



Children's Aid Society of Niagara (FACS) terrorized my family over the issue of homeschooling!

by Darla Winston

My family's nightmare with Family and Children's Services of Niagara (FACS) began one day when two workers showed up on my doorstep to investigate an "anonymous complaint" which they would not disclose until after they had bullied their way inside of my home. While my husband and I had nothing to hide, we soon learned that letting FACS workers into our home was a big MISTAKE!

Once inside the door, the FACS workers said that the initial complaint was about a messy house (it was cluttered, but not any worse than any home with 4 kids). The FACS workers spent about 10 minutes talking about our home but then spent over 90 minutes talking about homeschooling of our children! Just before leaving, one of them asked to conduct a complete inspection of our entire home. My husband who felt offended because of the FACS workers intrusive questions and unprofessional conduct said no. The workers repeated their demands to search our home several times with the answer always being "no". Finally the workers got up and began looking around without permission. The workers looked at the living room, dining room, and kitchen and then told us that we had 3 days to tidy up and if the house was not up to their standards, they'd take our kids. We had nothing to hide so we agreed.

Ten minutes later the FACS workers returned to take away our children on the grounds of safety issues because we didn't have plastic outlet covers that stop kids from sticking things into the electrical outlets! The FACS workers said our children could come home in three days if our home passed their standards. FACS workers asked about to have a doctor give the kids a routine check that same day. We called our family doctor and were told that she was working at the Emergency that evening and to take them there.

Once at the Emergency, the FACS worker ordered the children stripped naked, one by one, in front of the doctor, the FACS worker and parents. The children were examined from head to toe for signs of abuse or neglect, while being asked questions to see if we were really teaching them. One question my then 11-year-old was asked was, "What is Osmosis?" Even the FACS worker didn't know. My then 5-year-old son was asked several questions about dinosaurs, which is a subject that he never did care about. But because he didn't know enough about that one and only subject, the FACS workers considered him as not being educated. He wasn't even asked about any other subject. It didn't matter

that at five years of age he could add and subtract double digit numbers and multiply a few single digits! His English language skills were advanced! He didn't know about dinosaurs, so according to FACS workers we MUST be ignoring his education!

The kids were not allowed to return to our home while FACS workers had several meetings with us during which homeschooling was discussed endlessly. The day before we expected to get our children back home we got a call from the worker stating that FACS now had "new concerns" so our children wouldn't be coming home as previously promised by FACS.

The focus of the workers from the beginning was the homeschooling. As a side issue the FACS worker attempted to make an issue of the weights of our two youngest children but the children were healthy and under the regular care of a paediatrician. FACS workers asked for the name and said they'd contact her for a report.

A week after the kids were taken away, we asked the FACS worker about the children coming home and she said that she still didn't have the report from the paediatrician, and they couldn't come home until she got the report. We waited another week, all the while being pressured daily to stop homeschooling. FACS also referred us to many outside organizations to the point where it became almost harassment. Sometimes more than one organization would show up at our door or call us on the same day. At the end of the second week, we asked again if FACS had received a report from the paediatrician but were told that it still hadn't come, despite the worker claiming that she had called the doctor to obtain it. And so we waited the third week.

After the third week, I asked again and was told that the report still hadn't been received, despite two reminders. FACS workers stated, "Sometimes doctors take their time with these things". So we thought that maybe if we called the office and explained the urgency of the situation, the doctor would rush it. But when we called, neither the secretary nor the doctor had any idea what we were talking about! It became apparent that FACS workers had lied and had never asked the paediatrician for a report!

The next day we called our family doctor and were advised that FACS workers had put pressure on the doctor to support FACS in keeping the children in care. Luckily, the doctor could see the game the FACS workers were trying to play and refused to bend to the unethical demands of the FACS workers.

The unqualified FACS worker had reported that she had determined that our kids were "developmentally delayed" to the point that I would be incapable of homeschooling the kids. So the kids were scheduled for testing by FACS. We agreed to this because we wanted to co-operate so the kids could come home. At the testing, which consisted of the kids colouring a picture and each being asked 3 or 4 questions, FACS workers came to the conclusion that all 4 kids had serious delays and desperately needed intervention and that homeschooling was out of the question. Wanting our kids home, my husband and I finally agreed to put our daughter in public school and to think about it for our son.

Miraculously, all of the "new concerns" stopped (they had "new, serious concerns" about the welfare of our kids almost daily, and we spent a lot of energy defending ourselves from one false accusation after another, and showing that my IQ is 130, so I definitely wasn't "too developmentally delayed to teach the children"), and the kids were suddenly well enough to come home the day after we agreed to send them to the public school!

A few days later my husband came to me and asked if I would have agreed to public school if FACS hadn't put pressure on us. I said no. He said that he wouldn't have either, and he was upset that we were bullied into it. So we agreed at that point to stand up and to fight for our children's rights.

The FACS worker became furious about us deciding to stand up for the rights of our children. She also said that she felt that our pre-school daughter's speech was delayed and should be tested. She felt that our daughter should be in daycare to help her speech along. We did think long and hard about that, but our lawyer felt that this, too, was connected with the homeschooling -- get all of the kids into the system as early as possible. So we said no to the daycare but yes to the testing.

Although we co-operated with everything that FACS wanted except the homeschooling, even to the point that we felt our lives being violated by the amount of outside intervention, the worker said we were being uncooperative and took us to court. The lies in the court documents were astounding! They said that our toilet was so filthy at the initial visit that you couldn't tell it was white. But the FACS workers had never seen our bathroom! Our toilet was green not white! The other details, mostly lies, were gross fabrications and we had witnesses to prove the CAS lies.

While waiting to go to court, we had our oldest two children tested independently. The report for the testing confirmed that our son was advanced in all except one subject and his math was at the "gifted" level. Our daughter did have a learning disability, but homeschooling was recommended for her because Special Ed classes couldn't give her the one-on-one time she needs. The tester's husband was a public school principal, and the tester was a former teacher, so the tester's experience was credible.

FACS was not happy about this report which showed our children doing good so they resorted to the dirty tactic of attempting to discredit the tester's credentials. Attempts

by FACS workers to discredit the results failed and the test results withstood the attack from the FACS workers.

The day before court, FACS agreed to drop the homeschooling issue if we agreed to do everything else they wanted including placing our youngest child in daycare. We agreed, but stipulated that we could pull her from daycare if this didn't work out. FACS workers agreed but asked the judge to stipulate a one year of supervision.

Within a few days after the court, both children were tested and found perfectly normal for their ages by one of the agencies FACS had referred us to. FACS was furious and accused us of "not co-operating." The FACS worker accused us of lying and said she'd call the testing agency herself. A few days later the FACS worker was back and conceded that the testing agency had no concerns.

The homeschooling issue was dropped from the visits for about a month, then started up again because of strange "new reports" that the kids were not being taught. Nothing but more lies by the FACS workers. We showed the FACS workers the children's workbooks but the workers did not seem to care that the children were doing good at home and kept up the pressure for us to stop homeschooling.

Then we got a break. We got a new worker (our third), who was a born again Christian who refused to lie like the previous FACS workers. While he personally did not like homeschooling, he did the right thing by not lying. We got the feeling that he only stayed involved because the court said FACS had to be involved for a year.

But then he had to quit because of a family emergency. The new worker after that only lasted for 2 visits. The next worker after that did put the pressure on again about the homeschooling.

When the year was almost up, the FACS workers began making noise about getting the kids retested. When we said we didn't have the money (\$300 up front), she said she'd see if FACS would pay for it, then kept stalling about checking (our lawyer felt she was going to use it as an excuse to get another year on the supervision order).

We informed the FACS worker that we had had enough and had been talking to lawyers and were going to take FACS to court. Suddenly, the next day, we were told that FACS would be dropping our case in court.

When we were in court for the review, the lawyers twisted information and denigrated us about the homeschooling, but did drop the case. Their FACS lawyer explained to the judge that they were originally going to seek an extension because they were concerned about homeschooling issues, but changed their minds because "homeschooling is not our jurisdiction". Funny that they just happened to draw that conclusion the day after I mentioned hiring a lawyer to sue FACS!

In the end, tens of thousands of tax dollars were wasted, court resources squandered and our family terrorized for over a year by FACS Niagara workers because of what would appear to be a hidden agenda to shut down parents who choose to homeschool their children.

Would I ever recommend FACS Niagara – NEVER!