



## Many CAS operated access centres not much more than government funded bullying centres

By Katerina Friesman

Bullying of children at schools and over the Internet has become an issue which people hear a lot about these days. Everyone knows that it's wrong and very damaging to those who are at the receiving end of the bullying.

Yet, almost every day in Ontario, parents and children are being bullied and abused in an even worse way by many of the province's children's aid agencies (CAS).

This bullying occurs behind closed doors in secret inside taxpayer funded facilities often referred to as CAS operated supervised access centres.

Much of this abuse is kept hidden from the public because the environment at these supervised access centres is carefully controlled to ensure absolute control over the victims and to ensure that absolute secrecy is maintained.

Some of the many complaints heard from children and families about access centres include:

- Parents are not allowed to take pictures of their child or themselves with their children during visits.
- Some parents are subjected to searches of their bodies and personal belongings and if they do not agree will not be allowed to see visit with their children.
- CAS workers hover over parents and children and listen to every word that is said and in many cases sit in the room writing notes on the visit.
- Children are told by CAS that they cannot speak to their parents about how they are being treated in CAS care and parents are told that they cannot ask.
- Parents are told that they cannot ask about a bruise or cut that a child may have when they show up at the access centre.
- Parents are told that they cannot give information to their children about their right or freedoms.
- Cell phones and recording devices are banned as part of the campaign by CAS workers to ensure secrecy and to ensure that parents cannot get any information from their child.
- Parents are told that they cannot tell their child how hard they are working to have them returned home. Workers frequently tell parents that it is inappropriate to be discussing this.
- Many of the access centres do not allow outside support people to come and witness the visits such as a priest, a counsellor or even a good family friend. Again this is all part of the strategy to ensure that there are no

witnesses to dispute the notes of CAS workers.

### Parents warned by CAS workers to remain silent

In some cases, CAS workers will go so far as to blackmail parents into silence and told that they if they don't do exactly what CAS workers want then they will never see their child again or lose their access visits.

As a result, many parents and children live in absolute fear of losing contact with their child if they don't do as they are told by CAS workers.

Because parents are effectively silenced, the children believe that their parents are not able to help them.

Of course CAS workers want the children to believe their parents are losing the battle for their return because then the children as well will give up hope of going home and become compliant to the demands of CAS workers.

Some CAS workers have been known to even tell children that their parents don't love them enough to, "Straighten up their act," in order for their children's return.

Many CAS workers slander and badmouth parents to the child.

Not only do children and parents complain of their rights being violated but more seriously, the concocted and manufactured notes of CAS workers taken during visits shows up later and used against the parents in family court.

One might refer to the behaviour of CAS workers as bullying as it is profoundly dangerous to put a person with power and control issues of their own in a position to decide, in any capacity, the fates of innocent families.

These families suffering the fate of supervised access are simply trying to enjoy what little time they are granted together, which is often not enough.

It is quite common for workers to discuss with one parent confidential information about another parent and their children with no regard to privacy.

It is a regular occurrence for parents to read later in court documents that there was inappropriate touching between themselves and their children during a visit.

It has happened on many occasions that children will innocently sit on the lap of a parent, or just be especially clingy on a particular day, and workers will portray this in the most perverse and disturbing light in their case notes.

Parents must be wary of any expression of love or comfort that they may share with their child in case it may be twisted into something perverse and grotesque by CAS

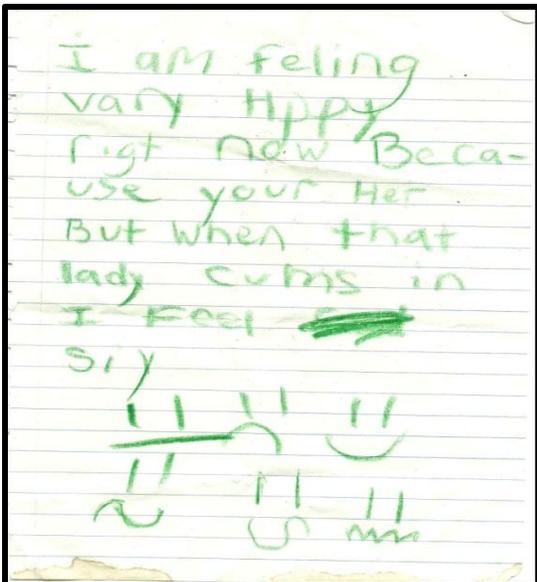
supervisors. In court these additional case notes will be chalked up to “additional cause” for concern by the CAS.

Never should a CAS worker’s mood on any given day determine the case notes of an access visit for a family, but sadly it happens all too frequently.

If a worker comes in to work in a bad mood, the notes on the access visit will reflect that.

Unfortunately, without an accurate record of visits, parents are at the mercy of the CAS workers who are in most cases, against the parents in court.

Even children complain about being supervised at CAS supervised access centres as the one note from a young child below clearly shows.



Above is a copy of a note given by a child to a parent in which the child says to the parent that she is happy when their parent is there but becomes sad when “that lady” (CAS worker) comes into the room

### Conflict of Interest

CAS operated supervised access centres are in many cases being used as nothing more than tool by manipulative and often over-zealous CAS workers to gather more damning evidence (often false or embellished) to be used against families at their next appearance in court.

Unfortunately, the testimony of these workers as well as the notes recorded during supervised access visits is taken very seriously by Judges in family court with devastating effects on children and their families.

Having CAS workers who are against parents on one hand in family court then having co-workers watch over the family at a CAS operated supervised access centre on the other hand is clearly a conflict of interest.

CAS workers would be expected to be on the side of their employer or support their co-workers and all employees would know that it is to their benefit and to the benefit of the particular agency that employs them to gather as much information as possible to use against parents. This is the nature of the adversarial court system.

### Guidelines and policies inconsistent

Another issue which is quite perplexing is that the guidelines for these CAS operated supervised access centres seem to vary from agency to agency and even from location to location.

In Guelph, Ontario for instance, a family’s worker is required to spend a certain number of hours a month at the access centre observing the visits before they are allowed to supervise on their own.

In Waterloo Region, only about 35 kilometres away, they never even have to step foot in the access centre before they start work as supervisors.

When it comes to rules, various access centres have different rules and there seems to be no consistency when it comes to rules.

One parent utilizing the services of the Muskoka CAS reported that CAS got him to sign a form indicating that he had read the rules but then workers said that he could not receive a copy of what he had signed.

### Independent, neutral and transparent access centres must be mandated

There have been more than enough stories from children and families to reasonably conclude that CAS operated supervised access centres are not working as good as they should and that many CAS agencies are using these centres unfairly against parents.

Having CAS operate its own supervised access centres is like having the fox guard the hen house.

To reduce the abuse of parents and their children, independent supervised access centres should be mandated and CAS should not be allowed to operate its own.

Neutral access centres, independent of CAS control, would save the taxpayers of Ontario a lot of money and restore some fairness and dignity to those parents and children being subjected to supervised access.

It’s about time for the Province of Ontario take action to fix this problem by getting the CAS out of the business of operating its own supervised access centres.

*Katerina Friesman writes on issues involving injustices against children and families. She may be reached at:*

[KaterinaFriesman@canadacourtwatch.com](mailto:KaterinaFriesman@canadacourtwatch.com)

**Are you a parent experiencing difficulty visiting your child at a CAS operated supervised access centre? To report an injustice against you or your child contact**

**Canada Court Watch**

**Email:**

[info@canadacourtwatch.com](mailto:info@canadacourtwatch.com)

**Website:**

<http://www.canadacourtwatch.com>