

A MESSAGE TO OUR PARTNERS IN JUVENILE JUSTICE

I am writing in response to the recent article published in the Philadelphia Inquirer about The Glen Mills Schools and about what the author described as a pattern of abuse of our students by our staff. To address these allegations, the Board of The Glen Mills Schools has hired a highly credible and nationally recognized panel of external experts to conduct an objective review of our organization. This External Review Panel is co-chaired by Leslie Gomez, Esquire, Vice Chair of Cozen O'Connor's Institutional Response Group, and Dr. Elfreda Massie, Ph.D., a nationally recognized expert in education and member of the National Center on Education and the Economy. We expect a complete and thorough review of our entire organization.

In direct response to the article, I ask that you bear in mind several important points

1. The conclusions stated in the article are false. Glen Mills does not abuse its students. In the two decades between 1999 and 2017, there was exactly ONE substantiated report of abuse on our campus. Two incidents since that time were troubling and we responded to each openly and immediately to assure our students are safe.
2. The External Review Panel will be provided the opportunity to determine the facts as to all the allegations cited in the article.
3. All of you know the quality of the services, programs, and opportunities that Glen Mills offers. Many of you have been to our campus and worked in partnership with us for years. I ask you to trust your eyes and your ears and trust what you saw and heard. Think about it – when you were here, did you get a sense that our campus was filled with beaten and abused students who lived each day in fear? No, you did not. That's why you sent kids here.
4. Virtually all of the allegations come from two sources: 1. Former, disgruntled employees who Glen Mills terminated or disciplined (some of whom are now seeking money); and, 2. Former students. Some of these students are also now seeking money.
5. Finally, with one exception, none of the allegations are new – some go back twenty years, and, with one exception, have been fully reported to government agencies, fully investigated by those outside entities, and either fully refuted or, when necessary fully addressed.

Glen Mills does not pretend that it is always perfect. When one cares for hundreds of court adjudicated youths, many of whom present defiant, challenging, and aggressive behaviors, mistakes will be made. We accomplish enormous good every day for hundreds of young men. In follow-up communications, I will be sharing some of their stories – stories from healthy and successful former students who will tell you how “Glen Mills saved my life” and gave them the skills they needed to return home and lead productive, law-abiding lives as professionals, husbands, and fathers.

We ask you to trust that when we are confronted with allegations that someone was mistreated or harmed, we listen, we respond, and we ensure all are properly investigated. The allegations reported in the article paint a dark picture – if they are credible. We say that they are not. We say, there are two sides to every story and that we have always tried to find the truth, by determining the facts, and responding accordingly. But we also know that we cannot ask you to simply take our word for it. To make sure that you have the information you need so that you know what has really happened and what has been invented, we are taking two steps. First, we have listed below allegations reported in the article. For each, we provided you a short response. For each, we also attach a more detailed “Fact Sheet” that states what we believe are the true facts connected to each allegation. We present them so you have our version of the facts, so you can begin to discern what is true and what is false.

As previously reported, we have convened an objective, external panel of reviewers (External Review Panel) and have asked them to thoroughly review all of these allegations – again, so that you are not left simply accepting our word.

Issues reported in the article are as follows:

1. Claim: Glen Mills operates on an isolated campus where abuse can happen undetected and can be hidden from view.
Response: This is false. Anyone who has actually visited the campus knows that we are open and accessible and that, literally, thousands of visitors come to our campus every year, including judges, politicians, parents, siblings, social workers, probation officers, licensing officials, and, sometimes, just the general public. Further details are attached in FACT SHEET 1.
2. Claim: The United States Department of Justice “DOJ” is conducting an “ongoing investigation” of violence at Glen Mills.
Response: We believe this is also false. In 2012, the DOJ wrote and stated that it had received a complaint and that it would conduct an “inquiry.” The DOJ never revealed the subject matter of the complaints, but their requests for information related to special education rights, not in any way to violence or abuse. Glen Mills cooperated fully with this inquiry. When we last heard from the DOJ, almost three years ago, they reported that they had concluded their fact-finding and that if they had found violations of students’ rights, they would issue a Notice of Violations letter in the near future. They never did. In fact, we have had no contact from the DOJ in almost three years. More details are attached as FACT SHEET 2.
3. Claim: Twenty years ago, Glen Mills obstructed child abuse investigations.
Response: Obviously, we did not. Then, as now, Glen Mills cooperates fully with state investigators in every way. What we did do, twenty years ago, was tell one police trooper who insisted on removing students from the campus to be interviewed without court authority, without parent permission, without the consent of the students’ lawyers,

and over the students' own objections, that he needed to obtain court authority to take custody of the students. A later review of Glen Mills' actions by higher-level law enforcement at the time confirmed that our statement of the law was correct and the matter ended. Glen Mills contested the allegations of "obstruction" at the time and prevailed in protecting students' rights. More details are attached as FACT SHEET 3.

4. Claim: Students have their communications monitored.

Response: We monitor communications for safety reasons consistent with student rights. See FACT SHEET 4.

5. Claim: In 1999-2000, Glen Mills promised to "reform" its procedures and did not do so.
Response: This is also false. Twenty years ago, Glen Mills had a licensing dispute with the Commonwealth. DPW issued a Licensing Inspection Summary and Glen Mills appealed, contesting most of the "findings." That appeal was eventually resolved through a settlement and a Plan of Correction, which was then verified annually through inspections by DPW. Since then, Glen Mills has received full licensing every single year.

6. Claim: Glen Mills' current promises about program enhancements and reform cannot be believed.

Response: We welcome you to come to our campus, announced or unannounced and see our program. Let your eyes tell you what is true. Ten years ago, we began to see a shift in the kinds of students who were placed with us. Many presented more complex challenges than the students we typically served before. Since then, Glen Mills has been on an aggressive mission to modernize, to meet the needs of today's students. To help our staff and students succeed, we are creating new tools and resources to help and today, Glen Mills stands as a leader in the field, creating new and innovative programs to offer: Trauma-informed care for students; full implementation of PBIS principles, faster and more completely than most public schools and far faster than any juvenile justice program anywhere; revised behavioral de-escalation tactics, and implementation of the nationally recognized "Handle with Care" (restrictive procedure); SPEP; JJSES, and much, much more. Details are attached as FACT SHEET 5.

7. Claim: Randy Ireson, Executive Director, stopped allowing students to walk by his office door to shield him from anonymous complaint letters that were slipped secretly beneath his office door.

Response: This is nonsense. I began keeping a dish of candy on my office table and invited students in to take a piece. When word of this got out, the knocks on the door became incessant and disruptive and needed to be stopped. I did receive several anonymous letters that did raise complaints, every one of which was reported to state authorities for investigation, no matter how vague. In response to having notes slipped under doors or left in mail boxes, Glen Mills has installed Grievance Boxes throughout

its campus so that anyone who wanted to could submit a grievance and not have to sneak around to do it. No further detail is required.

8. Claim: Counselors who report suspected child abuse are retaliated against. Examples include Lawrence Livers, Jim Rostik, and Shawn Magee

Response: This is false. All Glen Mills employees are mandated reporters and Glen Mills strictly adheres to its mandate to report. Details regarding three individual employees cited are attached as FACT SHEETS 6, 7, and 8.

9. Claim: Students are punched, kicked, and choked by staff, including students M. A. and A. W.

Response: Between 1999 and 2017, Glen Mills had exactly one indicated report against any of its employees. While this is one too many, we are proud of our record of safety. During that period, Glen Mills provided more than 2 million days of care for our students, with only one substantiated finding of abuse over the course of nearly two decades. We are not, of course, perfect. We concede that there are instances when staff do not follow our training and requirements for de-escalation of defiant behavior. We also concede that when students are properly and justifiably restrained for the safety of themselves or others, injuries to staff and students can occur. When we identify instances that suggest that the staff person involved does not have the temperament for work with difficult juveniles, we part ways with them, including the incidents A.W. and M.A. . Details about the M.A. case (from 2017) and the A.W. case (from 2018) (see FACT SHEET 9) and details about other instances when students were injured are attached as FACT SHEET 10.

10. Claim: There are several lawsuits pending against Glen Mills.

Response: True, but the existence of a lawsuit, by itself, means nothing about what is true. One year ago, there were no lawsuits pending against Glen Mills. Does that fact mean that Glen Mills was perfect then but somehow became a miserable mess since then? No. Once publicity occurred, surrounding the A.W. incident last summer, a number of people viewed this as an opportunity for easy monetary gain and either filed lawsuits or found lawyers to write threatening letters claiming they intended to do so, unless Glen Mills paid them. Glen Mills has not paid them nor will it. Rather, Glen Mills is contesting each lawsuit vigorously. Details of those that are pending are attached as FACT SHEETS 10 – 12.

11. Claim: The reported incident involving a student who supposedly had his eye knocked out is still under investigation. Glen Mills has never heard of the allegation and is reviewing its records to see if anything resembling it actually occurred. As of this writing, we have located no report or record that corroborates this allegation. One note as well, the former staff person who claimed to have seen this worked for Glen Mills for five months, in 2013. He apparently felt it was appropriate to remain silent about this incident until he was interviewed for the article. If the incident really happened, this seems odd.

While we believe this fact raises questions as to his credibility, we have taken the report of the incident seriously and have asked state investigators to assess its truthfulness.

12. Claim: Glen Mills staff threaten families.

Response: Glen Mills hosts thousands of family visits on our campus each year. This is the first time we are hearing this allegation. We have no information corroborating this allegation and have referred it to the External Review Panel for a full investigation.

FACT SHEET 13

13. Claim: Glen Mills fails to train its staff on proper restraint techniques in accordance with regulatory mandates.

Response: This is a gross mischaracterization. Glen Mills is inspected annually by state and local authorities and has never been cited for regulatory non-compliance in our training, with one exception – in 2014. In that year, state inspectors learned that during our training, we taught restraint techniques and had each trainee demonstrate their competence to perform restraints, as required. What we did not do, admittedly, was also make sure that each trainee had the restraint techniques performed “on them.” The applicable regulation requires that our training include: “Experience of use of the specific procedures directly on each staff person and demonstration of the use of each procedure by each staff person.” In other words, we trained people how to do restraints but we did not always make sure that, during the training, we also had every trainee play the role of the person being restrained. This had never been cited before. It was corrected immediately and has not been cited since. More importantly, a central focus of our programming is to use proper pre-restraint de-escalation techniques whenever possible and to resort to restraints, which are inherently risky for both the employee and the student, only when necessary to protect the safety of the student or others.

In closing, if I have not covered anything here that you are concerned about, please contact me. The original article appeared only a few days ago and we have assembled as quickly as possible these responses. If we missed anything or have not answered your questions, it is not for lack of trying to be open and to address your concerns. Please ask. My staff and I are available 24 hours every day to answer any additional questions you have.

Sincerely,



Randy Ireson
Executive Director
The Glen Mills Schools