



NO CHILD LEFT ALONE

“This book will give you the tools
and strategies you need to parent your
own darn kid”

— DEBORAH GILBOA, MD



Uncle Sam is the worst helicopter parent in America.

Children are taken from their parents because they are obese. Parents are arrested for letting their children play outside alone. Sledding and swaddling are banned. From games to school to breast-feeding to daycare, the overbearing bureaucratic state keeps getting between kids and their parents.

The state’s safety, hygiene, and health regulations rule, and the government’s judgment may not coincide with

yours. Which foods and drinks to send to school, what toys to buy, whether to breast or bottle-feed babies are all choices that used to be left to you and me. Not anymore.

As a mom to four kids, I should be used to it, but I’m not. All the government-mandated parenting gets under my skin. And I’m not alone.

No Child Left Alone explores the growing problem of an intrusive, interfering government and highlights those parents—all the Captain Mommies and Captain Daddies across America—fighting to take back control over their families.

Encounter
BOOKS

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ABOUT THE
AUTHOR

ABBY W. SCHACHTER



ABBY W. SCHACHTER is a regular contributor to *The Weekly Standard*, *Acculturated*, *Pittsburgh Tribune Review*, and *Reason*, among many publications. She lives in Pittsburgh with her artist husband, Professor Ben Schachter, and their four children.

“This is a must-read for every maverick mom and dad who rejects the Nanny State’s edict that government knows best. Abby W. Schachter compiles a searing indictment of intrusive bureaucrats meddling in every aspect of our children’s lives—from their food and drink to their toys and games, to their walks to neighborhood parks and schools. *No Child Left Alone* exposes just how out of control the persecution of good parents has grown. You don’t know the half of it! Thank you, Abby Schachter, for shedding a bright light on the regulatory extremists endangering our families’ lives, liberty, and happiness.”

— MICHELLE MALKIN, author, blogger, and mom

“If you’re fed up with being told—legislated—how to parent, if you feel that your child can handle more freedom than your government believes she can, this is the book that will vindicate you. Better yet, this book will give you the tools and strategies you need to parent your own darn kid, and fire Big Brother Babysitter once and for all.”

— DEBORAH GILBOA, MD,
author of *Get the Behavior You Want...
Without Being the Parent You Hate!*

“This exposé of good intentions run amok should provoke outrage in families across America. Children and their families are the victims, not beneficiaries, of the hectoring safety police. Common sense is truly dead when children aren’t allowed to engage in age-appropriate activities, and parents are arrested for acting like reasonable parents.

— PHILIP K. HOWARD,
chairman of Common Good and bestselling
author of *The Death of Common Sense* and
The Rule of Nobody



NO CHILD LEFT ALONE REVEALS:

The federal government has placed every public school kid on a restricted calorie diet.

40 percent of the 46 million Americans receiving benefits from the USDA's Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) are more likely to be obese than the poor who don't take SNAP benefits but who qualify.

In Richmond, VA, an elementary school requires parents to have a doctor's note if they want to send in a home-packed lunch.

Day camps in New York State were forced to stop games like red rover, wiffle ball, kickball, and tag because the state's Health Department argued these games may pose a "significant risk of injury."

States collect health data from students at public schools, often without parents' consent.

In the Consumer Product Safety Commission Handbook for Public Playground Safety, grass and dirt are not considered protective surfacing. Rubber flooring and wood chips are.

Broward County, Florida has banned running in playgrounds.

Overregulation of childcare facilities makes it unaffordable for the middle-income and low-income parents that need it the most.

In Pennsylvania the cost of full-time child care for one kid averages more than \$10,000 per child. In Massachusetts it's \$16,000 a year.

Government is pushing breastfeeding on mothers based on faulty science and unproven facts that nursing will result in healthier outcomes for children.

New York City hospitals have put baby formula under lock and key.

Breastfeeding hasn't been conclusively proven to prevent obesity, asthma, allergies, or eczema, and it hasn't been proven to be a significant contributor to higher IQ.



STORIES FROM: **NO CHILD LEFT ALONE**

In New Mexico, a three-year-old was taken from her parents and placed in foster care for two and half months because of obesity. She did not improve at all in foster care and later was diagnosed with a genetic pre-disposition.

A mom in Connecticut was charged with “risk of injury to a minor” when she allowed her seven-year-old and eleven-year-old to buy pizza unsupervised.

In Houston, TX, Tammy Cooper was arrested and charged with child endangerment and child abandonment after her neighbor told the police her children had been abandoned. In reality, they were playing in her front yard—and she was on the front walk watching them.

A mother in New Canaan, CT was arrested and charged with “risk of injury to a minor” when she allowed her older children to babysit the younger ones.

Children’s book author Kari Anne Roy was visited by police in Austin, TX after her neighbor found her six-year-old son Isaac unsupervised—within sight of her house.

In Detroit, a 7-year-old was put in a Child Protective Services foster home for three days after his dad accidentally gave him a Mike’s Hard Lemonade at a baseball game. His father didn’t know it was an alcoholic beverage (he’s an archaeology professor at the University of Michigan).



QUESTIONS &
ANSWERS

ABBY W. SCHACHTER

In terms of parenting—the nanny state
has really gone off the rails.

In what way is the government overly involved in parenting? Why is Uncle Sam the worst helicopter parent in America?

Examples include: Police arresting parents for letting their kids play unsupervised or taking custody of kids who were allowed to walk alone to the playground; child welfare taking custody of obese children; federal, state and local government pressuring mothers to breastfeed; the federal school lunch program putting all kids on a limited calorie diet; banning swaddling in state-licensed daycare; banning running at the playground or sledding on public hills. These are all decisions and choices that should be left up to individual parents or local school districts, not an unaccountable and distant bureaucracy.

Why should the government have an official policy about breastfeeding at all?

What got you into this topic?

When the daycare told me they couldn't swaddle my son because state regulations didn't allow it, I decided to look into how prevalent it was that a decision that should be in the hands of parents and families had been taken over by bureaucrats and politicians. I found out I didn't know the half of it.

The Meitivs—the Maryland couple who let their two children walk home alone from the playground—were charged with neglect. You want your kid swaddled.

What's the connection?

In both cases, the state is setting a standard for what is safe or healthy that is different than the standard parents would set. Also, in both instances, there is no public health or public safety issue government is solving with these rules and yet no one stops the legislators and bureaucrats from imposing them.

What's so wrong about Obamacare encouraging employers to help women breastfeed or WIC recipients incentivized to breastfeed?

Why should the government have an official policy about breastfeeding at all?

Why shouldn't there be standards for daycare facilities?

There should be standards, of course, but the question is whether the benefits of any regulation is worth the cost of imposing them. The supposed benefits of daycare regulations mean that, in too many states, daycare costs more than community college. The people who need daycare the most can't afford it.



What is the war on fun?

When cities ban sledding on public hills and public parks, or running at public playgrounds, or when public schools ban cartwheels and limit recess, and when the Consumer Product Safety Commission puts toy makers out of business for the risk of harm—rather than any actual harm to children—then I’d say there is a war on fun.

The people who need daycare the most can’t afford it.

You want less government involved in parenting decisions—but what about vaccines?

Ironically, vaccines are the one area where I feel the government has been too hands off! The number of children vaccinated in the general population actually *is* a public health issue because when too few are vaccinated, the power of “herd immunity” is nullified and people get sick.

What’s the worst thing that the government takes away from parents?

Their children. In 2000, in New Mexico, three-year-old Anamarie Regino was taken from her parents and placed in foster care for two and half months; she weighed 124 pounds and was nearly 4 feet tall. As it turned out, Anamarie didn’t improve at all in foster care, and she was returned to her parents. She was later diagnosed with a genetic pre-disposition. In Detroit, a 7-year-old was put in a CPS foster home for three days after his dad accidentally gave him a Mike’s Hard Lemonade at a baseball game.

If you could make one change to favor parents, what would it be?

There are several efforts underway to pass parental rights legislation at the state level so I’d favor more of that sort of legislative reform. I support reformers like Common Good Chairman Philip Howard to return common sense and individual responsibility to government. I’d also favor efforts at regulatory review—as promoted by Cass Sunstein and Edward Glaeser—to go back and look at the regulations in many of these areas and force legislators and regulators to assess the cost and benefit of many of these rules and change them when the balance is off.

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Who is this book for?

The book is for any parent — I call them Captain Mommies and Captain Daddies — who has felt that their personal judgment has been overridden by government authority and doesn’t know there are lots of others out there who feel the same. The book is also targeted at those who understand that there are costs to over-regulation—in jobs, growth and liberty—but they don’t know that in this area of life—in terms of parenting—the nanny state has really gone off the rails.



AN EXCERPT
FROM:

NO CHILD LEFT ALONE

Restricting imaginative play is just the latest in a series of attacks on fun in schoolyards.

In Loveland, Colorado, seven-year-old Alex Evans was suspended from school for pretending to save the world. He had devised an imaginary game in which he was the protector of the world, but when he launched an *imaginary* grenade into an *imaginary* box to kill the imaginary evil forces inside, school administrators told his mother he'd have to stay home from school for real. The no-fun-kins at Mary Blair Elementary have a list of absolutes that include zero-tolerance for play fighting or play weapons.

Kermit Elementary school officials in Texas suspended nine-year-old Aiden Steward for “threatening” a classmate with his ring from J.R.R. Tolkien’s Middle Earth. Steward told his friend he could make him disappear, but school officials fulfilled the promise by making Aiden stay home.

Restricting imaginative play is just the latest in a series of attacks on fun in schoolyards. Fear of only negative consequences has meant curbs or bans of nearly every variety of play at schools across the country. As a recent list at the *CafeMom* blog pointed out, what was normal in schools in the 1980s—tetherball, dodgeball, playing Cowboys and Indians—would never be tolerated now. “It’s fun stuff,” said Azia Orum, a Rio Linda, California, sixth-grader. “We just can’t do it. People get hurt.” Orum is referring to her school’s policy banning running games like tag and the dreaded dodgeball, which was first to be banned and has been banned consistently across the country.

You can’t really blame school administrators for viewing dodgeball as Enemy Number One in the war on fun. They’ve had trouble with it not only for reasons of safety but also due to litigation. In 2005 a schoolyard game of dodgeball led to a legal ordeal for a 12-year-old and her family. Complaints by parents of an injured student at a California school prompted

authorities to charge Brittney Schneiders with battery. Five other students plea-bargained down to probation, but Brittney refused. “I don’t think I did [commit a crime],” she explained. “I thought I was just playing a dodgeball game. I never thought it would come up to this level.”

“Play is essential and physical activity is important at a time when obesity is so common.”

If you don’t agree that dodgeball is a crime, many might agree that it is a violent, exclusionary, and anxiety-provoking game that should be eliminated because generations of kids have hated playing it. Or, then again, maybe not, since there is a case to be made for its positive attributes. “Dodgeball teaches students eye-hand coordination and gross motor skills. Getting singled out and eliminated from competition is part of life,” said Tom Reed, professor of early childhood education at the University of South Carolina Upstate in Spartanburg. “Life is not always fair,” said Reed, also a member of the Association for the Study of Play. “You don’t get what you want. Things like this are learned on the playground.” But learning life lessons is nearly the last thing school administrators want to deal with at recess.

Charlotte Avenue Elementary School in Nashua, New Hampshire, has banned tag because, as the principal told a reporter, kids said they’d been “pushed aggressively” while playing tag. Parents were of course not consulted and many did not support the decision.



Recess is “a time when accidents can happen,” says Willett Elementary School principal Gaylene Heppe, so she and other school administrators in the Boston area approve of the ban on tag, touch football, and other chase games during recess. And again, the policy was enacted without consulting parents. “I think that it’s unfortunate that kids’ lives are micromanaged and there are social skills they’ll never develop on their own,” said Debbie Laferriere, a parent at the school. “Playing tag is just part of being a kid.”

Schools in Cheyenne and Spokane, Washington, and Charleston, South Carolina, have also dropped contact sports at recess. These policies are enacted without consulting parents and are critiqued by some childhood-development experts, who argue that play is essential and physical activity is important at a time when obesity is so common.

In Grand Rapids, Michigan, at Zeeland Elementary School, tag and any chasing games have been banned. And at New Groening Kindergarten, the school sent parents a letter about their policy, describing the problem as children “running in packs, pushing, knocking other children over, and making the game dangerous.” That means in effect that running around is frowned upon or outright not allowed.

“Learning life lessons is nearly the last thing school administrators want to deal with at recess.”

In New York a ban on certain play at school was even more extreme. As CBS News reported in October 2013, “The ban at Weber Middle School in Port Washington, N.Y. will apply to footballs, baseballs, soccer balls, lacrosse balls or any other equipment that might harm a child or school friends. Students will be allowed to play with softer Nerf balls.” The fact that you cannot play football or lacrosse with a Nerf ball doesn’t seem to matter to the administration.

During lunch recess at Natomas Elementary School in Sacramento, California, yard supervisor Janice Hudson spotted a first-grader pushing a girl on the swing. “Do not push,” Hudson told the student. “Let her push herself, please.” If her reasoning had been about encouraging independent play and building skills, Hudson should have been commended for taking good advantage of the teachable moment. But it was not to be. As she explained her reasoning, “one person can be a little stronger than the other.”

“Recess in school has been sacrificed on the altar of safety.”

Mike Lanza became an advocate for recess, free play, and children’s independence and transformed from a Silicon Valley entrepreneur to a Captain Daddy as the author of a play manifesto called *Playborhood: Turn Your Neighborhood into a Place for Play*. A father in Menlo Park, California, Lanza says recess in school has been sacrificed on the altar of safety. “A lot of schools limit recess because of safety and don’t want kids to be competitive,” he told me. There is even a school nearby with a “no touch policy and one kid nearly got suspended because [he] high-fived another kid.”

Lanza also points out that, instead of allowing free and unsupervised play, there is a growing move to “facilitate” recess through government-supported programs like PlayWorks in California. The group has a contract with AmeriCorps, through which they send facilitators to improve recess. Lanza doesn’t think much of the idea. “They try to get kids to do things together but through a smiling militaristic play,” Lanza explained to me. Of course to hear PlayWorks tell it, their mission is a bit more utopian. “On our playgrounds, everyone plays, everyone belongs, everyone contributes to the game. Coaches encourage kids to bring out the best in themselves and each other, and kids learn the value of fair play, compassion and respect.” There’s nothing wrong with these goals except that now schools are aiming for behavior modification rather than allowing free play.