



Written by [Dave Bohon](#) on June 10, 2014

Justina Pelletier to Be Reunited With Family

It appears that a Connecticut teen who was  taken away from her parents in a case of heavy-handed state intervention will soon be returning home, as the state of Massachusetts has indicated its willingness to release her from its custody. As reported in February by [The New American](#), then-15-year-old Justina Pelletier, who had been taken from her parents over a year earlier, was placed in the permanent custody of the state of Massachusetts after a doctor at Boston Children's Hospital overruled the diagnosis of medical experts at nearby Boston Tufts Medical Center, insisting that the girl was suffering from a mental rather than physical disorder. Since that time, Matt Staver of the legal group Liberty Counsel has been working with Linda and Lou Pelletier to get their daughter released from the state's forced confinement.

A break in the case came on June 6, when the state's Department of Children and Families (DCF) made an about-face in its position, "asking a juvenile court judge to return the girl to her parents' custody," reported the [Boston Globe](#). "The development came after DCF removed its longstanding opposition to Justina's going home to her parents, saying that Lou and Linda Pelletier, who have been fighting for the girl's return, have met the conditions asked of them. Now all parties will be looking to see if the judge agrees."

According to the newspaper, the "family reunification plan" included a number of conditions Justina's parents would be required to meet, including following through on a care plan designed by Tufts Medical Center, and participating in family therapy with their daughter.

[Fox News](#) reported that as part of an appeal by the Pelletiers to family court Judge Joseph Johnston, who is hearing the case, Justina Pelletier taped an emotional 45-second video in which she asked Johnston to let her go back to her family where she has always belonged. "All I really want is to be with my family and friends," Justina pleaded to Johnston in a faltering voice. "You can do it. You're the one that's judging this. Please let me go home."

Fox recalled that at Tufts Medical Center, the now 16-year-old Justina was originally being treated for mitochondrial disease, a rare genetic disorder. But when her parents took her to Boston Children's Hospital for gastrointestinal issues, a doctor there changed her diagnosis to a psychiatric one — a move her parents refused to accept. The Pelletiers' rejection of the new doctor's diagnosis prompted staff at Boston Children's Hospital to report the parents for suspected child abuse.

Justina was then confined to the hospital's psychiatric ward for nearly a year while its staff and the DCF flexed its muscles against the family, ultimately moving the girl to another facility and appealing to



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Judge Johnston for full custody.

“In March, Johnston issued a four-page ruling blasting Pelletier’s parents for being verbally abusive and complicating efforts to bring the family together,” reported Fox News. “The Pelletiers, meanwhile, have claimed the Bay State bureaucracy has been aligned against the family from the beginning.” Lou Pelletier has insisted that Johnston ignored the testimony of his daughter’s doctors at Tufts, who have stood resolutely with their original diagnosis.

However, on June 6 Matt Staver of Liberty Counsel expressed his confidence that most issues in the case appeared to be resolved, and a motion by the state of Massachusetts agreeing to relinquish custody of Justina Pelletier will be followed by a positive decision by Judge Johnston. “We are thrilled that Justina will soon be returning home,” said Staver in a statement. “... The family looks forward to putting this 16-month nightmare behind them. It is hard to express the joy that the Pelletier family is experiencing as they look forward to being reunited as a family.”

Staver noted that after sixteen months in the hands of the Massachusetts DCF bureaucracy, Justina would require “much healing — physically, emotionally, and spiritually.” He added that the completion of the plan to reunite the Pelletier family “is a very positive development and brings us almost full circle to where this process started, before DCF took custody of Justina: Tufts Medical Center is finally providing Justina’s healthcare once more.”

Photo of Boston Children’s Hospital



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