

Court: Judge Had Right To Keep Mother From Home-Schooling

BY MARGERY A. BECK
Associated Press

OMAHA, Neb. — The Nebraska Supreme Court ruled Friday that a juvenile court judge had the right to order a mother not to home-school her young daughter, based on the recommendation of child welfare officials and the mother's history of abusive child discipline tactics.

The mother, listed only as "Angel B." in the opinion, had appealed the Lancaster County Juvenile Court's order last summer keeping her from home-schooling her 6-year-old daughter and requiring her to enroll the girl in a school approved by the Nebraska Department of Health and Human Services until further notice.

In 2012, Angel's 13-year-old daughter was removed from the home after officials say the girl was forced to sleep in a tent outside in 55-degree weather as punishment for back talk and failing to do her homework. Child welfare workers said the mother allowed the girl's uncle to force the girl into the tent, which he zip-tied shut. When the girl escaped the tent, the mother and uncle doused the girl with water from a hose.

State officials found that behavior posed a risk of harm to both the teen and her younger sister. Since then, case workers re-

ported, the mother has continued to defend her disciplinary tactics and once locked the younger girl in her bedroom as a form of discipline.

The younger daughter remains in Angel's physical custody, but the state retains legal custody of the girl.

The high court has previously ruled that parents have a fundamental, constitutional right to raise their children, including making educational decisions for them, Nebraska Supreme Court Justice Kenneth Stephan wrote for the court.

But because the state has legal custody of the younger girl, it has the authority and responsibility under Nebraska law for making fundamental decisions about the child's welfare — including choices regarding education, the high court said Friday.

"In a juvenile abuse and neglect case such as this, a court must balance these sometimes competing interests so as to achieve a result that is in the best interests of the child," Stephan wrote. "In other words, a parent's right to determine the educational needs of an adjudicated child is not absolute."

Neither the mother's attorney nor the Lancaster County Attorney's Office immediately returned phone messages Friday seeking comment.

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words, only one in every 278 appointments resulted in a delay of 31 days or more. By comparison, at the Northern California VA-Sacramento Valley — which had 133,328 appointments — 1 in almost every 15 appointments took 31 days or longer to complete.

Nationally, 1 in 36 appointments — or 2.8 percent — involved a delay of 31 days or longer.

The Associated Press examined waiting times at 940 VA hospitals and outpatient clinics from Sept. 1 to Feb. 28 in the wake of last year's VA scandal, which uncovered delays for care and attempts to cover up those delays by manipulating the medical network's

scheduling system. It led to the resignation of VA Secretary Eric Shinseki and prompted lawmakers in August to pass the Veterans Access, Choice and Accountability Act, which made \$16.3 billion available nationally to reduce wait times.

Douglas County Veterans Services Director Allan Jackson said he had expected a barrage of complaints when the scandal broke last year, "but it was just the opposite," he said. "They come in and say ... 'I have no problems here.'"

Jackson, an Air Force veteran, has used the hospital himself, having a cancerous kidney removed in 2006.

"I was very happy with the treatment I got," he said. "Once it was found, I got a call at home asking if I could come into the office, and I went in that same day. Within 30 days, I had the surgery."

Nebraska Sexual Health Program Garners Criticism And Support

LINCOLN, Neb. (AP) — Supporters of a sexual education implementation method are defending Nebraska's use of the program in the wake of parent criticism.

The *Lincoln Journal Star* reports the Nebraska Department of Education has received a \$75,000 grant to develop sexual education programs and policies using the Working to Institutionalize Sex Ed model. WISE is an initiative that focuses on implementing sexual health education through grants and other methods.

Two speakers at a Thursday board of education meeting told department officials that WISE has no place in

the state. One of the parents highlighted a controversy at a sexuality conference in Oregon last year where materials to given to participants offering alternatives to having sex, such as sexting and online sites. She said WISE was a promoter of the conference.

A parent advocacy group in Lincoln formed by critics of the Lincoln Public Schools' gender identity materials has also raised questions about portions of the sex education curriculum.

But supporters of the program, including Methodist Women's Hospital CEO Sue Korth, argued the initiative helps create a curriculum that educates students about

sexuality in a way that promotes health and well-being.

"I'm here to tell you I have seen the effectiveness of this program and urge you to keep it in place," said Korth.

Korth is said the number of teens who give birth and acquire sexually-transmitted diseases shows the need for such programs. WISE, she argues, promotes abstinence and does not encourage sexual activity.

Representatives from three school districts benefiting from the grant also attended the board meeting to speak in support of the program. Five school districts in total have used the grant.

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- Luke 24:2-3



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