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[\[Main Menu\]](#) [\[Last Form\]](#) [\[Document List\]](#) [\[Full View\]](#) [\[KWIC View\]](#) [\[Prev\]](#) [\[Next\]](#) [\[Help\]](#)

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**Document 15 of 29.**

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**SECTION:** NEWS; Pg. B01

**LENGTH:** 619 words

**HEADLINE:** KIDS PROGRAM FACES NEW CHARGES IN UTAH

**BYLINE:** Duane Stoltzfus, Record Staff Writer

**BODY:**

A Utah alcohol and **drug** treatment program launched by the Hackensack-based KIDS Centers of America faces allegations of abuse similar to those leveled at one time against three other affiliated centers.

KIDS of Greater Salt Lake, which began treating children and young adults last summer after staff members were trained in Hackensack, is the target of a \$ 6.5 million lawsuit and a South Salt Lake Police Department investigation.

"Basically, we are seeing the exact same charges as in El Paso and Southern California," said Gary Foster, a South Salt Lake detective, referring to two now-defunct KIDS centers.

Similar charges have been made against **KIDS of Bergen County Inc.** in Hackensack.

"It seems like they're going from one state to another. It's an extremely controversial program," Foster said.

Foster said complaints from the center's clients include assault and unlawful detention. He said he passed along the results of the department's investigation to the Salt Lake County Attorney's Office, which will decide whether to file criminal charges against the program.

Foster would not elaborate on the investigation's findings.

██████ Woolston, a 19-year-old who filed the lawsuit last month, claims she broke an arm and foot when she fell from a second-story roof while trying to escape from the program, according to her lawyer, Mary C. Corporon.

Corporon said Woolston had left weeks earlier and was "kidnapped" on the street Sept. 3 by a group that included her parents and a man who showed her a badge and said she was under arrest. She was returned to the center, remaining there until she tried the rooftop escape Sept. 18, Corporon said.

The Utah program is modeled after the Hackensack center, adopting a therapy method that includes marathon "rap" sessions.

Peer pressure is important in the KIDS approach, which was fashioned by Miller Newton, a medical anthropologist and author who is president and clinical director of the nonprofit KIDS Centers of America.

"What they're dealing with out there is total nonsense," said Newton, who has been advising the Utah staff. "It's so outlandish. In court, these allegations will be destroyed."

For example, Newton said, Woolston should have signed a form asking to leave the program, which has been in operation for three months. He said Woolston would not have been held against her will.

W. Kimball DeLaMare, director of the Utah KIDS program, worked for six months earlier this year at the KIDS Center in Hackensack, Newton said. DeLaMare did not return phone messages left at his office.

Two other affiliated centers closed this year: KIDS of El Paso County and KIDS of Southern California.

The Texas Commission on Alcohol and **Drug** Abuse revoked KIDS of El Paso County's license last year, charging that teenagers in the program were at times mistreated and poorly supervised. The program appealed, and this summer had its license conditionally reinstated for a year.

Then the program went bankrupt, Newton said.

In California, state officials this year had said the program was drawing complaints while operating without a required license.

Meanwhile, **KIDS of Bergen County Inc.** is seeking a license from the New Jersey Department of Health.

The license would subject KIDS to state monitoring and unannounced inspections, according to Charlotte Kitler, the Health Department's

director of legal services.

Earlier this year, the Bergen County Prosecutor's Office said it found "excessive use of force," strip-searches, solitary confinement, and administrative shortcomings in KIDS Centers' pilot program.

**LANGUAGE:** English

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[\[Main Menu\]](#) [\[Last Form\]](#) [\[Document List\]](#) [\[Full View\]](#) [\[KWIC View\]](#) [\[Prev\]](#) [\[Next\]](#) [\[Help\]](#)  
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