

## FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

### Ohio Adoption Agency with Unethical Past Involved in another Relinquishment Battle

**Adoption by Gentle Care, the Columbus Ohio based agency that was the placement agency in the [Grayson Vaughn](#) case, is refusing to honor a relinquishment revocation. Adoption Attorney, James Albers, is heading the battle against the very agency he helped create.**

May 1, 2014, Columbus Ohio; Allegations of obtaining an illegal consent to relinquish to adoption are being made against Columbus based Adoption by Gentle Care (AGC). Three days after consent, the mother of the child born on March 31st, 2014 during a scheduled C-section, Carri Stearns, requested that AGC her child returned to her custody which to date, the agency has refused to do. Stearns has since obtained James Albers of Albers Law Firm (<http://www.alberslawfirm.com/>) as her counsel; a move that has raised many eyebrows as Albers had previously not only worked with, but was a founder of the Ohio based agency..

#### A Pattern of Questionable Behavior and Poor Placements?

This is not the first time Adoption by Gentle Care, also known as Gentle Care Adoption Services Inc., has been in the limelight. Adoption by Gentle Care was the adoption agency that placed the [infant son of Benjamin's Wyrembek, called Grayson Vaughn](#) with an adoptive couple. Like Stearns, Wyrembek requested his child returned to his custody when he was 17 days old, but the legal battle continued for years. Eventually the three year child was returned to his biological father by the Ohio Supreme court.

The Adoption By Gentle Care Agency was found to be in contempt of court for not complying with a court order relating to this case earlier in 2010 as well. [Another case and lawsuit can be found going back to 2001](#) by Adoption By Choice, in Florida that started in 1990 as a branch of the Ohio agency, Gentle Care. The Board of Directors are [named in another case here](#). Even more horrible, there is the [tragic story of multiple adoptees dying under suspicious circumstances in an adoptive home that where Adoption by Gentle Care](#) was, again, the agency that made the placements.

#### Obtaining an Illegal Adoption Consent?

While Ohio adoption law does take adoption consents as irrevocable upon signature, the consent is under fire as accusations that birthmother social worker, Kelli Shoemaker, employed by AGC and acting on their behalf, instructed Stearns ahead of time to omit the facts that she was on doctors prescribed painkillers. The consent, taken just 72 hours after the surgery, took place in Sterns residence with only

Shoemaker and another witness not known to Stearns. The admission and alleged deception that consent was given on Vicodin, with a possibility of both Versed and Dilaudid also in her system having been administered by IV, is only one of a series of ethical concerns. The relinquishment consent was taped, but the tape was paused also bringing up questions.

Citing multiple infractions of Ohio revised legal code chapters 51 and 31, accusations against Adoption by Gentle Care include:

- Instructed Stearns to deny knowledge of the father's identity and did not follow up to make sure that his parental rights were either acknowledged nor consent to relinquish taken voluntarily as is his right.
- Ignoring that she felt pressured to relinquish and would not be considering adoption at all except to defer to the wishes of her significant other.
- Advised this potential birthmother to be deceitful regarding her Native American blood to avoid ICWA complications and keep the adoption on a time track of ease.

Trina Saunders, director of Adoption by Gentle Care, has not commented at this time, but documents show that "It is the adoption policy of Gentle Care to assure all parties that all recruitment activities and materials shall be in compliance with the "Indian Child Welfare Act of 1978" (rules 5101:2-42-48 to 5101:2-42-58 of the Administrative Code). " Compliance with the ICWA would mean that due to Stearns's Pottawami heritage the child's placement must be approved by the tribe even if she was not yet enrolled as a tribal member. Inclusion of the ICWA might mean that this contested adoption could be the next Veronica Brown story.

## **Hoping for a Quick and Happy Ending**

The baby is just a month old, and if returned, all parties would be able to put this unfortunate event behind them.

"I just want him back with us," states his mother. "I'm a good mom. We have a nice house and family; he has five other brothers and sisters. I don't understand why they just won't give him back. It's so simple. I wasn't myself and I panicked. I just did what they said. It was a mistake."

Current Ohio adoption law, however, does not allow for time for a mother to change her mind in the case of voluntary relinquishment. Other states allow a window of "revocation period" anywhere from a few days to 45 in some cases. In Stearns's case, a mere legality of 7 days, even 72 hours, would have saved her from the heartbreak of the now legal battle.

Meanwhile, the baby is at a now unknown location and it is believed that Camden is no longer with the hopeful adoptive family chosen by Stearns originally and could be in a foster care situation. With the ethical allegations, this adoption is playing out to be anything but "another way to grow one's family". Though the attorney's it has been stated that Adoption by Gentle Care claimed they would place Camden with another family from their agency who was waiting to adopt instead of returning to his mother and waiting family. Knowing that the child's original family would like him back and nullifying

any real reason for relinquishment, any family who takes this child in will have to ask themselves if they wish to take on the long and expensive process of fighting to be the home for a child that doesn't really need a home.

The majority of child welfare advocates say separating a child from their biological family should be a last resort as adoption is supposed to be about a child who needs a home, not keeping a child away from an able and loving mother who was ill advised and made a mistake. Critics wonder if this action by the agency would really be serving the best interests of "everyone involved, especially those of the child" as their website claims. It would be much more in the true best interests of all involved, if AGC simply admitted a mistake and returned the baby.

### **Contact Info:**

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<https://adoptionbygentlecare.org/>

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