

To whom it may concern,

It is difficult to encapsulate 17 years of begging a system for help and finally getting some assistance in 2021 when he was almost beyond help because he decompensated so badly. Yet the antiquated computer documentation system at ECMC does not capture the amount of ER visits we actually made.

Our journey began in 2005 when his brother passed from an opiate overdose in Clarence, NY. That was the initial Trauma that happened. Now 17 yrs. later my son has compounded , multiple traumas from older, wealthy gay men, police officers who thought beating him would help and correction officers that did the same thing. Now here we are 17 yrs. later and my son is a semblance of what he once was and the only thing keeping a lid on all these traumas is psychiatric medications.

He was in Ohio for a little while and because they use EPIC computer documentation and because they have another system in place EVERY time, he went to the ER this information was immediately sent to the service providers involved with him. So everyone was on the same page.

I have had years of writing letters to Judges, and Attorneys. Going to the gay community Center in Buffalo asking for the Crystal meth, party n play to be addressed directly. There is not even a crystal meth anonymous in the area.

I went to the DEA with names of people who were sexual predators dealing with the trafficking of young gay men for the purpose of party n play. Nothing was done and this person continues to invite young gay men to his home in Orchard park , giving them meth and even filming them naked and having sex. Nothing has been done even though some of these young men have completed suicide because of this experience. The ones living are too ashamed and afraid to testify.

I have spoken to the few Rehabs in the country that specifically address the use of crystal meth among gay men. At the time of my research there was only one outpatient setting that was located in NYC. (Dr. Joseph Ruggiero) There were a few Rehabs in Florida and one in Palm Springs. You may wonder why someone who is gay identified should go to a Rehab that primarily addresses Gay men. Well, its

because their issues are very unique and specific and its very difficult for a gay male to be in a room full of primarily heterosexual opiate users.

I have had 17 yrs. of pleading for help from the New York State Mental health and Josiah not being able to be admitted because he was not suicidal or homicidal but rather in a psychiatric and psychotic crisis secondary to Crystal meth use. It wasn't until he attacked a guard at the Holding center that he was even noticed even though he presented to ECMC and multiple area Hospitals including Strong memorial but was never admitted to inpatient psychiatry although over the last 17 yrs. I BEGGED for him to be admitted to inpatient psychiatry verses jail)

Had he have been helped way back in 2009 when I begged Police officers to take him to ECMC inpatient we potentially may not be where we are today.

The issue at hand was our experience with the mental health services in Erie County.

In the south they will admit people in crisis. But in the Buffalo area if you do not strictly meet criteria for inpatient psychiatric admission you are thrown to the curb.

As a result, many people in need are slipping through the cracks of a very broken system. I would like to contribute to this conversation. Below is an article that was in the Buffalo News in 2009 and when our nightmare began.

Thank you

Mary Jo Alessio

<https://buffalonews.com/2009/08/21/abuse-ales-show-need-for-reform/>

Joey thought he was having a bad day when, in a crystal meth-induced rage, he started screaming and smashed stuff in his South Buffalo home.

Little did he know, his problems had just begun.

Police were called last month to the house where he lives with his mother, Mary Jo Alessio. He was arrested, taken downtown and tossed into the Holding Center. He told me Thursday, as we sat in his living room, that he was beaten twice over the next few days.

If Joey were a lone voice in the wilderness, I might be inclined to doubt him. But the volume of complaints makes him just part of a choir.

The U.S. Justice Department, in a recent a 50-page report, blasted county officials for beatings and abuse of inmates in the Holding Center and the Correctional Facility in Alden. The tales of brutality made the old Humble Pie song, "30 Days in the Hole," sound like a trip to the beach.

If you think it could never happen to you, think again. Anything from a load of parking tickets to driving after a few beers could open the door.

Joey said he was roughed up by two guards after they ignored his request to help a prisoner suffering through drug withdrawal. After telling guards to "get the bleep in here," Joey -- who did not want his last name used, given his upcoming court case -- was taken into a hallway.

"They threw me on the ground and punched and kicked me," said Joey, who is 24, 5-foot-10 and 165 pounds. "I was shocked that they were actually beating me, that it was a reality."

He said he was beaten again the next day, after mentioning the first beating in court. He said guards pushed him against an elevator wall. After biting a guard in retaliation, he said he was thrown into a cell and shackled to a table, away from the toilet. After urinating on himself, he was taken into a shower room. With his face pressed sideways against the wall, he was punched in the legs and stomach by several male guards, as others watched.

"It was like I was the entertainment for the day," he said. "I don't think they punched me as hard as they could have, but it still hurt."

If even half of what is in the Justice Department report is true, we have a mini-Gitmo in our backyard. From denying inmates their medication to "tuning up" guys like Joey, it sounds like some of the guards -- and, granted, it is not an easy job -- should be the ones behind bars.

Some people have little sympathy for folks who screw up. To me, that attitude seems not just cold, but thick. Any one of us can make a mistake. Lawsuits by abused Holding Center prisoners cost county taxpayers more than \$1 million in recent years. Beyond that, this is Buffalo, not Tehran.

Joey is no angel, but his words ring true. Neither he nor his mother blames anybody else for his problems. Alessio said her son has drug abuse and other issues and can be "a wiseass." Joey admits he cursed at the guards and bit an abusive officer. They are not looking to cash in with a lawsuit but will simply file a complaint.

"The issue is bigger than my son," said Alessio. "Nobody expects the place to be a Marriott. But at least provide humane treatment, by people who are trained and educated."

As a longtime nurse, she has dealt with violent patients.

"As a professional, you don't treat people the way my son was treated," said Alessio. "The situation needs to change -- and I don't mean clean it up until the heat is off, then go back to the old ways."

Sheriff Tim Howard said changes have been made, and more are coming.

Nothing can change what Joey said happened to him. But if reform hits the Holding Center, at least his pain will not be in vain.

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