

**From:** Bonnie Sivyver

**Sent:** Thursday, January 27, 2005 1:08 PM

**To:** heal@heal-online.org

**Subject:** I was abused at Cinnamon Hills Youth Center

I was not abused at Cinnamon Hills but my nephew was. You may have already heard from other members of my family who've found your site but I wanted to put in my two-cents worth just in case.

My nephew spent over a year at this facility. His mother and grandparents live in California so driving to Utah to visit him was a long drive. The staff at Cinnamon Hills can deny visitation at any time and did so on several occasions, only notifying family members when they arrived that he had 'misbehaved' and was being denied the visit from his family. This was much more like a prison than a Behavior Modification Center! One can only imagine the frustration of driving for days only to be told at the last minute that you cannot see your child.

This policy gives the facility a prime opportunity for abuse since parents are only allowed access to their children at the facility's discretion.

During one visit my sister noticed that her son's front tooth was missing. She asked why he had not seen a dentist and they told her it was because he had not behaved and therefore could not leave the facility to see the dentist. Denying medical care should not be a consequence of one's behavior!

My sister is very proactive in her son's care programs and is used to being very involved in his treatment. This system was new to her and since he was in another state he was out of her local jurisdiction and she was completely at a loss as to how to deal with this situation.

She was ultimately able to retrieve her son from Cinnamon Hills but she did not retrieve the same son that she had left there. He was now afraid of people and behaved like an animal that had suffered abuse; hunkering down when approached, and other fearful behavior. He refused to speak about his tooth and what had happened. She had been told by Cinnamon Hills that he had slipped in the bathroom but he would not comment on it. After his release my sister, who worked in a hospital, received a patient one day that was a prior resident of Cinnamon Hills. This patient recognized her from her visits with her son and asked her if she knew what happened to her son's tooth. This person claimed to have witnessed the entire event. It seems the staff had 'restrained' him for what they arbitrarily deemed unacceptable behavior. Several staff members participated in this restraint effort which makes no sense to me as this child can't weigh more than 90 pounds soaking wet! Apparently they got 'a little rough' during the restraint which resulted in knocking out my nephew's tooth.

My sister returned home and told her son that she knew what had happened to his tooth but didn't tell him what she knew. She assured him he was safe and asked him to tell her the truth. She did not lead him in his response...only created a feeling of safety in

revealing the truth. His first response was "I misbehaved"...when prodded further he told the exact story the witness had provided.

His family was never told of this and was in fact denied visitation until his mouth had healed enough for him to be seen by them....meanwhile they concocted the story and used fear to persuade him to go along with their made up stories about how this had happened. This is the way I recall it being told to me at the time. I plan to forward this site to my sister so that she can write her own version which would be straight from the horse's mouth.

I advise anyone who is considering long or even short term placement of their children in ANY facility, regardless of the state, to first investigate the facility and make absolutely certain that you, the parent, have the right to have regular visitation and access to your child regardless of the child's behavior. Contact with parents is ESSENTIAL to any behavior modification program and taking away that right from a child is emotionally abusive!!

I would also recommend that you ensure the facility is governed by state and local laws and that a patient advocate for the governing bodies is available to investigate any concerns parents may have regarding the care of their child.

**PLEASE DO NOT ALLOW YOUR CHILD TO BE PLACED IN CINNAMON HILLS!! IT SHOULD BE LISTED AS A CONFIRMED ABUSIVE FACILITY AND NO CHILD IS SAFE IN THEIR CARE!**

Thanks for hearing me out.

I give permission to HEAL to use our story regarding Cinnamon Hills. Everything in my statement is true to the best of my knowledge and experience..