

THE MIND INSIDE EPISODE 3 | FILM TRANSCRIPT

TITLE CARD	TRIGGER WARNING - The following film contains discussions about teen suicide, addiction, and rape.
TITLE CARD	The students portrayed in this film, along with their families, have graciously granted us permission to share their stories; names have been changed to protect their identities.
TITLE CARD	The majority of this story was filmed prior to the COVID-19 pandemic
KELSEY	Where do you want me to start?
BRANDY BUSCHER	Well, let's start with what's going on right now.
TITLE CARD	KELSEY
KELSEY	Right now, we are actually staying in my dad's old trailer. We're allowed to stay there, but we can only have like a minimum of stuff. Technically, my dad kind of wants us out as soon as possible, that way it can get rented out.
BRANDY BUSCHER	Okay.
OFFICER JOHNSON	Why are you not living with your parents?
KELSEY	Because my dad decided to move into his girlfriend's house, which is a two bedroom, and she has a 10 year old autistic son.
OFFICER JOHNSON	So your dad told you there's not room for you in the house?
KELSEY	Yeah.
OFFICER JOHNSON	Okay.
BRANDY BUSCHER	And where's your, where's your mom at?
KELSEY	My mom is in rehab for meth.
BRANDY BUSCHER	Okay, where's that at?
KELSEY	Last I knew that's if she's still in it, it's in Norfolk.
OFFICER JOHNSON	When's the last time you had contact with your mom?
KELSEY	Last time I had contact with her was in June. She straight out told me she didn't care what happened to me anymore, and that she was playing the system, so.
OFFICER JOHNSON	Okay.
KELSEY	I have no contact with her no more, after that.
BRANDY BUSCHER	(sighs) Okay.
BRANDY BUSCHER	How's your education going? I'm thinking pretty good?

KELSEY	I'm on schedule, I'm actually probably going to finish my class, my one class tomorrow, and then I got another five, and another 2.5 credit class left, and that's it.
BRANDY BUSCHER	Okak, cool.
OFFICER JOHNSON	Okay, you're close then wow. That's awesome.
BRANDY BUSCHER	Good for you. So we don't need to do anything with education. Leave it the way it is, okay.
KELSEY	Maybe funding for college, which I'm supposed to start in January.
BRANDY BUSCHER	Okay
KELSEY	But I'm not worried about that yet.
BRANDY BUSCHER	We can cross that bridge when we get to it.
KELSEY	Yeah.
BRANDY BUSCHER	Physical health? If you aren't with dad, how are you going to go to the doctor? What if you get sick?
KELSEY	Good question.
BRANDY BUSCHER	Yeah, so let's mark that one, okay? How about mental health? Do you, It's kind of like physical health, if you don't have an insurance card and you need to go see somebody, right?
KELSEY	Yeah, I really won't go to counseling after what my step mom did to me, so.
BRANDY BUSCHER	What's that?
KELSEY	She used counseling as a punishment, non stop. And when I would come home from counseling, things would just get worse, so.
BRANDY BUSCHER	But you talked to Stephanie, right? Have you talked to Stephanie?
KELSEY	Yes, I have talked to Stephanie.
BRANDY BUSCHER	You know she's a counselor,
KELSEY	I know
BRANDY BUSCHER	and she's really nice
OFFICER JOHNSON	I would challenge you to change your mindset with that, because obviously your mom is not involved with you no more, but that's for you. And I do feel like if you find the right counselor, it makes a world of a difference, and but don't do it for anybody else but yourself. Okay?
BRANDY BUSCHER	Okay, and we'll work on it. Is there anything else that you need? Like right now? We have a food pantry at the high school.
KELSEY	Then probably food, because I have like \$40, and that's all I have left, and that's to go get food for now.
BRANDY BUSCHER	She needs some food, or whatever, whatever she needs. I know you'll help her out. Ok, awesome, thank you, okay, bye,

BRANDY BUSCHER	Take whatever you need. There's toiletry items, there's clothing, there's coats. There's hats, there's gloves. So whatever you need you just take whatever you need. We'll get, you can get a bag. You can just fill it with food.
OFFICER JOHNSON	So if you want to know what it's like with your mom being a drug addict, to say that she doesn't love you, doesn't want anything to do with you no more. And then your dad saying, "I got a new girlfriend, and we don't have room for you." And we expect these kids to be in school every day.
TITLE CARD	THE MIND INSIDE EPISODE 3
SALLY NELLSON	Brandy Buscher and officer Jeremiah Johnson provide the first line of support for all students and families within the North Platte Public School District.
OFFICER JOHNSON	I just need to make sure that the place is safe for your son, so.
MAN	Yeah, that's fine, I'm just cleaning the house up, Yeah, just doing dishes and stuff.
SALLY NELLSON	We were invited to follow them for nearly 20 days over the course of the year.
SALLY NELLSON	Most days Brandy and Officer Johnson, would ping pong between situations with students, their families, administrators, teachers, child welfare, the courts, and mental health providers. Together they're dedicated to removing the barriers that keep students from being engaged in school, and hopeful about the future.
SALLY NELLSON	How many students are in your district?
BRANDY BUSCHER	4,000 students.
SALLY NELLSON	And how many people do your job?
BRANDY BUSCHER	One, plus Officer Johnson. I think Officer Johnson, goes beyond the realms of a police officer, so I'm grateful, it's been a blessing to have someone that's more than willing to jump into a situation, knowing he can't write a citation, or there's not a crime, or he could easily say this isn't my job. You know, he could do that a lot but he doesn't, he jumps in.
OFFICER JOHNSON	You just need to focus more on your priorities.
STUDENT	Yeah
OFFICER JOHNSON	Okay. Anything I can do to help?
BRANDY BUSCHER	If I am overwhelmed with something, you know, he'll pick up the slack and then vice versa, and that's been, that's been nice, because I don't know if I could have continued without having that support.
DAUGHTER	I had a bad dream.
OFFICER JOHNSON	Oh you did? I'm sorry.
DAUGHTER	It's was like scary, I'm sweating.
OFFICER JOHNSON	Were you?
DAUGHTER	Yeah.

OFFICER JOHNSON	All right, it's time to get up. What do you want me to make you this morning?
DAUGHTER	Can I have toast with cheese on it, please?
OFFICER JOHNSON	Toast with cheese, okay.
OFFICER JOHNSON	When I applied to be the school resource officer. I don't think I truly understood, one, the importance of this position within a school, and two, how many lives I actually can touch, or how many students I can actually help.
MOM	Bye guys, I love you.
CHILD	Bye mama.
OFFICER JOHNSON	Love you, sweetie
STUDENT	Come here.
STUDENT	No, I'm not.
OFFICER JOHNSON	'Sup bud? Have a good one buddy.
BRANDY BUSCHER	I feel like North Platte has, it's had it's cycles you know, and we've seen some uptick, where we get new business and everyone's excited, but within the last 5 years, it feels like just a progressive decline. A lot of that was railroad layoffs. Our Shopko closed, our JCPenney's closed, our Alco has closed, several restaurants have closed, our mall is $\frac{3}{4}$ empty so we've lost those jobs you know, , which again, a lot of those people have struggled to recover, they're not finding the jobs that they used to have, or the opportunities. So it's hit our community really hard, and as far as poverty goes. Over half of our families live below or at the poverty line, which for a community our size is pretty, it's a big deal for our schools and for our students. And slowly with the loss of jobs, the loss of income, we have seen methamphetamine and drug use.
BRANDY BUSCHER	But if I were to go back 13, 14 years, methamphetamine was not a word that schools used, or even something I really thought much about. And now it comes up all the time.
REBECCA HARLING	We are seeing a ton of drug problems, I would say at least 80% of our cases have a drug component to them. What we're filing on our children who have been exposed to methamphetamine, children who are not being fed, clothed, cared for, because of methamphetamine use, are being put in terrible danger because not only do mom and dad use methamphetamine, but mom and dad's friends who come and go at all ours of the day and night; are also using methamphetamine.
BRANDY BUSCHER	The impact for a child, is devastating. They don't learn, you know, our kids, we've had cases over the years of small children that have tested positive, which means their exposure was so great, that they were physically impacted by methamphetamine use by a parent. So those are the kids who are kind of in sensory overload all day, lights are really bright, sounds are really loud, they might, you know, run around screaming, and then fall on the ground and then take a nap for two hours.
REBECCA HARLING	I do think that issues in the home, translate to issues in the school. So if they are up late at night, playing video games all night, if mom and dad are partying all night, whatever it is, that affects them at school.

BRANDY BUSCHER	Couple of months ago we had a parent admit to using meth, in one of our school meetings, and everybody was kind of caught off guard; not sure how to respond, and it took probably 3 months before anything really ever happened with that student, and.
SALLY NELLSON	What does that mean? You said it took 3 months for something to even happen, and then call who to do what?
BRANDY BUSCHER	So call it in into the child abuse hotline, because, you know, you have a parent in a school meeting admitting to abusing drugs, and admitting to not being able to care for their child essentially. So we call those reports in to the child abuse hotline, and sometimes we get a response, and sometimes we don't. And sometimes the response we get is, you know, we met with the parents and everything seems fine, and basically we're just going to move on.
MICAH FISHER	That or they get too much on their plate, and they just, it's not a top priority for them.
SALLY NELLSON	So maybe they're under-resourced too?
BRANDY BUSCHER	Maybe.
SALLY NELLSON	Where would this child go?
BRANDY BUSCHER	I mean, lots of times they'll go with a family member, a grandma or grandpa or an aunt or an uncle, they always try that first. But then there are times kids go into foster care. But again, that's not, when we make a call it's not so much for that, that's the extreme, that's 10 steps down the road.
SALLY NELLSON	Right
BRANDY BUSCHER	But for a lot of us is, can someone just please go in, and make sure this mom's okay, and make sure that there's some assistance offered to her, and some resources because it's now impacting this child's education, which is kind of a big deal.
TITLE CARD	CAMILA
SALLY NELLSON	Can you guys tell me what happened when you first came in this morning?
OFFICER JOHNSON	As soon as I came in my office, there was 3 girls here. One girl's in a crisis, so, you know, she came to school today, and she's not obviously not prepared to learn. She has so many other things going on in her life, she can't focus in a setting like this right now.
OFFICER JOHNSON	To be honest, and you can contest this, this has been a concern of ours, ever since you've gotten here, is just getting you this setup so you don't have to worry about this stuff.
CAMILA	I don't know if can handle it anymore, because she keeps telling me that whole rape situation. She's telling me that, I'm sure it happened, but she's saying that I couldn't help myself, and I always, I wanted that.
OFFICER JOHNSON	Okay
CAMILA	So then it makes me depressed, and I have been cutting about it 'cause I keep getting flashbacks, and I need help for it.
ANDREA HONGSERMEIER	Bridge of Hope, is a Child Advocacy Center. So we are one of 7 in Nebraska, a Child Advocacy Center is just a place where all the different disciplines come together for a child

	abuse investigation. The school is considered part of our multidisciplinary team, meaning law enforcement, HHS, the department of health and human services, medical team, whoever is required to help investigate their case that way.
ANDREA HONGSERMEIER	Statistically, we know that it's somewhere between 1 and 3, and 1 and 4 girls will be sexually abused before their 18th birthday, and one in 9 boys, although boys are significantly under reported. So we know for sure that within that class there should be some children that are unfortunately being sexually abused. And on top of that we're dealing with physical abuse, drug use in this community, and neglect and witness to domestic violence, other things that could be traumatizing a child, all sometimes co-occurring within a household, and definitely occurring with multiple children in a classroom, I would assume.
OFFICER JOHNSON	So this is Brandy Buscher, she's the student services coordinator, just for the school so she provides, and some of the stuff that you'd brought up, like food and stuff like that, She, that's a lot of what she deals with, and then when we talk about behavior health too, when you were talking about your, some of your mental stuff, she also assists with that type of stuff. So-
CAMILA	So I'm supposed to be on medication because I have PTSD, I have depression, I'm bipolar, and I have all that.
OFFICER JOHNSON	And things at sister's is not going good right now. She showed me pictures of drug and drug paraphernalia that's in the house. Her little niece has been removed from the house before, for drugs. They just recently got her back.
CAMILA	I believe so maybe 2, 3 months at the most.
OFFICER JOHNSON	Okay, and no one has still has not got her her insulin.
CAMILA	Yeah, and I'm Type 1.
FRIEND	And she told me that and I was like, uh
BRANDY BUSCHER	we need Dennis to get here.
OFFICER JOHNSON	Yes.
BRANDY BUSCHER	Hey
COWORKER	Hi
BRANDY BUSCHER	Hi, so we're up here at the high school.
CAMILA	Do I have to go home?
OFFICER JOHNSON	I don't that's going to be up with HHS, but we, we are going to see what we can get resolved today.
OFFICER JOHNSON	Well no, well another concern too, is she's been cutting, she has a lot of cuts on her right forearm.
BRANDY BUSCHER	And she's reporting drug use in the home, she's reporting no food.
OFFICER JOHNSON	She, she needs help. She needs some long term help.
BRANDY BUSCHER	Yeah, oh and Dennis is beeping in right now. So-

OFFICER JOHNSON	She is at the North Platte high school.
BRANDY BUSCHER	He's on his way.
OFFICER JOHNSON	She came in here, she's not looking too good. She's pretty upset.
DENNIS O'BRIEN	Okay.
OFFICER JOHNSON	She has cuts on her arms. She said she's been recently just cutting herself because she doesn't feel like, she feels like her world's collapsing, and nobody is doing anything for her. And now she's saying too, she did show me pictures of drugs and drug paraphernalia laying around the house.
DENNIS O'BRIEN	Like what?
OFFICER JOHNSON	THC wax, marijuana grinder. She says they use that butane torch, but she doesn't know for what, and there's only a couple of drugs where they use butane torches.
DENNIS O'BRIEN	Yup. Oh well, we'll deal with it.
OFFICER JOHNSON	You know Dennis, right?
CAMILA	Yeah
DENNIS O'BRIEN	How you doing?
CAMILA	Good
OFFICER JOHNSON	So is your mom, I thought your mom went back to Florida, is she here still?
CAMILA	I haven't been able to contact her.
OFFICER JOHNSON	So you don't know where your mom is?
CAMILA	Yeah.
OFFICER JOHNSON	Okay.
CAMILA	And I have Instagram too, and she sent a whole bunch of pictures off of my Instagram to my sister, saying that she's going to get me into trouble for this stuff that's on my Instagram, when there's nothing.
OFFICER JOHNSON	Like what are they talking about?
CAMILA	She's saying that, because I have a girlfriend ok, and just me and her always hugging and taking pictures like that, like that's normal.
OFFICER JOHNSON	Mm-hmm (affirmative)
CAMILA	She said I can get in trouble for that. When I don't see, how and why.
OFFICER JOHNSON	Mm-hmm (affirmative) no, you can't get in trouble for that.
CAMILA	I didn't think so, that's why she was making that a big deal, she said that if she would press charges, and everything like that I don't know why.

DENNIS O'BRIEN	Your mom?
CAMILA	Yeah.
DENNIS O'BRIEN	Don't worry about it.
OFFICER JOHNSON	Yeah. that's not
CAMILA	I didn't think so.
OFFICER JOHNSON	It's not illegal to be gay, you can't get in trouble for that.
CAMILA	I didn't think so.
OFFICER JOHNSON	You shouldn't be ashamed by it either. Do you know what you are going to do Mr. O'Brien? Just kind of let her know so that she-
DENNIS O'BRIEN	begin with running her through the emergency room having her assessed.
OFFICER JOHNSON	Do you have thoughts of harming yourself? Or, sometimes, if you have thoughts, be honest with them.
CAMILA	I do have thoughts sometimes
OFFICER JOHNSON	Okay.
CAMILA	It's just when I'm at my sisters, I do that.
OFFICER JOHNSON	Ok. And be honest with them, because they can help you. And there's nothing to be ashamed of, like that, those are normal feelings and sometimes we just need help dealing with those. We don't hear from you, we can't help you right? So I know it takes a lot of courage, but you know that my office door is always open for any of you guys, okay?
CAMILA	Yeah
OFFICER JOHNSON	For a girl that's scared, and stuff like that, for her to even come into my office, she's been hanging around school after school, just standing there, and she's kind of followed me a little bit. And I think she just, she wanted to talk, and she just didn't know how to do it.
BRANDY BUSCHER	So I think we as a school sometimes feel we're the voice that no one listens to. You know, we have the kids for 7 hours a day, all day, but yet sometimes when we call we get "Oh those teachers are just softies, or they are overreacting." or we get told a lot, we're imposing our own values on other parents, and these type of things are said. And I think for us it's like no, we're seeing a kid who's not having basic needs met. And we can't teach them, so we need help. Like we need HHS and these agencies to help us, get to a place where we can.
BRANDY BUSCHER	And that seems to be a constant, constant battle.
TITLE CARD	Later that day, Officer Johnson and the HHS investigator visit Camila's sister's house for a well-check.
BRANDY BUSCHER	How did that go?
OFFICER JOHNSON	We removed all her kids, well, the little girl too.
BRANDY BUSCHER	Oh

OFFICER JOHNSON	And they just got her back.
BRANDY BUSCHER	Yeah, I know.
OFFICER JOHNSON	So it was emotional, it wasn't bad, but you know how it is?
BRANDY BUSCHER	Yeah.
OFFICER JOHNSON	As you would imagine, if you were to lose your children.
BRANDY BUSCHER	Yeah. Oh, man..
OFFICER JOHNSON	I'll be there in about 5 minutes.
BRANDY BUSCHER	Okay, all right. Bye.
BRANDY BUSCHER	(Sighs)
BRANDY BUSCHER	Okay, well I'm home now, I'll see you in the morning. Okay, all right, We'll talk later, okay, all right bye. Hi, hi, hi, hi, hi. hi Rudy? What's up?
RUDY	Nothing
BRANDY BUSCHER	Do the boys want french fries instead of-
SON	I want French fries mom.
DAD	I knew that they'd want French fries.
BRANDY BUSCHER	It's so hard to, you know watch kids fall through the cracks, and watch kids that don't make it. I just want a kid to come to school and learn. And I want 'em to graduate, I wouldn't be working in this school system if I thought there was a different avenue to help kids.
DAD	New Jersey?
BRANDY BUSCHER	Okay.
DAD	Correct.
BRANDY BUSCHER	All right, What about that one?
DAD	Arkansas.
BRANDY BUSCHER	What's 4 plus 1?
SON	4 plus 1 is-
BRANDY BUSCHER	Don't write that answer yet, what's 4 plus 1?
DAD	Mexico
SON	Five
BRANDY BUSCHER	Okay

OFFICER JOHNSON	This is how we work, and this is what's hard, and I will tell you that this is the hard part, is just all these phone calls and then when we're trying to concentrate on one case.
SALLY NELLSON	Yeah
OFFICER JOHNSON	Then this happens.
BRANDY BUSCHER	Well because you need-
OFFICER JOHNSON	It just happens.
BRANDY BUSCHER	Check your email.
OFFICER JOHNSON	Do I?
BRANDY BUSCHER	Yeah, it's bad.
OFFICER JOHNSON	Um, So it's hard to concentrate on one thing.
SALLY NELLSON	Well, then how do you prioritize?
OFFICER JOHNSON	You know, We're trying to deal with this girl, who is in crisis mode, and now we have a couple of others. One school that's in crisis, and then you know, with the Head Start, another and it's not even a student of ours- So I just mean
BRANDY BUSCHER	Hi Tamryn, it's Brandy Buscher how are you?
TITLE CARD	Officer Johnson responds when a student is suspected to be under the influence of drugs or alcohol while in school.
OFFICER JOHNSON	We have a kid who truly has alcoholism, and comes to school intoxicated, and dad's been taking away the alcohol, and no alcohol in a house or stuff like that, and the kid got into some prescription drugs this morning. and my standpoint with this it's not a punitive action, it's more of again services and resources.
OFFICER JOHNSON	You know, I can cite the kid for being under the influence, I can send him to court, but what is that going to help the problem?
SALLY NELLSON	Right.
OFFICER JOHNSON	And I say no. But right now dad is taking him to the emergency room, just to make sure to be safe. 'Cause he's not as, he's hard to keep alert, and he can't stand or sit on his own. He's just extremely high. So dad's going to take him up to the hospital now, just for the safety precautions of that. And the hospital will give dad resources...We just don't
BRANDY BUSCHER	They won't admit him for the psych.
OFFICER JOHNSON	Yeah, they won't admit him for the psych, 'cause it's not a mental health issue, with the alcoholism with that portion of it.
BRANDY BUSCHER	Or he's too young.
SALLY NELLSON	This is one kid with a really serious issue. And we don't, there's not a solution.
OFFICER JOHNSON	There isn't

SALLY NELLSON	Right? Like it doesn't...
REBECCA HARLING	We do not have a psychiatrist in this town that will see anybody under 15, so you either have to go to Scotsbluff, or Kearney sometimes, there're sometimes full, the next closest place, Lincoln. You're a psychiatrist, you are trying to work a program with a family, hey I'm gonna put your child back into your home, here are the safety measures. Why don't you come so that we can talk about it, 3 hours away.
REBECCA HARLING	We're lucky as all get-out compared to Mullen, or Thedford, or Hyannis, or any of the Sandhills communities, they're driving just for a weekly therapy session, 3 hours round trip. Just to go to a therapist once a week.
TITLE CARD	SIENNA
AMY	My daughter was in the ICU a year ago. She tried to take her life, and when I found her she was pretty much dead.
SIENNA	Well we have kids at my school that you could wear a different shirt that no one likes, or a have a different brand, and everyone sees it and like stares at you, and point fingers at you, or you are too fat, you're too skinny, and they'll point at you and stare at you, and they'll just make of fun of you because of your size.
SALLY NELLSON	Did that happen to you?
SIENNA	Yeah.
SALLY NELLSON	Can you tell me about that?
SIENNA	Last year I was like really skinny, and everyone noticed and they just. I just went to school, and everyone like eventually started rumors, and saying that I was actually anorexic, and that I was like in the hospital, but I was still at school. And I was like, I don't know why people believed it, but they just wanted to start drama.
SALLY NELLSON	And how did you react when you heard these things?
SIENNA	I didn't really cry over it, until everyone was asleep, and I would just like be in my room crying by myself. And I just decided to I get a lot of pills and stuff and try to kill myself. And then it didn't work and I got back to school, I went to this one place, Richard Young, and that helped me a lot, and I was happy and stuff.
SIENNA	Then I come back to school, and everyone's, they're spreading rumors and telling me that people are saying that I wanted attention and stuff, but that I didn't really want attention, I had anxiety issues, and I didn't want anyone paying attention to me, 'cause I was always standing out and getting bullied, I didn't want attention.
SALLY NELLSON	So now that you've come back to school, it's just like it was before?
SIENNA	I have better friends now, and I live in a better environment, and I have gained weight and I have met new people. But I still think people think I still wanted attention, even though I didn't. And I don't think people will believe me so I just don't talk about it.
SIENNA	And if people start talking about it I shut down, and I don't want to talk about it, because no one understands.
SALLY NELLSON	I'm sorry.

SALLY NELLSON	Can you tell me a little bit about some of the struggles that your, that you and your family have had?
AMY	Well, I would have to tell you, a little bit about my family history, in order for you to fully understand it. I got married when I was really, really young. And I was with a really abusive man, and he was abusive to me and my kids as well. And so when like, I finally left, he committed suicide in the home, with the kids.
AMY	My kids have been in counseling ever since. I've, I'm trying to do everything that I can to help my kids.
SALLY NELLSON	Could you tell me a little bit more about your daughter and her attempted suicide?
AMY	Yes, so that morning we had actually accidentally overslept, and so I went into her room and she was laid out on the bed, and I, I didn't realize, you know, at that point what she had done, and I was trying to wake her up, and I couldn't get her to wake up, and at that point I was, I slapped her across her face, you know then I see pills next to the bed, you know, like four bottles of pills.
AMY	And I was hysterical at that point, actually my daughter had hid the house phone as well, so that when I went to go call 911, I couldn't call 911, so I had to run to my neighbor, to get the phone and call. And so that, the ambulance came.
BRANDY BUSCHER	When all this happened, Officer Johnson was at the hospital with Amy, and he called me and asked me to go to Adams Middle school, and get all the administration in one room. And have a meeting. So I knew something really bad had happened. We didn't know what or who. So when Officer Johnson got there, and he told us what happened, he told us it was pretty grim, and pretty much the whole room broke down.
BRANDY BUSCHER	You know, I think we felt like we missed something. That was, that was hard. The counselors cried, the admin cried, I mean It was tough we felt like we missed something really big.
TITLE CARD	ISABELLE
SALLY NELLSON	What about the girl that has a ten days suspension?
BRANDY BUSCHER	Yeah, I am going to call, that's who I was going to call next.
SALLY NELLSON	How old is she?
BRANDY BUSCHER	16. She's been suspended, holy cow, one, two three. She's been suspended four times and she only started at, in January, she lives with her grandma, she's been in and out of our district for, since she's been in kindergarten. She floats back to Omaha, I'm gonna guess that maybe she has a parent in Omaha. Let's see.
ARMITA	Hello?
BRANDY BUSCHER	Hi, Is this Armita?
ARMITA	Yeah.
BRANDY BUSCHER	Hi Armita, this is Brandy Buscher, I was returning your call.
ARMITA	Yeah, I was just checkin' because I know she's got to go back to school, and turn around and get kicked out again.

BRANDY BUSCHER	Okay.
ARMITA	She does not want to be in the school. She keeps having problems with teachers, and they don't let you quit at 16 no more. And they say that you if she keeps hacking away on it, she could graduate like in December, with D's.
BRANDY BUSCHER	Okay, yeah, why don't you guys plan on coming tomorrow at 9.
ARMITA	Okay, I'll call her and let her know so she is here after work.
BRANDY BUSCHER	Okay.
ARMITA	Okay.
BRANDY BUSCHER	Okay, we'll talk to you then.
ARMITA	All right.
BRANDY BUSCHER	Okay, uh-huh, bye.
ARMITA	Bye.
BRANDY BUSCHER	(sighs)
BRANDY BUSCHER	Okay let's talk about you've mentioned online schooling,
ARMITA	Yeah
BRANDY BUSCHER	So where are you at, credit wise for graduation? Do you know?
ISABELLE	They said as long as I pass all my classes this semester, I should be able to graduate by December.
BRANDY BUSCHER	I pulled the it up this morning, it showed that you had like 157 credits, so-
ARMITA	Doing a little bit better.
BRANDY BUSCHER	So you'd need about 90, around there to graduate. Has anyone talked to you about TLC?
ISABELLE	Yeah
ARMITA	Well, I asked 'em about that up at the school. That's where your mom went, she finished while she was having you.
BRANDY BUSCHER	So you would go to school, I think it's from 8:30 to about noon, and you'd work online. So since you guys don't have a computer at home, you know they have computers there, and then they have staff there that'll help you, and then when you go to work and then you save your pay check stubs, then we can use those pay check stubs and count those towards elective credits. Do you wanna go out there? Is it something you think you... because I don't wanna put a kid out there, who doesn't wanna be out there or have that.
ISABELLE	I don't wanna do anything, but I have to graduate. so-
ARMITA	Yeah, they don't let you walk at 16 no more. So-

BRANDY BUSCHER	No, and you, I bet you want, don't you want your diploma?
ISABELLE	Not really.
BRANDY BUSCHER	No?
ARMITA	You gotta complete it one way or the other though, according to the laws anymore.
BRANDY BUSCHER	Why don't you, why would you not want your diploma?
ISABELLE	Just don't want to work for it, I just, I don't really wanna deal with school anymore. I want to just work.
BRANDY BUSCHER	Okay..And that's
ARMITA	But, you know a lot of jobs require that diploma to make big bucks, you know more money, if you wanted to go work over at the-
ISABELLE	You don't need a lot of money though, you just need to be able to survive.
ARMITA	Like even if you went over to the hospital right now .
BRANDY BUSCHER	I grew up in a railroad family, my dad was a rail worker, my uncles were railroaders, my two big brothers are both railroaders, so, and none of them went to college. And they didn't have to go to college, and my dad took great care of us, you know, and his job through the railroad took great care of our family.
BRANDY BUSCHER	So traditionally, the emphasis on college hasn't always been there in this community, because you didn't have to have that in order to go have a nice life, and make a nice life for your family.
BRANDY BUSCHER	And, and now that's gone, slowly not only are the jobs disappearing, but the ones that they have are requiring a degree. People are gonna have to change their mindsets, they're going to have to adapt, and figure out what they are going to do, because there's no more graduating from high school and walking into a job where you are making you know, \$80,000, that's not happening anymore.
BRANDY BUSCHER	And how you feel right now. You might not feel in 10 years. You know what I mean, I mean I understand right now, how you feel like you don't want to deal with school. But in 10 years what if you decide you want to do something else, and you don't have that? And if, from what I can see, you're really a smart girl, I have you that you are a high ability learner.
ARMITA	Yeah
ISABELLE	That was a long time ago though, a lot's happened since then.
ARMITA	A lot has happened in her life since then, yeah she needs it put back up there.
BRANDY BUSCHER	So what happened since then?
ISABELLE	A lot, just not good things.
ARMITA	Basically one parent didn't want her sent her off to the other one, then she got shipped to one of the parent's grand parents, or mother, and she was a lot older and couldn't take care

	of her, so she ended up with me. There's a lot going on, so a lot we aren't even going to discuss yet.
BRANDY BUSCHER	Absolutely, and you don't have to discuss it. But I want to make sure that you have everything that you need, to be able to, to be able to do this. We have a therapist that goes out to TLC. About 2 hours a week, and you can schedule time with them, that's up to you, it's free, we don't, you know there'll be no cost, it's just someone out there to talk to, so when you get out there, if you feel like you wanna talk to her. She doesn't share anything with the school, we just contract with her to be there for the kids.
BRANDY BUSCHER	Use you wanting to be just done with school as motivation, to work hard. Okay,
ARMITA	Okay
BRANDY BUSCHER	and hopefully, we can do TLC.
ARMITA	Good
BRANDY BUSCHER	Sound like a plan?
ARMITA	Yeah, because she gets back over there, she's just going to end up kicked out again. So, and they said next time it's her fourth one so she'll be out the remaining of the year here.
BRANDY BUSCHER	Is this a student issue or teacher issue? Or what's going on?
ISABELLE	Kind of like a 'my' issue.
BRANDY BUSCHER	Okay
ISABELLE	I have a problem with authority, and I just get really cocky.
BRANDY BUSCHER	Okay
ARMITA	She's trying to grow up before she's ready.
BRANDY BUSCHER	Mm-hmm (affirmative)
ISABELLE	No I just don't like people telling me what to do.
ARMITA	She's been left in charge a lot, she's got, each parent
ISABELLE	A boy
ARMITA	has a son about the same age, she's always been left taking care of kids, and being the boss when everybody's working, doing everything else and she's had a lot, so that's why I'll let her get away with some, but been letting her have a little free time.
BRANDY BUSCHER	Is it just you with grandma right now?
ISABELLE	Um No, my friend from Omaha moved in with us.
ARMITA	I collected another 18 year old the other day,
BRANDY BUSCHER	Got it

ARMITA	and he has till May to finish too. He hasn't got enrolled yet.
BRANDY BUSCHER	Do you have anything you need from me right now?
ISABELLE	No,
BRANDY BUSCHER	No? Okay, well if you guys don't have anything else for me , then I'll talk with admin, and give you guys a call.
ARMITA	All right.
BRANDY BUSCHER	Okay, thank you guys.
ISABELLE	Yup
ARMITA	Yeah, Thank you
ANDREA HONGSERMEIER	I think inherited trauma, has a lot to do with what we see, from an advocacy perspective, when I talk to parents we will ask questions like, does your family have a history of sexual abuse, does your family have a history of domestic violence or substance abuse, and more often than not we're hearing yes.
ANDREA HONGSERMEIER	And a lot of times, with sexual abuse, we'll be talking to a mom, or a parent, and she'll say something along the lines of I can't believe this is happening to my daughter. It happened to me at this exact same age, and so I think a lot of those issues are not being dealt with, and then history is repeating itself, because the underlying issues haven't been dealt with.
ANDREA HONGSERMEIER	And I don't know how many generations back those go, but it tends to repeat itself; or that's what we see.
SALLY NELLSON	But what do you do next?
BRANDY BUSCHER	I'll go meet with her admin, and just push really hard for her to get into our TLC program. I just, you know, all we can do is try to do a different setting in a way, a different style of educating, and hope that that is what she needs.
BRANDY BUSCHER	Did you hear that her grandma say that her mom was in that program? When she was pregnant with her.
SALLY NELLSON	This is the generational trauma that you're talking about.
BRANDY BUSCHER	Yes. I think with this situation though we have probably some pretty serious trauma, and serious depression and I don't know that grandma has the resources to deal with that, and I don't know if you guys picked up, but she, grandma said that's why I let her get away with some things. Grandma's being grandma. And she also needs a parent, who tells her "No you are not staying out 'til 1:30 in the morning, and you know, your boyfriend's not moving in here." And all these things and so, that is probably the biggest issue we see with grandparents raising kids, grandkids Is that they see them as grand kids, and it's a whole different light, and it's a whole different perspective for them. So it's hard for them to sometimes hold them accountable.
TITLE CARD	After missing more than 20 days of school, Brandy and Officer Johnson go to Isabelle's house to check on her.

BRANDY BUSCHER	It made me sad that she said, she doesn't even want her diploma, and she's very happy just working, where she's working.
SALLY NELLSON	And isn't enough just to survive.
BRANDY BUSCHER	Isn't it enough just to survive? Yeah, I don't hear that very often. Most kids, even kids in rough situations, have hope and aspirations for their lives, you know when you ask them what they want to do, they have a vision,
SALLY NELLSON	Right
BRANDY BUSCHER	So that was, that kind of spoke where she's at though, 'cause she's shut down.
OFFICER JOHNSON	Came to talk to you about school.
ISABELLE	I know, my grandma called me.
OFFICER JOHNSON	Did she?
ISABELLE	Yeah.
OFFICER JOHNSON	What's going on?
ISABELLE	The past couple of weeks, I've been having, like a lot of panic attacks. And like they take, they take a lot out of me.
OFFICER JOHNSON	Well. I'll be honest with you, I'm kind of worried about you. Okay. I mean you used to come to my office quite a bit, and just talk about things and stuff like that, and I've kind of missed you this year. I'm concerned with you not showing up for school.
ISABELLE	It's mostly just like a lot of mental issues.
OFFICER JOHNSON	Okay. And if you're not showing up to school, and you are not dealing with those issues, you're not going to be successful. And we want to make sure that you're successful, and we're going to help you.
BRANDY BUSCHER	It's sad to watch it, it has to progress to a certain level, and for us how much trauma does that child have to go through before that level is reached? And then who's cleaning up that mess,? Ccause we end up being the ones that, you know, have to deal with all that. And have to try and make that child whole again, after, you know, sometimes years of just extreme neglect.
BRANDY BUSCHER	It's like there's no in between, it's like either it's life threatening, and now we are involved, or it's not. And there's no in between, like there's no like that this is emotionally damaging, and this is not a healthy environment, and this is there is no structure, and you know, we got an email today a third grader who can't stay awake, on a regular basis. Is it life threatening? No, but do I want someone to go intervene and help the situation so that the student can learn and function?
BRANDY BUSCHER	Yeah, there's no in between.
OFFICER JOHNSON	We can use that as an example as just the bureaucracy behind it
BRANDY BUSCHER	We called on a young man, who his mom was not meeting any of his basic needs at all, not a single one, he was hungry, he was not clean, he did not have clothes that fit him, or that were clean. He did not have shoes that fit him, I mean nothing there's, there, this kid needed every

	service we offered, so we did laundry, we gave him clothes, we gave him food, pretty much met all of his basic needs, and then he started to get sick.
BRANDY BUSCHER	And mom wasn't taking him to the doctor, started to have a lot of mental health concerns, and mom wasn't taking him for that, and we made a referral to the region and got him connected with the region worker who was helping with some of those things for mental health. But I finally called the hotline, because even the region worker and I are like okay, "what's his mom doing?" Like where is this money going, how's there's never any groceries in the house. How does this kid you know?
BRANDY BUSCHER	And yeah, basically the hotline worker told me, "Well you're doing that, so what's the concern?" Like where's the concern?
SALLY NELLSON	But you don't have custody of him, you don't have parental rights. How is that, so what is up with the mom?
BRANDY BUSCHER	She was using meth, with her new boyfriend. And I mean ultimately the kid became a state ward, but it took Officer Johnson and I, going to the County Attorney to sit down and say "Something really bad's gonna happen to this kid." and you know, It was like spring, and we were thinking about summer.
REBECCA HARLING	I think in this day and age, the school is doing so much more, than just teaching a child in a classroom. They don't have all the resources they need, but with the little they have I think they do a lot. And do a lot of good. Without the school, a lot more kids would fall through the cracks.
BRANDY BUSCHER	Why should the school be doing this? And I agree with that. I think that all the time, I go home,
BRANDY BUSCHER	Jay and I have this-
OFFICER JOHNSON	I agree with that too, but nobody else doing it.
BRANDY BUSCHER	Yeah, but like you can't just say, 'school, don't do it.'
SALLY NELLSON	And you abandon these kids- and then don't
BRANDY BUSCHER	Yeah.
SALLY NELLSON	Just write off 5% of the population.
BRANDY BUSCHER	Yeah, and here in North Platte sometimes we feel like, it's more like 10%. 15%, it feels like that percentage kind of keeps getting a little bit bigger. It's okay to say "hey, it's not the school's responsibility." But then you better start holding people accountable whose responsibility it is, and that's not occurring right now.
BRANDY BUSCHER	I think If we don't step up and start providing some services for these kids and, what does our community look like in 10, 20 years?
TITLE CARD	Kelsey received her high school diploma in December of 2019. In June of 2020, she and her boyfriend welcomed their first child. She continues to reach out to Brandy and Officer Johnson for support and services.
TITLE CARD	NATIONAL SUBSTANCE ABUSE AND MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES 1-800-662-HELP (4357) samhsa.gov

TITLE CARD	Six months after filming, Camila was hospitalized due to an overdose. Upon release, HHS placed her in a group home several hours away. She is no longer in touch with the school.
TITLE CARD	NATIONAL SEXUAL ASSAULT TELEPHONE HOTLINE 1-800-656-HOPE (4673)
TITLE CARD	Sienna is more comfortable at school, where she's finding success with her grades and confidence with her friends. Occasionally, she sees a counselor to help manage her depression.
TITLE CARD	NATIONAL SUICIDE PREVENTION LIFELINE 1-800-273-TALK suicidepreventionlifeline.org BOYS TOWN NATIONAL HOTLINE 1-800-488-3000 yourlifeyourvoice.org
TITLE CARD	Isabelle received her diploma in early 2020. She is working at a restaurant and living with her boyfriend. Isabelle says that graduation high school is the only good thing that has happened to her this year.
TITLE CARD	NATIONAL DOMESTIC VIOLENCE HOTLINE 1-800-799-SAFE (7233) thehotline.org

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Officer Jeremiah (Jay) Johnson | School Resource Officer, North Platte Public Schools/North Platte Police Department

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Micah Fisher | Assistant Principal, North Platte High School

Dennis O'Brien | Investigator, Nebraska Department of Health and Human Services

Anna | Mother of Sienna

Armita | Grandmother of Isabelle

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Bridge of Hope Child Advocacy Center

Lincoln County Attorney's Office

North Platte Police Department

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