

Complaints triggered probe

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Post Staff Reporters

The director of the American Civil Liberties Union in Cincinnati said Thursday that an investigation into Straight Inc., a drug rehabilitation center in Clermont County, has been prompted by a series of complaints from persons she described as "escapees."

One of those complaints came from a teenager who was alleged to have been thrown to the floor during a therapy session and held down by other clients after "not giving the answer to a question they wanted to hear," the ACLU director said.

Margie Robertson said the ACLU asked the Ohio Bureau of Drug Abuse to investigate Straight after hearing allegations from former clients who complained about some of the techniques supposedly used at the non-profit center in Mt. Repose.

SHE SAID separate interviews with a number of former clients and parents, whom she refused to name, has led the ACLU to "have some heavy concerns about whether the rights of these children are being violated."

She said these included allegations that verbal confrontation is used routinely, that tactics designed to break down a child's sense of self are com-

monplace and that the voluntary program does not permit clients to readily leave the facility.

The state bureau conducted a three-day investigation of Straight last week, based on the concerns raised by the ACLU, according to Stewart Bell, director of the drug abuse bureau.

He said a report is being prepared for submission to the Governor's Advisory Council June 18, but would not comment further.

JERRY RUSHING, director of Straight, said allegations of mistreatment made to the ACLU were untrue.

"I won't deal with any specific cases, as well as any individuals, but I know

the allegations that have been made and they are false, they are false," Rushing said.

"Whenever terms like 'abuse' and 'coercion' are used around it perks ears," he said. "No doubt that Straight is tough, but no apologies for that, it is not a program, but neither is treatment abuse. We are a tough program that develops a lot of commitment from parents and the kids in the program."

CYNTHIA [REDACTED], 18, is among those who talked to about Straight, Mrs. Robertson said Thursday.

Miss [REDACTED] said this week