting impact on your life. Your insights are valuable in helping us understand these effects. How have your experiences in youth residential treatment facilities affected your life and well-being, both during your time there and after leaving care? Please share any ways these experiences have influenced you.** I have CPTSD, it takes me awhile to trust people. I am very independent.

**If you could tell policymakers one thing about youth residential treatment facilities and what needs to change, what would it be?** We didn't have any rights. We were trapped.

---

ID: 65

Age: 13

**How old were you when you were sent to the institutional placement(s)?** 12-13

**What was the name of the institutional placement(s)? Did you experience this placement while in foster care?** Brighter Path - Courtland, AL / yes

**We understand that sharing your experiences can be difficult, and we appreciate your courage in doing so. Would you be willing to share with us about your time in youth residential treatment facilities? What were some of the aspects of your living conditions, including the quality of food, clothing, and overall care you received?** food was bad and i did not like what they served. usually small servings so everyone - including me - was starving before the next mealtime. bed was terrible, hard mattress and uncomfortable. not on bedframe but on a brick slab. bedding was itchy and so were the clothes. misplaced clothes and mixed in with other kids clothes. stinked like urine because kids peed their beds and then had to sleep on them. staff sometimes took our clothes home to wash it in their laundry soap but we didn't always get our clothes back.

we rarely got to go outside to play. we were kept on our hall in our rooms except for class in the morning, mealtime, and maybe 30 minutes in the gym.

some staff would bring video game consoles for us on the weekends when the directors were not there. we got to play call of duty and jump force. staff would put on their disney + accounts and their roku channels to let us watch tv sometimes.

mr. williams - i think, we called him pops, would throw candy into my room at night sometimes.

**We know that maintaining education can be challenging in different living situations, and we value your input on this matter. Were you able to continue your education and receive the academic support you needed while living in the youth residential treatment facilities? Please share your experiences, including any challenges or successes you encountered.** no. everything was done in work packets and barely ever got any help. did not have help with tests. spent a lot of time playing games on computer. i do not feel prepared for the next grade - 8th grade - because i spent 7th grade at the facility and did not learn anything.

**Describe your access to health care, mental health support, and other services you needed while in youth residential treatment facilities. Were your needs adequately met?** no medications - even other the counter medications - could be dispensed if the nurse was not there. so if i had a headache or growing pains overnight and even sometimes during the day then we couldn't get tylenol or pepto bismal for upset stomach. i do not know what medications i was taking or what they were for. i was taken off of one of them but do not know why.

when i was sick i was just given a small glass of ginger ale and only saw a medical doctor once. allergies were not treated even when i told the nurse and my mom did, too.

**Your safety and well-being are extremely important, and we are committed to understanding your experiences. Did you feel safe during your time in youth residential treatment facilities? If you experienced any instances of abuse, neglect, or overly harsh punishment, please share what you**

**feel comfortable discussing.** sometimes but sometimes not because of the staff. staff yeled a lot and cursed me out a lot. they used inappropriate language at me. one staff - mcghee - baracaded me in my room with just me and him and yelled at me. he threw me against the cement wall, shoved me i the chest so hard i have bruises, and shoved me into a concrete window ledge that left bruises across my back. when i screamed for help no one came. i tried to grab the door handle to get out but he squeezed my wrist which left a bruise. another staff member hurt me a lot of times. ladon would hit me with the walkie talkie and mainly shoved me hard in the arm.

i was the smallest child in our unit with other boys. kids would start fights and i was hit so many times i cannot even count. i was punched so hard in the eye it broke the skin below it. another kid tried to walk in on me while i was taking a shower because he got away from his behavioral aid.

**We understand that your experiences in youth residential treatment facilities may have had a lasting impact on your life. Your insights are valuable in helping us understand these effects. How have your experiences in youth residential treatment facilities affected your life and well-being, both during your time there and after leaving care? Please share any ways these experiences have influenced you.** i came to see violence as being an every day thing while there.it encourages violence in my mind but i am trying hard not to be.

**If you could tell policymakers one thing about youth residential treatment facilities and what needs to change, what would it be?** they treated us as bad or worse than prisoners. i did not feel respected by most staff there and was often treated like an animal. change would be better oversight and more employee background checks.

---



ID: 66

Age: 22

**How old were you when you were sent to the institutional placement(s)?** 17

**What was the name of the institutional placement(s)? Did you experience this placement while in foster care?** Second Nature Wilderness Therapy, Alpine Academy

**We understand that sharing your experiences can be difficult, and we appreciate your courage in doing so. Would you be willing to share with us about your time in youth residential treatment facilities? What were some of the aspects of your living conditions, including the quality of food, clothing, and overall care you received?**

The conditions I endured for ninety-one days at Second Nature Wilderness Therapy were abusive and subhuman. We were in the Uinta Mountains. I was there from November to February. Temperatures were often below freezing. I lost all feeling in my hands, feet, and face for days at a time. I got hypothermia bumps on my buttocks, thighs, and calves. My hands had open wounds from the cold. A permanent layer of dirt and ash covered my entire body, and my snot was black from smoke and ash inhalation. Every single one of us developed pitted keratolysis on our feet because we were forced to wear tightly fitted boots and socks and we could not properly wash our feet. We were given antifungal powder to “treat” this bacterial infection, which was obviously ineffective. The cuts and bruises I sustained took weeks or months to heal because of a lack of access to proper nutrition and medical care. One camper got a staph infection and was forced to dress and treat her wound while in the woods. If it was 32 degrees Fahrenheit or above, staff would refuse to light a fire and force us to sleep outside.

Second Nature’s website will tell you that they feed each child 3000 calories a day, a mix of fresh fruits, vegetables, eggs, bacon, and more. They are lying. Breakfast every single day was one serving of dry oats and dry granola. Lunch was a slice of sausage and a chunk of cheese, or one packet of tuna fish. Dinner was usually rice and freeze-dried beans. We were occasionally given a single apple or orange after we finished a hike. There was never bacon. I did not see an egg for the ninety-one days I was there. One of my peers vomited over a dozen times because of the quality of the food. Many of us threw up at least once/and or had bouts of diarrhea. Staff encouraged us not to wipe ourselves after we urinated because it was “a waste of toilet paper.” This led to UTIs and yeast infections.

We had one shirt and one pair of long underwear which we had to wear for six days straight. We were given coats that did not protect us from the extreme cold and weighed down our packs. We were not given any kind of hiking or camping training or experience, and we had to carry men’s large hiking backpacks which sometimes weighed more than half our body weight. Second Nature Wilderness Therapy swears that its “students” never have a pack weight that is more than a third of their body weight. They are lying. Staff weighed our packs only twice in the entire time I was there, and we were not allowed to see the scale. In a Google Review, a former staff member wrote, “It is true that students are carrying more than 1/3 of their body weight.... Second Nature continuously required staff to lie about pack weights - and to simply not do them.”

At Alpine Academy, I was forced to eat, often to the point of nausea. Food was carefully monitored and measured out, and anyone who ate more or less than the meticulously divvied out portions would be punished. There were video cameras everywhere but the bedrooms and bathrooms. We had to earn a certain number of “points” every day. If we did not, we had to sit at the kitchen table and not speak to anyone for 24 hours. We had heat-sensitive alarms on our doors and if we set them off, even if we needed to go to the bathroom, we were punished.

**We know that maintaining education can be challenging in different living situations, and we value your input on this matter. Were you able to continue your education and receive the academic support you needed while living in the youth residential treatment facilities? Please share your experiences, including any challenges or successes you encountered.**

Before I was sent to the troubled teen industry, I had a 5.0 GPA. I received 5's on every AP test I took. I was on track to receive my International Baccalaureate (IB) Diploma. I had over 200 hours of community service. I was on the board of my high school's National Honors Society Chapter and our mock - United Nations club. Because I was sent to youth residential care, I did not receive my IB Diploma. I did not graduate from the high school I attended for three and a half years. I lost my perfect GPA. I believe that my loss of membership to these clubs, my withdrawal from Advanced/ IB classes at my school, and my lowered GPA, all results of being sent to youth residential treatment facilities, affected the scholarships and acceptances I received for colleges.

Most of the "academics" I was given at Second Nature and Alpine were worksheets/packets.

**Describe your access to health care, mental health support, and other services you needed while in youth residential treatment facilities. Were your needs adequately met?** My needs were never adequately met. At Second Nature, I was forced to hike even when I was sick or injured, as was everyone else. Our concerns about the freezing temperatures, lack of nutrition, and injuries were almost always ignored. It was common for staff and therapists to accuse us of faking injury or distress. I met with a therapist once a week. The rest of the time, our whole group was entirely in the care of 1-3 people in their early twenties. They were wholly unprepared to help or heal severely traumatized teenagers, or to even look after their basic needs.

At Second Nature, my therapist told me repeatedly that my parents never abused me (despite several Child Protective Services reports). She told me that I was not allowed to leave the program until I "take accountability for playing the victim in the relationship with [my] parents and manipulating them."

At Alpine Academy, my medications were changed without my knowledge or consent. When I mentioned my abuse, the staff taunted me and called me a liar. The staff mocked my relationships outside of the program. My therapist at Alpine told me that the sexual assault I experienced as a child never happened, and that my brain was "making it up." He regularly implied that any relationships I had with anyone other than my abusive parents could not be trusted. That everyone but my parents would leave me. I had to do workbooks on codependency and was encouraged to see all of my relationships with people besides my parents as unhealthy and codependent.

**Your safety and well-being are extremely important, and we are committed to understanding your experiences. Did you feel safe during your time in youth residential treatment facilities? If you experienced any instances of abuse, neglect, or overly harsh punishment, please share what you feel comfortable discussing.**

There was never a time in the nine months of youth residential treatment in which I felt safe. I was subjected to strip searches and pat-downs on multiple occasions. I was subjected to medical examinations and was not allowed to decline. I was denied contact with everyone, including my immediate family, for months at a time. Everything I said and did was surveilled. All of my communications were monitored and censored. Staff routinely looked through all of my belongings. Everything I wrote was reviewed, including in my private journals. For nine months, my body was not my own. My mind was not my own.

Besides the surveillance, there was the constant terror of not knowing why I was there or when I would leave. I was told that each thing I did was a testament to whether or not I was ready to go. For nine

months, I lived in constant terror. Forgetting a pencil or not making my bed correctly could mean another day, another week, another month that I was locked up. Showing any signs of distress meant that I was not yet healed and I needed to stay longer. I was being tortured and I was not allowed to know when it would stop.

At Second Nature, you can be put on a “solo.” You have to build your own shelter, make your own food, and not speak to anyone. One girl in my group was on a solo for eight weeks. She was not allowed to speak to any of us for eight weeks, including on Christmas.

While I was at Alpine Academy, one of the therapists was fired for being sexually inappropriate towards his teenage clients. I heard numerous stories from other girls about male and female staff members crossing physical and sexual boundaries.

**We understand that your experiences in youth residential treatment facilities may have had a lasting impact on your life. Your insights are valuable in helping us understand these effects.**

**How have your experiences in youth residential treatment facilities affected your life and well-being, both during your time there and after leaving care? Please share any ways these experiences have influenced you.** Since leaving youth residential treatment, I have been diagnosed with Posttraumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD). I still have nightmares about the residential facilities. I have PTSD attacks often. Because of the “therapeutic” brainwashing I endured, I destroyed some of the most important relationships I have ever had and have been unable to replace or regain them. I struggle to keep in touch with the friends I knew before I was sent away, because I am so ashamed about what happened to me. I struggle with socializing with my peers and forming close bonds with them. I am afraid everything will be taken away from me because it has been before. I do not know how to relate to people my own age. I cannot talk about prom or high school graduation or the traditions I did in my senior year of high school. For nine months I was taught that something was definitively, irreparably wrong with me. So now I believe it. Residential treatment centers destroyed my life. I no longer do any of the things I enjoy. I am afraid to go outside. I am afraid to become friends with people. I miss the person I was and I am afraid that she is gone forever.

**If you could tell policymakers one thing about youth residential treatment facilities and what needs to change, what would it be?** It is unfathomable to me that these places still exist.

---

ID: 67

Age: 18

**How old were you when you were sent to the institutional placement(s)?** 16

**What was the name of the institutional placement(s)? Did you experience this placement while in foster care?** Elk River Treatment Program (Huntsville AL) - No I was not in foster care

**We understand that sharing your experiences can be difficult, and we appreciate your courage in doing so. Would you be willing to share with us about your time in youth residential treatment facilities? What were some of the aspects of your living conditions, including the quality of food, clothing, and overall care you received?** We slept in teepees outside that were freezing cold in the winter with no proper heating. Showers were covered in mold. Residents were required to sleep in snow and build campfire for staff as punishment for talking out of permission.

**We know that maintaining education can be challenging in different living situations, and we value your input on this matter. Were you able to continue your education and receive the academic support you needed while living in the youth residential treatment facilities? Please share your experiences, including any challenges or successes you encountered.** I was able to continue education however when I left they refused to transfer any credits so I had to recomplete school as if I never took any classes

**Describe your access to health care, mental health support, and other services you needed while in youth residential treatment facilities. Were your needs adequately met?** Healthcare was denied many times. Personally I've had a medical cut and was denied access to medical care as a punishment. I also believe I had an untreated concussion caused from a staff member

**Your safety and well-being are extremely important, and we are committed to understanding your experiences. Did you feel safe during your time in youth residential treatment facilities? If you experienced any instances of abuse, neglect, or overly harsh punishment, please share what you feel comfortable discussing.** I did not feel safe at all. Staff retaliated frequently and would brag about painful containments. We were punished for talking without nonverbal permission (being watched every word or else harsh punishments)

**We understand that your experiences in youth residential treatment facilities may have had a lasting impact on your life. Your insights are valuable in helping us understand these effects. How have your experiences in youth residential treatment facilities affected your life and well-being, both during your time there and after leaving care? Please share any ways these experiences have influenced you.** I went in with depression and anxiety but left with those plus severe ptsd

**If you could tell policymakers one thing about youth residential treatment facilities and what needs to change, what would it be? -**

---

ID: 68

Age: 25

**How old were you when you were sent to the institutional placement(s)?** 16

**What was the name of the institutional placement(s)? Did you experience this placement while in foster care?** Los Angeles Youth Network DBA Youth Emerging Stronger, yes

**We understand that sharing your experiences can be difficult, and we appreciate your courage in doing so. Would you be willing to share with us about your time in youth residential treatment facilities? What were some of the aspects of your living conditions, including the quality of food, clothing, and overall care you received?** My overall experience in congregate care was okay. We certainly were one of the "better" group homes from some of my other peers experiences. Firstly, there were staff always crossing boundaries that were not healthy or age appropriate for the youth living in care. The fridges and kitchen space were often locked so youth could not access food. Fights broke out regularly. There wasn't any order in the houses as they were often staffed by "low-skill" staff. We received a \$50 clothing allowance a month, which is not enough when youth in foster care constantly lose their belongings or they're misplaced moving from place to place. I was sexually assaulted and groomed in the group home and my peers were too. When this was brought to the group homes attention, the perpetrator was not fired, but moved to another home and allowed to continue to work with youth. Our group home was often targeted by pimps to recruit more young girls. I could go on and on, but these are the major issues that stick out to me and just what we had to live with. There wasn't anything we could do.

**We know that maintaining education can be challenging in different living situations, and we value your input on this matter. Were you able to continue your education and receive the academic support you needed while living in the youth residential treatment facilities? Please share your experiences, including any challenges or successes you encountered.**

Continuing my education while living in a group home was a significant challenge. The environment was often chaotic and not conducive to learning. There was a lack of academic support, and it was difficult to focus on schoolwork given the conditions.

Access to educational resources was limited. We had restricted access to study materials and the internet, which made completing assignments and studying for exams difficult. The facilities rarely provided a quiet and stable place to study.

Despite these challenges, I made efforts to keep up with my education. There were a few staff members who genuinely cared and tried to help with schoolwork, but their support was often inconsistent due to the overall instability of the facility.

The biggest success I encountered was developing my own resilience and self-motivation. These qualities helped me push through and continue my education despite the numerous obstacles. Fortunately, I was able to successfully enter a four-year university. However, this is certainly not the norm for my peers. When I exited care, they just dropped me off with my belongings, providing no support during that transition.

**Describe your access to health care, mental health support, and other services you needed while in youth residential treatment facilities. Were your needs adequately met?** Access to health care,

mental health support, and other essential services while in youth residential treatment facilities was often inadequate. Health care was of very low quality; getting timely medical attention was challenging, and regular check-ups were rare. When medical issues arose, the response time was often slow, and the quality of care varied greatly. Many medical professionals seemed overworked or indifferent, which negatively impacted the quality of treatment we received.

Mental health support, which is crucial in such environments, was also severely lacking. While there were some efforts to provide counseling and therapy, these services were often infrequent and not tailored to individual needs. The high turnover rate of mental health professionals made it difficult to build trust and continuity in care.

Other essential services, such as educational support and life skills training, were minimal. There was a lack of structured programs to help us develop the skills needed for independent living. This gap became particularly evident when transitioning out of care, as I saw my peers often unprepared for adulthood.

**Your safety and well-being are extremely important, and we are committed to understanding your experiences. Did you feel safe during your time in youth residential treatment facilities? If you experienced any instances of abuse, neglect, or overly harsh punishment, please share what you feel comfortable discussing.** I didn't feel safe. I always felt like I was staying hyperaware of my surroundings and not being able to trust anyone. Like mentioned earlier, a few of us were sexually abused/assaulted and nothing was done about it. As I look back now as an adult, I wish I would have spoke up, but when you are living in congregate care, you feel helpless. I also didn't feel safe because I knew our group home was known and being targeted by pimps.

**We understand that your experiences in youth residential treatment facilities may have had a lasting impact on your life. Your insights are valuable in helping us understand these effects. How have your experiences in youth residential treatment facilities affected your life and well-being, both during your time there and after leaving care? Please share any ways these experiences have influenced you.** Being in foster care has left a lasting mark of my identity into adulthood and it is not anything you can just erase or forget. I have no familial support as an adulthood, it impacts my relationships, and I've had to work through trauma from being in care.

**If you could tell policymakers one thing about youth residential treatment facilities and what needs to change, what would it be?** Invest in the staff!! High quality staff will make or break a group home. You cannot pay these staff minimum wage to do this work. You will attract low skilled, unqualified employees. Group homes often operate on razor thin margins. If you don't invest in youth now, we as a society will pay for it later.

---

ID: 69

Age: 35

**How old were you when you were sent to the institutional placement(s)?** 14

**What was the name of the institutional placement(s)? Did you experience this placement while in foster care?** Academy Ivy Ridge

**We understand that sharing your experiences can be difficult, and we appreciate your courage in doing so. Would you be willing to share with us about your time in youth residential treatment facilities? What were some of the aspects of your living conditions, including the quality of food, clothing, and overall care you received?** I attended Academy at Ivy Ridge 2003--2004 for 18 months. I was kidnapped and handcuffed by two strangers in the middle of the night and transported to Ogdensburg, New York on July 4, 2003. At arrival, I was deliberately stripped of literally every human right I had and denial of access to lifesaving medical care when needed. My day to day consisted of isolating, attacking and overpowering, both physically and psychologically, to force a change in my personality. Pharmacological abuse causing side effects in my central nervous system -- inhibiting cognitive, cardio-metabolic and motor functions -- I felt weakened and no part of my being felt safe. I was deprived from drinking clean water and of any privacy while using the restroom or showering. When I took more than the time given of 5 minutes to shower the facility staff would pull me out of the shower from my arm naked drenched in shampoo or soap and had to wipe dry. The facility would use ("brain washing") practices and abusive in literally any other context. They forbid all communication with anybody outside the program except for my parents. This is a privilege that is granted or withheld at the staff's pleasure. Possession of mobile phones or internet-capable devices was out of the question. Approved communication was limited to heavily censored handwritten mail and infrequent phone calls via landlines requiring staff to input a code to dial out. These calls were strictly monitored and would be abruptly cut off if I spoke ill of the program or say I wanted to go home. The program censored incoming mail, redacting references to friends or non-immediate family members to further cut us off from external systems of support. There were many times I felt ill and begged for permission to see a doctor and I was denied. They completed a pap smear at the facility and they stated I had AIDS causing me to feel a strong revulsion against myself. When my mother pulled from the program in December 2004 I tested negative for AIDS back at home. I now suffer from chronic post-traumatic stress disorder, depression, general anxiety and insomnia that has lasted well into my adulthood.

**We know that maintaining education can be challenging in different living situations, and we value your input on this matter. Were you able to continue your education and receive the academic support you needed while living in the youth residential treatment facilities? Please share your experiences, including any challenges or successes you encountered.** Academy at Ivy Ridge promised my family and I a graduation with a high school diploma and it was not accredited. I struggled with school tremendously. My parents were paying for private tutoring I was not receiving. When I was pulled from the program I came home to start 9th grade and I was supposed to be in 11th grade. I then decided to drop out of school and pay to get my high school diploma through a private school. The program's curriculum was based on their religion and was basically asking multiple choice questions repeating the same questions until you got them correct. I do not recall learning anything during my time there.

**Describe your access to health care, mental health support, and other services you needed while in youth residential treatment facilities. Were your needs adequately met?** I was on medications that

were making me feel very ill with stomach pains and nausea. I begged for a doctor and they stated I was manipulating or lying and denied medical attention. I also felt like a zombie while I más medicated.

**Your safety and well-being are extremely important, and we are committed to understanding your experiences. Did you feel safe during your time in youth residential treatment facilities? If you experienced any instances of abuse, neglect, or overly harsh punishment, please share what you feel comfortable discussing.** I did not feel safe during my time at Academy at Ivy Ridge due to being full forced restraint to the point that I couldn't breathe at times, and I also experienced other girls get restrained and staff members sit on them to the point that they would yell they couldn't breathe. When I arrived to the program, I started getting food, allergies and feeling ill, and I requested a lactose intolerant medical card due to having a lot of vomiting, heartburn and indigestion. The staff would purposely make me eat all of my food because I did not have a medical card it took 5-6 months to get a medical card for lactose intolerant.

**We understand that your experiences in youth residential treatment facilities may have had a lasting impact on your life. Your insights are valuable in helping us understand these effects. How have your experiences in youth residential treatment facilities affected your life and well-being, both during your time there and after leaving care? Please share any ways these experiences have influenced you.** During my time at Academy, Ivy Ridge, my Mental Health deteriorated as I felt ashamed, embarrassed, disappointed In myself due To the attack therapy they used. They would tear me down with their words and Belittle me. Once I arrived home after the program, I was in survival mode I was in fight or flight mode, constantly looking over my shoulder. I went to therapy and a psychiatrist and was diagnosed with chronic post traumatic stress disorder, general anxiety, depression, and insomnia. I now have to be treated for my traumas from the program.

**If you could tell policymakers one thing about youth residential treatment facilities and what needs to change, what would it be?** They need to hire fully trained staff including medical. The kids need to be monitored at all times and have camera installations all around the facility.

---



ID: 70

Age: 28

**How old were you when you were sent to the institutional placement(s)?** 16

**What was the name of the institutional placement(s)? Did you experience this placement while in foster care?** Logan River Academy

**We understand that sharing your experiences can be difficult, and we appreciate your courage in doing so. Would you be willing to share with us about your time in youth residential treatment facilities? What were some of the aspects of your living conditions, including the quality of food, clothing, and overall care you received?** I had food taken away from me. I could not eat what the other kids ate because according to them, being overweight was not a good thing. They obsessed over my weight at 16. I was the only student they did this do, which caused me a significant amount of damage and lifetime of body dysmorphia. They would not allow me to leave until I lost 10 pounds. They find your inner weakness, something wrong with you, and completely use it against you. With me, it was my weight.

**We know that maintaining education can be challenging in different living situations, and we value your input on this matter. Were you able to continue your education and receive the academic support you needed while living in the youth residential treatment facilities? Please share your experiences, including any challenges or successes you encountered.** Absolutely not.

**Describe your access to health care, mental health support, and other services you needed while in youth residential treatment facilities. Were your needs adequately met?** I had a 103 temperature, they moved me into a small room with bunk beds, all that was there was a dirty mattress with blood and urine stains. One sheet, one pillow. I was not offered any medical treatment, they believed I was faking it. I had to be in there for over 24 hours with a staff member sitting in a chair by the door with all eyes on me.

**Your safety and well-being are extremely important, and we are committed to understanding your experiences. Did you feel safe during your time in youth residential treatment facilities? If you experienced any instances of abuse, neglect, or overly harsh punishment, please share what you feel comfortable discussing.** The boys always had bloody noses at campus. They weren't as physical with us girls. We had to sit in the basement room called Devo, no windows, in a desk, perfect posture. We would have to sit in there for hours. For the silliest things too, not turning off a light, going over your 6 hour shower time limit which was monitored by adults with the door open. Girls would have months in Devo, I witnessed them being dragged by their feet and hands into the basement.

**We understand that your experiences in youth residential treatment facilities may have had a lasting impact on your life. Your insights are valuable in helping us understand these effects. How have your experiences in youth residential treatment facilities affected your life and well-being, both during your time there and after leaving care? Please share any ways these experiences have influenced you.** After LRA my rehab journey began. I went to 9 rehabs. Before LRA, I barely knew about substance abuse and alcoholism. I have severe body dysmorphia and an ED. I don't think I'll ever get over. I've tried just about everything. My parents apologize every day for sending me there. They knew when the phone calls were being recorded to pull me out. They tried to convince my parents I still have "major issues" and to stay another 6 months.

**If you could tell policymakers one thing about youth residential treatment facilities and what needs to change, what would it be?** It can't just be one thing, all these places need to be shut down. It makes me sick to know students are there this moment.

---

ID: 71

Age: 25

**How old were you when you were sent to the institutional placement(s)?** Toddler age and 14/15/16

**What was the name of the institutional placement(s)? Did you experience this placement while in foster care?** Some I'm unsure of as a baby/child, ARTEC and girls gh in Utah as a teen

**We understand that sharing your experiences can be difficult, and we appreciate your courage in doing so. Would you be willing to share with us about your time in youth residential treatment facilities? What were some of the aspects of your living conditions, including the quality of food, clothing, and overall care you received?** Moldy, unsafe and bare minimum

**We know that maintaining education can be challenging in different living situations, and we value your input on this matter. Were you able to continue your education and receive the academic support you needed while living in the youth residential treatment facilities? Please share your experiences, including any challenges or successes you encountered.** The facilities set me back educationally because I was being taught elementary level academics in all congregate care facilities as a middle/highschool age young person.

**Describe your access to health care, mental health support, and other services you needed while in youth residential treatment facilities. Were your needs adequately met?** My therapist was brand new. She had no idea what was going on or how to meet with someone with trauma and PTSD. Basic Health needs were met but not mental health well

**Your safety and well-being are extremely important, and we are committed to understanding your experiences. Did you feel safe during your time in youth residential treatment facilities? If you experienced any instances of abuse, neglect, or overly harsh punishment, please share what you feel comfortable discussing.**

**We understand that your experiences in youth residential treatment facilities may have had a lasting impact on your life. Your insights are valuable in helping us understand these effects. How have your experiences in youth residential treatment facilities affected your life and well-being, both during your time there and after leaving care? Please share any ways these experiences have influenced you.** These experiences left me very much behind my peers educationally, trusting anyone but especially adults was difficult, the places I was sent got me into more things I shouldn't have been learning or doing, it aided in severing any and all bonds I should have had with my biological family and of course the life long stigma of being that "bad kid" has followed me for life

**If you could tell policymakers one thing about youth residential treatment facilities and what needs to change, what would it be?** CONSENT LAWS FOR MINORS ARE A MUST STILL! My state Utah has laws that allow youth to literally be kidnapped and placed into these programs where they can't escape abuse.

---

ID: 72  
Age: 40

**How old were you when you were sent to the institutional placement(s)?** 15

**What was the name of the institutional placement(s)? Did you experience this placement while in foster care?** Not foster, Carolina Springs Academy

**We understand that sharing your experiences can be difficult, and we appreciate your courage in doing so. Would you be willing to share with us about your time in youth residential treatment facilities? What were some of the aspects of your living conditions, including the quality of food, clothing, and overall care you received?** Yes

The food did not seem regulated as many of us gained upwards of 20+ lbs within first year. It wasn't molded, it tasted fine, I just don't believe the quality was there

The clothing we received was sufficient and we were allowed to wear as appropriate for the weather

Overall? That is a vast q/a...they kept us alive physically, but many barely as they experienced significant malpractice and neglect. I escaped such

Mentally and emotionally, we were manipulated and abused in derogatory, belittling and back handed ways. We were made to take ownership and accountability for abuse we received in life, had our emotions used against us in order to ascend levels and we were taught to belittle each other in order to ascend levels and get privileges such as TALKING TO OUR PARENTS ON THE PHONE.

In seeking assistance to word this, Google AI states an accurate depiction of what we endured daily::

"Emotional abuse is a non-physical form of abuse that uses emotion to control, isolate, or frighten someone. Mental abuse can include changing facts to gain control. Both types of abuse can have severe short- and long-term effects, such as confusion, anxiety, shame, guilt, and depression."

**We know that maintaining education can be challenging in different living situations, and we value your input on this matter. Were you able to continue your education and receive the academic support you needed while living in the youth residential treatment facilities? Please share your experiences, including any challenges or successes you encountered.** My brain loves to learn. In CSA, we were on our own and only taught to memorize. We took the same test over and over until we got it right, then that's the mark that went on our transcript. While I'm grateful for the fresh higher start when I got home (which I continued), I learned nothing. I remember nothing. So no, I got a GPA not an education. Then add the CONSTANT mental abusive programming simultaneously.

**Describe your access to health care, mental health support, and other services you needed while in youth residential treatment facilities. Were your needs adequately met?** The fact that ZERO adult entities in CSA recognized the problem with the facility or realized that CHILDREN were being blamed for behavior that got them there (many who didn't even exhibit "bad" behavior) vs the adults and environments we grew up in....this shows there was NOT any mental health assistance, only manipulation, teaching us to manipulate the system to be free.

**Your safety and well-being are extremely important, and we are committed to understanding your experiences. Did you feel safe during your time in youth residential treatment facilities? If you experienced any instances of abuse, neglect, or overly harsh punishment, please share what you feel comfortable discussing.** I have a different experience than my peers. I always felt physically safe and that if I needed something I could get it.

**We understand that your experiences in youth residential treatment facilities may have had a lasting impact on your life. Your insights are valuable in helping us understand these effects. How have your experiences in youth residential treatment facilities affected your life and well-being, both during your time there and after leaving care? Please share any ways these experiences have influenced you.** This boarding school, in looking at patterns through this timeline, served as a physical manifestation of how imprisoned I was already feeling. This only magnified once graduated from CSA and home. It took 6 months for me to entirely unravel and since I went in at 15 and experienced zero real life anything or access, I came home at 15 yrs old mentally. So now (2002), I am a legal adult with a 15 year old's mind that was already at war every day unable to be authentic.

This continued until my mid 30s where I started to become aware of myself, my issues, my patterns. I've had dozens of sexual partners, many negative and abusive relationships, large list of employment locations, and hardly any real relationship with my parents despite living at their house for a decade after losing everything in a horribly abusive relationship. Now that I'm 40, I run BCAI Cultural Arts and Humanities in IL and I have 2 young boys of my own. I've mentored hundreds and I am an audacious voice for youth and do everything in my power to protect their unique individual voices while upholding their autonomy and ability to cocreate.

\*I\* did this work on my own. After decades of behavior that did NOT serve my higher self. There is far more to this story, yet I need to get back to my son. I appreciate this opportunity 🙏

**If you could tell policymakers one thing about youth residential treatment facilities and what needs to change, what would it be?** If these facilities are truly to make ANY positive change, the mandates for credentials and trauma informed, socially and culturally aware and competent PROFESSIONALS that operate with pure intention, not a pay check or lateral gain from an agenda nonconductive to liberating youth.

Youth require support. Start there. Youth require understanding and innerstanding. Start there.

There HAS TO BE PUT IN PLACE policy that protects us from further condemning our society to damaged psyches where we lack trust, abilities and connection

---

ID: 73

Age: 24

**How old were you when you were sent to the institutional placement(s)?** 14

**What was the name of the institutional placement(s)? Did you experience this placement while in foster care?** Spring Ridge Academy. No foster care, my parents did this.

**We understand that sharing your experiences can be difficult, and we appreciate your courage in doing so. Would you be willing to share with us about your time in youth residential treatment facilities? What were some of the aspects of your living conditions, including the quality of food, clothing, and overall care you received?** Personal Experience at Wilderness and Spring Ridge Academy

Spring Ridge Academy age 14, Aug. 2014 – July 2016

The food was terrible, or we were starved. Punishment was isolation and brain washing. We were forced to wear excessively feminized clothing in "attack therapy". I was overmedicated, never saw a doctor or a licensed mental health provider.

The purpose of documenting my experience is to illustrate the contrast between the sunny ideals sold to parents and the stark reality of the treatment we received there. While the experiences may appear to be in the past for you, I live with the consequences of it every day.

As one survivor said: "The things I experienced first-hand were sometimes so disturbing that my attempts to share these atrocities have been insufficient."

My story has many similarities to the account of Spring Ridge Academy survivor Candace Cason. There are many additional narratives from Raelyn K. , and a multitude of other former residents who were also subjected to unregulated inhumane tactics, humiliation, physical and psychological intimidation, shaming, unlicensed practitioners, overmedication, medical negligence, and fraud. A recent lawsuit, Sweidy v. Courtney, corroborates and documents these types of events that occurred at Spring Ridge Academy.

In addition, my autistic tendencies were exploited against me with no accommodation for my individual needs. The cruelty of this experience remains with me today.

I experienced the following during my time at Wilderness and Spring Ridge Academy:

Fear, terror, abandonment, suicidal thoughts and plans, emotional manipulation, sexual grooming by staff, isolation, staff acting as therapists with no training or licensing, over sedation with Seroquel and other unknown substances, heatstroke from working outside with no access to water or shade, forced not to speak as a punishment, also forced to speak in inappropriate group therapy sessions, which included "attack therapy", we were also forced to say the things that they wanted to hear and convince them of our sincerity, we were threatened with punishments, starvation, isolation, or juvenile hall if we rebelled or told anyone what was happening, our parents were told to ignore our concerns and thus our pain, LGBT+ students were forced to repress their true selves and pretend to be straight, I was not considered feminine enough and forced to wear makeup and clothes that did not reflect my true self.

The trainings and workshops were based directly on the previous damaging cults such as Synanon, that the owner of Spring Ridge Academy, and her former husband previously were involved in, the techniques were not evidenced based, and have now been documented as brain washing and torture.

Thousands of desperate parents have been duped and defrauded by the Troubled Teen Industry (TTI). Hundreds of thousands of teens have been through the grinder of these institutions, ending up worse than they were before, some with lasting damage leading to C-PTSD, and some ending their own lives.

**We know that maintaining education can be challenging in different living situations, and we value your input on this matter. Were you able to continue your education and receive the academic support you needed while living in the youth residential treatment facilities? Please share your experiences, including any challenges or successes you encountered.** No, I was not able to complete my high school education, and have delayed college for six years, in order to recover.

**Describe your access to health care, mental health support, and other services you needed while in youth residential treatment facilities. Were your needs adequately met?** No, my needs were not met. No health care, no mental health support, hard labor in the heat and forced attack therapy from fellow "students". I was never able to obtain my school records, or find out what medications that were sedating us with.

**Your safety and well-being are extremely important, and we are committed to understanding your experiences. Did you feel safe during your time in youth residential treatment facilities? If you experienced any instances of abuse, neglect, or overly harsh punishment, please share what you feel comfortable discussing.** No, I was not safe. Every moment I lived in psychological fear and they threatened us with punishment if we revealed what was going on. Our parents were told not to believe anything we said.

**We understand that your experiences in youth residential treatment facilities may have had a lasting impact on your life. Your insights are valuable in helping us understand these effects. How have your experiences in youth residential treatment facilities affected your life and well-being, both during your time there and after leaving care? Please share any ways these experiences have influenced you.** I do not trust anyone. I have trouble going to doctors, therapist, educators because I was instilled with fear. I currently experience severe debilitating anxiety and have panics attacks. I cannot focus on education because of this.

**If you could tell policymakers one thing about youth residential treatment facilities and what needs to change, what would it be?** I lived in terror everyday. We need regulation and oversight, including criminal penalites. Also, look at the treatment centers that are taking kids out of this country.

---

ID: 74

Age: 17

**How old were you when you were sent to the institutional placement(s)?** 15

**What was the name of the institutional placement(s)? Did you experience this placement while in foster care?** newport academy and no

**We understand that sharing your experiences can be difficult, and we appreciate your courage in doing so. Would you be willing to share with us about your time in youth residential treatment facilities? What were some of the aspects of your living conditions, including the quality of food, clothing, and overall care you received?** i only had strict clothing because of the dresscode but mostly wore what i wanted and cpuld get packages from home at anytime and overall got good care i got put into a good academy so i want to share how it positively affects me but i also want to limit the harm done from other treatment centers and on other children

**We know that maintaining education can be challenging in different living situations, and we value your input on this matter. Were you able to continue your education and receive the academic support you needed while living in the youth residential treatment facilities? Please share your experiences, including any challenges or successes you encountered.** yes i got online school and it helped

**Describe your access to health care, mental health support, and other services you needed while in youth residential treatment facilities. Were your needs adequately met?** yes

**Your safety and well-being are extremely important, and we are committed to understanding your experiences. Did you feel safe during your time in youth residential treatment facilities? If you experienced any instances of abuse, neglect, or overly harsh punishment, please share what you feel comfortable discussing.** most of the time i felt safe but some people that were in charge made me feel threatened and i was not very comfortable with them raising their voice or treating me how they did

**We understand that your experiences in youth residential treatment facilities may have had a lasting impact on your life. Your insights are valuable in helping us understand these effects. How have your experiences in youth residential treatment facilities affected your life and well-being, both during your time there and after leaving care? Please share any ways these experiences have influenced you.** it has helped me with a better life

**If you could tell policymakers one thing about youth residential treatment facilities and what needs to change, what would it be?** who is hired

---



ID: 75

Age: 36

**How old were you when you were sent to the institutional placement(s)?** 13

**What was the name of the institutional placement(s)? Did you experience this placement while in foster care?** Carolina Springs Academy and Dundee Ranch Academy

**We understand that sharing your experiences can be difficult, and we appreciate your courage in doing so. Would you be willing to share with us about your time in youth residential treatment facilities? What were some of the aspects of your living conditions, including the quality of food, clothing, and overall care you received?** Yes, I will be willing to share about my time in youth residential treatment facility called Carolina Springs Academy. Also, my time in the youth residential treatment facility called Dundee Ranch Academy, some of the aspects that we lived in we decent however the mental aspects were the worst part of it.

**We know that maintaining education can be challenging in different living situations, and we value your input on this matter. Were you able to continue your education and receive the academic support you needed while living in the youth residential treatment facilities? Please share your experiences, including any challenges or successes you encountered.** I was not able to continue my education while I was living in a residential treatment center. I experienced a lot of challenges due to the fact that we were on our own when it came to education we did not have a proper teacher.

**Describe your access to health care, mental health support, and other services you needed while in youth residential treatment facilities. Were your needs adequately met?** I had no access to Healthcare mental health support or other services were not adequately met

**Your safety and well-being are extremely important, and we are committed to understanding your experiences. Did you feel safe during your time in youth residential treatment facilities? If you experienced any instances of abuse, neglect, or overly harsh punishment, please share what you feel comfortable discussing.** I believe I experienced instances of mental abuse and sexual abuse. I had a relationship with one of the staff members that was an adult during my time in the program.

**We understand that your experiences in youth residential treatment facilities may have had a lasting impact on your life. Your insights are valuable in helping us understand these effects. How have your experiences in youth residential treatment facilities affected your life and well-being, both during your time there and after leaving care? Please share any ways these experiences have influenced you.** My experience in Carolina Springs Academy, and Dundee Ranch Academy change the course of my life shortly after getting out of these treatment facilities, experienced suicidal thoughts, distrust of adults And turned to drugs and alcohol within five years of leaving the facility to deal with these thoughts

**If you could tell policymakers one thing about youth residential treatment facilities and what needs to change, what would it be?** These facilities at the very least need to have professionals monitoring them

ID: 76

Age: 41

**How old were you when you were sent to the institutional placement(s)?** 17

**What was the name of the institutional placement(s)? Did you experience this placement while in foster care?** Carolina Springs Academy. No

**We understand that sharing your experiences can be difficult, and we appreciate your courage in doing so. Would you be willing to share with us about your time in youth residential treatment facilities? What were some of the aspects of your living conditions, including the quality of food, clothing, and overall care you received?** Yes. We had roughly 90 girls to a double wide trailer. Had set times to take a shower. Couldn't shave out legs until a certain level. Had set times when we could use the bathroom. The staff had no experience which wasn't required. Had to go through set seminars to make it through the program. If you watched 'The Program' on Netflix, this was my life. Sending and receiving letters were monitored. The food was terrible, we had to eat or we'd get in trouble, I gained 50 pounds in there. My clothing was yellow basketball shorts, yellow sweatpants and sweatshirts and a yellow Carolina Springs Academy shirt. I almost died there. They didn't believe I was sick, then ended up in the hospital with Spinal Meningitis.

**We know that maintaining education can be challenging in different living situations, and we value your input on this matter. Were you able to continue your education and receive the academic support you needed while living in the youth residential treatment facilities? Please share your experiences, including any challenges or successes you encountered.** We had "school" but it was limited. My credits didn't transfer after I left the program. Had to finish when I left the program and do it all over again.

**Describe your access to health care, mental health support, and other services you needed while in youth residential treatment facilities. Were your needs adequately met?** Health care was limited, they did everything in their power to not take me to the doctor. I almost died, they didn't believe I was sick in which finally I was rushed via ambulance to the hospital. That is when I was diagnosed with Spinal Meningitis. Had no mental support, we were taught it was our fault.

**Your safety and well-being are extremely important, and we are committed to understanding your experiences. Did you feel safe during your time in youth residential treatment facilities? If you experienced any instances of abuse, neglect, or overly harsh punishment, please share what you feel comfortable discussing.** I wasn't safe there.

**We understand that your experiences in youth residential treatment facilities may have had a lasting impact on your life. Your insights are valuable in helping us understand these effects. How have your experiences in youth residential treatment facilities affected your life and well-being, both during your time there and after leaving care? Please share any ways these experiences have influenced you.** In a huge way, my mental health suffers. I have no self-esteem whatsoever. I can't trust anyone at all. I barely got by until 10 years ago when I met my fiancée.

**If you could tell policymakers one thing about youth residential treatment facilities and what needs to change, what would it be?** End them all! Go after Narvin Litchfield!!