

February 2nd, 2011 (Updated on August 17th, 2011)

Behavior Modification Industry
Aspen Education Group
WWASPS
UHS, IFB, etc...

Dear Behavior Modification Programs:

HEAL is referring to behavior modification programs including wilderness and residential programs. We have substantial reason for distrusting your industry. This includes the multiple lawsuits against you and/or your fellows for deceptive marketing, fraud, falsifying records, and RICO violations. All of the above provides a valid basis for us to distrust you and your public statements regarding your business practices.

We have substantial reason to believe children are safer at home than in unregulated programs far away from their families and communities. And, we have substantial reason for believing that children will be harmed if and when placed in a wilderness and/or residential behavior modification program. This includes the Congressional Hearings, HR 911, the GAO Investigation, lawsuits, and criminal prosecution of those in your industry for a variety of violations including wrongful death. All of the above provides a valid basis for us to believe that children are safer in their home communities than in behavior modification programs. Since child-safety is a priority for us at HEAL, we believe in advocating for local/community support that includes family therapy and individual therapy for all family members.

In 2009, UHS of Provo Canyon (aka Provo Canyon School) filed a defamation suit against the owners of the HEAL websites. All of the information we posted is true to the best of our knowledge and experience. And, we expect to win this suit. Since we know from firsthand experience and documentation that the information we post is accurate and true, being accused in such a way further causes us to distrust that the industry is changing to a more humane model as some would suggest.

We made a serious error in applauding L. Jay Mitchell for taking responsibility in the following paragraph from the original letter [updated April 25th, 2011]:

“We would like to applaud L. Jay Mitchell (formerly of Alldredge Academy) for admitting responsibility in the suicide death of Ryan Lewis. It is refreshing to see anyone in this industry take responsibility for their part in the harm caused by their programs and/or programs’ policies. Seeing this report gave the people at HEAL some hope that the industry may start to take responsibility and hold itself accountable for the harm caused to children and families. But, we are not holding our proverbial breath.”

In the article titled “Founder of Greenbrier School for Girls Admits He Is Responsible For Teens Death”; the opening paragraph quoted from a notarized statement by Mitchell was not something Mitchell did willingly. And, Mitchell has before and since denied any

responsibility for the abuse and deaths at programs he operates. (See article at: <http://www.heal-online.org/lewis012111.pdf>) It is very disappointing to us that what we thought was a possible bright spot or turn in some individuals in this industry taking responsibility for their wrongdoing, was naïve at best. It is abundantly clear that people like L. Jay Mitchell who continue to operate teen programs even with their horrific track record are allowed to do so. And, this is why federal regulation and stronger local regulation is imperative to protect children and families from fraud, abuse, and death of loved ones residing in these facilities.

It is extremely disappointing to us that the only record we could find of any of these programs admitting to wrongdoing was the article linked in the previous paragraph. It has been our experience that regardless of civil or criminal judgments against them, these programs and/or their leadership will not take responsibility for their own actions/inactions that result in serious harm and death. And, it appears L. Jay Mitchell, like others in the industry, are inconsistent, deceptive, and continuing to harm children.

HEAL regrets having applauded L. Jay Mitchell and recognizes our error in doing so. We spoke with the Lewis Family on April 25th, 2011 regarding their concerns. And, we have updated our site in agreement that it was an error to applaud Mitchell given his lack of integrity and subsequent denials of wrongdoing following the civil and criminal actions against him and his program(s).

In January of 2011, Craig Rogers of Abundant Life Academy started his own smear campaign against HEAL. He has made a number of defamatory statements including likening HEAL to “Muslim terrorists” and saying we support pedophiles and child abusers. All of those statements are false and libel per se. We are looking into pursuing legal action. To see the exchange with the evidence and links, visit www.heal-online.org/abundant2.htm.

We are writing this open letter as an invitation to programs on our watchlist who wish to have anything edited or modified. Please understand that we have facts, evidence, and good reason to distrust you and to trust families who report to us. However, we are willing and open to genuine dialogue to resolve any misunderstandings.

Before contacting us, you will likely want to review our exchange with Brian Church of Aspiro. That can be found at www.heal-online.org/brianchurch.pdf. If you intend to avoid serious questions and play games, please don't waste our time or yours. If you intend to have an open dialogue in which our concerns are addressed openly and reasonably, please do contact us.

It is HEAL's goal to present the most accurate information available. Our information standards are listed at www.heal-online.org/infostand.htm. If you wish for HEAL to edit our content on any program, you will need to meet or exceed our information standards. As always, if your program is listed on our “Investigate” list at www.heal-online.org/invetigate.htm, it is very possible that your program will be removed once you provide the requested information (see: www.heal-online.org/helpteen.htm).

Programs on our “investigate” list are those programs families have inquired about or that have been reported without specific allegations.

If your program is listed on our website at www.heal-online.org/childtortureusa.htm or www.heal-online.org/adult.htm and you are listed as “suspect” or “suspected”, it is possible that your program will be removed once you provide information that satisfies our suspicions and concerns. Programs listed as “suspect” on our website have been reported to HEAL as abusive and/or use a model that HEAL finds to suggest an abusive environment. This can be resolved by your being more transparent and avoiding using methods described in our warning signs at www.heal-online.org/warn.htm. We are open to hearing from you if you are willing to effectively, directly, and honestly address the concerns raised by your reported practices.

If your program is listed on our website as confirmedly abusive it is because your program has been sued, reported on by the press, investigated and fined by authorities, and/or reported by families and survivors as being abusive. All HEAL Coordinators and Parent Support Volunteers are victims of your industry. So, we tend to believe other victims. And, we wish to protect the public from fraud and abuse, so, we share all information we feel is vital in that pursuit. If there is a specific issue, allegation, or comment you wish to see edited or modified, you will need to provide evidence that the issue, allegation, or comment is misleading, false, or subject to reasonable misinterpretation.

Regardless of your programs’ statuses on our watchlists, if you want something edited or modified, you will need to be specific and include both the quoted text and the link to the page where the text is found. For example, this letter:

Location/Link: www.heal-online.org/invite.pdf

Quote: “Our information standards are listed at www.heal-online.org/infostand.htm.”

Issue/Edit Request: The information standards’ page does not contain a list and is only a series of paragraphs describing your policy. You may wish to change the word “listed” to something more accurate. I would suggest, “Our information standards are available at www.heal-online.org/infostand.htm.”

(End Example)

If we receive vague, antagonistic, or otherwise futile or harassing messages claiming to be legitimate edit requests, please understand that this will further distance us from the industry and serve only to reinforce the beliefs already held by us in regards to behavior modification programs.

You may contact us by e-mail at info@heal-online.org. Please use “edit request” for the “subject” and use the example above as the model for the body of your request. We will not respond to incomplete requests.

We require requests to be in writing. If you are uncomfortable e-mailing HEAL, please

send your requests to: HEAL, 126 SW 148th St, Ste C100-422, Seattle, WA 98166-1984.

Sincerely,

The HEAL Team