

Maura Corrigan statement

Issues of child welfare have dominated the headlines in the past few months. As the current director of the Department of Human Services and a former justice of the Michigan Supreme Court, I appreciate any spotlight on the plight of our state's most vulnerable children. But if we are all to work together to protect children and ensure that they are living in safe and stable homes, we must understand the system in place to protect them.

Contrary to popular belief, our Child Protective Services caseworkers do not decide on their own to remove children from their homes. **Only judges can issue orders removing children from their homes; such orders are issued only in the most extreme circumstances.**

In fact, fewer than 8% of the cases investigated by CPS in 2010 result in children being placed in another home to protect their safety. Law enforcement sometimes removes children from home in emergencies to protect them from immediate threats of harm. In those situations, CPS still must obtain a court order before accepting the child from law enforcement for purposes of placement in a safe home.

A dramatic picture is often painted of parents being caught unaware when their child is to be removed from the home. Sometimes the parents cannot be provided advance notice of an order of removal, as it may threaten the safety of the child.

Both the parents and the child are represented by an attorney before the judge when the case is being weighed. The parents' attorney is responsible for bringing to light relevant facts, and only when all the evidence is considered will a judge make the determination whether to place a child away from his or her home.

The best place for children is with their own families. Many programs are in place to help parents acquire the skills they need to care for their children -- and these are the most prescribed actions when dealing with child abuse and neglect cases. But in that small percentage of cases where children are unsafe or at imminent risk of harm, we must take action to find a safe haven.

Under Michigan law, DHS is bound to protect the privacy of the children in our care. We cannot share the background that led to our actions or the facts that would make the court's decision to remove a child clear. This can lead to the perpetuation of misinformation and/or a mischaracterization of the actions taken in a case. Sadly, our social workers who are so committed that they are willing to face horrors each day to protect children are demonized.

A child's welfare is first and foremost the responsibility of the family. But when a family is unable, or unwilling, to care for their children, the courts, law enforcement, community partners and DHS all share responsibility for ensuring that children are safe and that families receive the support and services needed to achieve successful reunification.

Maura D. Corrigan became the director of the Michigan Department of Human Services in January and is a former Michigan Supreme Court Chief Justice.

Learn more: [BEVERLY TRAN: Maura Corrigan Makes Fraudulent Public Statement To Cover Up Child Welfare Fraud](http://beverlytran.blogspot.com/2011/05/maura-corrigan-makes-fraudulent-public.html#ixzz1UHW2VCIu) <http://beverlytran.blogspot.com/2011/05/maura-corrigan-makes-fraudulent-public.html#ixzz1UHW2VCIu>
Stop Medicaid Fraud in Child Welfare