

Child Services Tells Mother Her Kids Can't Play Outside by Themselves

[Via Reason:](#)

Emily Fields' three kids—a boy, age four, and two girls, ages 6 and 8—were playing outside. The Fields live in the quiet town of Pearisburg in rural western Virginia. It was there, on a May afternoon in 2021, that Fields' 4-year-old kicked a soccer ball across the road toward the neighbor's cat, which he avoided hitting.

The neighbors yelled at him and took his ball. But it didn't end there.

"My sister had actually been outside, watching them," says Fields, who homeschools her kids. By the time Fields got home, 15 minutes later, her kids and sister were inside. They told her what had happened. Fields walked her son to the neighbors' house to apologize.

"They began to scream and yell," says Fields. "They said that everyone in the neighborhood thought I was a horrible mother, and that my children abused animals, and they were going to call [child protective services] every day until my children were taken away." The neighbors did indeed call child protective services (CPS). The agency dispatched two caseworkers to investigate the soccer ball incident the very next day.

It turns out this was not the first time CPS has visited the Fields' home.

They were there in 2018 when officials told Fields her children—then 2, 5, and 6—were reported playing outside. The

children were not unsupervised—Fields was watching them from a window—but this apparently didn't placate police officers. They informed her the children must be supervised at all times until they were 13 years old!

As a parent of three children under 13, I can attest to how ridiculous this idea is. My children sometimes play outside all day long by themselves. We've never had a single complaint or a police visit.

Like Ms. Fields, I grew up in an environment where outdoor play was encouraged and children were allowed to roam. My friends and I would play for hours in a marsh near our homes: exploring, building forts, having snowball fights and sling shot wars.

This was one of glorious things so many in Generation X experienced. It was a stark contrast to the environment of [safetyism](#) so many children are raised in today.

How to raise children is a subjective matter, of course. Some parents would find my own parenting techniques atrocious, while others would celebrate them.

But what is being done to Ms. Fields is another matter. She is being hounded by the state for simply allowing her children to play—and she faces the very real prospect of having her children taken from her if the busybodies in her community detect future “transgressions.” (The family was coerced into signing a “safety plan,” and Lenore Skenazy points out the family could have their children taken if they're found to have violated it.)

This is what happens when the state strays from the true purpose of [the law](#), which does not exist to make us better people, to redistribute wealth, or to engineer a better society.

Her persecution is a good reminder of [Ludwig von Mises'](#)

warning about the risks of embracing the idea that it falls within the state's purview to protect citizens from themselves.

"Once the principle is admitted that it is the duty of the government to protect the individual against his own foolishness," Mises wrote, "no serious objections can be advanced against further encroachments."

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