



On November 30, when I was last in D.C., the statuary of a wolf and her pup located in a busy downtown section of Washington, DC garnered my interest. When I stopped to look more carefully, I noticed an identical statuary on the other side of a very architecturally interesting building. It was then that I noticed the name of the building: “Defenders of Wildlife.”

Like I said, I was curious. A quick electronic search provided the information I was hoping to uncover. Among other things, Defenders of Wildlife is a firm that employs lobbyist to advocate for stronger laws to protect wildlife in the U.S. and harsher penalties for those who commit wildlife crimes.

Of themselves, they maintain: “Defenders’ approach is direct and straightforward – We protect and restore imperiled species throughout North America by transforming policies and institutions and by promoting innovative solutions. We speak with one voice informed by scientific, legal and policy expertise, hands-on wildlife management experience and effective advocacy.”



The thought then hit me like a ton of bricks, in many respects wildlife conservation issues are valued more in this country by the populace and many legislators than the plight of children in harm’s way.

The lack of available appropriate foster homes across the nation continues to find children sleeping in cps worker’s offices, hotel rooms, and make-shift emergency shelters or in unlicensed settings. That reality continues to be an issue that many choose to ignore.

TEXAS

This past June, the Dallas Morning News reported that by the end of September 2023, Texas was on-track to spend approximately \$30 million dollars paying off-duty policemen to provide security for children over an eighteen-month period. The article was entitled: “CPS pays millions to station off-duty cops at hotels, churches housing Texas foster kids.”

[<https://www.dallasnews.com/news/politics/2023/06/29/cps-forks-over-millions-to-station-off-duty-cops-at-hotels-churches-housing-foster-kids/>]

OREGON

Oregon Public Broadcasting – 11/20/23 *News report by Lauren Dake*, entitled: “Oregon pays millions to place foster kids in unlicensed short-term rentals.”

The report states: “State officials are paying a religious non-profit more than 100 times the amount they pay foster care parents to watch vulnerable children in unlicensed short-term rental homes.”

The report alleges: “Oregon child welfare officials have spent years struggling to find appropriate places to house the state’s most vulnerable children.

“Now, after scandals involving their use of hotel rooms and out-of-state private facilities, state officials have landed on a new — but still trouble-ridden — approach: They are paying a religious nonprofit more than 100 times the amount they pay foster care parents to watch children in unregulated short-term rental homes.”

“It’s the latest iteration of a desperate child welfare system continually plagued by problems, lawsuits and criticism. The practice has gone unpublicized, but inquiries into the new arrangement by OPB and attorneys representing children in foster care have spurred the state to examine it more closely.

<https://www.opb.org/article/2023/11/20/oregon-foster-care-children-sent-to-unlicensed-short-term-rental-homes-millions-for-religious-nonprofit/>

Florida

Central Florida foster care agency failed to pay bills, caused kids to sleep in offices - Orlando Sentinel - December 3, 2023 - Annie Martin

Reportedly, an unexpected high number of children needing care have overwhelmed the foster care system. The lead agency for administering foster care and related services in Central Florida is being sued by a contractor who alleges they are owed 1.3 million for services it provided, including for children who had to sleep in contractors offices because space was not available in foster homes.

https://www.orlandosentinel.com/2023/12/03/central-florida-foster-care-agency-failed-to-pay-bills-caused-kids-to-sleep-in-offices-suit-says/?utm_medium=email&utm_source=govdelivery

North Carolina

North Carolina also has children sleeping in offices as foster care falls short. - Blue Ride Public Radio - by Lilly Knoepp. December 1,2023

Since the pandemic, fewer families have been signing up to become foster parents. In North Carolina, the number of licensed foster homes dropped 23%, according to federal data. This has led to foster children sleeping at department of social services (DDS) facilities across the state.

<https://www.wunc.org/2023-12-01/on-the-edge-children-sleep-in-offices-as-foster-care-falls-short#>

Kentucky

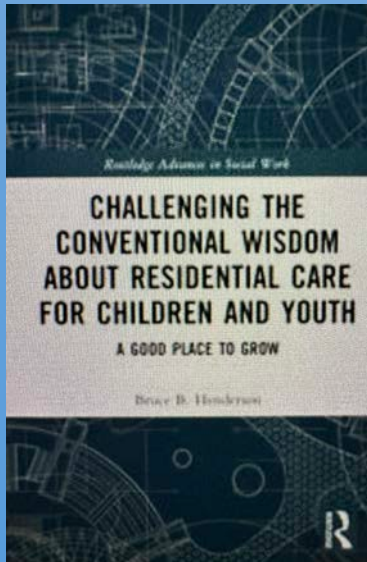
Kentucky Facing Foster Care crisis, children sleeping in government offices. By William Battle - Nov 16, 2023

“Kentucky is currently grappling with a foster care crisis, marked by shortage of families willing to temporarily take in children within the foster care system. The loss of many qualified foster families during the COVID-19 pandemic has further exacerbated the problem, leaving a significant void in available foster homes.”

Children in foster care, both locally and across the state, now face the heartbreaking reality of sleeping in hallways at social service facilities, churches, government offices, and even state parts instead of warm, loving homes.

We are currently in a situation where children are literally sleeping at DCBS offices on cots. Social service offices, offices like this, we don't have showers or facilities where people are really supposed to be staying there.

<https://www.wbko.com/2023/11/17/kentucky-facing-foster-care-crisis-children-sleeping-government-offices/>



New Publication: **Challenging the Conventional Wisdom About Residential Care for Children and Youth: A Good Place to Grow**

Is residential care “inherently harmful”? This book argues that this conventional wisdom is wrong and is, itself, harmful to a significant number of children and youth. A careful analysis of the available research supports high-quality residential care as a treatment of choice for certain groups of children and youth, not the last resort intervention. The nature of high-quality care is explored through child development theory and research, and two empirically supported models of care are described in detail. The book will be of interest to all scholars and students of child development, child welfare, youth work, social work, and education, as well as professionals working within these fields.

Author: Bruce Henderson is Professor Emeritus of Psychology at Western Carolina University. He obtained his Ph.D. in child psychology from the University of Minnesota’s Institute of Child Development. He has worked as an adjunct Professor of Social Work at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, a research consultant at the Yale Child Study Center, a consultant for the National Foundation, and a member of the Scholar’s Council of the University of North Carolina System. Bruce has published extensively on the development of children’s curiosity and memory development among other topics. Bruce has served on the Board of Directors for the Black Mountain Home for Children, Youth and Families since 1990. Dr. Henderson received the CORE Award for Trustee of the Year in 2019.

Information regarding ordering, content, reviews:

<https://www.routledge.com/Challenging-the-Conventional-Wisdom-about-Residential-Care-for-Children/B-Henderson/p/book/9781032564739>

Congress Convenes on January 8, 2024. Please contact your legislators again to ask for support for H.R. 3852 - Create Accountable Respectful Environments (CARE) for Children Act.

UPDATE ON OTHER LEGISLATION;

H.R. 2955 & S.1353 Stop Institutional Child Abuse Act

Fifteen additional cosponsors signed onto H.R. 2955 in November and December 2023. That raises the number to 64 cosponsors including the 3 original cosponsors.

Three additional cosponsors signed on to S. 1353 in November and December raising the number of cosponsors to 18.

H.R. 755 Protecting Sibling Relationships in Foster Care Act

The Act has 7 cosponsors not including its sponsor. No new cosponsors were added in November or December

S. 102 & H.R. 756 Foster Care Stabilization Act of 2023

Currently there has been no recent activity on either of the bills.

A Shout Out to St. Joseph's Indian School and Cal Farley's Boys Ranch for the availability of no cost training opportunities accessible online through Podcast. Each podcast is approximately 45 minutes in length and loaded with content to strengthen a person's skill set and knowledge base.

Having reviewed podcast by both, I can affirm that the resource will be of great benefit to those who work with children and families from hard places.

The podcast series at St. Joseph's Indian school is referred to as Hóčhoka (emphasis on the first syllable) means the center of the camp circle.

<https://hochokapodcast.com>

Brain Based Parenting - Cal Farley's

Here is the iTunes link:

<https://podcasts.apple.com/us/podcast/brain-based-parenting/id1716534284>