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Drug Clinic Changes Detention Procedures In Wake of Jury Award

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Straight Inc., a Florida-based drug rehabilitation agency with a Northern Virginia facility in Springfield, says it has made some changes following an adverse decision in court.

Eighteen months ago a federal jury in Alexandria awarded \$220,000 in damages to Fred Collins Jr., a **Fairfax** County man who said he was detained for more than four months in Straight facilities.

The jury found that Straight had kept Collins, then 20, against his will.

The case, now on appeal to the U.S. 4th Circuit Court of Appeals in Richmond, has led to changes in the organization's procedures for dealing with clients who want to leave the program, according to Straight executive director Bill Oliver.

"We have improved our documentation significantly," Oliver said in a recent interview. He said Straight now keeps better records of requests by clients to leave the program, and that clients over age 18 may leave the program immediately. Minors are turned over to a parent, he added.

Dr. Mel Riddile, director of Straight's facility in Springfield, said that Straight now makes sure that "every client in the program knows verbatim" how to withdraw from the program.

"We're confident that we have assured the due process rights of both the minors and the adults in our program," he said. "We've taken a good, long look at these issues."

Straight opened its Springfield facility in October 1982 amid controversy over the program's methods, which were termed harsh by some critics. There were then about 115 clients enrolled in its drug and alcohol rehabilitation programs, Riddile said. There are now about 250 clients, and nearly 200 people have completed the program.

Collins, who said at the time of the verdict in his suit that he was thinking about becoming a lawyer, is now a junior majoring in engineering at Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University in Blacksburg, according to his attorney, Philip J. Hirschkop.

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