

JKK

REPORT ON CLASS ACTION SUIT AGAINST STRAIGHT INC., SPRINGFIELD, VIRGINIA

o General Overview

The suit was filed by Fred Collins Jr., a 20 year old resident of Virginia previously enrolled in the St. Petersburg, Florida program and moved back to Virginia when the program opened in October.

Collins is represented by the law firm of Hirschkop and Grad. The suit was filed in U.S. District Court, Alexandria, Virginia.

Collins is asking for injunctive and monetary relief, and brought the suit as a class action. The class he is asking to be certified consists of everyone that has ever been in Straight Inc.

o Specific Complaints

- A) That Straight is enrolling individuals in the program under duress and without obtaining their permission.
- B) That Straight is subjecting individuals to physical and psychological abuse.
- C) That Straight is preventing individuals from leaving the program against their will.

o Straight's Position

The allegations are false.

- 1) There is no duress as each potential client must voluntarily sign a treatment agreement form and the parents must voluntarily sign an admission agreement form. The program rules and procedures are explained fully to the client and parents before the forms are signed. Specifically, Collins intake interview lasted three hours, of which 1½ hours of paperwork was involved. The intake proceedings are supervised by executive staff. The intake procedures are constantly under review by the staff, State agencies where the programs operate, outside consultants, and the media.
- 2) Straight does not subject clients to physical abuse. The only time restraint must be used is when a client becomes physically abusive to other clients in the program. Straight has treated more than three thousand clients and has never had one serious injury resulting from the use of physical restraint. Drug dependent people can be prone to be physically aggressive, which cannot be permitted in a room full of people. The physical eruptions are rare, they have occurred, but were always handled in a restraining manner.
- 3) Clients are not subjected to psychological abuse. This is a common complaint by the non-professional against the technique of group

confrontation which Straight uses so the client will recognize honesty is essential to becoming drug-free. The program is under constant scrutiny of qualified third party professionals, such as:

Dr. Robert DuPont
American Council on Marijuana
6193 Executive Boulevard
Rockville, Maryland 20015

Dr. Andrew Malcom
55 Queen Street, East - Suite 1402
Toronto, Canada M5C 1R5

Dr. Sharon Wegscheider
OnSite
1645 Hennepin Avenue, Suit 206
Minneapolis, Minnesota 55403

Jack Sarmanian, A.C.S.W.
330 Bedford Street
Lexington, Massachusetts 02173

Not one of these professionals has ever found any psychological abuse.

- 4) Straight has been challenged before, that they were holding clients against their will. As in any treatment facility, there is a specific exit procedure which involves counseling the client with the parents and staff. Straight does not simply have an " open door " any time a client decides they do not want to be there. Straight has an obligation to the parents to do their utmost in restoring their child to a drug-free life style. The exit procedure has been carefully scrutinized and has always been upheld.
- 5) The charges against the Washington program are not new ones. The same issues have been levied in St. Petersburg, Atlanta, and Cincinnati. Straight has been cleared in each case.

Fred Collins Jr. asked the court for an injunction to prevent Straight from doing A,B & C further. The court, based upon a hearing of both sides, refused to issue the injunction.

Keith Stroup, former Director of the National Organization for the Reform of Marijuana Laws (NORML) is apparently involved. It is not known exactly to what extent.

Fred Collins parents feel devastated, and will appear as witnesses for Straight. His younger brother has chosen to remain in Straight.

Straight has treated more than three thousand young people and 60% are drug-free today. The typical adolescent drug treatment programs have a success rate of 3 to 18 percent.

William D. Oliver, Executive Director of Straight Inc. has offered to come to Washington and answer any questions.

Enclosed are copies of newspaper articles reporting on the same kind of charges brought in other cities.