

STATEMENT SUBMITTED FOR THE RECORD OF A HEARING

“IMPROVING PROGRAMS DESIGNED TO PROTECT AT-RISK YOUTH”
HEARING, JUNE 16, 2011
COMMITTEE ON WAYS AND MEANS
SUBCOMMITTEE ON HUMAN RESOURCES

WRITTEN TESTIMONY OF:
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My name is Lorna Hogan and I am the mother of four children. I began self-medicating with marijuana and alcohol at the age of fourteen because it was the only way I knew how to cope with being physically and sexually abused. After awhile, this combination was no longer working and I needed something stronger to help me cope. I began using crack cocaine.

Crack cocaine would take me to horrible places I never imagined I would go. The once clean police record I had became stained with drug related crimes I committed to support my habit. My children were definitely affected by my drug use. I couldn't be a mother to them.

I couldn't stop using. I tried several single adult treatment programs but I was just detoxing. I was not getting help for the emotional pain I kept suppressed by using drugs. There were no services provided for me as a mother. There were no services for my children. There were no opportunities to heal as a family.

During this time, my family and I were receiving regular home visits by child welfare workers. These home visits did not help my family heal. Because there was nowhere we could go together, my fear of losing my children caused me to hide my struggle from the caseworker. We needed treatment.

In December, 2000, I was arrested on a drug related charge and my children were placed with Child Protective Services. When I went before the judge for sentencing, I begged him for treatment. The judge refused my request. I felt hopeless. I not only lost my children, I lost myself. I didn't know where my children were or what was happening to them. I felt I would never see them again.

In jail, I received no treatment. I was surrounded by women like myself—we were all mothers. We were all there, in jail, suffering from untreated addiction, but there were no treatment services in jail for us, there were no therapists that could help us address physical and sexual abuse, depression or trauma.

When I was released there were no referrals to aftercare treatment programs. I was released to the street at ten o'clock at night with four dollars in my pocket. I still didn't know where my children were. I went back to doing the only thing I knew, which was using drugs. I felt myself sinking back into a life of self-degradation.

Months later, by the grace of God, I finally found someone to listen to me: a child welfare worker who was assigned to my case. I disclosed that I had been using drugs for 26 years, and she referred me to an 18-month family treatment program. A family treatment program is where a mother can go with her children and the family as a whole unit receives help together.

In family treatment, I addressed the underlying reasons for my addiction. I identified the many ways that I self-medicated to numb my pain. I had a therapist to help me address the guilt and shame of being a mother who used drugs. I also had parenting classes that gave me insight into how to be a better mother.

As part of my treatment process my children and I were reunified and my children received therapeutic services so that they too could heal from the pain of my addiction, and their being separated from me.

Today I am a graduate of the family treatment program. I acknowledge ten years in recovery from substance abuse. My children and I have been reunified for nine years. They are succeeding academically in school and I am a PTA mom. We are a whole, strong and loving family today.

My story is not unique, there are many women across this country who share my journey from surviving violence, to addiction, to the criminal justice and child welfare systems; and it's because of family treatment programs and the comprehensive services that we received, we were able to heal and raise our families with dignity and health. Family treatment is the second chance our families need.

Thank you.