



“They had no right to make my dad look like a criminal”

Daughter (aged 13)

As New Zealanders are discovering, the anti-smacking law isn't reducing child abuse in New Zealand. Instead, it just victimises kids in a new way. By unjustly harassing their mums and dads, the anti-smacking law threatens the physical and emotional bonds that help

these children and their parents remain close. The following are more disturbing examples of good parents who have been investigated, and even taken to court, over trivial matters as a result of the new law.

CASE 11: They had no right to make dad look like a criminal

“My name is Steven and I am 11 – this is what happened. I was late home and my dad was angry with me because I was out on the street when it was dark. He smacked me a couple of times on my bum but it did not hurt.”

“The next day I told my neighbours what had happened and they rung CYF. CYF came to my school and talked to me and also my brother and sister without my mum and dad knowing. When I got home after school we were told that we could not see our dad; my brother and sisters and I were hurt by this.”

“I wish CYF never got involved; they hurt my family. Dad was allowed home again because we told them it wasn't abuse. The Police also said it wasn't.”

“I am Steven's older sister and I am 13 years old. I think what CYF did was wrong. They told my mum that my dad couldn't see us for two weeks. They didn't interview me even though Steven told them he had an older sister. If they had interviewed me I would have been outraged because my dad is hard working and watches us play sports and takes us to music lessons. Our family was in tears, even my dad. They had no right to make my dad look like a criminal.”

CASE 12: Father taken to court for “reasonable discipline”

A 30-year-old Glen Innes father was charged by Police for allegedly hitting his five-year-old daughter with an open hand on the back of the head and swinging a pair of jeans at his six-year-old daughter. He denied the allegations yet had to spend a day in the Police cells. Police actually opposed bail!

CYF also investigated the family yet found nothing to be concerned about.

When the matter eventually came to court, the Police offered no evidence and the case was dismissed.

The father's lawyer said he had pushed one of his girls to get her to hurry for school and threw the jeans at the other to get her attention. “When the whole issue was being discussed in Parliament and in public, they said that minor matters would not end up in court, only the serious ones... the public were given assurances that Police would consider this law carefully. In this case they have not.” Source - NZ Herald

CASE 13: Teen to mum – you can't hit me but I can hit you

Nickie is a mum who uses a smack “once a year”. But recently she was hit by her 16-year-old son when he refused to obey her request. Nickie said to him “You can't hit me.” His immediate response was “Ah...no...you can't hit me”.

Nickie has four sons and is very worried about how this attitude will affect her other children. Her 3-year-old has also started saying “you can't hit me.”

Nickie feels like her only option is to ‘hand them over to the Government – we have no control any more’.

CASE 14: Kids fighting in backseat of car earns mum a Police investigation

Rebecca* (name changed to protect her identity) was driving her parents' car with her two young boys in the backseat. They were fighting and causing a dangerous distraction to Rebecca. She turned to the back seat, pointed at each of the boys to get their attention, and told them to stop fighting and to sit quietly.

A passerby reported Rebecca to the Police for allegedly smacking a child in the front seat!

Since the vehicle was registered to Rebecca's grand-

parents, Police went to their house first. After finding the grandparents absent, the Police then questioned a number of neighbours and eventually tracked down where Rebecca lived. She wasn't home, and they refused to discuss their inquiry with Rebecca's husband. However, they did acknowledge to him how time-consuming the investigation was.

Rebecca and her husband are understandably upset by the malicious and inaccurate claims, the involvement of the Police, and the suspicion and embarrassment caused by the interviewing of various neighbours.

CASE 15: One smack for one hour tantrum – 10 year old calls 111

Joy has a special needs 10-year-old boy who has muscular dystrophy and ADHD. One afternoon, after refusing to do what his mother had asked, he started swearing at Joy, threw a knife at her, and threatened to harm himself. Joy sent him to his bedroom but every time he came back out, the tantrums continued. This went on for an hour. Finally Joy gave him one smack on the bottom, which immediately brought him under control.

He then called 111 from his bedroom and within half an hour, the Police were on Joy's doorstep. The Police realized that this was not child abuse and told the boy not to waste their time again. Joy wanted to make her son go down to the Police station to apologise for his actions, but the officer in charge told Joy that this was not allowed and that the boy had done the right thing!

When Joy realized that her son had rung the Police, she was petrified. She feared they could take her son.

The following night, as Joy's husband was playing-fighting with their son, she began to fret over the possibility of an accident occurring. If things got a bit rough and her son fell off the bed, breaking his arm, the Police would be on her door step asking questions! She says “I know that sounds extreme but it could happen; it has definitely made us cautious. Pretty sad when you feel nervous about playing with your own kid.”

Previous cases

The true accounts in this advertisement are in addition to previous cases Family First has highlighted:

- CASE 1:** Mum investigated by Police when child falls over
- CASE 2:** Police investigate grandmother for smacking swearing grandchild in shop
- CASE 3:** Toddler's bedtime tantrum brings three cops knocking
- CASE 4:** School dubs mum to CYF for hand smack
- CASE 5:** Boy calls 111 to report parents who, according to Police, were disciplining him 'reasonably'
- CASE 6:** Mother investigated after smacking 4 year old for running out on road
- CASE 7:** Supermarket tantrum earns stressed mum Police warning
- CASE 8:** Class of eight year olds taught to report their parents
- CASE 9:** Passerby reports squealing child – Police investigate
- CASE 10:** Grandmother warned by Police after grabbing grandchild running onto road

For more details on all reported cases, go to www.familyfirst.org.nz

Will you be next?

Hopefully not. But are you confident that you'll never be targeted? Meanwhile, Police and CYF resources are diverted from at-risk families that do need investigating and children that do need protecting. And the government continues to fail to deal with the real causes of child abuse: (To see Family First's 5-point Action Plan, go to www.stoptheabuse.org.nz)



Defending good parents
Demanding action on *real* child abuse