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14	Attorneys for Plaintiff B.R.	
15	and the Proposed Class	
16	UNITED STATES	DISTRICT COURT,
		CALIFORNIA – SANTA ANA
17	CENTRAL DISTRICT OF	
18	B.R., a minor, and all others similarly	Case No.:
19	situated, by and through his Guardian	
	ad litem, JILL RANDALL,	COMPLAINT FOR DAMAGES
20		PURSUANT TO 42 U.S.C §1983
21	Plaintiff,	
22	VS.	DEMAND FOR JURY TRIAL
22	COLDITY OF ODANICE and 11's) Class Action
23	COUNTY OF ORANGE, a public) Class Action
24	entity; MYESHIA HAMMOND, in	
	her personal capacity, together with	
25	all others similarly situated,) \
26	Defendants.	
27	Defendants.) }
) .
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Jurisdiction is conferred on this Court by 28 U.S.C. §§ 1343(a)(3) and 1343(a)(4), which provide for original jurisdiction for all suits brought pursuant to 42 U.S.C.§ 1983. Jurisdiction is also conferred by 28 U.S.C.§ 1331 because the claims for relief derive from the United States

Constitution and the laws of the United States.

VENUE

2. Venue is proper in this district and in this division because all of the events giving rise to the claims occurred in this district and in this division, and the Defendants reside here.

PLAINTIFF

- 3. Plaintiff B.R. is an individual, who at all relevant times was a resident of Huntington Beach, California, and a minor in the sole physical and legal custody of his mother, non-party Jill Randall. He was born in December of 2005.
 - Prior to the involvement of the Defendants, Ms. Randall provided for her son's needs at all times and was his primary caretaker. Plaintiff was raised, nurtured, guided by, and cared for by his mother and both mother and child enjoyed the company, companionship, and society of each other, and all other benefits and obligations attendant to their parent-child relationship.

5.

Defendant County of Orange ("County") is a municipality in corporate form, organized and existing under the laws of the State of California, and has as an administrative subunit thereof, the Department of Children & Family Services ("Agency").

6. Agency is a governmental agency organized and existing pursuant to the laws and policies of Defendant County. Plaintiff alleges that Defendant County and its Agency encouraged and permitted its employees to regularly seize children from the homes and care of their parents without first obtaining a warrant or similar court order, under circumstances where no exigency existed, as described in greater detail herein.

Individual Defendant

7. Defendant Myeshia Hammond ("Hammond"), was at all relevant times mentioned herein employed by County as a Social Worker in the Agency.

At all times relevant herein, she acted under color of law, within the course and scope of her employment, and in accordance with the customs, policies, procedures, and practices of the Agency and County.

General Allegations

8. On March 8, 2010, Hammond seized Plaintiff from his mother's care and custody. At the time of the seizure, B.R. had not been injured or pysically

abused in any way, and there were no allegations that B.R. had suffered any form of physical abuse – Hammond knew this. Moreover, when B.R. was seized, there was no reasonable or articulable evidence to suggest that he was likely to suffer severe bodily injury or death in the time it would have taken to obtain a warrant.

- 9. At the time of B.R.'s seizure, Hammond did not have a warrant and did not explore any lesser intrusive alternative means of ensuring Plaintiff's safety before seizing him. At no time was there any immediate threat of death or serious bodily injury to Plaintiff. At the time of seizure, Hammond possessed *no* evidence to suggest that Plaintiff would suffer any serious bodily injury at the hands of his mother, Jill Randall. Plaintiff alleges that at the time of the seizure a warrant could have been obtained from a Judge of the Superior Court within two hours.
- 10. Plaintiff was returned to his mother's care three days later on March 11, 2010 by court order. No juvenile dependency petition was ever filed by the Agency, and no court ever found that warrantless seizure of Plaintiff from his mother's care on March 8, 2010, was justified or appropriate.
- 11. At the time Plaintiff was seized, neither the County or the Agency had any policy, guideline, rule, procedures, practice or custom that would require any of its social worker employees to first obtain judicial authorization

before seizing a child in the absence of an exigency involving death or serious bodily injury. On the contrary, at that time it was the standard operating procedure for Agency social workers to seize children from the parents without first obtaining a warrant regardless of whether or not exigent circumstances existed.

- 12. At the time Plaintiff was seized, it was clearly established that any governmental entity, including Defendant County and its Agency, were required by the Fourth and Fourteenth Amendments to the United States Constitution to first obtain judicial authorization before seizing a child in the absence of a exigency involving death or serious bodily injury. Indeed, more than a decade earlier in *Wallis v. Spencer*, 202 F.3d 1126, 1138 (9th Cir. 2000), the Ninth Circuit held that "Officials may remove a child from the custody of its parent without prior judicial authorization only if the information they possess at the time of the seizure is such as provides reasonable cause to believe that the child is in imminent danger of serious bodily injury and that the scope of the intrusion is reasonably necessary to avert that specific injury."
- 13. The following year, the Ninth Circuit further emphasized these constitutional limits on social workers, holding that "Government officials are required to obtain prior judicial authorization before intruding on a

parent's custody of her child unless they possess information at the time of the seizure that establishes reasonable cause to believe that the child is in imminent danger of serious bodily injury and that the scope of the intrusion is reasonably necessary to avert that specific injury." *Mabe v. San Bernardino County*, 237 F.3d 1101, 1106 (9th Cir. Cal. 2001).

- 14. For years prior to seizing Plaintiff, Defendants knew or should have known that seizing a child from the custody of his mother was per se unconstitutional in the absence of a warrant or immediate threat of serious bodily injury. And even this limited exception to the warrant requirement must be "strictly circumscribed by the exigencies which justify its initiation." *Terry v. Ohio*, 392 U.S. 1, 25-26 (1968).
- 15. Notwithstanding their knowledge of the constitution's requirements, neither County, or Agency, or any member of the Social Worker Class including Hammond made any attempt to obtain a warrant prior to seizing Plaintiff from his mother's custody. Defendants further made no attempt to establish or describe an exigency that would demand the immediate seizure of Plaintiff, a seizure that lasted for several days.
- 16. County and Agency only recently promulgated a policy to require a warrant to seize a child where no exigency existed, in March 2010. But, even with such a policy in place the County did not institute a mandatory

training program for its social workers on warrants until February 2012, long after Plaintiff's seizure. The County instituted its mandatory training program on warrants because of the rising burden associated with litigating warrantless removal claims.

17. During the time period between May 2005 and May 2010, the Agency seized 7,840 children from their families. Each child in this time period was seized before the County trained any of its social workers about the serious constitutional limitations on their power – specifically warrant requirements. Defendants seized literally thousands of children from their parents and guardians without any warrant or exigency in the years before the County promulgated a warrant policy and trained on it. Each such seizure is a violation of the constitution that demands redress.

Tolling

- 18. **Age of Majority.** The statute of limitations has been tolled by the failure of class members, including Plaintiff, to reach the age of majority. The statute of limitations for the deprivation of constitutional rights does not even begin to run until the victim reaches the age of majority, which in California is eighteen years of age.
- 19. **Discovery Rule.** Plaintiff's claims accrued upon discovery that he was removed from his mother's care and custody without a warrant. Plaintiff is

typical of other members of the class of children similarly seized in that they did not discover and could not have discovered this fact through reasonable and diligent investigation until well after they were seized.

20. Active Concealment Tolling. The statute of limitations has also been tolled by Defendant County's knowing and active concealment of the fact that only a credible threat of immediate death or serious bodily injury can support the seizure of a child from his parents' care and custody in the absence of a warrant. Hammond, together with other members of the Defendant Employee Class, kept Plaintiff and other class members ignorant of vital information essential to the pursuit of their claims, without any fault or lack of diligence on the part of Plaintiff or other class members. Plaintiff and class members could not reasonably have discovered the fact that they were removed from their parents' care and custody without a warrant.

Plaintiff Class Action Allegations

- 21. Plaintiff brings this action on behalf of himself and all other persons similarly situated, under Federal Rules of Civil Procedure 23(b)(2) and 23(b)(3).
- 22. The class of persons that Plaintiff seeks to represent is defined as follows:

 All natural persons who, as minors, were seized from the care and

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custody of their parents by Orange County without prior judicial authorization and in the absence of an immediate threat of grievous bodily injury or death.

Excluded from the Plaintiff Class are Defendants, as well as the employees, officers, executives, or directors of Defendant County or any of its subdivisions, along with the judicial officers assigned to this case, court employees, and the attorneys of record in this case. Plaintiff reserves the right to amend the Class definition if discovery and further investigation reveal that the Class should be expanded or otherwise modified.

Numerosity and Impracticability of Joinder.

The members of the class are so numerous that joinder of all members as individuals would be impracticable. Plaintiff is informed and believes, and on that basis alleges, that the number of Class members exceeds five thousand (5,000) persons. The precise numbers and identities of members of the Plaintiff Class can be ascertained through discovery, including records of the Superior Court of California, in and for the County of Orange, as well as the records of the Defendant Agency.

Commonality and Predominance.

25. There are common questions of law and fact that predominate over any questions affecting only individual members of the Plaintiff Class. These

common legal and factual questions include but are not limited to the following:

- a. Whether prior judicial authorization is required to seize a child from the care and custody of his or her parent(s) or guardian(s) in the absence of an exigency involving an immediate threat of serious bodily injury or death;
- b. Whether members of the Defendant Social Worker Class knew they were required to first obtain judicial authorization to seize a child from the care and custody of his or her parent(s) or guardian(s) in the absence of an exigency involving an immediate threat of serious bodily injury or death;
- c. Whether members of the Defendant Social Worker Class removed and seized minor children without first obtaining a warrant notwithstanding having actual knowledge that prior judicial authorization was required in the absence of an exigency involving an immediate threat of serious bodily injury or death;
- d. Whether members of the Defendant Social Worker Class acted with conscious disregard for the constitutional rights of

children to be free from warrantless seizures;

- e. Whether the Defendant County failed to enact a policy and procedure requiring its employees to seek and obtain judicial authorization prior to removing a child from the care and custody of his or her parent(s) or guardian(s) in the absence of an exigency involving an immediate threat of serious bodily injury or death;
- f. Whether the Defendant County failed to instruct, counsel, train, supervise, and enforce a policy and procedure requiring its employees to seek and obtain judicial authorization prior to removing a child from the care and custody of his or her parent(s) or guardian(s) in the absence of an exigency involving an immediate threat of serious bodily injury or death;
- g. Whether Plaintiff and the Class have suffered damages resulting from being removed from their parent(s) or guardian(s) without prior judicial authorization in the absence of an exigency involving an immediate threat of serious bodily injury or death; and
- h. Whether as a result of Defendants' collective and individual

misconduct, Plaintiff and the Class are entitled to equitable relief, and if so the nature of such relief.

Typicality

Plaintiff's claims are typical of the claims of the members of the Class.

Plaintiff and all class members have been injured by the same wrongful customs, practices, policies, and standard operating procedures of Defendant County and the members of the Defendant Social Worker Class.

Plaintiff's claims arise from the same customs, practices, policies, and procedures (or lack thereof) that give rise to the claims of the Class members and are based on the same legal theories.

Adequacy

27. Plaintiff, by and through his guardian ad litem, will assert and protect fully and adequately the interests of the Class. Plaintiff has retained class counsel who are experienced and qualified in prosecuting class actions, and civil rights action arising from alleged warrantless seizures of children by Orange County. Neither Plaintiff, his guardian ad litem, or his attorneys, have any interests contrary to or conflicting with the Class.

Superiority

28. A class action is superior to all other available methods for the fair and efficient adjudication of this lawsuit, because individual litigation of the

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claims of all Class members is economically unfeasible and procedurally impracticable. The likelihood of individual Class members prosecuting their own separate claims is remote, and even if every Class member could afford individual litigation, the court system would be unduly burdened by individual litigation of such cases. Further, individualized litigation would also result in varying, inconsistent, or contradictory judgments and would magnify the delay and expense to all of the parties and the court system because of multiple trials of the same factual and legal issues. Plaintiff knows of no difficulty to be encountered in the management of this action that would preclude its maintenance as a class action.

- In addition, Defendants have acted or refused to act on grounds generally 29. applicable to the Class and, as such, final injunctive relief or corresponding declaratory relief with regard to the members of the Class as a whole is appropriate.
- Defendants have, or have access to, information for the Class members that 30. may be used for the purpose of providing notice of the pendency of this action.

Defendant Class Action Allegations

The use of a representative action to litigate conclusively the interests and 31. liabilities of a defendant class has long been accepted in the United States.

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See *Smith v. Swormstedt*, 57 U.S. (16 How.) 288, 302 ("[T]he rule is well established that a . . . bill may . . . be maintained against a portion of a numerous body of defendants, representing a common interest.")

- 32. Defendant class actions are expressly authorized by Rule 23(a) of the Federal Rules of Civil Procedure, which provides in pertinent part that "[o]ne or more members of a class may sue or be sued as representative parties on behalf of all members" so long as certain criteria are met.
- 33. Plaintiff and members of the Plaintiff Class assert common allegations of fact and law against a class of persons defined as follows:

"All natural persons who were employed by the County of Orange as a social worker, investigator, supervisor, specialist, or similar function regardless of job title who participated in, supervised, agreed with, counseled, or advised other such employees in seizing any member of the Plaintiff Class from the custody of his or her parent or guardian."

- 34. This defendant class will be termed herein as the "Social Worker Class" or "Defendant Class" for the purposes of clarity and comprehension.
- 35. Excluded from the Social Worker Class are Plaintiff, his guardian-ad-litem, and any member of the Plaintiff Class, along with the judicial officers assigned to this case, court employees, and the attorneys

of record in this case. Plaintiff reserves the right to amend the Class definition if discovery and further investigation reveal that the Class should be expanded or otherwise modified.

Numerosity and Impracticability of Joinder

36. The members of the Social Worker Class are so numerous that joinder of all members as individuals would be impracticable. Plaintiff is informed and believes, based upon the experience and investigation of his counsel, and therefore alleges, that the number of members of the Social Worker Class exceeds three hundred (300) persons. The precise numbers and identities of members of the Defendant Social Worker Class can be ascertained through discovery, including records of the Superior Court of California, in and for the County of Orange, as well as the records of Defendant Agency.

Commonality and Predominance

- 37. There are common questions of law and fact that predominate over any questions affecting only individual members of the Social Worker Class.

 These common legal and factual questions include but are not limited to the following:
 - a. Whether members of the Social Worker Class knew they were required first to obtain judicial authorization to seize a child

from the care and custody of his or her parent(s) or guardian(s) in the absence of an exigency involving an immediate threat of serious bodily injury or death;

- b. Whether members of the Social Worker Class acted to effectuate warrantless removals and seizures of minor children notwithstanding their actual knowledge that prior judicial authorization was required in the absence of an exigency involving an immediate threat of serious bodily injury or death;
- c. Whether members of the Defendant Social Worker Class acted with negligent disregard for the constitutional rights of children to be free from warrantless removals;
- d. Whether members of the Defendant Social Worker Class counseled and encouraged each other to disregard constitutional strictures and create a culture of deliberate disregard for known legal obligations;
- e. Whether the Defendant County failed to enact a policy and procedure requiring members of the Defendant Social Worker Class to seek and obtain judicial authorization prior to removing a child from the care and custody of his or her

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parent(s) or guardian(s) in the absence of an exigency involving an immediate threat of serious bodily injury or death; and

f. Whether the Defendant County failed to instruct, counsel, train, supervise, and enforce a policy and procedure requiring members of the Social Worker Class to seek an obtain judicial authorization prior to removing a child from the care and custody of his or her parent(s) or guardian(s) in the absence of an exigency involving an immediate threat of serious bodily injury or death;

Typicality

Worked in the employ of Defendant County and Defendant Agency for several years. Hammond and members of the Social Worker Class participated in the same or similar training programs while working for the Agency which lacked any instruction on procedures or policies or standards regarding when a child may be lawfully removed from his or her parent's care without prior judicial authorization. Hammond and members of the Social Worker Class participated in or supervised, counseled, consulted, or advised on removals of children without prior judicial

authorization in the absence of an immediate threat of serious bodily injury. As such, Hammond's training, experience, actions, inactions, and work duties are typical and representative of other members of the Defendant Social Worker Class.

Adequacy

39. Hammond will fully and adequately assert and protect the interests of the Defendant Class and will likely retain counsel for her defense who is experienced and qualified in defending class actions, as well as litigating warrantless seizure procedures. Plaintiff knows of no interests of Hammond that are contrary to or conflicting with other members of the Defendant Social Worker Class. In the event Hammond is not an adequate representative, Plaintiff will seek to identify other individual members of the Defendant Class and name them as representative defendants in her stead.

Superiority

40. A defendant class action is superior to all other available methods for the fair and efficient adjudication of this lawsuit, because individual litigation of the claims of all Defendant Social Worker Class members is economically unfeasible and procedurally impracticable. The court system would be unduly burdened by individual litigation of such cases, creating

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as many independent class actions as there are former and present employees of the Agency. Further, individualized litigation would also result in varying, inconsistent, or contradictory judgments and would magnify the delay and expense to all of the parties and the court system because of multiple trials of the same factual and legal issues. Plaintiff knows of no difficulty to be encountered in the management of this action that would preclude its maintenance as a defendant class action. In addition, named Defendants and other members of the Defendant Social Worker Class have acted or refused to act on grounds generally applicable to the Plaintiff Class and, as such, final injunctive relief or corresponding declaratory relief with regard to the members of the Defendant Class as a whole is appropriate.

Defendants have, or have access to, information for the Defendant Class 41. members which may be used for the purpose of providing notice of the pendency of this action.

First Claim for Relief

Violation of Civil Rights – 42 U.S.C. § 1983

(Against Hammond and Defendant Class – Seizure Without Warrant)

Plaintiff re-alleges and incorporate paragraphs 1 through 41, inclusive, as 42. though fully set forth herein.

43. Hammond was at all times acting under color of state law when she seized Plaintiff on March 8, 2010. Hammond failed to seek or obtain a warrant authorizing B.R.'s seizure. At the time of seizure, there was no evidence to suggest that Plaintiff would suffer any serious bodily injury or death in the time that it would take Hammond to obtain a removal warrant. In reality, there was no immediate danger to B.R. when Defendant seized him. As the direct and proximate result of Hammond's actions, Plaintiff has suffered, and will continue to suffer, physical, mental, and emotional injury, all to an extent and in an amount subject to proof at trial.

Second Claim for Relief

Violation of Civil Rights – 42 U.S.C. § 1983

Monell Claims Against County of Orange

- 44. Plaintiff B.R. re-alleges and incorporates paragraphs 1 through 41, and 43, inclusive, as though fully set forth herein.
- 45. The practices, procedures, customs, usages of Defendant County of Orange were the moving force behind the violations of Plaintiff's constitutional rights, including those arising under the Fourth and Fourteenth

 Amendments. These customs, practices, and procedures include but are not limited to:
 - a. the practice of removing children from their family and their

- homes without first obtaining a warrant or other court order when no exigency exists;
- acting with deliberate indifference in implementing a policy
 of inadequate training or by failing to train adequately, the
 County's officers, agents, and employees with respect to
 well-established constitutional protections, including those
 under the Fourth and Fourteenth Amendments;
- c. acting with deliberate indifference in implementing a policy of inadequate supervision or by failing to supervise adequately, the County's officers, agents, and employees with respect to well-established constitutional protections, including those under the Fourth and Fourteenth Amendments.
- 46. Defendant County breached its duties and obligations to Plaintiff by, including but not limited to, failing to establish, implement and follow the correct and proper constitutional policies; by failing adequately to select, supervise, train, control, and review its agents and employees as to their compliance with constitutional safeguards; and by knowingly, or with deliberate indifference, permitting the Individual Defendants and its

 Agency to engage in the unlawful and unconstitutional conduct as alleged

above.

47. Defendant County knew, or should have known, that by breaching the above-mentioned duties and obligations that it was foreseeable that its agents would, and did, cause Plaintiff and Class Members to be injured by such breaches. Defendant County also knew that such breaches were in contravention of public policy and its legal duties and obligations to Plaintiff and Class Members.

48. These actions and inactions of the County were the moving force behind the constitutional violations alleged above, and the direct and proximate cause of injuries to Plaintiff and members of the Plaintiff Class. As a result Plaintiff and members of the Plaintiff Class have sustained general and special damages to an extent and in an amount to be proven at trial.

Prayer for Relief

Plaintiff for himself and for all others similarly situated, prays for judgment against the County of Orange, Myeshia Hammond, and each member of the Social Worker Class for the following:

1. An order certifying the Plaintiff Class and the Defendant Social Worker Class under Federal Rule of Civil Procedure 23(b)(2) and 23(b)(3); appointing Plaintiff as a representative of the Class; appointing Defendant Myeshia Hammond as representative of the Social Worker Class; and appointing

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the lawyers and firms representing Plaintiff as counsel for the Plaintiff Class;

- 2. An award of all recoverable compensatory, statutory, and other damages sustained by Plaintiff and members of the Plaintiff Class in such amounts as may be separately determined for each such individual;
 - 3. Appropriate injunctive relief;
- 4. Attorneys' fees and expert fees, together with costs of suit, pursuant applicable law; and
 - 5. For such other and further relief as the Court may deem proper.

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Attorneys for Plaintiff, B.R.

DEMAND FOR JURY TRIAL

Pursuant to Rules 38(b) of the Federal Rules of Civil Procedure, Plaintiff hereby demands trial by jury.

Dated: April 14, 2015

The Law Offices of Shawn A. McMillan, A.P.C.

Shawn A. McMillan, Esq. Stephen D. Daner, Esq.

Dennis B. Atchley, Esq.

Attorneys for Plaintiff B.R.