

From: [Sunset Advisory Commission](#)
To: [Janet Wood](#)
Subject: FW: Form submission from: Public Input Form for Agencies Under Review (Public/After Publication)
Date: Tuesday, June 24, 2014 4:13:37 PM

-----Original Message-----

From: sundrupal@capitol.local [<mailto:sundrupal@capitol.local>]
Sent: Tuesday, June 24, 2014 4:03 PM
To: Sunset Advisory Commission
Subject: Form submission from: Public Input Form for Agencies Under Review (Public/After Publication)

Submitted on Tuesday, June 24, 2014 - 16:03

Agency: DEPARTMENT FAMILY AND PROTECTIVE SERVICES DFPS

First Name: Jolene

Last Name: Sanders

Title:

Organization you are affiliated with:

City: AUSTIN

State: Texas

Your Comments About the Staff Report, Including Recommendations Supported or Opposed:

I support the recommendation to institute a mentoring component, but have concerns about whether that mentor would also have a full caseload. This may cause more turnover if not properly supported.

I agree that a crisis culture is an adequate description of the reactive climate inherent in the current CPS. The crisis is so big at this point that it would appear, in terms of addressing allegations of abuse, the agency, with its limited resources, is trying to just contain the biggest wildfires, but leaving all the other cases smoldering. What happens is all those smoldering cases have the potential to turn into wildfires too and then the crisis escalates.

Any Alternative or New Recommendations on This Agency:

1. There needs to be an alignment of Family Code and Education Code. Abuse that occurs in schools is far too often not investigated by CPS, but rather designated to school districts to address. What happens is the school conceals the incidents and it is difficult to pursue these cases without the intervention of CPS. The kinds of assaults occurring in Texas schools, if perpetuated by parents or other individuals, would demand the immediate attention of CPS. Teachers are not being held to the same standard. CPS should not discriminate in their investigations based on the context of the abuse.
2. CPS should be required to investigate all allegations of abuse in schools, even in incidents when the parent withdraws that student from the school to protect the child. Parents are regularly being told "Because you withdrew him, you have eliminated further contact with the teacher/staff, thereby preventing any more potential harm, so we will not be investigating." The result is that abusive teachers are either transferred to other schools or allowed to resign in lieu of termination or disciplinary action. Abusive teachers/ staff then move on to perpetuate abuse elsewhere. This epidemic of "teacher shuffling" is recycling abuse in our public and charter schools and leaving a trail of students with PTSD in its wake.

3. CPS should include in the data tracking and reporting improvement component a plan to document and track reports of abuse by teachers in schools. CPS should inform TEA of all reports of abuse so that even if CPS fails to investigate, TEA has a system in place to act as a secondary monitoring so these cases do not fall through the cracks. For instance, TEA may notice "School A or Teacher A has repeated reports of abuse. CPS isn't investigating, but something is going on here. What is it?"

My Comment Will Be Made Public: I agree

Jolene Sanders

June 25, 2014

Sunset Advisory Commission
P.O.Box 13066
Austin, TX 78711

Dear Sunset Advisory Committee,

Please accept the following as my official testimony in response to the public hearing held Wednesday June 25, 2014.

My name is Jolene Sanders. I am from Austin TX and I am here representing myself and my son Lourson Stallard. I am offering testimony today to outline some issues that have been missed during this evaluation of CPS, and offer personal testimony about my family's experience with CPS.

It is important to first establish some background. My son Lourson Stallard attended his first year of 2nd grade at an east Austin charter school during the 2012-2013 school year. He received special education services with the eligibilities of Autism, ADHD, and Speech Impairment. He was placed primarily in a self-contained classroom. This classroom was a converted storage room with a table and chairs. The room was actually still being used as a storage room. My son had very little opportunity for inclusion and there was little to no monitoring or traffic through this area.

On April 3, 2013, I was called to pick my son up early from school because he was having "a meltdown". When I arrived he was distraught. When we got to the car, he told me his teacher picked him up, squeezed him, and slammed him down in a chair, making his lip bleed. I immediately contacted administrators at the school to inquire about it. I was assured it would be investigated to find out what happened before pursuing action with CPS. Two weeks later nothing had been done and I called a meeting with three administrators. Still nothing was done, but I was assured there would always be two teachers present in that room for the remainder of the year. On May 3, 2013, I arrived early to pick up my son from school and walked in on his teacher screaming at him and throwing a chair. There were not two teachers present. His teacher yelled at me "He's all yours. You deal with him if you can!" and walked out of the room. It was at that time that I noticed another child sitting in the corner of the room sucking her thumb. This abusive teacher had been left alone in a room with these students to traumatize them. The teacher admitted to all the events and was permitted to resign in lieu of termination and move on to another school. Both the teacher and administration have yet to be held accountable for ignoring our concerns.

I immediately withdrew my son from the school and reported the incident to CPS. I thought this was an easy case, after all there were witnesses and the teacher admitted to the events. What happened next shocked me. CPS told me they would not investigate because I had removed him from the school and he would not have any further contact with the teachers or staff, and therefore no potential for additional abuse. They did not investigate. I have come to realize over the last year from working with many parent advocacy groups that this practice is very common. My recommendations to CPS are:

1. There needs to be an alignment of Family Code and Education Code. Abuse that occurs in schools is far too often not investigated by CPS, but rather designated to school districts to address. What happens is the school conceals the incidents and it is difficult to pursue these cases without the intervention of CPS. The kinds of assaults occurring in Texas schools, if perpetuated by parents or other individuals, would demand the immediate attention of CPS. Teachers are not being held to the same standard. CPS

should not discriminate in their investigations based on the context of the abuse.

2. CPS should be required to investigate all allegations of abuse in schools, even in incidents when the parent withdraws that student from the school to protect the child. Parents are regularly being told "Because you withdrew him, you have eliminated further contact with the teacher/staff, thereby preventing any more potential harm, so we will not be investigating." The result is that abusive teachers are either transferred to other schools or allowed to resign in lieu of termination or disciplinary action. Abusive teachers/ staff then move on to perpetuate abuse elsewhere. This epidemic of "teacher shuffling" is recycling abuse in our public schools and charter schools and leaving a trail of students with PTSD in its wake.

3. CPS should include in the data tracking and reporting improvement component a plan to document and track reports of abuse by teachers in schools. CPS should inform TEA of all reports of abuse so that even if CPS fails to investigate, TEA has a system in place to act as a secondary monitoring so these cases do not fall through the cracks. For instance, TEA may notice "School A or Teacher A has repeated reports of abuse. CPS isn't investigating, but something is going on here. What is it?"

My son is currently in trauma counseling each week, and has even required emergency room services for his PTSD. At the height of his trauma, my 8-year-old son verbalized that he wanted to kill himself. This is a tragedy, and he is not the only victim in our state. Until there is systemic change in our public school systems, we must also consider additional safety monitoring to protect the most vulnerable populations of students from abuse in schools. I propose the consideration of safety cameras in self-contained classrooms as a critical first step.

I thank you for the opportunity to provide my testimony.

Sincerely,
Jolene Sanders