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People of Courage

Don Keenan: Children Rights Activist for 25 Years



Don Keenan has been fighting for children's rights for over 25 years. He is suing Georgia's Department of Children and Family Services over the Terrell Peterson case. There is an ongoing investigation into the state of Georgia surrounding the circumstances in this case. The state says it cannot comment on pending investigations.

What went wrong in the case of Terrell Peterson? After his death, the state conducted two internal investigations, which uncovered gross errors. Within a month of these internal investigations, DCFS called a press conference to say it had done everything right and had followed procedure. Two days later, the author of that press release told his department head it was false. The media never followed up. It wasn't until a year later, when someone within DCFS leaked that the press release was false, that Don got involved. He says he's been after DCFS for the last 20 years, hoping for reform, but receiving only empty promises.

DCFS continually says it is unable to comment on cases because of the children. The cover-ups continue. They create task forces, but there is no action. Don believes much of the problem is due to over-worked and underpaid social workers. When a social worker is assigned over 60 cases, there's practically no way he or she can visit each case.

Don suggests court-appointed agencies, independent from DCFS that serve as "watch dogs" to make sure everything is done for these children. He says, "We teach our children, 'first you have to accept responsibility and then you have to make sure you don't repeat it,' yet our own government does just that."

Tortured Children Follow-Up

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