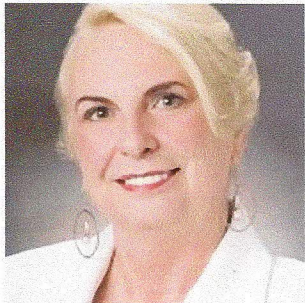


7 YEARS AFTER WHISTLEBLOWER REPORTED FAILURE OF HHS TO PROTECT RUNAWAY & HOMELESS CHILDREN AGENCY PROPOSES CHANGES TO RHY ACT



In June 2007, a Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) federal program officer for the Runaway and Homeless Youth (RHY) at Administration for Children and Families (ACF) began making protected whistleblower disclosures to management officials, the Office of the Inspector General (OIG), the Office of Special Counsel (OSC) and members of Congress.

The disclosures verbally and in writing included grantees receiving federal funds to care for vulnerable children were not in compliance with the Runaway and Homeless Youth Act (RHYA) and violating federal and state laws. Among the disclosures was the fact that grantees receiving millions of dollars each year were not licensed by state agencies to run group homes. There was also failures to perform background checks and fingerprinting of people working for grantees and requiring grantees coordinate with the national missing children's database.

The whistleblower also reported rampant fraud by grantees including Emergency Housing Consortium (EHC) and other well-known nonprofits including Santa Cruz Community Counseling Center (SCCC), LA Conservation Corp and The Salvation Army. A director in charge of the youth program at the Salvation Army the whistleblower reported as being out of compliance was later arrested for child sexual abuse. The whistleblower also reported a bias towards not funding any organizations that provided services to lesbian, gay, bisexual or transgender (LGBT).

For well over a year and a half, the whistleblower was subjected to constant retaliation particularly by Stanley Koutstaal, a politically embedded employee including being ordered not to speak to higher management and members of Congress inquiring about the disclosures, which was a violation of whistleblower protection law.

In October 2008, The San Jose Mercury News published an article below on the disclosures and what was happening to the whistleblower and the horrific conditions reported. The whistleblower had already filed for protections under the Whistleblower Protection Act (WPA) articulated in the No FEAR Act at both the Merit System Protection Board (MSPB) in June 2008 for prohibited personnel practices and a discrimination complaint at the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) for the federal sector.

Neither federal agency lifted a finger to help the whistleblower and both ignored the clear and present danger runaway and homeless children were suffering as the result of inaction by the federal government.

Less than 2 months later after the article appeared in the Mercury News, the whistleblower was allegedly removed from federal service for embarrassing the agency and forcing

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grantees committing fraud (at least 3 had no building or a program) to relinquish funding. A sad ending for the whistleblower who did the right thing...

Now HHS is trying to amend the RHYA to include the clear whistleblower disclosures the federal program officer made 7 years ago. Rule making [announced](#) in the Federal Register. More info can be found [here](#). The deadline to comment is June 13, 2014. A [Town Hall Meeting](#) is planned for May 9, 2014.

Why did it take so long for HHS to propose expanding the law when the whistleblower reported these same problems years earlier? Why are the managers who retaliated against the whistleblower named William Clair and Curtis Porter still working for HHS in this same program? They both knew children were subjected to abuse, neglect and living in unsafe and dangerous conditions. They both knew children were trafficked by sexual predators and they knew whistleblower retaliation was a violation of federal law.

A former high level manager tried to help protect the whistleblower in 2007. However, Karen Morison was fired around after she stood up for the employee. Ms. Morison had only been with the federal government a months so it was easy to fire her when she went up against higher management to protect the whistleblower. The Mercury News interviewed Morison for their story. She stated:

“Everything she (the whistleblower) found was proven to be true, and nothing has been trivial,”

Apparently Morison was correct. What the whistleblower disclosed was true and none of it was trivial which is what HHS intends to add now.

What remains to be seen now is how HHS is going to keep a lid on the fact that for 7 years, they allowed children to be exposed to pedophiles and grantees to commit fraud. If there ever was a case of how the federal government will wait out their misconduct until the press coverage dies so that their own wrongdoing can be swept under the rug...here is a perfect example.

Had I not been alerted by good colleagues to the fact HHS is proposing amendments the RHYA to include the whistleblower's disclosures...this story would have no meaning and the public would never know the background. Thanks to social media we can now alert the public and educate ourselves as to what our government is doing behind closed doors.

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As a result of Evy Brown's encounter with a corrupt federal government and its ongoing abuse of its faith-based grant processes, she founded the non-profit, WhistleWatch <http://whistlewatch.org> to assist in protecting other whistleblowers.

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