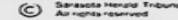


Sarasota Herald-Tribune.

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MONDAY, APRIL 25, 1983



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Section B

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Straight To Review Corrective Measures

Herald-Tribune Reporter
Officials of Straight Inc., a drug rehabilitation center for youths, have been ordered to respond to a list of measures aimed at correcting charges brought against the organization by former patients.

Robert Constantine, Health and Rehabilitative Services district administrator in Fort Myers, said Sunday the organization was sent several pages of corrective measures they are to agree to or provide a list of corrective measures on their own by Friday. The agency can strip Straight of its state license if an agreement is not reached, he said.

More than two dozen sworn statements charging criminal abuse at the Sarasota branch of Straight, a nationally acclaimed drug treatment program, are being investigated by state officials, according to published reports.

William Oliver told the Times he has not seen any of the specific allegations, but said his organization does not tolerate the abuses that have been alleged.

"We agree that those allegations shouldn't happen, the incidents alleged in those reports shouldn't happen," Oliver told the newspaper. "I'm not getting into a debating contest with anybody about the truth or falsity of those statements."

Telephone calls to the Herald-Tribune from parents whose children have attended the program complained of mistreatment in some cases. But other parents called the program's hard-ball style of rehabilitation a live saver and point to their drug-free children.

In an unrelated civil suit filed against Straight in December, former clients and

Alexandria, is expected to go to trial May 9. He is seeking \$750,000 in punitive damages.

Straight gained national attention last year when Nancy Reagan visited its St. Petersburg office and wept as teenagers related the horrors of drug abuse.

Straight, a private, non-profit organization, is based in St. Petersburg and has branches in Georgia, Ohio and Virginia, in addition to Sarasota. A sixth branch is planned for Orlando later this year, said Oliver.

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by state officials, according to published reports.

Earlier this month, State Attorney James Gardner turned over a report critical of the organization to HRS officials following a year-long investigation that included sworn testimony from more than 50 persons.

"If the problem continues, that's the end of the program (in Sarasota)," said Gardner, speaking to the St. Petersburg Times. "If HRS doesn't end it, I'm going to do what I can civilly and criminally to see that the (state laws) are followed."

Included among the complaints, according to Gardner's office, were charges of holding clients against their will; subjecting clients to physical abuse "including ... hair pulling, kicking, hitting, biting and being sat upon"; confined clients to "time-out" rooms for periods of "hours to days"; and denied patients food as a form of punishment.

Straight Executive Director

filed against Straight in December, former clients and their parents told of abuses at the program's St. Petersburg branch. The suit, filed by former Straight client Fred Collins in U.S. District Court in

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