

Lawsuit Alleges Foster Children Abuse

Canadian Couple Suing Family Support Services of North Florida

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JACKSONVILLE, Fla. — A Canadian couple said the details about their adoptive children's care before they became their legal guardians are horrific.

The couple is suing Family Support Services of North Florida, alleging the adoption agency never told him the real background of the two Jacksonville children.

The adoptive parents said their two children were physically, sexually and mentally abused while in foster care.

"Yeah, I am angry. I am very angry," Andrew Dolan, the children's adoptive father, said at a news conference Tuesday morning. "I'm angry, disappointed."

Video: Lawsuit Filed Over Abuse

According to the lawsuit, the siblings, who are now 8 and 6, were shuttled from one foster home to another, five in all.

During that time, they suffered disturbing abuse ranging from being yelled at or beaten, being denied food and being forced to commit sex acts with adults or one another, the couple said their adopted children told them.

Dolan said that if he had it to do again, he and his wife would have never adopted the two children from Jacksonville and taken them to live in Canada.

"My wife and I have saved these children's life, as far as I am concerned," Dolan said.

"We've taken them out of a system that did nothing for them and treated them terribly."

"The years since have been hell," the Dolans' attorney, Brian Cabrey, said of how the adoptive parents feel. "The things that have been disclosed, the things they learned what their children have been through while in foster care in the state of Florida is nothing short of nauseating. They are egregious. They are among the worst allegations I have ever seen, and I have seen a lot."

The family said they will never give the children back, but they believe the state should pay more for the children's medical and psychiatric care. The parents already receive \$900 a month from the state, but they said the bills are much more, and that's why they are suing.

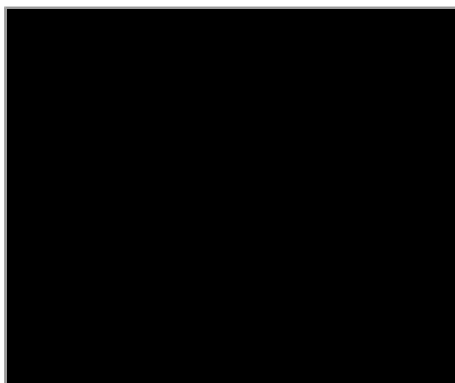
"(Family Support Services) saw us coming and dropped this bombshell on us and did not tell us anything about it," Dolan said. "And not until we got (the children) back to Canada, then months later the bombshell started to blow up, and this is what we are left with."

Jim Adams, the head of Family Support Services of North Florida, said in a phone interview that he can't believe the allegations and what happened to the children.

"Whoever covered it up should be prosecuted and should be held civilly liable," Adams said. "Ultimately, I am responsible for every employee who works for me. If one of our employees covered up anything, it's just as vengeful as the attorney engaged in this case."

Family Support Services is investigating, along with the Florida Department of Children and Families.

"It boggles my mind that the children were taken away from their birth mother for neglect, put into a foster care system that then exposed them to physical, mental and sexual abuse over a number of years," Dolan said. "You have to wonder if they would not be better outside the system."



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The Department of Children and Families said the allegations are a concern if they are true. DCF said the family has not been cooperative and only made the claims when seeking more money.

DCF said it has notified the abuse hotline, the state attorney's office and the Jacksonville Sheriff's Office about the accusations.

DCF did say other children in the foster home had been interviewed and there were no reports of abuse with them.

The suit was filed on Tuesday. No court date has been set. The family's attorney says the agency is the only one named in the suit but others might be added at a later date.

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