

## CONVERSION PROGRAM PROGRESS REPORT: SUWS in NC

By Rev. Minister Angela Smith of COPE (<https://www.cope.church>) Dated: 10/27/21

The HEAL Mission of COPE has received 24 separate complaints (51 separate complaints total on all SUWS locations including the closed Idaho location) from individuals and families alleging negative experience, abuse resulting in traumatic stress, trauma, one survivor reported via e-mail to the HEAL Mission "what i was forced to endure was horrific, it was against my human rights. against my dignity. what was committed against me was despicable," manipulative staff, medical neglect, another survivor reported via e-mail to the HEAL Mission "I went to SUWS in 2001 and had a great time! I loved the wilderness and first aid training we were provided with there. We hiked all over beautiful country and got lots of time to hone our survival skill as well as self-reflection time. By the end of three weeks, I felt like my team members were family. It was a wonderful experience, and I've often contemplated working there. They seems to have the same director, I recall Kathy Rex's name. The Field Instructor turn-around is mostly due to the fact that the program doesn't pay that much to employees, and repeated new groups of kids to lead around the wilderness means a lot of wear and tear on instructors over the years. They actually have something like 21 days on, and 14 off, so they commute in from other states and often have second jobs. The groups of kids only hike around the wilderness for 3 weeks, and it's always done in the morning before it gets hot. All kids are given protective long sleeved shirts, sunscreen, and are told to drink plenty of water when it's hot. They also provide everybody with a nice new cocoon sleeping bag, cold weather clothes, rations, a tin to cook food, and supplies to make a "pack-roll". Yes, I am the same person that emailed you about Youthcare. Went to both. I'd appreciate it if you'd represent SUWS positively," censoring/monitoring/restricting communications with outside world (held incommunicado/communication blackouts), another survivor reported via e-mail to the HEAL Mission "HI i was forced to go to suws and it was a horrible experience. although it didnt seem that bad compared to the military school I was shipped off to St. Johns Northwestern Military Academy. Anyway first of all. they always read your mail no matter what. they actually censored one of my mothers letters... the staff members who were with us all the time were for the most part really Exceptional people though some of the best people ive ever met. but the counselors and people you never really saw. well they were all cynical. i remeber one occasion where one of the kids in my group said something about not changing comparing it to an old pair of shoes that you keep wearing even though there are holes. well the counselors decided to actually cut holes in his hiking boots and we were in the mountains in the middle of winter. his feet would always be soaked and he ended up getting a really bad infection because of the things they did to try and "fix" him. i actually got scoliosis from the backpacks they made us use and severe back pains. theres a long list of things that were wrong with this program we need to shut them down," another survivor reported via e-mail to the HEAL Mission "The horse flies hap teeth that cut in to you like a knife it was real nasty especially if you were squaring over a hole covered with them while your pants were off. Other peopleshadow pooped which means they sneak off somewhere and just went in som hole they dug. I got passed over one time for a level change because I wanted to wash my hands after using a sage bushes branch to wipe myself because I didn't want to carry around used toilet paper . Another time after using toilet paper. A

instructor came over and started cursing me out because some one saw some of the poop on the ground from my toilet paper and decided to shadow poop right next to the latrine and this instructor thought it was my fault he decided to use his hand to pick up all the poop and put it in the latrine . Near the end of my time there I got real depressed because I didn't think i'd ever leave and once I finally graduated they decided to put me into a boarding school which is also on your list . The only way I could see why any one thought suws was a good idea is because it's a scared straight program and the kids are so scared that thier parents would send them some where else that they behaved," poor nutrition (eating road kill, bugs, and carrion), one parent trying to rescue their child reported via e-mail to the HEAL Mission "I am only allowed to contact via email which they print out and hand delivery to my child. She can only communicate with me by writing letters to me that are then scanned to me by there staff. Every piece of communication between me and my child is read by someone at SUWS. I have gone to court but the judge considers SUWS to be just like any sleep away camp," involuntary/illegal enrollment without a court order, another parent reported via e-mail about her daughter's time at SUWS "She was at SUWS for the minimum 4 wk stay, and since she left in early August, she has had a very difficult time since not only with us but family members and friends. We are hoping that very soon she will go to the drs with us, as we believe she needs psychological help, and suffers deeply from depression from the ordeal. As I sit and write this, it is Christmas morning, and she does not want to come downstairs and spend time with the family and open gifts. She posted on FB a few hours ago about SUWS, and believe it really brought back horrendous memories. We as parents are struggling, and the guilt now is unbearable," physical abuse, food deprivation, staff reportedly rubbed kids faces in the dirt, unpalatable water causing parasitic infections, coercive thought reform, one survivor reported via e-mail to the HEAL Mission "while at suws my therapist was an awful woman named erin rice who is in your list. While I am no therapist myself I will say that she had an intense drive to first keep all of her students at suws for longer periods of time and she enjoys keeping her students in line with threats of a longer stay there. while working with her you detect that she does not care for you at all and does everything in her power to break your will, that is the goal that I think suws works towards to break your will and make you fear coming back to that place but erins goal is also to send her students away she recomended all of her students including me go to boarding school even though the right choice was made by our parents and we were brought home she is a terrible therapist and generally a sadistic person," use of "escorts/teen transport", another survivor reported via e-mail to the HEAL Mission "I am a former student of suws of the Carolina's Phoenix outdoor program. I was awoken at 3:00 A.M. by two big men and transported there. I spent 62 days 15 hours and 3 minutes at suws. They deceive students and parents alike in order to make a profit. This was all in order to justify some form of further treatment that was always run by either Aspen educational group or crc. I will help any way I can to help shed light on this matter," and deceptive marketing at SUWS (AKA SUWS of the Carolinas). Some of these complaints are referenced online and others remain confidential and on file with the church. With the intention of providing an opportunity for closure, clarification, and potentially peace, on 10/19/21 Rev. Angela Smith invited SUWS victims (families and survivors) as well as staff whistleblowers to provide a guest sermon. That invitation read thus:

"Dear SUWS Survivors and Families,

SUWS of the Carolinas is on the HEAL Mission watch-list (of fraudulent and abusive programs) and enrolled in the COPE Conversion Program based on your reports to the HEAL Mission alleging fraud, abuse, and/or other violations. (SUWS in Idaho is not because it is permanently closed and buried at [www.beyondbusiness.net/youarenext.htm](http://www.beyondbusiness.net/youarenext.htm) since 2013.) You can learn more or refresh your memory at <https://www.heal-online.org/thelist.htm> and/or <https://www.heal-online.org/suwsnc.htm> .

The HEAL Mission and COPE Conversion Program (for Conversion Programs) has updated our protocols to provide entities populating the watch-list and/or enrolled in the COPE Conversion Program three ways off the watch-list or out of the program. Death and/or closure remains one way after which they will be buried at <http://www.beyondbusiness.net/youarenext.htm> with the others who didn't make it off the list or reform in time. Programs enrolled in the COPE Conversion Program/placed on the watch-list are also eligible for graduation if they meet the minimum Honesty In Marketing Standards described and/or provided via hypertext link at <https://www.cope.church/standards.htm> . The third option is merciful release. Merciful releases are determined by date of last directly reported to the HEAL Mission complaint (date of incident(s) of abuse), whether those incidents occurred prior to when by custom or law the requirement to retain such records has expired, and whether Sponsors (you) are actively participating or maintaining interest in holding your program accountable.

The most recent complaint the mission received on SUWS of the Carolinas was in 2016 (if you were abused later than that then you did not include the dates of your enrollment when you contacted the HEAL Mission). The custom is to retain such records for 11 years in North Carolina. So, the requirements for merciful release have not been met. This is an invitation for you to provide a guest sermon no later than Wednesday, October 27th, 2021 at 8pm Pacific if you wish to provide one rather than have a progress report posted at that time. For sermons (including guest sermons), see <https://www.cope.church/sermons.htm> and for progress reports see <https://www.heal-online.org> . Here's how to participate:

1. In the body of an e-mail message write out your complete sermon and include answers to the following questions:

Did you report fraud or other unlawful actions to the proper authorities? If not, why? If so, what happened with the reports? (So, 2 part question)

Why do you believe SUWS of the Carolinas should remain enrolled in the COPE Conversion Program?

2. Send that guest sermon to me at [rev@cope.church](mailto:rev@cope.church) with your first and last name (full) and notify me if you wish for your contact information to be included or for all feedback to be handled by the mission and/or church. Your full first and last name will be shared along with your sermon as written and provided by you. It will be posted as a Guest

Sermon at <https://www.heal-online.org> , <https://www.heal-online.org/suwsnc.htm> , and <https://www.cope.church/sermons.htm> .

If no one provides a guest sermon and there are no new complaints received by the HEAL Mission of COPE by December 31st, 2027 SUWS of the Carolinas will be mercifully released.

Thank you in advance for participating. And, please learn more about how to value your contributions at <https://www.cope.church/givetoday.pdf>.

In Solidarity,

Rev. Angela Smith  
HEAL Mission National Coordinator/Founding Mother of COPE"

Now, there was a vote on whether SUWS should remain on the watch-list initiated on April 5th, 2020 where all Sponsors of that program's placement in the COPE Conversion Program were invited to participate. No one voted for merciful release or the equivalent at that time. HEAL Mission and the COPE Conversion Program recognize participation in the vote in April as recent enough participation even if Sponsors prefer more time to consider, write, and/or provide any guest sermon. While we understand this may be disappointing for SUWS, it is the hope that this progress report helps explain the reasons for the continued enrollment/placement in the COPE Conversion Program. Additional or continued participation by Sponsors, including providing guest sermons or participating in future votes will impact whether or not the program qualifies for merciful release or remains enrolled. Lack of participation by Sponsors where all other criteria for merciful release are met, will result in merciful release of the program.

Similar invitations will be going out to all survivor/victim/whistleblower e-mail lists and their respective programs placed on the watch-list. It may take some time to get through the entire list especially if enrollments pick up. But, we are working on it and everyone can submit Feedback at <https://www.cope.church/feedback.htm> at any time regardless of position regarding program placement or enrollment.

To close, I remind everyone that there are remedies at law. Labor trafficking, rape, fraud (misleading marketing/false advertising), false imprisonment, kidnapping, battery, assault, and any crime or tort you could name are actionable at law. The HEAL Mission of COPE is prepared to assist all victims by providing reporting resources and information for the sake of justice and we appreciate all Sponsors who selflessly contribute content for the sake of informing the public to help those exercising due diligence avoid becoming a victim. Reporting Guide Available at: <https://www.heal-online.org/report.htm> and <https://www.heal-online.org/suwsnc.htm> .