

HAVING KIDS™

Child-first Advocacy

HavingKids.org

info@havingkids.org

Governor Rick Scott
State of Florida
The Capitol
400 S. Monroe St.
Tallahassee, FL 32399-0001

Attorney General Pam Bondi
Office of Attorney General
State of Florida
The Capitol PL-01
Tallahassee, FL 32399-1050

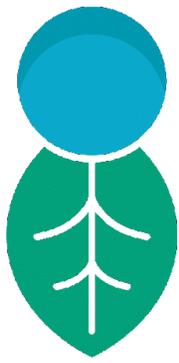
Mike Carroll, Secretary
Department of Children and Families
1317 Winewood Blvd. Building 1, Room 202
Tallahassee, FL 32399-0700

Ed Brodsky, State Attorney
Office of the State Attorney
12th Judicial Circuit
Criminal Justice Building
2071 Ringling Blvd., Suite 400
Sarasota, FL 34237

The Honorable Charles Roberts
P.O. Box 48927
Sarasota, FL 34320

April 25, 2018

RE: State of Florida vs. Shane Samuels; 2018-CF-002161 and 2018-CF-2163



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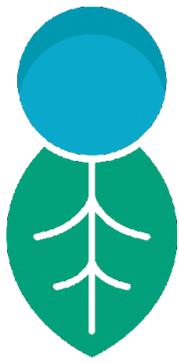
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Governor Scott et al.,

Having Kids is a national nonprofit organization dedicated to reforming family planning by replacing parent-centered family planning models with the human rights-based and child-first Fair Start model. We are writing to you out of concern for current and future child abuse/neglect victims in the Florida.

In late January, 2018, the Department of Children and Family Services went to the home of Shane Samuels on a child welfare check. Inside a home with cigarette butts and trash strewn about the floor, investigators found a four-year-old boy with a large red, swollen handprint on the side his face. Samuels told investigators (and later Sarasota County Sheriff's deputies) that this child had simply fallen in the backyard and that his injuries were the result of an accident. Fortunately, investigators removed the child from Samuel's care pending an investigation. During the course of the next month, investigators slowly received information from a terrified young child who was told by Samuels, hand over the boy's mouth, that "the bogeyman was going to get him." Doctors confirmed that this boy's injuries, bruising and hemorrhaging on his face, neck and ears, were the result of "severe physical child abuse" and, on February 13, 2018, the Sheriff's deputies arrested Samuels and charged him with aggravated child abuse.

As Samuels is currently being held without bail waiting further court proceedings, it is, of course, extremely important that this boy is finally receiving the care and attention that he deserves. It is critical, though, that he not be put back in the hands of his abuser in the near future. Having Kids wants more for the children of Florida than the state's after-the-fact reaction to such horrible abuse, however, and we're convinced that you feel the same way. After all, reacting after a child has already been made to suffer means that the child will spend his or her lifetime recovering from this trauma. From a purely economic point of view, the state will spend considerably more resources to attempt to reverse these negative effects.[1]



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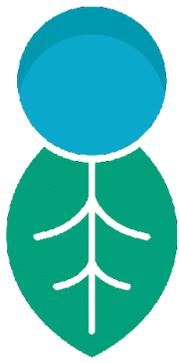
What happened to this child in Samuel's case stems from a larger problem of poor family planning and parenting; a problem that begins with a paradigm in which the decision to have a child is focused on what parents want in the short term rather than what each child needs in the long term. There are frequent stories about child abuse in Florida, many worse than this case, every week.[2] [3]

In 2015 alone, there were more than 160,000 reports of child abuse and neglect referred for investigation in Florida.[4] Even more alarming, there were a staggering 126 fatalities from child abuse and neglect in Florida in 2017 – twice as high as the national average.[5] This contributes to Florida's dismal ranking of 40th in the nation for child wellbeing.[6]

Clearly, this is a systemic problem that is only growing in severity, particularly in light of our country's opioid epidemic.[7] The current model – which makes having and raising kids the exclusive business of the parents – ignores every child's right to a minimum standard of well-being not only at birth, but throughout childhood. The parent-centered family planning and parenting paradigm is a violation of the rights of children to be protected.

Having Kids urges the State of Florida, through its appropriate agents, to consider seeking an order in the Sarasota County criminal cases against Samuels, in the event of a conviction and probation, to prevent Samuels from having children for a limited time period as a condition of his probation. The details of such an approach can be found at <https://havingkids.org/solution-fair-start-orders/>. Samuels' conduct has demonstrated a clear unfitness to parent at this time and the state should not be setting him up for further failure without first taking the necessary steps for rehabilitation (such as government-mandated counseling, parenting courses, etc.)

The state would not consider putting the helpless boy back into the Samuels' care; the state should similarly consider the right of a child not to be born to Samuels at this point in time, particularly in light of strong evidence of child abusers repeating or escalating violence within the family.[8] In addition, we ask the Court and the State Attorney's Office prosecuting this case to ensure that the child victim in these cases is provided every opportunity to exercise his Florida Constitutional Rights under Article I, Sect. 16(b).



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Finally, we urge you Governor Scott and your administration to protect future children in Florida by working with legislators on a law that explicitly authorizes courts, in specialized cases of egregious abuse, such as that of Samuels, to issue orders preventing abusive and neglectful parents from having additional children for limited time periods. The State of Florida can fulfill its obligations to future children by moving towards a human-rights based and child-first family planning model. Having Kids is available to assist in creating state policy and law that furthers this goal. Please contact us.

Sincerely,

/S/ Anne Green

Anne Green
Executive Director
Having Kids

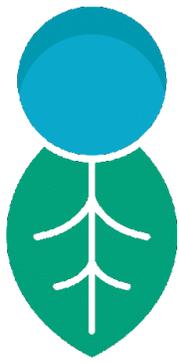
[Having Kids](#) is a 501(c)3 nonprofit organization dedicated to reforming family planning by replacing parent-centered family planning models with the human rights-based and child-first Fair Start model.

[1] Per a 2017 study, the economic cost to the public was \$400,000 for each victim of child abuse in the City of San Francisco in 2015. *See The Economics of Child Abuse*, a report by the San Francisco Child Abuse Prevention Center and the Haas School of Business at University of California, Berkeley, *available at*:

https://safeandsound.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/09/economicsofabuse_report_sfcapc1.pdf

[2]

<http://www.jdnews.com/news/20180410/man-gets-22---29-years-for-beating-girlfriends-4-year-old>



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[3]

<https://www.usatoday.com/story/news/nation-now/2018/04/14/florida-mother-let-her-2-year-old-child-smoke-meth-and-marijuana-authorities-say/517107002/>

[4] Per statistics compiled by the Children's Welfare League of America.

<https://www.cwla.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/03/FLORIDA-1.pdf>

[5]

<https://okeechobeenews.net/community-news/flags-honor-126-children-who-died-in-florida-last-year/>

[6]

<https://www.naplesnews.com/story/news/health/2018/04/05/fewer-kids-florida-live-poverty-but-state-ranks-40-overall-child-well-being/486648002/>

[7]

<http://www.firstcoastnews.com/article/news/local/more-foster-parents-needed-as-opioid-epidemic-surges-in-florida/77-535282262>

[8] Per Florida's Department of Children and Family Services, of the 103 reported child fatalities in 2018 thus far, 38% of the deceased children had prior contact with Florida's child welfare system within the past 5 years. See <https://www.dcf.state.fl.us/childfatality/state.shtml>