

I am a survivor of the troubled teen industry. I am here today to talk about my experience with education consultants.

For my entire life, I have experienced extreme anxiety that has often left me with multiple panic attacks a day and at times unable to leave my house.

I have been involved in therapy for most of my life.

At 12, my anxiety became so severe that I was unable to leave my house or attend school.

My parents felt they had exhausted all of the options they knew of locally and sought out the advice of education consultants.

The first education consultants that my parents hired were Patricia Phelan and Anne Locke Davidson of Education Connections LLC, a Portland based company

I believe that once my parents made the decision to enlist the help of education consultants that my fate was sealed.

My parents were desperate and willing to do whatever the people they viewed as experts, told them would help me, and these experts only ever prescribed one treatment and that was inpatient.

These consultants made a recommendation after speaking with my parents, friends, and family members. They read my medical files and spoke with my previous therapists. However, through all of this, they never spoke with me or even bothered to meet me. They came to conclusions about what was best for me, how to proceed with my care and what type of care I needed without ever even meeting me.

They made the most extreme of recommendations for a child in my situation with only second-hand information.

My parents were advised to enroll me in a wilderness program right after my 13th birthday. They were assured that this program would fit my needs and that I would be provided with proper therapy to treat my anxiety. However, that was not the case.

Education Connections directly recommended that my parents employ the use of transport services to take me from my bed in the middle of the night without any prior warning and deliver me to Utah.

In the 6 months leading up to this I spent most of my time in bed and 6 weeks before I arrived at the program, I had pneumonia. This seemed of little concern to anyone and I was taken to Second Nature Wilderness. Immediately upon my arrival I was strip searched. I spent the next 13 weeks hiking upwards of 10 miles a day, 5 days a week with a 50-pound pack.

I was never properly treated for my anxiety in this program, and despite being advertised as a therapeutic program I only saw my therapist once a week.

I then went to a program in another state for 3 weeks before returning home. The education consultants advised against this and told my parents that I had no chance of success without long-term inpatient treatment.

After I got home my parents stayed in constant contact with education consultants. Every complaint, worry and fear my parents expressed was met with the same recommendation: Long term residential treatment. My parents never received advice as to what less-extreme options could be explored to provide me with the support I needed to stay at home.

It was around this time that parents employed the services of education consultant Rob Meltzer of Northlight Services, a Colorado based company.

Once again, my parents were directly advised to use transport services and a week before my 15th birthday I was once again woken in the middle of the night and transported across state lines to Utah.

I spent 6 weeks at Aspen Institute for Behavioral assessment. I was once again subjected to a strip search. Daily outdoor time took place in chain link cage attached to the building, this area was across the hall from the concrete time-out room. My therapist told me in our last session that my family was better off without me and that if they had any sense, they would lock me in these programs until I was 18 and never look back.

From there I went to Uinta Academy in Utah, where I would remain for 8 months, enduring daily emotional abuse.

Uinta operated on a point system. I had to earn a certain number of points each day to earn privileges like watching tv, socializing and additional phone calls with my parents.

Education consultants would occasionally visit and the students in the house would gather to answer any questions they had. We were always prepped by staff beforehand. Staff made sure we were well groomed and would give explicit instructions not to mention certain parts of the program and to put a positive spin on everything.

One of these visits coincided with my second phone call. I was pulled aside by a staff member who told me it was of extra importance that I spoke up because they were looking for a program for a girl just like me. She told me that as long as it went well, she would pull me out when it was time for my call. I did as I was told to maintain enough points for my call.

The following week I learned that those visitors were my education consultants and that they were there to see me.

Between the ages of 13-15 I was transported twice and sent to four different programs. I experienced some form of abuse or neglect in 3 of the 4 programs.

This would not have happened had my parents not been directly advised to enroll me in these programs by education consultants. My parents put their trust into people with PHD's and long lists of credentials that had them convinced that these were the foremost experts. Unfortunately for me that couldn't be further from the truth.