

DRUG TREATMENT CENTER BACKERS CRITICIZE STATE OFFICIALS, REPORTERS

Palm Beach Post, The (FL) (Published as The Palm Beach Post) - August 17, 1990

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- Edition: FINAL
- Section: LOCAL
- Page: 12B

Supporters of a controversial drug and alcohol treatment center lashed out at state officials and reporters Thursday, accusing the state of harassment and the media of practicing "yellow journalism."

At issue is the Department of Health and Rehabilitative Services' investigation into allegations of abuse made by former clients, as well as a July 30 report that said the center's proposed plan to correct deficiencies is inadequate.

"This is a continuation of their harassment of our program," said Warren Blanchard, volunteer president of the board at Growing Together Inc.

He announced that the Joint Commission on Accreditation of Health Care Organizations has granted the center conditional accreditation as a result of a January survey.

However, the July 9 letter informing the center of the conditional accreditation also says the survey found certain areas that must be corrected. In addition, in determining the center's corrective plan to be inadequate, HRS cited the center's policy of "restraining" or "holding" residents against their will.

HRS also said there are too few adult staff members at the center and that the center discourages residents from obtaining medical attention during the early stages of their stays in the program.

In an Aug. 14 reply to HRS, Blanchard said the state's letter demonstrated "continuing harassment" of the center and added: "Our board and staff are not going to be intimidated by implied threats to our license when we have assured ourselves and others that we more than meet all statutory requirements."

Growing Together's state license expires in October.

Blanchard said the center does not use restraining devices to hold down clients, but it does allow clients to be held down. Blanchard said the law allows that.

- *Index terms: DRUG AID FL LW COST ISSUE*
- *Dateline: LAKE WORTH*
- *Record: PBP08170773*
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