



Cassandra Sanchez  
Child Advocate

# State of New Hampshire

*Office of the Child Advocate*



**Contact: Cassandra Sanchez, Child Advocate**  
**603-848-0413, [Cassandra.L.Sanchez@childadvocate.nh.gov](mailto:Cassandra.L.Sanchez@childadvocate.nh.gov)**

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE** – Wednesday, September 6, 2023

**CONCORD, N.H.**

## **New Hampshire Office of the Child Advocate Releases Update, Follow up on Out-of-State Residential Facility: Bledsoe Youth Academy**

On August 8, 2023, the Office of the Child Advocate (OCA) publicly released the Issue Briefing, *Concerns for Out-of-State Residential Facility: Bledsoe Youth Academy*. This report highlighted the serious issues observed during the OCA’s visit to the residential facility Bledsoe Youth Academy in Gallatin, Tennessee on July 11, 2023. As highlighted within the report, the Advocates walked away from their tour with an overwhelming feeling of concern for not only the two New Hampshire youth placed there, but all children within this program. New Hampshire sent these two kids to Bledsoe with the understanding that the facility was a therapeutic placement rich in clinical programming, however as the OCA reported, this is more of a punitive placement matching that of a juvenile detention facility.

“We are incredibly grateful for the collaborative efforts that have allowed for the two boys to be safely returned to New Hampshire,” Child Advocate, Cassandra Sanchez stated. Shortly after their return to New Hampshire, the Advocates went to meet with the boys to check on their well-being and offer support given all they had endured. The boys opened up about the realities of what they experienced in the 30 days after New Hampshire notified Bledsoe Youth Academy of the OCA’s concerns. Sanchez went on to say, “after meeting with both of them and hearing in more detail about the maltreatment they experienced while at Bledsoe, it is very clear to the OCA that NO child should remain in the care of Bledsoe Youth Academy.”

This follow-up report details firsthand observations from former Bledsoe Youth Academy staff, the return of the New Hampshire kids previously placed at Bledsoe, disclosures made from both boys upon their return to the Granite State, and action steps taken to address the maltreatment they experienced. Although New Hampshire has made strides in improving its child serving systems, the OCA and other key stakeholders recognize that there is more work to be done to protect all New Hampshire children in residential placements. “We appreciate those who have reached out to the Office in pursuit of continued systemic change and look forward to further collaboration with DHHS on this pertinent issue,” Sanchez noted.

Pursuant to RSA 21-V, the Office of the Child Advocate provides independent oversight of all children’s services provided or arranged for by the State to assure that the best interests of children are being protected.

#####