

Mum and Dad go for parenting

HELP

The anti-smacking law gives them

HELL

Green MP **SUE BRADFORD** said that her anti-smacking law was never intended to solve the problem of child abuse and violence**. And it hasn't. The only thing this law has done is **TARGET GOOD PARENTS**. Below are 5 more cases of **GOOD PARENTS BEING TRAUMATISED** by the anti-smacking law.

In contrast, the right hand panel shows 7 children who have **DIED AT THE HANDS OF ROTTEN PARENTS/CAREGIVERS** since the law was passed. We are still **FAILING TO TACKLE THE REAL CAUSES** of child abuse.

PARENTS SEEK HELP – CYF REMOVE CHILDREN

John* and Sue* sought help from a social service because of the behaviour of their 9yr old daughter. The two case workers were very affirming of them as a family and seemed both positive and helpful.

On a subsequent night, the daughter had a major tantrum which involved throwing toys, banging the bunks against the wall and verbal abuse of mum. Dad warned her that if the behaviour continued she would receive a smack on the bottom (she had already been sent to her room at this point). She continued and dad gave her a smack. She stopped the bad behaviour, and shortly afterwards came out remorseful and apologetic.

At the next meeting with the social workers, Sue mentioned that they did smack their children but only when their behaviour warranted such discipline, and that John had smacked their daughter the previous day.

That Friday, Sue received a call from CYF to inform them that an allegation of abuse had been made and that they needed to find alternate accommodation for their two children over the weekend.

They were interviewed by the police for 5 hours and later found out that the report to CYF said that 'they admitted to hitting their children'. CYF have since apologised and admitted they would learn from this!

PARENTS SEEK HELP – REFERRED TO CYF INSTEAD

Jeff* and Mary* were having behavioural problems with their 10yr old son. At times their son would scream at, kick, and hit his mother. Their usual forms of discipline were time out, writing lines, and as a last resort, a smack. They realised other help was needed and were referred to a child and youth mental health service.

At the initial interview they mentioned that as a last resort they occasionally used a smack. As soon as the social worker heard the "smack" word, she short-circuited the conversation and insisted on interviewing the son alone while Jeff and Mary were asked to leave the room.

They were subsequently reported to CYF.

Jeff and Mary say this is a warning to parents who use physical discipline to curb absolute defiance in their children. With the law as it stands, if parents go to any health agency for help, they will be reported to CYF. The case has been subsequently closed by CYF.

MOTHER SUSPENDED FOR TAPPING CHILD ON HAND

A 3-year old was at work with her mother at a community centre. Mum was putting her to bed for an afternoon nap when the child started throwing a temper tantrum and scratching mum's arm. She didn't respond to mum's voice so mum tapped her on the back of the hand. Not a hit. Not a slap. No red marks, raised skin, bruising – just a compliant child!

For this, mum was suspended from work and charged with two counts of gross misconduct and child abuse. The employer threatened to refer the case to the police and go to CYF.

However, her lawyer successfully got the employer to drop the case. Mum is back at work but she's still feeling angry that something between her and her daughter should be met with disproportionate measures.

BOY INTERROGATED AT SLEEPOVER. CYF CALLED

Briar's* 7 year old son, John*, stayed over at a friend's house. When he returned home the next day, he told Briar that his friend's mum had interrogated him about whether Briar smacked him. John confessed to Briar that he had said that

sometimes she did (Ironically, the friend's mum sometimes smacked her own children while John was staying!). The friend's mum even told John to run away to her place the next time Briar gave him a smack.

Within a few days, Briar was rung by CYF and was told that an anonymous complaint of child abuse had been made and that they were going to interview Briar's other children at school.

CYF told Briar they had informed John that mum was never to smack him and if she did, he should ring CYF. A couple of months later, CYF rang Briar to say the case was closed but she was not to smack.

Since then John has become very angry, defiant and rebellious. As a solo mum, Briar is struggling to cope but is afraid to ask for help for fear of further interference.

DAUGHTER (10) DOBS MUM TO CYF AFTER GROUNDING

Two CYF workers arrived at Tania's* home to say there was a complaint by her daughter that mum had smacked her. Tania was distraught but said that they could talk to her daughter uninterrupted to determine if she was unsafe.

The social workers simply wanted to remove her. Eventually they agreed that the daughter could stay the night with the godmother (but ironically, they were happy to leave Tania's 8 yr old at home with her).

The following day, the investigation found no basis for the complaint and that it had stemmed from her daughter and a friend being angry with mum for preventing her from attending the friend's party.

Mum and Dad are now feeling powerless with their parenting. They say "Every time someone gets told off in our home you feel like you'll be reported; we are being held to ransom by this new law." Their daughter has told them that if they discipline her "We'll go through this again."

REAL ABUSE CONTINUES

■ **Nia Glassie**, 3, Rotorua, died after months of assaults by her stepfather, grandfather and extended family. Nia was dropped into an ice-cold bath, kicked in the head, spun around in a tumble dryer, spun on a clothes line until she flew off - and was used by her abusers to practise wrestling moves on.

■ **Tahani Mahomed**, 2 mnths, Otahuhu, died of a skull fracture and was so malnourished she had not put on any weight since her birth. She was allegedly left alone in a car for a period of time in humid conditions. The father has been charged with murder and the mother with wilful cruelty

■ **Sachin Dhani**, 16mnths, Remuera, died from blunt-force trauma to the head

■ **Tyla-Maree Flynn**, 22mnths, Tokoroa, died from severe burns believed to be caused by hot water but wasn't taken to hospital for 17 hours

■ **Jyniah Te Awa**, 10 months, Manurewa, died from injuries after being kicked, thrown against a wall, shaken and smothered by a family friend. She had been held against a gas heater, swung around by her hair, hung on a clothes line and put in a closed freezer several times

■ **Duwayne Pailegutū**, 7, Nelson, was murdered by his stepfather after he was repeatedly kicked, beaten with a cricket stump and thrown against a wall

■ **Riley Osborne**, 16-month old, Kerikeri, died of serious head injuries. The stepfather has been charged with murder and also faces six methamphetamine-related charges.

* Names changed to protect identity **Radio New Zealand, 21 Dec 2007

FAMILY FIRST
NEW ZEALAND

For more details on these and other cases, go to www.familyfirst.org.nz

This advertisement was paid for with donations from concerned NZ mums and dads