

Institutional Abuse & Neglect

“We come alongside you...we lift you up and empower you. And then together, we break the abuse cycle in the most effective way possible: by holding responsible institutions accountable.”

-Sharon Iskra, Partner and Practice Team Leader

People of all ages can be victimized by those entrusted to care for them in institutional settings such as group homes, rehabilitation centers, foster care systems, schools, youth programs, facilities that serve the disabled, and even places of worship.

Protected by institutional façades, perpetrators can spend years preying upon society’s most vulnerable members: children, individuals with special needs, the elderly, and men and women in desperate situations. Offenders and the institutions who employ them often assume that victims will not (or cannot) disclose the abuse, or that no one will believe them, or that no lawyer will take their case because they lack “proof.” These lies keep victims trapped and silent, while institutions continue to profit, and unpunished abusers continue their patterns of victimization and violence.

Members of the Institutional Abuse & Neglect team at Bailey Glasser are committed to breaking this cycle by standing up for our clients and by holding wrongdoers accountable. Leader Sharon F. Iskra is a nationally-recognized advocate for the defenseless and a Court Appointed Special Advocate (CASA) representing children in abuse and neglect cases. Sharon is also a frequent speaker on issues related to sexual abuse and institutional neglect.

In 2021, our team won a multimillion dollar jury verdict on behalf of two developmentally disabled children who suffered physical and emotional abuse by staff at a residential treatment facility in West Virginia. Because of their conditions, neither child could speak to describe their experiences. The facility claimed there was no proof of such incidents, and attempted to blame the victims’ injuries on alleged prior abuse. Bailey Glasser overcame these challenges with an honest and compelling presentation, which yielded the largest verdict in Hardy County history. We continue this specialized practice today through our representation of a disabled child who was verbally, emotionally, and physically abused by his special needs teacher in a public school classroom.

Sadly, institutional abuse occurs on a systemic level nationwide and globally. As *Mountain State Spotlight/Ground Truth* uncovered in a series of new stories, West Virginia’s foster care system, like that of many other states, is bursting at the seams with too many children and too few resources. Not only are children abused at facilities in the state, but because of overcrowding, children are

often sent to centers in other states, where there are allegations of rape, physical abuse and neglect. Meanwhile, the fastest growing criminal enterprise in the world isn't the sale of drugs—it is the sale of *people* through human trafficking (both sexual and labor trafficking), which occurs in hotels, resorts, housing developments and other industries, often while management tacitly looks the other way. This horrific industry enslaves adults and children alike, and those who survive have lifelong repercussions.

There are remedies for each of these wrongs, and there are lawyers like us who demand them. We listen. We treat you and your loved ones with dignity, compassion, and respect. And when recourse is due, we give you a voice through the legal process.

Please contact us for a free consultation.

Experience

- *K. and D.S. v. Potomac Center, Inc.* (West Virginia): Lead counsel securing \$3.5 million verdict for two developmentally disabled youths abused and neglected at a residential group home. This is the largest verdict on record in Hardy County, West Virginia.
- *Doe v. Yeshiva University et al.*, (New York): Lead counsel representing an adult sexually abused by clergy under the New York Child Victims Act and state human rights laws.
- *S. and K.S. on behalf of A.S. v. Kanawha County Board of Education et al.*, (West Virginia): Lead counsel in this matter involving abuse of a disabled elementary student by his special needs classroom teacher.
- Consulting counsel for WVUBelieveThem, an advocacy and assistance group for sexual violence victims at West Virginia University.

News & Insights

Not In My House: Keeping Children and Teens Safe From Online Predators
03.25.2021

Is Your Child Safe on A School-Issued Computer?
01.15.2021

How Can We Help?

General Case and Matter Inquiries

Webinars

Not In My House: Keeping Children and Teens Safe From Online Predators