



Written by [Gregory Hession](#) on October 1, 2009

Michigan Mom Told to Stop Baby-sitting

It takes a village to raise a child, except when the government gets involved.

In a small rural Michigan township southeast of Grand Rapids, Lisa Snyder volunteered to do a favor for a few neighborhood mothers, and watch their children for an hour before school so the mothers could get to work on time. She helps them get to the bus safely, and does not take money for it.



A neighbor reported this activity to the Michigan Department of Human Services (DHS), and in a spasm of regulatory over-kill, the agency sent a cease-and-desist letter to Snyder right after the school year started. In it, the DHS demanded that she stop helping her neighbors by providing an “illegal daycare operation,” because she was not a licensed day-care center.

A Michigan law prohibits persons from caring for unrelated children in their home for more than four weeks each calendar year unless they are licensed day-care providers. Violation of the law is a criminal misdemeanor and can result in fines and jail time.

After getting the letter, Snyder, a stay-at-home mother, contacted the Department of Human Services, but she “got nowhere.”

Somehow this situation came to the attention of higher-ups in the government, and this week the Governor of Michigan, Jennifer Granholm, publicly weighed in on the matter. She instructed the agency Director, Ismael Ahmedm, to work with the State Legislature to try to change the law.

Yesterday, Michigan State Rep. Brian Calley (R-Portland) said he was working to draft legislation that would exempt situations like Snyder’s from coverage under Michigan’s current day-care regulations. “The bill will make it clear that people who aren’t in business as day care providers don’t need to be licensed,” Calley said.

Ironically, Snyder was threatened with jail for providing a service to her community, a “crime” for which another tax-funded state agency may bestow an award to her. The State of Michigan funds the Michigan Community Service Commission (MCSC), whose mission is to “build a culture of service by providing vision and resources to strengthen communities through volunteerism,” and “to help individuals get involved in their local communities.” Outstanding volunteers are even given special service awards by the Governor.

Apparently, volunteerism is not legal unless it is done under the watchful eye of the government.



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