

DRUG PROGRAM TRACED TO RESIDENTIAL BUILDING ORGANIZATION MAY BE VIOLATING ZONING LAW

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KIDS of North Jersey, the drug-treatment program that has been operating at undisclosed sites since leaving Hackensack as a dwindling and troubled operation, is running one satellite effort in a Passaic County house.

The program's activities at 81 N. 12th St. in Prospect Park would appear to be in violation of the residential zone governing that street, Borough Clerk Judith Critchley said when told of the activity there.

"We have had complaints from neighbors about that house," Critchley said. "They see a lot of children being dropped off in the morning, and building materials being taken in. "

"The license plates are from all over from New York State and farther away," she said. "Neighbors have asked us, 'What's going on? We had to say we just don't know what's going on. "

William Sposa, the building inspector, is investigating the use of the house, Critchley said. She said no one had applied for a permit to do construction, which apparently has been taking place.

In August, KIDS left its Hackensack quarters. The private program, which earlier this year owed nearly half a million dollars in back rent, agreed to vacate the 80 Commerce Way building as part of a settlement with the landlord.

Dozens of patients left the program this year some escorted by the Bergen County Prosecutor's Office, which was responding to allegations that patients were illegally being held against their will. KIDS officials denied the allegation.

Bob Moss, the program's finance and administration director, said the Prospect Park house "probably" is a satellite operation. Moss said Shirley Clemence, who rents the apartment, would know more.

During a reporter's visit to the apartment, a young man who identified himself only as a senior counselor in the KIDS program came to the door.

"How did you find out we are here? " he said. When asked whether Moss or **KIDS President Miller Newton** were available, the counselor said he would check. He returned with a telephone, and the person on the phone identified herself as Clemence.

"That is my personal apartment," she said. "I have guests there. " When asked whether her guests were involved in drug and alcohol treatment there, she said, "That's none of your business. "

The building's owner, Lucille Joyner, said she rents the first floor to Clemence and was not aware of any program activities at the house. "I'm certainly going to look into it," she said.

The second floor is vacant, and workers are readying the place for the next tenant, Joyner said. She said she believed it was repair work that would not require a permit.

A neighbor down the street who did not wish to be identified said he has seen groups of teenagers arriving at the house in the morning. He also said he has seen cars with license plates from Utah, Texas, and California.

Those are three states in which **Newton** once operated affiliate programs through the parent agency, KIDS Centers of America. The programs in all three locations ran into difficulties and closed.

This summer, KIDS of Greater Salt Lake closed after state officials revoked its license. Last year, KIDS of El Paso County in Texas went bankrupt, and KIDS of Southern California closed.

In all three locations, KIDS struggled with licensing amid allegations that clients in the program were mistreated and unlawfully detained. **Newton** has said the program's critics are unfair and misinformed. Moss said **Newton** could not be reached Thursday for comment.

"Look at how we're functioning, with satellite locations and temporary office space," Moss said. "We've been operating like this since August. It's very taxing, very wearing. At the same time we're trying to nail down a permanent location and preserve the program. "

At present, Moss said, KIDS has 60 to 70 patients, which is about half the number reported only a few months ago. The program is based on the premise that peer pressure is essential in treating drug and alcohol abuse and eating disorders.

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