

Mental Health Service Working Group

Legislative Office Building, Room 2C

Monday, January 29, 2013

Members of the Mental Health Service Working Group,

I was not planning on submitting testimony for this hearing, but I would like to suggest something that may help to prevent future tragedies like the one that occurred at Sandy Hook Elementary.

It is my understanding that the Freedom of Information Act prevents publicly releasing confidential information regarding a person's medical and psychiatric history. I think this is a great law and I am in favor of even stronger laws that prevent individual's personal information from being released to the public.

But I also believe that individuals associated with high profile cases such as the shootings at Sandy Hook, Aurora Co, the Gabby Gifford shooting, etc., should not fall under the same protection as other individuals. These are extraordinary cases that have had horrendous impact on their communities and the country. I think the medical and psychiatric records of these individuals should be open to the public, not to demonize the individuals that committed these crimes, but to get a better understanding of what may have contributed to their crimes and prevent them in the future.

This information should be available to a wide audience, not a privileged few individuals.

There are many unanswered questions that are being asked regarding the mental state of these killers and their treatment:

- What medications were they taking and when? There is a concern among some that certain anti-depressants or anti-psychotropic drugs taken by these individuals may have contributed to the heinous acts they committed. I understand that these drugs are a blessing to millions of people and they should not be demonized, but if there is a pattern of these drugs being used by these individuals, and these drugs may have contributed to their actions, I think it makes sense to add additional warnings to these products and alerting the public that an extremely small percentage of users may experience horrific side-effects.
- What treatment were they receiving?
- Was anyone aware of their violent and/or homicidal tendencies?

I have to admit that I am not aware of what would be required to change the laws pertaining to releasing of medical and psychiatric records for these individuals. It is possible that this is something that cannot be done on the state level, but would require a change in the federal laws. Whatever is required, I ask that the Connecticut legislators work towards modifying the current laws so this

information can be released to a wide range of public healthcare professionals that can study the information and use the results to work towards identifying troubled individuals and prevent future tragedies.

Thank you very much for your time and consideration of my position.

Regards

Christopher Coniam

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