

The following essay will NOT be an enjoyable experience for me to write. It pertains to the dental-medical care policies of The PA DOC and my own personal dental situation. After years of moderately fluctuating drug and alcohol use, being subjected to numerous incidents of trauma, and otherwise just lacking the desire to take care of myself, I regret to indicate that I only have 4 teeth left in my mouth as the result of living a detrimentally reckless lifestyle. I am not blaming anyone else for my personal disposition, but I really need some help with resolving this situation effectively.

Most of my teeth were extracted in 2010 after many of them were broken in a car accident. I was on parole at the time and guilty of DUI which led to a previous period of incarceration. That particular period of incarceration lasted for nearly 28 consecutive months which is a key point in this essay to remember because I'll be reflecting back to this point later on. Anyway, it was 2 days before Christmas in 2010 when I was instructed to report to a DOC dentist appointment in order to have all of my remaining, broken, upper teeth in my mouth removed and most of the lower teeth as well. Needless to say, I did NOT have a very Merry Christmas or a Happy New Year. In fact, I was in A LOT of pain but it was a pain that I was able to anticipate so I was able to endure it even though the only relief they could provide me with was an abundance of generic Motrin. For several days after the procedure, I could actually breathe through holes in the roof of my mouth that connected my mouth chamber to my sinus cavities as a result of being punctured. They also allegedly used "dissolvable stitches" that were supposed to disintegrate after about 2 weeks but, after that didn't happen, I took matters into my own hands and removed them myself with a mirror and a nail clipper.

In the end, I healed up OK. I had hoped to get dentures made at some point after the healing process was complete but, after nearly an additional 2 years and 2 more relocations to other SCI's in that time span, it never happened. I was eventually paroled in December of 2012 to a CCF for 45 days before finally returning home under supervision until June of 2014 when I successfully completed the remainder of my sentence. When I left the CCF in late January, 2013, I was

provided with state funded insurance coverage but it was revoked after a rather short period of time because I started working and almost instantaneously "earned too much money" to qualify for the continued aforementioned coverage even though I was completely destitute, hopelessly in debt, and living off of the generosity of my friends and family members. Many health/dental care service providers didn't even accept the insurance anyway so most of these efforts were just a huge waste of time and energy in the end. I did eventually get a job that paid rather well with excellent benefits but I was EXTREMELY LUCKY to have landed this position with that company. Even then, I STILL never made it out of debt or made it to a point where I could afford getting the dental work done myself. Over the next few years, the quality of my life gradually deteriorated and I eventually lost my way again due to a sequence of ineffably unbelievable and indescribable events that absolutely crushed my ambitions, hopes, dreams, spirit, and even my will to survive. I inevitably relapsed like NEVER before as I conceded to despair after having done so well for so long against all odds. In 2018, I ended up catching 2 more DUI charges which turned out to be 2ND and 3RD offenses within a 10 year time frame. Initially, not even this could bring me back to a mental state of acceptance in order to realize exactly how poorly my decision making skills were becoming as I somehow managed to become "willfully oblivious" to such things as I was constantly lost in a downward spiral of ignorance and hopelessness for quite some time. I am legally forbidden to fully disclose the exact reasons or nature of the origin of this hopelessness without resorting to some degree of prohibited disparagement against one specific individual whom I've since established a moderate level of peace with and, in the interest of preserving that peace, I will not publically digress on the situation that led to the aftermath of those actions and/or reactions. Instead, I will clarify that I am truly GRATEFUL that I came to terms with the catastrophe that I was living in and somehow found the will to turn away from the madness I was becoming familiar with. I don't understand how this happened, but I do know for a fact that if it didn't, I probably wouldn't be alive today. Anyway, I eventually accepted the fact that I was headed back to The

DOC after I considered paying for my crimes at the county level of the American penal system. (The details of THAT particular decision will be better explained in another separate essay someday.)

I arrived at the reception block of my current location in the fall of 2019 as a new CDCC committed inmate. Part of the CDCC process includes being seen by a dentist for an initial examination for an assessment to be made regarding any work that might need to be performed. The dentist that I saw there noticed that I only had 6 teeth left and recommended that they all be extracted due to them being damaged and then for full denture plates to be made. Afterwards and by the end of September, 2 of the 6 teeth I had left were probably infected and starting to painfully bother me, so I submitted a dental sick call slip in order to address the issue. When I was called for that line movement, I informed the dentists I saw in that dental office of the reception block dentist's recommendation and requested for all 6 remaining teeth to be extracted in order to start the final healing process and then have the full upper and lower denture plates made. I also told them that the majority of the extractions had been done almost 9 years ago (relevant to that time) by The DOC at another SCI, but that I'd never been able to get the plates made since then. The dentists said that they "COULDN'T" pull all 6 remaining teeth, then pulled the 2 that I initially indicated as problematic, and said that when I got to my "home jail" the rest of my dental needs would be "taken care of there". This would go on to become what I've interpreted as a proverbial "run around - spin move" that has not resulted in a favorable outcome made in the interest of helping me to achieve growth of any kind.

Within 2 weeks from this point in the timeline, I was moved out of the CDCC housing block and into a general population block which basically means that SCI Camp Hill became my "home jail". Shortly after this happened, I was called back to the dentist's office for a supplemental assessment since their recommendations led me back to their office after a "home jail" was assigned. Essentially, this was a supplemental assessment that occurred as a direct result of the reception block dentist's recommendation. I told the "home jail" dentist about the extraction of the 2

teeth when I was still a CDCC inmate and the reception block dentist's initial assessment/recommendation. I also indicated that all of this had happened when I was a CDCC inmate and, shortly thereafter, I was classified to SCI Camp Hill which made this my final "home jail" (and therefore I was implying that I was now officially "his problem" in a very subtle yet respectful manner). I expressed my concerns and made him aware that the majority of my previous dental work was done by The DOC at SCILH almost a decade ago and emphasized my need and desire for denture plates to be made. He replied with what I can only presume to be a standard response that could be more relevant to decisions contrived in the interest of "financial deferment" instead of liability to provide adequate care and treatment that I very clearly need and want.

I can't even begin to tell you how psychologically damaging and degrading it has been to be a man in his late 20's (all the way through to his late 30's now) and literally not have a smile and/or to feel like an outcast when laughing, smiling, or eating in the presence of others. I guess that many people probably never consider how awkward job interviews can be when I have to try to conduct myself professionally without the ability to look prospective employers in the eye and match their energetic smiles with my own. (I also haven't mentioned that my own child has NEVER seen me with a pearly white smile nor is there a single photograph of us together with this being a potential feature.)

In summary, I guess I just don't understand how The DOC can justify contradicting its assessments and then basically refuse to treat inmates accordingly since "we/they" - or in this case I - "PROBABLY" won't be here long enough to get dentures" (which was the official explanation I was given as to why I STILL won't be receiving any assistance in the denture plate subject matter area). I also wonder how/why the dental department seems to have prior knowledge pertaining to my projected parole related eligibility/outcomes that somehow affect whether or not my dental situation is "worth" being their "timely" concern or not..... If The DOC and The PBPP truly supported their mission statements and

honestly wanted to see me succeed, how and why would they potentially object to or perceive my receiving of dentures as an "insufficient investment"? It's not like I am going to be able to afford them whenever I am inevitably /eventually released regardless of if I am granted parole OR max out my sentence. I also wonder what the "long enough" period of time to get them is then and how this duration of elapsed time was conclusively established, determined, and implemented as a standard operating procedure..... Reflecting back to when I had the majority of them extracted in 2010, I was STILL in The DOC for 23½ months AFTER the procedure occurred on 12-23-2010 and apparently not even THAT amount of time was considered to be "long enough"..... All I know for certain is that I have to experience a huge amount of ambivalence between joy and humiliation every single time I feel the urge to smile or eat in the company of other people. It's detrimental to my self esteem, confidence, and social interactions which are all undeniably missing critical elements in the formula for personal success and isn't that the point of me being sent here in the first place (or at least a significant portion thereof)? I really don't know of any recourse or action I can take in relation to this subject, but it seems that this tertiary objective and secondary reason for CHOOSING to serve my sentence in The DOC instead of relying on an even LESS competent county level system will also result in failure which is, to say the least, rather discouraging. I am, however, saving money on tooth paste but that's as far as my optimism can stretch in relation to this particular topic. I just hope that I don't develop a potentially fatal blood infection in the meantime either.

Respectfully submitted by "Merlin DuFrein" on January 7, 2020