

LIFELINE TRIES TO KEEP POSITIVES TO HELP KIDS

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Lifeline Inc. has its roots in the controversial local Kids of the Great Salt Lake substance abuse treatment program. But it has separated from Kids' parent organization, Kids of Bergen County (N.J.).

Lifeline staff hope to keep the good ideas from the original drug rehabilitation program, while overcoming some of the negatives - including adverse publicity.

Treatment is still based on the Kids model, according to Bob Hansen, Lifeline general counsel.

That model comprises treatment phases youths must pass through to graduate. At first, they stay in host homes, are never left alone and must focus on their own problems. Treatment includes "rap sessions" where youths talk to - and sometimes berate - each other. Families also participate in group sessions.

"We have a real insistence on parents getting treatment for the whole family. If you don't change negative family dynamics, nothing is accomplished," he said.

Later, the youth returns home to work out family problems, while continuing to receive treatment from the program.

After the youth has successfully worked back into his family, he can return to school, then employment and other activities. The final phase deals with the youth in recreation, relationships and the community, Hansen said.

"They're good, logical steps from total control to total self-control," he said.

Kids of the Great Salt Lake attracted media attention last year after incidents where youths tried to leave the program and were restrained. Clients also accused counseling staff of abusive behavior.

"We've been talking with Miller Newton (Kids founder). He's helped make the break as amicable as possible. He forgave a \$23,000 debt and we are deeply indebted to him in many ways. But this is a totally independent program at this point," Hansen said. "We had to make some changes. You can't treat adults the same way, legally, you can treat minors. They have to be able to sign out with 24 hours notice. And 22 of our 26 young men are over 18."

When Hansen became involved with the drug rehabilitation program, he expected to find addicted 15- and 16-year-olds. "I can't believe we're looking at age 12 and even younger. But a child can become chemically dependent in three months. An adult takes about 10 years."

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