

Child Injury Laws *Blog*

Even After Foster Care System Overhaul; Children Remain At Risk For Abuse & Neglect

Posted by **Jonathan Rosenfeld** on May 13, 2011

Acknowledging the problems with its foster care system, New Jersey pledged to make improvements with an investment of more than \$1 billion and improved oversight of the system with a federal judge. Despite its admirable intentions, a recent article on NJ.com confirms that supervisory problems continue to threaten the well being of children that the system is intended to protect.

With more than 7,000 children living in licensed **foster care** and **group homes**, New Jersey's Division of Youth and Family Services has the responsibility to supervise and protect children living in the states foster care system. Even with the system overhaul in place, a recent NJ.com article documents the problems with the system as evidenced by several lawsuits brought on behalf of foster children who were abused or killed while under the care of their foster parents.

Many of these foster care tragedies have resulted in civil lawsuits against the agency for failing to ensure safety and well being of the children. Amongst the recent foster care lawsuits, the article described:

- A boy who had been shuffled between 22 different living situations during his tenure in the system. During his rapid-fire transitions, the boy was regularly abused--- and returned to his foster mother where he was again abused by the woman's son. New Jersey paid \$1.2 million to settle that matter

Jonathan Rosenfeld offers legal services relating to: birth injuries, medical malpractice, day care abuse, foster care abuse, swimming pool injuries, automobile accidents, school bus accidents, dog bites, food poisoning, product liability, amusement park accidents and clergy abuse. For more information please visit Child Injury Laws Blog (<http://www.childinjurylaws.com/>) or call Jonathan directly at (888) 424-5757. (www.rosenfeldinjurylawyers.com.)

- New Jersey paid \$4.5 million to settle another case where a boy was sexually abused by his parents over the course of several years.
- \$800,000 was paid to the family of a 21-month-old girl who overdosed on a methadone that was left unsecured in the foster home she was staying in. The investigation determined that the state failed to intervene with the child's foster parent after reports she was improperly storing her medication.

Compared with cases of abuse or neglect in institutional settings such as **day care centers** or **camps**, statistics tell us that children in the foster care system are more likely to suffer mistreatment. At the heart of the problem, is the supervisory system, which relies on caseworkers that may be overworked and physically unable to follow up on all allegations involving improper care.

As a **lawyer who represents children** who have been mistreated in a foster care or adoptive setting, I feel somewhat torn about anytime a state implements an 'overhaul' of the system. On one hand, I commend the state for acknowledging the problem, but--- on the other, I fear that sometimes large-scale overhauls fail to acknowledge the 'little things' like caseworkers 'regular' visits with foster children and 'spot-checks' ensure compliance. Until, caseworkers are given these freedoms and relieved of some of the burdens associated with heavy caseloads, the proposed reforms will have little impact.

Related:

Foster Care System Failing To Protect Those Who Need It The Most

\$10 Million Settlement For Child Abused By Foster Parent Demonstrates Lapses In Oversight System

Jonathan Rosenfeld offers legal services relating to: birth injuries, medical malpractice, day care abuse, foster care abuse, swimming pool injuries, automobile accidents, school bus accidents, dog bites, food poisoning, product liability, amusement park accidents and clergy abuse. For more information please visit Child Injury Laws Blog (<http://www.childinjurylaws.com/>) or call Jonathan directly at (888) 424-5757. (www.rosenfeldinjurylawyers.com.)