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## **Va. Says Drug Program Was Slow to Report Rape; Letter Details Violations by Straight Inc.**

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A drug abuse treatment program in **Fairfax** County that Virginia officials are seeking to shut down was cited for numerous violations, including failing to report the rape of a client promptly, according to state documents.

In a letter dated Jan. 29, the Virginia Department of Mental Health, Mental Retardation and Substance Abuse Services said, among other things, that "Child Protective Services [was] not contacted promptly after [a patient's] disclosure of rape."

The letter, sent to Straight Inc. to explain why the state denied renewal of the program's licenses, said the rape, which allegedly occurred two years ago, was disclosed March 28, 1990, and reported to Child Protective Services on April 27, 1990.

The state said the Springfield program, which treats 130 children and adults for drug abuse, has until Feb. 11 to close or file an appeal.

Joy C. Margolis, vice president of public affairs for Straight, a Florida-based organization, said Friday that the state is denying "vital treatment to kids for purely bureaucratic reasons." She said the program is continuing to operate and has notified the state that it will appeal.

"They are doing all of this because we didn't dot our i's and cross our t's," Margolis said. "It seems like using a hammer to kill a fly. What you have at stake are literally the lives of kids." Margolis said the letters she received did not cite any allegations of abuse.

Among other violations of licensing standards, the letter says, the state found no evidence that a psychiatric evaluation or a suicide watch was conducted for a client who told the staff she wanted to kill herself.

Other violations listed in the report include no tuberculosis tests for paraprofessionals, no employment application for paraprofessionals, no fire inspection, no sanitation inspection and a toilet out of order.

The report also said that Straight does not have an education program for school-age children.

The state said in the letter that many of the violations it found "are repetitions of the same violations cited during the past two compliance reviews."

The state recently found that the Springfield program failed to notify county officials of allegations that a 13-year-old boy in the program had been sexually abused by a 19-year-old client. The state found the 19-year-old had been allowed

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to remain in the program after he had been accused of sexually abusing two other clients.

According to state records, Straight, which opened in 1982, has been cited for numerous violations in recent years for punishing clients by depriving them of sleep, drinking water, snacks, meals and visits with parents or legal guardians. Straight has said it did not administer those punishments.

Straight, which is part of a national chain, has been the subject of lawsuits locally and nationally.

The program has drawn criticism throughout the country for its controversial rehabilitation program. Lawsuits filed against Straight by parents and clients allege false imprisonment and emotional and physical abuse. In 1985, an 18-year-old woman reached a \$ 37,500 settlement with Straight after she said she was held against her will and physically and mentally abused in a center in St. Petersburg, Fla.

Straight officials have said that it has since changed some of its most controversial methods. Officials say, however, that the restrictive program forces clients to come to terms with addictions by involving the entire family in the treatment process and using positive peer pressure.

The program, which employs a series of steps similar to the 12 steps of Alcoholics Anonymous, has been defended by Straight officials and some clients and parents who say that the methods are successful.

Straight claims a 70 percent success rate.

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