



Teen Drug Clinic Cited For Cover-Up In Sex Abuse Case

FAIRFAX (AP) — Virginia officials cited a private Fairfax County drug treatment center for failing to report allegations a 13-year-old boy was sexually abused by another patient, state documents show.

The citation is one of at least 45 violations the state has found at Straight in recent years. The residential program for teen-agers also has been the target of lawsuits locally and nationally.

Violations cited since 1985 include allowing strip searches of youths in front of their peers, punishing patients by withholding food and depriving youths of education in the early days of treatment, according to the state records.

Straight spokeswoman Joy C. Margolis said program officials notified the county as soon as they heard of the alleged abuse last December.

The private, non-profit program treats about 130 children and young adults at the Fairfax facility. Patients range in age from 10 to the early twenties. The Florida-based drug treatment program for adolescents has eight facilities nationwide.

Straight officials say their program revolves around "positive peer pressure." Clients who have

been in the program gain increasing authority to guide, and sometimes confront, newcomers in their recovery from drug use. Treatment generally lasts about a year.

Although the 8-year-old Fairfax center has been cited for numerous violations, state officials say the violations are not serious enough to close the facility.

Straight signed a consent agreement in July, promising to correct its actions.

Straight Inc. has drawn criticism throughout the country for its controversial rehabilitation program since it was founded in St. Petersburg, Fla., in 1976.

Lawsuits have been filed against Straight by parents and clients alleging imprisonment and emotional and physical abuse. In 1985, a federal appeals court in Alexandria upheld a \$220,000 verdict against Straight after a Fairfax County man claimed he was falsely imprisoned.

According to state documents, Straight has been cited over the years for punishing clients by depriving them of sleep, drinking water, snacks, meals and visits with parents or legal guardians.

Straight denied the charges and maintained that clients were treated with dignity consistent with health, safety and therapy.