

## Strong-Arm Tactics

By Kate Mattias

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Jon Lender's Dec. 16 Government Watch column ["Pepper Spray The Latest Issue For DCF"] reveals an astounding issue and should incite federal investigation into the treatment practices at Riverview Hospital.

The column cited three cases where children were pepper-sprayed as a means of medical restraint. However, this kind of extreme response is reserved for criminal acts. It is completely inappropriate for a psychiatric hospital to respond to sick children in a treatment environment as if they were criminals on the street.

The exposure of this practice raises several questions for family and consumer advocates, such as:

- Why doesn't the hospital staff know how to appropriately address out-of-control behavior?
- Why hasn't the Department of Children and Families publicly addressed the issue or taken responsibility for the error in practice?
- Why is the state using police from an adult facility to respond to children?

The federal government should investigate these questions, and action must be taken to stop the use of weapons in the restraint and seclusion of children with psychiatric illnesses.

Many of these kids have histories of severe trauma, and they deserve better from our state system of care.