

Rutherford Institute Defends 4-Year-Old Pre-Schooler Who Was Handcuffed, Shackled and Transported to Police Station for Allegedly Acting Up in Class

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STANARDSVILLE, Va. — The Rutherford Institute has come to the aid of a four-year-old Virginia student who, after allegedly acting up in class, was turned over to police, who handcuffed and shackled the preschooler and transported him to the sheriff's office. While at the sheriff's office, the police forced C.B., the four-year-old, to speak with prison inmates in an apparent attempt to "scare straight" the preschooler. The child was left in handcuffs or shackles for about 20 minutes.

Pointing out that handcuffing and shackling a four-year-old is excessive, unwarranted, and unnecessarily traumatizing, attorneys for The Rutherford Institute have asked that public school officials take steps to assure the child's family and the rest of the community of parents and concerned citizens that what happened to C.B. will not happen again to him or other students of similar age. Specifically, Institute attorneys have asked that protocols be established to guide school personnel and allow them to deal more appropriately with students who are acting up or have become upset, preventing such incidents from escalating to the point where use of law enforcement is considered an option.

"That it was a sheriff's deputy and not a public school official who handcuffed and shackled this four-year-old does not detract from the fact that this mother entrusted her son to the care of school officials, trusting them to care for him as she would, with compassion, understanding and patience," said John W. Whitehead, president of The Rutherford Institute and author of [A Government of Wolves: The Emerging American Police State](#). "That such extreme restraints would even be contemplated in a case such as this points to a failure by those in leadership to provide the proper guidance to school personnel in what forms of restraint and force are appropriate when dealing with students, especially the youngest and most vulnerable."

The incident occurred on October 16, 2014, while four-year-old C.B. was in one of the pre-Kindergarten programs at Nathanael Greene Primary School. According to school officials, C.B. was removed from the classroom after allegedly becoming agitated and throwing several items onto the floor. School personnel then telephoned C.B.'s mother, Tracy Wood, who indicated she would come and get the child. Although school personnel knew C.B.'s mother was en route to NGPS, they called in the school's resource officer, a Greene County deputy sheriff, to confront the preschooler. The sight of the law enforcement officer reportedly only served to agitate C.B. further. Instead of employing positive reinforcement, a bear hug or some other method of control appropriate for children, the officer escalated the situation by treating the 4-year-old as if he were being arrested: handcuffing C.B. and transporting him in a police car to a Greene County Sheriff's office. Upon arriving at NGPS, Ms. Wood was stunned to learn that her son had been transported to the Sheriff's office.

After a frantic trip to the police station, Ms. Wood arrived to find her son traumatized and in leg shackles, like an inmate being transported for a court appearance. To her dismay, Ms. Wood learned that not only had the 4-year-old been handcuffed and shackled for about 20 minutes, but that the police officer had forced C.B. to speak with persons who had been arrested in an apparent attempt to "scare straight" the preschooler. Incredibly, C.B. was held in handcuffs or shackles for about 20 minutes. Rather than recognizing the imprudence of treating a young child like a hardened criminal, school officials and the sheriff's office not only defended their actions but actually suspended C.B.

from the pre-K program and instructed his mother to seek “homebound instruction” for him. In coming to C.B.’s defense, Rutherford Institute attorneys have asked that school officials rescind the suspension, remove any indication of the incident from C.B.’s records, and implement policies making it clear that handcuffing, shackling and other similar excessive restraint techniques are never appropriate when dealing with children of tender years.

Legal Action



[Click here to read The Rutherford Institute’s letter to Greene County Public Schools](#)

Nisha Whitehead
(434) 978-3888 ext. 604
(434) 466-6168 (cell)
nisha@rutherford.org