

Department of Public Health

Petition Form 1

Please fill out and return to:

State of Connecticut

Department of Public Health

Practitioner Investigations Unit

410 Capitol Avenue, MS#12HSR

P.O. Box 340308

Hartford, CT 06134-0308

Cc:

APA - Office of Ethics 750 First Street, NE

Washington, DC 20002-4242

Phone: 202-336-5930 FAX: 202-336-5997

Petitioner/Complainant:

Susan Skipp DOB 08/16/1966

Mother of:

Gabrielle Tittle 08/08/2000, patient of Dr. Howard Krieger

Wyatt Tittle 09/04/2002, patient of Dr. Howard Krieger

Address: PO Box 1383, Litchfield CT 06759

Telephone Numbers: 203 509-1585

In August of 2010, my children began seeing Dr. Horowitz under the dictum of the Guardian Ad Litem, Mary Brigham. On March 28, 2011, Judge Resha in Waterbury Connecticut Superior Court appointed Dr. Sidney Horowitz to serve as a therapist to my son (Wyatt) and daughter (Gabrielle) during my divorce proceeding.

MEMBER IN QUESTION:

Dr. Howard Krieger

Connecticut Resource Group

113 Scovill Street

Waterbury, Connecticut 06706

203 573-9521

PLEASE INDICATE NATURE OF YOUR COMPLAINT:

- Quality of care
- Substance abuse
- Sexual contact with patient
- Unlicensed practice
- Failure to release patient records
- Insurance fraud
- Unsanitary conditions
- Other

Department of Public Health

Petition Form 2

Describe your concerns below. Include as many specific details as possible (who, what, when, where, why). Attach additional sheets if necessary.

Issue Number 1:

Dr. Krieger provided services under false pretenses, in the context of a prolonged parenting between my ex-spouse and me. Our divorce was not litigated, but all terms were agreed to. In the dissolution (page enclosed) Howard Krieger’s role is defines as co-parenting counselor. His contract, attached as well is a different matter. I consider Krieger to be the pivotal point of breakdown with parenting and the professional who was most important. My former husband refuses to communicate with me, thus leaving all of issues, per definition of co-parent coordinator

Along with his colleague Dr. Sidney Horowitz, Dr. Krieger comingled “Parenting Coordination” and “Co-Parenting Counseling,” which were inappropriately provided according to APA guidelines. The court order of (date) state that Dr. Krieger is assigned as a “Co-Parenting Counselor.” However, Dr. Krieger has assumed the role of “Parenting Coordinator,” as evidenced by the “Parenting Coordination Agreement” that Dr. Krieger created on 5/4/11. . There was (and still is) constant confusion as to the differing roles and responsibilities of Dr. Krieger, as he seems to shift both at will, then fails to explain his scope of responsibility in my case. I am enclosing the order from the court of his role, and the contract of his illegal assumption as a co parent coordinator- as this is an appointed position.

GAL Mary Brigham recommended to the courts that Dr. Krieger become involved with my case. Shortly after a serious car accident where I sustained soft tissue trauma to my head, Dr. Krieger insisted that he should proceed with Parenting Coordination (I will cover this issue later in this complaint). Physicians involved with my care strongly advised Dr. Krieger against performing these services at that time, as my brain injury remained symptomatic. However, Dr. Krieger represented these sessions as “mediation” and a way to “determine parenting styles.” Dr. Krieger performed a battery of psychological tests on me at that time; he did not explain that he would be doing these tests, why he was performing them, or their significance in the proceedings. Additionally, during his testing, Dr. Krieger was fully aware of the fact that I was suffering from a recent and still symptomatic brain injury. I attempted to obtain the results of these tests to see what (if any) adjustments had been made to control for the brain injury. Dr. Krieger refused my request for these records on numerous occasions. Again, I will cover this more thoroughly in a later section.

I later discovered that the scope of Dr. Krieger’s responsibilities did NOT include psychiatric testing or medical procedures. Yet Dr. Krieger fraudulently billed Aetna for medical services.

Furthermore, page 65 of the APA Guidelines for Parenting Coordinators states:

In the PC role, the psychologist does not provide formal psychological evaluations or testing, offer any psychological diagnoses, or render individual, family, or marital therapy or counseling services to the parents or children. Such clinical assessment or psychotherapy intervention services are referred to other providers as deemed necessary or helpful. If the PC is concerned about the children’s or any family member’s safety because of parental mental illness, family violence, substance use, or other conditions or behaviors, the PC considers appropriate actions, such as making a referral in a timely fashion, reporting concerns to the court, or contacting law enforcement or child protection authorities.

Include letter from MD advising against psych testing pp. 16 ADA

Include letter from CT Resource Group “Participation Agreement” pp. 35 ADA

Issue Number 2:

As briefly mentioned above, Dr. Krieger ignored the recommendations made by my primary care physician and performed psychological testing upon my person shortly after I sustained major brain injury as the result of a serious car accident. At the time Dr. Krieger performed this testing, I remained symptomatic and I was also healing from a major nasal surgery. (See above complaint and letter from Dr. Frederic Newman for reference). This factor will also be significant in my report on Dr. Krieger’s billing practices and his reactions to my requests for copies of same. (see attachment3H)

Issue Number 3:

Dr. Krieger failed to follow guidelines established by the APA for dealing with cases involving domestic violence. In fact, Dr. Krieger disregarded my reports of my ex-husband's history of violence and continued to compromise my safety throughout his assignment to our case.

Below, I will list the APA Guidelines for Parenting Coordinators that pertain to this matter and how Dr. Krieger violated them.

A.) Page 63 of the APA states:

They (parenting coordination sessions) are more likely to have significant psychological problems, which may interfere with their parenting, and they more often expose their children to intense conflict and intimate partner violence, also commonly referred to as domestic violence (Johnston et al., 2009).

B.) APA Standard 3.04; APA Committee on Professional Practice and Standards, 1999 states:

Parents who have a history of prior or current domestic violence, also commonly referred to as intimate partner violence (Johnston et al., 2009), may present substantial safety risks or power imbalances and may not be appropriate for parenting coordination. In determining whether to accept such cases, the PC seeks to rely on the extensive empirical and clinical research involving violence between partners, including research differentiating among patterns of domestic violence (Dalton, Carbon, & Olesen, 2003; Ellis, Stuckless, & Wight, 2006; Jaffe, Johnston, Crooks, & Bala, 2008; Johnson & Ferraro, 2000; Johnston, 2006; Johnston et al., 2009; Kelly & Johnson, 2008). PCs are aware of their professional and ethical responsibilities and take great care to avoid any harm that their professional interventions may have on others with whom they work (APA, 2002, Standard 3.04; APA Committee on Professional Practice and Standards, 1999).

C.) Page 67 states:

The terms high conflict and domestic violence are often used interchangeably; however, they do not describe the same types of interactions. Of greatest concern is the pattern of violence characterized by coercion and control, psychological abuse, intimidation and threats of harm, economic control, and often severe physical and sexual violence. Victims of such violence are at very high risk following separation and in contested custody cases and may be best served before and after divorce by court intervention.

D.) Page 68 states:

PCs carefully determine whether a specific case involving past or present intimate partner violence or child maltreatment is appropriate for the PC process, with a particular focus on safety concerns and substantial power imbalances. PCs understand that when intimate partner violence and/or child maltreatment is present or alleged in a custody case or ongoing litigation, parent-child contact may create opportunities for renewed intimidation, violence, or trauma and pose risks of abuse and exposure to the children. PCs use their professional judgment in carefully reviewing any evidence, allegations, or findings regarding family violence, harassment, intimidation, and current power imbalances when deciding whether use of a PC is safe or appropriate. The PC also carefully considers the safety risks posed by the ordered parenting plan.

I repeatedly informed Dr. Krieger of my ex-husband's history of physical, emotional, psychological, and financial abuse that my children and I suffered throughout our 12 year marriage. I was also able to establish a pattern of behavior, as evidenced by his history of violence towards his first wife and daughter, multiple arrests, and many eye witnesses. (see attachments 6a, 6b, 6c,7,8a,-e,9, 10a, 10b,11,12,13,14, 15, 16,17,18a,18b,19a,19b) On numerous occasions, I voiced grave concerns about my

safety and the safety of my children, if my ex-husband was permitted to have continuing, unsupervised access to us. I provided empirical evidence to support my claims, and will should you need more documentation.

Dr. Krieger not only ignored my concerns, but he also disregarded the current research on the subject of ways in which psychologists should handle cases involving Domestic Violence. Dr. Krieger continued to encourage and recommend that my abusive ex-husband have full and unfettered access to my children and me. Because of this access, I have continued to suffer abuse at the hands of my ex-husband. On several such occasions, my life was in jeopardy. I can elaborate further if you feel that this information will be helpful in your review and evaluation of this case, but I think I have sufficient documentation.

Partly due to Dr. Krieger's involvement and recommendations, full custody was granted to my abusive ex-husband in **October 16, 2012** I have been denied contact with my children since that time. As of this date, I have not seen or spoken to Wyatt or Gabby in **8 months**. Because my children reported the abuse they suffered at the hands of their father to Dr. Krieger, Dr. Horowitz, Mary Brigham, teachers, and other mandated reporters- resulting in two investigations,, *I* was labeled with the discredited and highly controversial "Parental Alienation" idea. I have no criminal record, no history of violence, abuse, or substance abuse (my ex-husband has a well-documented history of all of these factors). In fact I worked in a court support services program with the state's children until recently changing the campus.

My only continuing psychological issues are a direct result of the abuse I have suffered at the hands of my ex-husband and the Connecticut Family Court System , PTSD. It was never disputed that I have been the children's primary attachment figure/caretaker since birth, and I am a good parent. Despite these facts, Dr. Krieger and the others somehow came to the conclusion that I was more of a threat to my children's wellbeing than my violent ex-husband. Now I am the one who has been effectively "alienated" and shut out of my young children's lives.

Throughout Dr. Krieger's involvement in our case, I continuously begged him and other court appointed "professionals," including the judge, to enforce measures that would protect our safety. My children also begged Dr. Krieger and others for protection from their violent father. My pleas were interpreted by Dr. Krieger to be signs of serious emotional instability; my children's pleas were regarded as symptoms of "Parental Alienation Syndrome."

Considering the fact that "PAS" has been largely discredited and labeled as a dangerous legal tactic by many esteemed APA professionals, yet there is abundant research proving that children are severely harmed by witnessing DV, child abuse, and being cut off from their primary attachment figure, I am shocked that a licensed professional within your organization would arrive at such conclusions. I would love to see the professional research that he utilized to form his conclusions. I have performed extensive research in this area, and have not found a single piece of reliable research that would substantiate such recommendations and actions on the part of a mental health provider.

As mentioned in section "D," Dr. Krieger did not investigate ANY of mine or my children's reports of abuse, despite the fact that Dr. Krieger was offered in depth, reliable, mostly third party evidence to support these claims. In contrast, my ex-husband offered no evidence to support that he is NOT abusive

or violent. In the event that Dr. Krieger did not consider the testimony of my children, witnesses, and me, or my other evidence as “credible,” I am unsure as to why or how he drew those conclusions. Dr. Krieger has refused to allow me to review my records from the testing he performed upon me and upon which he claims to have based most of his conclusions. Also it was unethical for Dr. Krieger to see my children in his role as co-parent mediator.

Ironically, even though Dr. Krieger took no action to consider DV as part of the dynamics in this case, he billed Aetna under a ICD-9 Code which delineates Domestic Violence Counseling (I will provide samples of billing later in this form). See attachment 4 and 5

E.) Page 68 states:

As in all psychological services, prior to providing services, PCs ordinarily explain to parents that in cases of suspected child abuse or neglect, by requirement of law, psychologists must report their concerns to the appropriate authorities as governed by state law.

Although my children, witnesses, see attachments 3g, 3a,3b, 3g 14a, 14b, and I all reported being the victims of longstanding and ongoing abuse at the hands of my ex-husband, and provided documentation as evidence of our claims, Dr. Krieger shirked his duty as a state mandated reporter. Dr. Krieger did not report the alleged abuse to the proper authorities for investigation, as is mandated per state law. Yet Dr. Krieger drew the conclusion that *I* was a serious danger to my kids because of “Alienation”....enough of a danger to necessitate the removal of the children from my home. Yet, Dr. Krieger also did not report this alleged danger to the proper authorities either.

I will refer to items mentioned in this section during future sections of this complaint, as several of the issues are intertwined.

Issue Number 4:

As a trained psychologist, Dr. Krieger minimized my severe symptoms of PTSD that I displayed throughout these proceedings and were testified to by my treating psychiatrist. Dr. Krieger also did not recognize or act upon the signs of DV that I clearly displayed, told him about, showed him court orders that were to take place with illegal weapons (see 2b,15,16) that were not only held to me, but accessible to my children. In fact, Dr. Krieger’s methods along with his subsequent uncooperative, ridiculing, and secretive behavior only exacerbated my symptoms. Telling me “forget about the guns.” (see 2b attachment) This is unreasonable for a family who has endured violence. Such exacerbations were described in court as “bizarre behavior,” requiring for my children to be “protected” from me by being placed in the full custody of the abuser.

During these proceedings, I enlisted the help of an advocate for the Americans with Disabilities Act. Her role was to assess specific areas of concern which may hinder me from successful litigation, due to my

PTSD, depression, anxiety, and ADD. The advocate then created a plan of corrective action. Next, she sat down and spoke with the various "Professionals" involved in my case, including Dr. Krieger, regarding the signs that my symptoms are being exacerbated during proceedings, the root causes of such symptoms (including the dynamics of family violence and prolonged stress), and simple ways in which the court and those associated with the court to assist me with my attempts to litigate appropriately. The ADA advocate's recommendations were rejected, across the board, even though every intervention mentioned was 100% within the law. For example, the advocate recommended that when I started to show obvious signs of intolerable stress (like stuttering, forgetfulness, raising my voice, forgetting the words I planned to say, etc), I should be given a 5 minute break to compose myself.

Most importantly in his illegal and self-contracted position (see attachment 3a,3b, 3c, 3d, 3e, 3f-this shows Krieger was responsible- for which he was paid, 2500 retainer and 250 per session, He was to be a co-parent coordinator. (see attachment 21, scarily an AFCC document) He did not respond to my concerns for well over a year-. This is central to the issue of losing custody of my children. He did not fulfill his role. In fact it was another professional who pointed out what happened in the case. For over a year, Dr. Krieger did not address basic safety issues, childcare, schedules, children's activities, all for which were used against me, despite the hundreds of emails that went unanswered that I sent to Howard Krieger, cc. to Sidney Horowitz as well as the illegally appearing GAL, Mary Brigham. Howard Krieger's failure to perform his duties were used against by AFCC judge, Lynda Munro, with whom he presented AFCC programming last month. Also, Elizabeth Thayer is on the complaint review Board and is an AFCC member. I am enclosing the programming that Krieger uses, clearly to incentivize conflict and keep professionals involved as long as possible. I directly hold Howard Krieger failing to do his job. It is mal-practice, fraud by way of his contract and changing the court order to suit his income. It is also insurance fraud as he billed Aetna for these services; moreover he used domestic violence. (See court order pages where in GAL writing it states weapons issue. Six of these are hand guns. One is untraceable. I have been greatly concerned for my safety, moved to a main road so the police could get there quickly if needed.

I am including the recent AFCC article from the Washington Times (attached20)that documents the illegal activity and unethical activity throughout the judicial system. Also, Krieger has a contract, but the bidding was opened only for an hour. Lynda Munro recused herself with cause in my case and now is engaging an early retirement.

Howard Krieger also spoke with family relations officer Laurie Anton for her custody study. At this point Dr. Krieger had recused himself. Dr. Krieger spoke with Mary Brigham against my wishes, this is a HIPAA violation. Dr. Krieger refuses to give me any records, any testing. Howard Krieger, AFCC Member, also committed insurance fraud in my case, billed me for services of co-parent coordinator. This role he charged 2500, plus 250 per session. He also billed Aetna using domestic violence codes. His fee was paid. A description of parent coordinator is "to handle all disputes immediately" what cannot be mediated is referred to court. Also during this time, Krieger performed illegal psychological evaluations on both parties; Krieger did not respond to my many pleas for a year to basic safety issues. This is in stark contrast of the contract he drew services. Although Krieger has a contract with the state, he never

signed the anti-discriminatory portion of his contract, thus rendering my children and me unprotected.
Petition Form 3

See attached document 1.Names of any prior and/or subsequent treating practitioners

Fill out the attached Consent for Release of Medical Records.

Sign and date below. Signature must be notarized. Although, the Department of Health has subpoena power and does not need consent.

_____ Dated this day of 20

Petitioner's Signature

Signed and sworn before me this day of 20 .

Notary Public Commissioner of Superior Court

Department of Public Health

Petition Form 4

STATE OF CONNECTICUT

DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC HEALTH

CONSENT FOR RELEASE OF MEDICAL RECORDS

Petition No.

Birth Date: 08/16/1968 Susan Skipp/ AKA Susan Skipp Tittle

Patient's Address: __c/o Susan Skipp PO Box 1383 Litchfield Connecticut 06759

This is to certify that I hereby give my consent to, and authorize:

Connecticut Resource Group LLC

to release a copy of all information and medical records in their possession, including psychiatric, psychological,

alcohol and/or drug related treatment records consisting of but not limited to the following:

1. Presence in treatment (dates of admission and discharge).
2. Diagnosis, brief description of progress and prognosis.
3. Medical history and physical.
4. Intake sheet.
5. Psychosocial assessment.
6. Treatment plan.
7. Discharge summary.
8. Aftercare plan. Of Gabrielle Tittle
9. Complete billing records and insurance billings if applicable to the Practitioner Licensing and Investigations Section, of the State of Connecticut Department of Public Health, 410

Capitol Avenue, MS# 12HSR, P.O. Box 340308, Hartford, CT 06134-0308. This information is to be used in connection with any investigation or hearing conducted by the Department of Public Health in accordance with Connecticut General Statutes §19a-14(a)(10) and (11). I understand that I may revoke this consent at any time by notifying the above authorized person in writing, except to the extent that action has been taken in reliance on my consent. I understand that the medical record to be released may contain information pertaining to psychiatric, drug and/or alcohol abuse diagnosis and treatment, and may also contain confidential HIV (AIDS) related information. Please honor a mechanically reproduced copy of this release. This authorization expires one year from the date of the last signature.



Susan Skipp

Signature of Patient or Legal Representative Date Signed

self

Relationship to Patient

Signature of Witness Date Signed

Attach copies of any supporting documents, such as photographs, records, correspondence etc. (1)

April 18, 2013

Dear Attorney Klaskin,

Att 1

I have become aware that this office is currently investigating the legitimacy of the business entity Connecticut Chapter of AFCC, Inc. I am a litigant in a family law case who, along with my children, has been harmed by the dealings of this organization, which was not registered with your office during the time of its profitable transactions directly involving my case.

I'm also aware that in the course of your investigation you can refer the matter to the DOJ and to the CT Attorney General. I urge you to send this investigation to those offices to handle the criminal aspects of AFCC's business dealings.

Some of the AFCC members involved in my case are:

Judge Gerard Adelman

Judge Lynda Munro

Psychologist Sidney Horowitz

Psychologist Howard Krieger

Dr. Linda S. Smith

Visitation Solutions, Inc.

Bruce Loudon Law, my divorce attorneys

Guiliano and Richardson, my former husband's attorneys

Jim Hirschfield of Cramer and Anderson, an attorney who represented me post judgment

CSSD, family relations as AFCC programs were making the policy of family relations, earmarking high conflict cases. As your investigation continues, you will see a distinct pattern of abused women and children made further victims by AFCC policies to garner more federal grant money.

There was never any disclosure by these participants of their illegal conflict of interest based on their participation in the profit-making business activities of CT Chapter of AFCC, Inc.

You can read more about my case in the following two links:

I'd like to demonstrate just a small handful of the illegal business practices committed by CT AFCC members under color of law in my case.

Dr. Sidney Horowitz, AFCC member and AFCC-funded GAL trainer, is currently under investigation by Aetna for fraudulent billing practices. Further Horowitz has no contract with the state thereby leaving the public unprotected by standard anti-discriminatory language in government contracts. In addition Horowitz perjured himself five times openly before the Hon. and AFCC-affiliated Munro, and this was to her knowledge as she had the record. She herself committed perjury, and later recused herself for cause.

Howard Krieger, AFCC Member, also committed insurance fraud in my case, billed me for services of co-parent coordinator. This role he charged 2500, plus 250 per session. He also billed Aetna using domestic violence codes. His fee was paid. A description of parent coordinator is "to handle all disputes immediately" what cannot be mediated is referred to court. Also during this time, Krieger performed illegal psychological evaluations on both parties; Krieger did not respond to my many pleas for a year to basic safety issues. This is in stark contrast of the contract he drew services. Although Krieger has a contract with the state, he never signed the anti-discriminatory portion of his contract, thus rendering my children and me unprotected.

Suspect appointment of GAL Mary Brigham was over strenuous objection. In fact there is no appointment on record. Brigham also demanded that my children use another AFCC affiliated therapist, Linda Smith after Horowitz recused himself from the case.

In February 2012, Jim Hirshfield, my attorney, did not represent me in the requests I made, in fact placed me in harm: allowing Brigham and Plaintiff's attorney to argue for my incarceration because of my inability to pay Brigham's fees, ordered to liquidate my federally-protected retirement account to pay her fees- (she was not appointed and had no right to such action) Hirshfield promoted my case to the bench of Lynda Munro without the criteria for such a referral, and Munro herself ignored her own standing orders in my case.

AFCC-trained Brigham claims to have billed over 107K, 70K post-judgment. No record of fees or an affidavit of fees was filed before Munro, CT AFCC member, in a trial that was to eventually sever all contact with my children, whom I have not seen or heard from or about for over 6 months. Munro, CT AFCC member, ordered Brigham's fees based on her testimony alone. This violates federal law on debt collection and fair trade.

Family Relations in Waterbury Superior Court: did not follow protocol for restraining order, Laurie Anton did not follow orders May 23, 2011 from another non AFCC judge to suspend father's visitation for the safety of the children. Laurie Anton was assigned to perform custody study in December 2011. Laurie Anton's cousin was handling my former husband's criminal case for which he is on probation. Further, Anton spoke with both Horowitz and Krieger, though they had recused.

Horowitz and Krieger both recused themselves from my case on or about March 23, 2012 after I asked for billing and records, which are currently under investigation for fraud. It was represented in court that I was threatening them. I suppose asking for records for illegal activity could be perceived as a threat.

There were many referrals to AFCC or profit driven professionals such as Visitation Solutions, where I was only allowed to purchase 3 hours a month at \$150 per for therapeutic visitation services without an evaluation, diagnosis or other standard protocols to adjudicate therapy. Also, in order to see my children, again I was order to see Harry Adamakos Ph.D. who also serves a AFCC-trained GAL in many cases similar to mine, an hour from my home at \$175 per hour. Again, Munro's order is illegal in this instance as well. She was unable to articulate this as no statute provides for a federally illegal act in which she has no subject matter jurisdiction. I petitioned the court to have another, even more qualified non-AFCC supervisor for visitation, but was denied by AFCC-member Munro.

My case follows the same patterns as many other CT family cases, which ultimately put children in the custody of violent fathers. It is interesting that AFCC members procure fatherhood access and visitation grants, which pay the state commensurate to the amount of time that fathers have access to their children, and mothers don't.

Based on the requirements of these grants, AFCC-member psychologists recommend placing children in danger with violent men. AFCC-member judges order these profitable evaluations and the custody of children to violent male parents. They then order the constant involvement of AFCC-member treaters, who bill the state and CT families for fabricated diagnoses, to "treat" the damaged children.

It shocks the conscience that these same AFCC members are in positions to regulate and oversee their own organization's practices, and to field all complaints of their racketeering by captive consumers.

It is also a discriminatory practice, in violation of Title IX, as women over 21 are unable to access any grant money to assist them in access and visitation, yet fathers have hundreds of millions to access.

The trauma I have suffered at the hands of AFCC business operations, under the color of law, in the state of CT has left me disabled with severe PTSD.

Other national organizations exist that protect children in family court such as National Council of Juvenile and Family Court Judges. Other such entities are unable to do business as the AFCC has created a monopoly of this market and franchised this section of the judiciary within their monopoly. As the directors of AFCC also decide which programing and trainings they use the organization violates anti-trust laws.

Again, this entity claims to be a non-profit in its recent filings; however has acted without certification or license by the state for thirty years. During the time this illegal enterprise operated, it significantly harmed me and my children, and the harm continues.

During this time of their illegal enterprise tax fraud occurred as no filings occurred. Also, per tax code, AFCC by its activity is precluded from a non-profit status, yet does so to procure federal funding.

Your office, as well as the offices CC'd on this letter and to whom it is forwarded have an ethical, moral and contractual obligation to investigate business practices that are illegal by violating civil rights, fair trade, and consumer and debt collection laws. Also allowing these practices to continue violates implicates state and federal statutes to the harm of abused women and children. AFCC members appointed to my case have not afforded equal protection to my children and me as they have not signed contracts with the state that hold them to regulation and prevent their discriminatory and harmful practices. Thank you for your time and attention to this serious matter.

Susan Skipp

WASHINGTON TIMES

guest author, Aine Nistiophain

Immunity for Guardian Ad Litem destroys Connecticut Family

WASHINGTON, DC, March 1, 2013 - In Connecticut, the phrase “for the sake of the children” is often thrown around on custody cases involving child victims of violent crimes. However, cases like 9-year old Max Liberti’s suggest that some family court appointees are more likely to favor the opportunity to continue billing families for unnecessary, even fraudulent services, over what is best for the child.

After all, children living in safe environments do not need Guardian Ad Litem (GAL), evaluations, or therapy to protect and rehabilitate them. When Max disclosed that his father raped him, the GAL and other professionals charged his family a whopping total of \$1.5 million for their services. Yet most of the 40+ professionals assigned to his case spent little or no time with Max, or did not know him at all before making recommendations that forever severed his relationship with his mother.

Often the court appoints a GAL to advocate for the child’s “best interests” instead of asking the children for direct input. The GAL then bills the parents for asking other strangers appointed onto the case what’s best for the children.

In 2003, the Connecticut court decided that the GAL has the exclusive right to speak on the child’s behalf, yet there are no requirements as to how much time a GAL must spend with their ward. To clarify the GAL’s role, the court drew the bright line rule that *“Just as it is not normally the province of the attorney to testify, it is not the province of the guardian ad litem to file briefs with the court.”* (In re *Tayquon H.*, 821 A.2d 796 [Conn. Ct. App. 2003]).

While the Judicial Branch provides free certification trainings^[1] for GAL’s, there is no central oversight process in place to review the quality of their work, yet they enjoy qualified immunity for their actions.^[2]

What exactly is the Judicial Branch training GAL’s to do?

GUARDIAN AD WHO? THE SKIPP-TITTLE CHILDREN

When Susan Skipp’s daughter Gabrielle truthfully disclosed^[3] that her father assaulted her family, Susan was ordered to use the majority of her income to pay the fees of various court appointed professionals she could not afford. Attorney Mary Brigham was appointed as the children’s GAL, and Dr. Kreiger^[4] and Dr. Horowitz^[5] were appointed to assess the family and provide them with therapy. A court issued an order forbidding Susan from speaking to the children about the litigation, seeking domestic violence support for them, or “disparaging” the father who allegedly assaulted them.

As GAL, Brigham billed the children's home at a rate of \$300 per hour to represent the children's wishes and best interests. Billing records show that between September 2010 and November 2011, she billed over 196 hours, including only five meetings with the children.^[6] It's impossible to tell whether the children met with Brigham alone, how long these meetings were, or what was said.

Invoices show during this period, Brigham's time was largely spent talking to other providers who barely knew the children or recently met them, emailing unnamed parties, speaking to Dr. Tittle and his attorney, and talking about billing matters. Susan was also charged for the time Brigham spent drafting, filing, and successfully prosecuting motions, including as many as three motions she personally filed seeking to hold Susan in contempt for nonpayment of GAL fees. Susan says that last July, Judge Robert Resha held her in contempt, then threatened to incarcerate her if she refused to immediately liquidate her teacher's retirement pension to pay Brigham \$20,000 in fees.

Susan also saw Horowitz and Kreiger's unorthodox billing practices as red flags that made her doubt the legitimacy of the appointments.

"My divorce agreement states that the parents will see Dr. Krieger for parent counseling. Instead, Dr. Krieger drafted up an agreement for co-parent mediation," says Susan. This was improper she says, because *"Mediation is a legal service that is not covered by health insurance and must be court ordered."*

Susan says that Kreiger charged Aetna for treatment, despite the fact that she was required to provide him with a \$2,500 retainer and pay expenses out of pocket. She questioned whether Dr. Kreiger was billing for treatments that were unnecessary or improperly performed.

"Dr. Krieger also performed psychological evaluations on the family," Susan says. *"Those need to be ordered by the court too, and were outside the scope of his appointment as a counselor."* Susan adds that one such evaluation had flawed results because it was done against medical advice immediately after her car exploded, leaving her hospitalized with head injuries.

When Susan requested copies of the records and bills, then questioned Dr. Horowitz and Dr. Krieger's refusal to address the assaults or the father's struggles with addiction and the law with the children, both providers recused themselves from the case.^[7] ^[8] However, Brigham then asserted privilege on the children's behalf, thereby prohibiting Susan from obtaining documentation from either provider.^[9]

"While Kreiger and Horowitz testified in trial that there was no domestic abuse, they both used domestic violence codes when billing Aetna," says Susan. Dr. Horowitz testified that he used one medical chart for 2 children, used the wrong billing codes with the insurance company, then failed to inform the parents and the GAL that he had diagnosed the children with serious mental disorders.^[10]

Brigham decided it was "not in the children's best interests" to have them testify at trial.

"ARE YOU HERE TO SAVE US?"

Once when their father refused to pick his children up for three days of parenting time, I had the pleasure of meeting Susan's children. The children seemed traumatized not only by the violent crimes

perpetrated against them, but also by the fickle will of the courts to intervene on a moment's notice and upend their lives without including them in these decisions. Given their isolation and the infrequent, yet intensely hostile interactions between Brigham and the children, it was no wonder they sought answers from me the moment their mother left the room.

"Are you here to save us?" Gabby asked. "Someone has got to help mom stop my father. We are afraid because he hurts us."

"No honey," I told them, "I'm just a journalist, I can't save anyone."

They begged me *"Please write something to make Mary Brigham listen so the court will not make us live with my father."*

My heart was heavy because they too felt the inevitable, that darkness was coming for them, and they knew they were helpless to stop it.

With Judge Munro's trial decision not yet issued, in September 2012 Dr. Tittle sought to permanently sever all of Susan's parenting rights and access to the children. Judge Gerard Adelman heard testimony that the children refused to visit with Dr. Tittle for the stated reason that they feared for their safety. When Brigham refused to talk to them about these concerns, the children refused to get in the car with her. Brigham told the children she was unconcerned, then demanded they get in the car so she could bring them to Dr. Tittle's [which they did not do.] Consequently, Judge Adelman granted Dr. Tittle's motion for sole custody with the caveat that the court would permanently terminate all of Susan's parenting rights if she were even 5 minutes late for any future visits.

One week later, I attended the hearing on Dr. Tittle's second motion to terminate Susan's parental rights. Judge Munro called Judge Adelman's orders "draconian," then criticized Brigham's role in instigating the proceedings by acting outside the scope of her appointment as Dr. Tittle's "taxi driver." As we left the courtroom, Brigham informed me that she had filed her affidavit of fees a month ago. Subsequently, neither I nor the court staff were able to locate Brigham's affidavit.

Ultimately, Judge Munro awarded Dr. Tittle sole custody of the children, then constructed a "set-up-to-fail" parenting plan that effectively terminated Susan's access to the children. Susan retains the right [on paper] to purchase a few hours per week with her children at Visitation Solutions, Inc.,^[11] which is affiliated^[12] with Horowitz and Krieger, and located over an hour away from the home she and her children once shared.

Judge Munro denied Susan's request for alimony, then awarded Brigham \$70,000 in fees, despite the fact that Brigham never filed an affidavit disclosing her billing. After Judge Munro recused herself from hearing Susan's case, Brigham's subsequent motions to garnish Susan's wages were denied pending the outcome of Susan's appeal.^[13]

Since October 2012, Susan filed for bankruptcy and has not been able to afford to purchase time with her children. Dr. Tittle^[14] has refused to allow the children any contact with their mother, and remains

on criminal probation for driving under the influence, reckless driving, and evading responsibility (leaving the scene of an accident.)[\[15\]](#)

Brigham has scheduled a status conference for April 4th to discuss payment of her fees, garnishment of Susan's assets and tax returns.

Who's best interests have been served?

IS THERE A COMMON DENOMENATOR?

Horowitz and Dr. Kenneth Robson often conduct the court's "free" GAL certification trainings together with Judge Munro. Court records show that when Dr. Kenneth Robson[\[16\]](#) and Horowitz[\[17\]](#) are involved and the State is paying, the parents are often ordered not to communicate with their children about the trauma they experience. The GAL exclusively communicates directly with Horowitz about the children's care, and only the GAL will speak to the children about the litigation.

"One of the core issues is the qualified immunity GAL's enjoy, which results in much of the judicial outsourcing to them," says advocate Peter Szymonik. He points out that a major reason why parents cannot even find relief from excessive GAL fees in bankruptcy is that the court categorizes it as child support, which is nondischargeable. *"This leads to excessive and unnecessarily billings which permanently financially devastate parents."*

While Szymonik says the system is biased against parents, Journalist Keith Harmon Snow has documented over 70 CT cases[\[18\]](#) where fathers who committed legal offenses, have gained custody of child victims. The mothers were often required to purchase parenting time through outrageously expensive, even corrupt supervised visitation providers, who extorted them out of relationships with their children. Now permanently destroyed and bankrupted by abusive, often deadly State sponsored litigation, these families have no recourse.

"GALs are, in fact, paid by judges even ahead of child support," says Szymonik. *"This translates into a multi-million dollar fraud and state sponsored corruption which is financial devastating families and parents, harming children, and fleecing taxpayers."*

To additional documentation related this journalist's investigative report on the Connecticut courts:

<http://www.scribd.com/JournalistABC>