

DRUG-REHAB PROGRAM SUES BERGENFIELD

Record, The (Hackensack, NJ) (Published as The Record (New Jersey)) - August 27, 1992

- Author/Byline: By ELIZABETH LLORENTE, Record Staff Writer, The Record
- Edition: 3 Star2 Star B1 Star Late1 Star Early
- Section: NEWS
- Page: a01

Bergenfield officials have ordered young patients of a psychological-rehabilitation program who are staying with two borough host families as part of their treatment to leave the borough.

Borough officials say the host families are violating zoning laws by permitting the Secaucus-based treatment program, known as Kids of North Jersey Inc., to use their homes as part of the recovery process.

Kids of North Jersey is fighting the eviction on behalf of the borough host families and has asked for a restraining order in state Superior Court in Hackensack.

The group's clinical director, Miller Newton, contends that the borough is using zoning as a cover for "the real issue discrimination against kids in trouble. "

In its complaint, Kids of North Jersey maintains that the host families are not violating zoning laws, because the patients are "guests," like those of a high school exchange program.

Bergenfield Borough Attorney William Dimin argued that the patients, who spend most of the day at the Secaucus facility undergoing treatment and counseling, are not "mere guests," because their stay in host homes is "part and parcel of their treatment. "

"This is not a permitted use in our zoning laws," said Dimin.

He said the borough has received complaints from neighbors of host families about yelling and unruliness late at night.

A hearing has been set for Sept. 11.

Kids of North Jersey offers psychological treatment to people between 14 and 22 who are dependent on alcohol or drugs or have eating or conduct disorders.

Its treatment is modeled after Alcoholics Anonymous and is based on a five-phase model aimed at returning the patient to a normal lifestyle. The early phases of the program require the patient to stay with the family of another patient who is in a more advanced phase.

Their stay can last between one day and one month. The patients are not permitted to leave the homes except to go to the Secaucus facility for treatment.

Children of both host families in Bergenfield have undergone the Kids treatment, said Newton.

Newton said that a crucial part of the treatment is that patients in more advanced stages of the program be able to help early-phase patients.

"Part of the recovery is that a kid help another kid. That's the same principle of Alcoholics Anonymous," he said.

Kids of North Jersey said that through such host-family arrangements, it can provide free treatment treatment that many families could not afford if they had to turn to residential-care facilities.

The Bergenfield host homes are just two of many in North Jersey that have opened their doors to Kids patients.

Newton said that in eight years, about 20 families from Bergenfield who have used the facility for their own children have served as hosts to Kids patients.

Inasmuch as families that use the Kids program must serve as hosts when their children reach advanced phases of treatment, said Newton, "Bergenfield would stop its own families with kids in trouble from continuing to participate in our program. "

- *Index terms: BERGENFIELD; LAWSUIT; DRUG; ABUSE; COUNSELING; ORGANIZATION; GOVERNMENT; ZONING; VIOLATION*
- *Record: 988149*
- *Copyright: Copyright 1992 Bergen Record Corp.*