

Immigrant children forcibly injected with drugs at Texas shelter, lawsuit claims

Children held at the Shiloh Treatment Center, a government contractor south of Houston that houses immigrant minors, described being held down and injected, according to federal court filings.

BY MATT SMITH AND AURA BOGADO, REVEAL JUNE 20, 2018 1 PM

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The Shiloh Treatment Center, near Manvel, is one of 32 Texas facilities licensed to care for migrant children who have been separated from their parents. The facility, where inspectors have found eight recent health and safety violations, has received \$25 million in federal payments since 2013.

President Donald Trump's "zero tolerance" policy is creating a zombie army of children forcibly injected with medications that make them dizzy, listless, obese and even incapacitated, according to legal filings that show immigrant children in U.S. custody subdued with powerful psychiatric drugs.

Children held at the Shiloh Treatment Center, a government contractor south of Houston that houses immigrant minors, described being held down and injected, according to [the federal court filings](#). The lawsuit alleges that children were told they would not be released or see their parents unless they took medication and that they only were receiving vitamins.

Parents and the children themselves told attorneys the drugs rendered them unable to walk, afraid of people and wanting to sleep constantly, according to affidavits filed April 23 in U.S. District Court in California.

One mother said her child fell repeatedly, hitting her head, and ended up in a wheelchair. A child described trying to open a window and being hurled against a door by a Shiloh supervisor, who then choked her until she fainted.

"The supervisor told me I was going to get a medication injection to calm me down," the girl said. "Two staff grabbed me, and the doctor gave me the injection despite my objection and left me there on the bed."

Another child recounted being made to take pills in the morning, at noon and night. The child said “the staff told me that some of the pills are vitamins because they think I need to gain weight. The vitamins changed about two times, and each time I feel different.”

Shiloh is among 71 companies that receive funds from the federal government to house and supervise immigrant children deemed unaccompanied minors.

An [investigation](#) by Reveal from The Center for Investigative Reporting and The Texas Tribune found that nearly half of the \$3.4 billion paid to those companies in the last four years went to homes with serious allegations of mistreating children. In nearly all cases reviewed by Reveal, the federal government continued contracts with the companies after serious allegations were raised.

At Reveal’s request, forensic psychiatrist Mark. J. Mills assessed materials from 420 pages of children’s medical records and statements filed in California federal court this April.

“You don’t have to be a rocket scientist here; it looks like they’re trying to control agitation and aggressive behavior with antipsychotic drugs,” said Mills, who practices in the Washington, D.C., area and was an expert witness for a [lawsuit that in 2008](#) stopped the federal government from forcibly administering antipsychotic drugs to deportees.

“You don’t need to administer these kinds of drugs unless someone is plucking out their eyeball or some such. The facility should not use these drugs to control behavior. That’s not what antipsychotics should be used for. That’s like the old Soviet Union used to do.”

The records were filed in connection with an [ongoing class action status lawsuit](#) alleging poor treatment of immigrant children in U.S. custody. An attorney representing the children said youth separated from their parents often become depressed, angry, anxious and, sometimes, unruly, and that in turn encourages prescription of inappropriate medication.

One child was [prescribed](#) 10 different shots and pills, including the antipsychotic drugs Latuda, Geodon and Olanzapine, the Parkinson’s medication Benztropine, the seizure medications Clonazepam and Divalproex, the nerve pain medication and antidepressant Duloxetine, and the cognition enhancer Guanfacine.

Dosage recommendations at Shiloh gave orderlies what Mills called an unusually wide berth to determine how much medicine to give the children.

Maribel Bernardez first suspected her son was being drugged at the Shiloh facility when she saw a video sent by his caseworker via WhatsApp.

“He was completely hypnotized and lethargic,” Bernardez told Reveal.

Bernardez, now reunited with her son in New Orleans and seeking asylum from Honduras, provided Reveal with records showing her son was held at the Shiloh facility

for six months. He was 9 when he landed at Shiloh last November after being referred for what staff considered psychological issues. *Reveal* is not publishing his name at his mother's request.

Medical records show that Bernardez's son was administered psychotropic drugs at Shiloh. She told *Reveal* that she repeatedly objected and did not sign any consent form.

The Shiloh Treatment Center has not responded to a request from *Reveal* for comment about the case. The government Office of Refugee Resettlement has not responded either.

Side effects of the medications make some children feel even more desperate, leading to the prescription of increasingly powerful medications, said Carlos Holguin, an attorney for the Los Angeles-based Center for Human Rights & Constitutional Law. Holguin is asking a judge to require parents' permission or a court order before children in the country illegally can be medicated.

Shiloh already had a reputation for mistreating children. In December 2014, U.S. Rep. [Sheila Jackson Lee](#), D-Houston, called for Shiloh to be shut down, citing reports from the *Houston Chronicle* of "physical violence, unreasonable and excessive use of physical restraints, administering emergency medications without notice to governmental authorities, and several deaths of minor children while in custody," [she said in a statement](#).

But the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services continued sending children and funds to Shiloh – a total of more than \$19 million after the congresswoman called for its closure, according to federal payment records.

Shiloh has contracted to house immigrant children since 2013. Last year, the most lucrative yet under its agreement, Shiloh collected \$5.6 million.

Children and parents interviewed by the attorneys described being forcibly injected or made to take as many as 18 pills a day. One record reviewed by Mills showed a child taking a battery of shots and pills that included three different types of antipsychotic drugs, which Mills said were improperly prescribed for "agitation" and "aggressive behavior."

Of the 20 or so children Holguin and his colleagues interviewed, all had been medicated. Parents he interviewed described the results.

"I understand they are requiring (my daughter) to take very powerful medications for anxiety. I have noted that (my daughter) is becoming more nervous, fearful, and she trembles," one said. "(My daughter) tells me that she has fallen several times and has injured her head and arms, to the point that she ended up in a wheelchair, because the medications were too powerful and she couldn't walk. She has complained about the medications to the staff, that they make her afraid of people."

Medical records included in the court exhibits suggest improper use of medications, according to Mills.

Asked how such drugs and dosages would make children feel, Mills said: "They feel like shit. They feel like they have given up their own control. The long-term complications are weight gain and developing adult onset diabetes. These drugs are not benign."

The Trump official who tried to stop a detained immigrant from getting an abortion

By [Rachel Siegel](#) October 26, 2017 [Email the author](#)



A legal battle over an immigrant teen's request for an abortion while in federal custody sparked protests. (Michael S. Williamson/The Washington Post)

Long before he became the head of a federal office for resettling refugees, E. Scott Lloyd built a career as a **champion of religious values, holding strong antiabortion views** that have now thrust him into the center of a national controversy.

His past work has also made him a target of [critics](#) who argue he is ill-prepared for his current role as director of the Office of Refugee Resettlement, a position he assumed in March within the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. Recently, the Trump appointee played a prominent role in impeding a detained [undocumented teenager](#) from obtaining an abortion, prompting a lawsuit in federal court.

[Last week](#), HHS — which is responsible for caring for detained unaccompanied minors — said “there is no constitutional right” for an immigrant minor to have an elective abortion while in federal custody.



E. Scott Lloyd. (Health & Human Services)

Lloyd has personally intervened to try to persuade unaccompanied minor girls not to have abortions, according to an HHS official.

“When there’s a child in the program who is pregnant, he has been reaching out to her and trying to help as much as possible with life-affirming options,” the spokesman said. “He by law has custody of these children, and just like a foster

parent, he knows that that's a lot of responsibility and he is going to make choices that he thinks are best for both the mother and the child."

The official declined to say whether those girls had been blocked from getting the procedure, as in the case of the 17-year-old detained in Texas and identified in court papers as "Jane Doe."

Early Wednesday, the teenager identified as "[Jane Doe](#)" [terminated her pregnancy](#) after an appeals court ruling in her favor.

Lloyd is scheduled to testify Thursday before the House Judiciary Committee's subcommittee on immigration and border security [on unrelated immigration issues](#). He could also draw questions related to the abortion case.

[[The only reason I am alive is the fact that the abortionist had not yet arrived at work](#)]

The New York Times editorial board [has called Lloyd](#) an antiabortion "crusader." The liberal Washington Post opinion columnist [Ruth Marcus](#) labeled him an "antiabortion zealot."

But Janet Morana, author of "[Recall Abortion: Ending the Abortion Industry's Exploitation of Women](#)," dismissed the criticism of Lloyd, [writing on Twitter](#) that "those who value human life will see a stand-up guy."

[Lloyd's advocacy of conservative causes](#) stretches back to his days at Columbus School of Law at the Catholic University of America.

As a law student, [he worked closely with the parents of Terri Schiavo](#), who fought to keep their daughter alive through feeding tubes in one of the country's highest-profile right-to-die cases, according to the Los Angeles Times.

Lloyd later worked in private practice at [LegalWorks Apostolate](#), which provides legal representation and counsel "while remaining faithful to Church teaching." During this time, he wrote an [essay](#) for Ethika Politika, an online journal affiliated with the Center for Morality in Public Life, arguing that "contraceptives are the cause of abortion" while attacking Planned Parenthood and "other population control entities" for spreading misinformation.

In another piece on the same website, Lloyd wrote that ["tax dollars are being used to help trick people into aborting their own children, when they would not do so if someone was not lying to them."](#)

He called on state legislators to "provide clarification where propagandists have intentionally fouled things."

Subsequently, he joined the George W. Bush administration as an attorney for HHS. In that role, Lloyd co-authored a "conscience" rule that gave medical

providers the right to refuse contraceptives, abortions or other care on moral grounds.

The Obama administration later [rescinded](#) most of that federal regulation. Lloyd, who is from [Stone Harbor, N.J.](#), attended James Madison University in Harrisonburg, Va., for his undergraduate degree. He now lives in Virginia with his wife, Ann, and their six children.

[\[She chose to die so she could give birth. Now her newborn is dead, too.\]](#)

In a [2009 opinion article for the National Catholic Register](#), Lloyd argued that an increase in the Title X family planning fund — which provides free or reduced-price services to low-income women — would help pay for “truckloads of condoms” that, while distributed free, would actually fail and cause more unplanned pregnancies and abortions.

“I suggest that the American people make a deal with women: So long as you are using the condom, pill or patch I am providing with my money, you are going to promise not to have an abortion if the contraception fails, which it often does,” Lloyd wrote.

Women, he added, should “sign a pledge” that if they have an abortion, they would become ineligible for taxpayer-funded contraception.

Before his appointment as the director of the refugee agency, Lloyd served as an attorney in the public policy office of the Knights of Columbus, a Catholic fraternal and service organization. Officials at the group did not immediately respond to a request for comment about Lloyd.

His [government profile](#) says that while at the Knights of Columbus, he led the organization’s policy advocacy on behalf of ethnic and religious minorities victimized by ISIS.

But critics have argued that experience alone was not enough to merit his appointment by Trump to shepherd the Office of Refugee Resettlement (ORR).

Melanie Nezer, vice president of policy and advocacy at a Jewish organization that contracts with HHS to resettle refugees in the United States, told the [Daily Beast](#) in April that Lloyd “doesn’t appear to have much experience with resettlement, which is somewhat concerning given that this is a program that’s been in operation since 1980 and has been very effective in receiving, resettling, and integrating refugees across the country.”

There are about 5,000 unaccompanied minors in the office’s custody.

Court filings in the “Jane Doe” case showed that, as director of ORR, Lloyd flew to Texas to try to talk a young woman out of having an abortion.

“As I’ve said, often these girls start to regret abortion, and if this comes up, we need to connect her with resources for psychological and/or religious counseling,” Lloyd wrote in an email included in the filings by the American Civil Liberties Union.

In another email, he wrote that ORR’s shelters could only provide “pregnancy services and life-affirming options counseling” and “should not be supporting abortion services pre- or post-release.”

The ORR did not immediately respond to a request for comment.

[Undocumented teen immigrant has the abortion she sought for weeks]

The abortion ended the girl’s individual court challenge in a case that drew widespread attention and evoked the incendiary issues of abortion rights and illegal immigration.

But the broader legal battle over whether the federal government may continue to dissuade, and even block, undocumented teens in its custody from having abortions is still pending in U.S. District Court in Washington.

Georgeanne Usova, legislative counsel for the American Civil Liberties Union, which represented the teen, said Lloyd’s previous writings raise concerns for young women in need of emergency contraception, including those under the care of ORR. Usova noted that scores of young women are sexually assaulted in their home countries or on their journeys to the United States.

“Jane Doe’s case is not isolated,” Usova said. “When you look at [Lloyd’s] long antiabortion history, that’s not a surprise.”

In a statement prepared for Thursday’s House hearing, Lloyd writes: “Since my time at ORR, I have had the opportunity to visit numerous resettlement sites in communities throughout the U.S. I have been amazed at the level of dedicated resettlement staff, innovative programs, and the support at the local level on behalf of refugees.

“I have seen firsthand the impact that ORR services can have on the lives of those we bring to this country — restoring hope for a new beginning.”

He then writes that “one such story” — of a woman he met during his ORR directorship — “has stayed with me.”

It was, he says, a story “of an elderly woman from Afghanistan I met who had the opportunity to start a child care business through the ORR Microenterprise Development — Home-Based Childcare Program. Opening her own business was

never in the realm of possibility in her home country. When asked how this program had helped her, she replied, "This program gave me wings to fly."

Immigrant Kids Separated From Their Parents Are Being Moved All Over The US, And The Trump Administration Won't Say Where

Buzzfeed

State and local officials say they have been kept in the dark about where children are being sent, even when it's in their own backyard.

Posted on June 22, 2018, at 11:38 p.m.

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Undocumented immigrant children who have been separated from their families at the border are being quietly relocated to sites across the country, but city and state officials say they have been kept in the dark about the moves, even when large facilities to house the children are available in their backyard.

Officials across the country say federal agencies have refused to provide basic information about the children, such as how many to expect, while in New York, Gov. Andrew Cuomo accused the Trump administration of issuing a "gag order" on any information about the separated families. In Houston, a shelter that could house up to 240 immigrant children was set up in the city's downtown essentially in secret.

"I did not, as mayor, give my blessing to this deal," Houston Mayor Sylvester Turner said during a press conference Wednesday. "I found out only last week."

Immigrant advocates and government officials say such information is vital for local agencies to prepare to deal with what is expected to be an influx of child immigrants who will have a variety of needs ranging from foster, legal, and health services.

Some of those services, as the children transition from government custody to foster care, will be provided by immigrant advocates, nonprofits, and local services, but officials say

they have been unable to prepare because of either the inability, or unwillingness, of federal officials to provide information.

At least 2,300 undocumented children were separated from their families under the Trump administration's "zero tolerance" policy between May 5 and June 9, which prosecuted anyone caught crossing the border illegally.

Trump, on Thursday, signed an executive order meant to stop the separations, but it was unclear exactly how the order would translate to action on the ground, or what it meant to those who had already been separated from their families. Still, officials said they continue to expect an influx of immigrant detainees, including children.

In Houston, city officials were caught off guard when they learned Southwest Key, a nonprofit contracted to house immigrant children, had leased a building in the downtown area.

The city did not learn about the facility from US Health and Human Services, which is tasked with the children's care, or from the nonprofit.

Instead, Turner said during a press conference Wednesday, his office was told by immigrant activists who reached out to his staff about the rumors.

Facebook: video.php

The city itself had been in talks with the owner of the building, hoping to set up a homeless shelter. Instead, in the middle of talks, Turner said officials learned the building had been leased to someone else.

A Southwest Key spokesperson told BuzzFeed News they planned to move forward with the facility.

"At first we were not told of who the new tenant was and, quite frankly, it was kept as a secret," Turner said. "Southwest Key also gave us no notice that it planned to come to town."

That sentiment was echoed across the country as local and state governments braced for the impacts of the administration's zero tolerance policy.

Mayors and lawmakers have in recent days attempted to inspect some of the facilities holding immigrant children, but were denied access by officials with US Customs and Border Protection.

On Thursday, a group of mayors, including from Los Angeles, New York, and Seattle, attempted to visit the child detention camp in Tornillo, Texas, but were denied entry.

"Children aren't poker chips," Los Angeles Mayor Eric Garcetti said at a press conference outside the facility. "They are people and we demand that Washington fix the mess that it's created."

An official from Garcetti's office told BuzzFeed News the city was ready to work with the federal government, but an exchange of information between local and federal agencies was not happening.

In New York, Gov. Cuomo accused the US Health and Human Services agency of placing a gag order on foster care agencies that house immigrant kids.

"Not only did HHS send children to our state without our knowledge, but they put a gag order on the foster agencies from telling us, which is just bizarre," Cuomo said Friday on CNN. "Why would you now want the state to help, to provide mental health services, counseling, reunification services, at the state's expense?"

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The Department of Health and Human Services did not respond to BuzzFeed News' request for comment.

In Florida, [Gov. Rick Scott sent a letter](#) to the Department of Health and Human Services, asking agency officials for information on any children being sent to the state under Trump's policy.

In Los Angeles, where attorneys and immigrant rights groups expect many of the children to eventually end up, officials told BuzzFeed News they've received little information on the number of children sent to facilities or foster services in the area.

Catholic Charities of Los Angeles, which assists immigrants with legal and resettlement services, has received only one child so far who has been separated from his family.

"Right now we have to wait and see how the distribution of children is going to be done," said Moises Carrillo, director of agency programs at Catholic Charities. "We don't have the details."

Groups like Catholic Charities have in the past received information in advance from federal agencies on children or their circumstances. That has not been the case this time, Carrillo said.

The Office of Immigrant Affairs in Los Angeles told BuzzFeed News it had not yet been informed by federal officials how many kids had been relocated to the area, or are to be expected, but immigration advocates estimate about 100 unaccompanied children have been moved to Southern California.

That's partly because of the fluid political uncertainty surrounding the policy.

"Unfortunately there's quite a bit of unanswered questions," Carrillo said. "This is a bit more dynamic and changing, where it's not a straightforward process."

Immigration advocates said they expected the detention of children, however, to continue. How exactly the spider web of federal agencies involved — Department of Homeland Security, CBP, HHS, and the Office of Refugee Resettlement — would implement the executive order remained unclear.

"We haven't heard anything yet," he said. "We just have to wait and see."