

# Straight drug center ends inpatient care

By Len Penix  
Post staff reporter

**MILFORD, Ohio**—Some say they were given a new life, free from the scourge of drug addiction, at the Straight Inc. rehabilitation center near here.

Others claim they were beaten, denied adequate food and water, and confined in small isolation rooms.

After five years of praise and condemnation—and a purported 60 percent success rate treating more than 800 drug-dependent youngsters—Straight Inc. is changing the way it does business.

The drug treatment program is closing its inpatient care.

After Oct. 1 youngsters with

drug problems will no longer receive treatment from Straight for 24 hours a day for an average of 11 months. Instead, youths will come to the center at 6074 Branch Hill-Guinea Road in Mt. Repose for three to five hours a day after school, said Will Kniseley, Straight program director.

• The reason for the change: Increased competition.

Within the last two months, Jewish and Ft. Hamilton-Hughes hospitals have opened drug treatment programs, Kniseley said. During the last two years, Christ, Bethesda, Emerson North and other Cincinnati-area hospitals have

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# Straight

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launched similar programs.

—At its peak two years ago, Straight treated more than 200 clients. Now, only about 65 are enrolled.

Hospitals are more attractive to parents because their inpatient programs are shorter. Youngsters spend about 25 to 45 days at hospitals, compared to six to 18 months at the Straight center.

It is human nature to prefer less time-consuming periods of rehabilitation, said Dr. Frank Tims, deputy chief of the National Institute on Drug Abuse in Rockdale, Md.

However, short-term programs may be less successful, Tims said. One National Insti-

tute on Drug Abuse study that compared patients with less than 13 weeks of rehabilitation with those in year-long programs found about 50 percent more of those in the short-term programs relapsed.

Competition from short-term hospital programs hasn't grown as rapidly in other cities as in Cincinnati, Kniseley said. As a result, seven other Straight Inc. centers across the nation are not changing their treatment.

Cincinnati-area youngsters wanting in-house treatment are now being referred to the other centers.

Before the change in methods, when youths with drug problems entered Straight, they were grouped with others who had already been in the program for months. They spent as many as 12 hours a day at the center under what Straight called the persuasive sway of

their more drug-free peers.

"In order to have peer pressure, we need a large group size. The group size has been diminished by the very large numbers of drug treatment centers now provided in Cincinnati," Kniseley said.

Some people claim the program has relied too much on peer pressure, and not enough on skilled counselors and psychiatrists.

Eric Weaver, who filed a \$1 million lawsuit against Straight in June 1986 said his peers would beat him and sit on his chest for over six hours.

"I was severely mistreated, physically and mentally," said Eric, now 17.

Similar claims were made in a \$1 million suit filed in February by Kenneth [redacted] of Hamilton. He claimed he was denied adequate food and sleep at

Straight, and subjected to verbal and physical abuse.

[redacted] claims he was subjected to "lengthy confinement in a small isolation room" after entering the program on Oct. 9, 1984 for seven months.

The suits filed by [redacted] and Weaver have not yet come to trial, said Jonathan Schiff, an attorney representing both plaintiffs.

Straight officials deny the allegations in the suits, claiming that no client has ever been mentally or physically abused, or wrongfully restrained.

Regardless of the legal claims, Marian [redacted] of Anderson Township, believes Straight may have saved the life of her son, Michael, who now lives in Mt. Carmel.

"I was helped greatly by the program," said her son, now 27 years old, and married with two children.