

My name is Rose Bond. When I lived in Fargo, I needed to find help for my son, Richard. He has Asperger's syndrome and was having anger issues. When his anger meltdowns became a threat to his safety, I asked Children's services to help me with finding out what was causing the rage in my son. They referred me to juvenile court to intercede for me. I wanted my son placed in a residential facility where he could receive help for his Asperger's. I learned about a school called Starr Commonwealth in Michigan. It was a private pay facility, but I needed a referral from an agency such as Children's Services. I explained this to Rick Van Camp, who I was told was the supervisor or intake worker for Children's services. Rick told me I could petition the courts and say my son was deprived or call the police every time my son went out of control until they could prove him unruly and remove him from my home.

Rick led me to believe that the only way I could get any help in ND was to do one of those two things and allow children's services to take custody. Once they had custody, they would do everything in their power to help my son. Since stating Richard was deprived was a lie, I began documenting his meltdowns and when he was in danger of hurting himself, I called the police. After about 4 months of phone calls and visits from the police, the police finally took Richard to a safe house and had him charged as first unruly, then as deprived and delinquent.

He was placed with Cass County Children's services in April of 2009 (file #09-09-R-326) and they were to have custody for one year. Marlene Sorum was to be Richard's case manager through children's services. Since there was nothing available in Fargo for placement for Richard, and The judge felt Richard wasn't in danger while living with me, Richard was returned to my home and was to receive intensive in home therapy. That therapy consisted of a therapist coming into my home and making me watch parenting dvd's. She said my home had little structure and was unstable because I didn't have a husband in the home to command discipline. She came twice a week for 6 weeks and only had counseling sessions with Richard about 2 or 3 visits.

In June, Richard was so angry, he tried to choke himself with an extension cord, started throwing things at me, and was really in danger of hurting himself. The police removed Richard from my home and took him to Children's services to place him in attendant care. He hadn't left my house yet and the worker from attendant care called to say they observed him and he seemed calm so could I get up to their office and bring him back to my home.

When I refused, Richard was placed in a safe home and a hearing was set to determine if Children's services could bill the state for him being in the safe home. The judge, upon hearing that nothing was done to help Richard in April, refused to let Children's services bill for Richard's stay until they could prove they were doing everything possible to help him. Marlene did nothing to help us.

We had another hearing in July with a different judge, and Marlene was on vacation so she wasn't at the hearing. Her supervisor didn't have time to come to the hearing so there was just me and the state attorney before the judge. Richard wasn't even informed of the hearing or his right to attend. The judge asked me if there were any changes. I said nothing was done to help Richard yet so no there were no changes. The judge said it was a shame that this hearing was only for giving children's services

permission to bill for Richard, but since I had not made any changes to get Richard's custody back, he would keep Richard in Foster care until I had better conditions at home or till Cass county's guardianship ended.

He was never placed in a residential facility, but was put in a PATH foster home. I was told that they had to place him in the least restrictive environment, but was not told what their definition of least restrictive was. Marlene Sorum told me that ND had nothing in the way of help for my son, but as soon as she exhausted all placements in ND, she would look out of state for placement. I again said that I wanted to get him into Starr Commonwealth and showed Marlene the brochure and application.

Marlene made no effort to look into the Starr commonwealth schools, or any other facility experienced in autism spectrum disorders. When I voiced my concerns, Marlene told me to be a good little girl so that I could continue to have visitation rights.

Richard missed the first 4 weeks of school because Marlene didn't know how to register him in school. I was not permitted to register him because I didn't have legal guardianship. The first foster home Richard was placed in abused him. I had to call the sheriff to remove him from the home during an incident where Richard ended up with a head injury. Marlene, children's services, path foster care and protection and advocacy did nothing to investigate the incident. His second placement was in Mandan, 100+ miles from me. Marlene said it was the closest placement she could find, but that was a lie, because two doors down from where I presently live is a trained Path foster home family.

This was not the help I asked for and I feel that Children's services did not do their job, so I petitioned the court in August to get my son back. My son and I were both appointed legal help and my son was also appointed a guardian ad litem. None of these people helped us to reunite my son with me. We had a hearing with Juvenile court on March 24 at Cass County Juvenile Court to hear our case. My only focus was on the best interests of my son. I felt his issues were not adequately addressed and that he had suffered from this willful neglect. I also felt that waiting till March with no hope of reunification resulted in permanent damage emotionally to my son. I received no support from legal counsel or the guardian ad litem. I didn't get much communication from Children's services either.

In March, Marlene perjured herself on the stand making the judge feel that Richard should remain in foster care. My attorney did nothing to confront Marlene's lies even though I showed him documentation that she was lying. The end result was that my son had to stay in foster care until his 18th birthday. Because no one supported him, his anger issues were never addressed, he was denied medical and dental care for a year, he failed his junior year in high school, now that he is 18, he cannot attend Starr Commonwealth schools, the over medication and lack of supervision of medications left Richard with health problems, emotional issues and mental issues, and his estrangement from our family has made reunification a difficult process. In fact he and I feel he was treated as a juvenile delinquent for having a developmental delay.

The one positive note on all of this is that Cass county children's services were able to abscond \$400.00 a day in taxes for their department. It is so very wrong that nearly \$0.00 was used to help and support Richard.

Marlene Sorum from children's services kept stating that there are no programs in North Dakota to address my son's unique challenges. I know there are programs in other states. All I asked was for my son back so that I could move to a state that would help him. If Children's services couldn't help us why didn't they let me take my son somewhere else where he could receive good quality care and support so that he doesn't end up on the welfare system as an adult.

The complacency, ignorance of autism spectrum disorder, and general laziness of government agencies has abused my son and according to people like Marlene, there isn't a thing I can do about it. Marlene has stated that she makes the law regardless of what anyone, especially legislature states. She is above the law and the only way to get help is to do exactly what she says, when, how and where she says, and if I confront her, she will make me pay by making my son miserable and destroying my family.

If I were to have an ombudsman, I would want one powerful enough to challenge people like Marlene and hold them responsible for their actions. The ombudsman should be able to remove poor case managers, and entire agencies, if it becomes evident that the agency is abusing its authority. The abusing agency should be held legally responsible with an investigation by an independent agency, not be given the convenience of an internal investigation where the incidents are swept under the rug. Our children's needs, best interests and support should always be the reason an agency is contracted, not for any convenience of a case manager and if that case manager breaks the law, then they should be held accountable for their actions.