

Manatee

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Section B

Straight Faces 2nd Suit From Former Sarasota Client

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A 17-year-old youth who claims he was "locked behind iron bars at night with a Doberman pinscher stationed outside the door" of his foster home became the second juvenile from Sarasota to file suit against Straight Inc. for its controversial drug-treatment methods.

The suit, filed Wednesday in Sarasota County Circuit Court, seeks \$750,000 in compensatory and punitive damages through a trial by jury.

Lawrence Taylor "Tay" [redacted] charges he was beaten, deprived of bathroom facilities and proper food, medical attention and psychological guidance during the four months he was enrolled in Straight's Sarasota branch beginning in February 1981. [redacted] was 15 years old at the time.

[redacted] 14-year-old brother, Benson, filed a \$1.1 million lawsuit against the drug-rehabilitation program last week for

conditions the younger [redacted] claims he experienced in the program when he was 12. Since both plaintiffs are juveniles, their suits were filed through their mother, Marcia, by Sarasota attorney Larry Byrd.

He charges that Tay [redacted] was "falsely imprisoned" in the facility and, as the result of four months of repeatedly running away from the program and being caught and returned, "suffered physical and psychological pain... and physical handicap." He said the physical handicap refers to a possible bladder injury the youth may have suffered when he was denied use of a bathroom except at certain times of the day.

Byrd's two-count suit terms the boy's treatment in the program an "outrageous disregard" for his rights.

Former employees of Straight gave conflicting testimony to Assistant State Attorney David Levin earlier this year on practices used inside the Cattlemen Road facility before it indefinitely suspended operations July 20.

Several of those interviewed described various forms of physical contact to prod unruly clients into submission or to participate in group activities, but stated they believed such acts did not constitute abuse.

Florida law defines "battery," a first-degree misdemeanor, as touching someone against their will.

Newcomers to the program were not allowed to return home at night and were given shelter by the families of more advanced clients. It was during his stay in these "foster homes" that Tay [redacted] escaped several times, only to be caught and returned to the program, Byrd said.

Straight has filed a request to open its latest facility in Winter Park near Orlando.

PODIATRIST