

Drug-treatment group sued; parents say son was abused

BY BEN L. KAUFMAN

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A Miami Township couple is suing Straight Inc. for \$1 million, saying its staff abused their son while pretending to treat him for a drug problem.

"He's home now, but he's still under psychiatric care," Rosemary Weaver said Sunday night.

Robert and Rosemary Weaver were not even sure 16-year-old Eric had a drug problem until Straight evaluators said he did, their attorney, Timothy A. Smith, said.

"Totally absurd," Straight Executive Director Jerry Rushing responded to the suit in Clermont Common Pleas Court.

The Weavers were being manipulated by Smith's co-counsel, Jonathan Schiff, a persistent critic of Straight, he said Sunday. "He's using them as a pawn."

The suit is part of a campaign orchestrated by civil libertarians and others who object to Straight's "firm stand on parental authority with kids," Rushing said.

Schiff, who has dealt with Straight before as attorney for youngsters who have been in the program, rejected Rushing's accusation.

"I was requested to come in as co-counsel," he said. "I didn't go after the Weavers. I was familiar with the program. I was not using anybody as a pawn."

Straight is part of a national organization that offers drug cures to teen-agers and young adults. It relies heavily on peer pressure and family participation.

Youngsters commonly are lodged with families of participants who are further into Straight's cure than they are.

Straight's Clermont County facility — started by parents and

supporters in early 1981 — is at 6074 Branch Hill-Guinea Pike, Mount Repose.

Smith said a conversation between Eric and another youth raised family suspicions and the Weavers sought the advice of a school counselor who recommended Straight.

Eric's parents enrolled him in the \$3,000 program March 12 and took him out June 13 when they realized he was hurting himself, Smith said.

Their suit said Eric was beaten, made mentally ill and kept out of school by Straight's staff.

"He came out with a psychiatric depression," Smith said. "One of the major clues was that he was carving on himself."

The Weavers' suit and one other in Clermont County are still open, Rushing said.