

# Ex-Straight head has new service for drug abusers

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**CLEARWATER** — A former director at Straight Inc. who resigned abruptly more than a year ago plans to open a new drug abuse counseling program in Clearwater next week.

James E. Hartz, a 35-year-old drug abuse specialist who was executive director at Straight for more than six years, will be the director of FACTS, a private, nonprofit drug abuse program.

FACTS, short for Family and Community Treatment Services, will offer clinical services aimed at diagnosing clients who may be drug abusers, as well as one-on-one outpatient counseling.

But within six months, Hartz said Friday, FACTS plans to open a fulltime treatment center in Hillsborough County patterned after Straight Inc., the popular but much criticized treatment program based in St. Petersburg.

**"WE WANT A specialized treatment center for the citizen who is chemically dependent,"** said Hartz, referring to the Clearwater clinic. "It will be an outpatient clinic designed to provide specialized services to any citizen of Tampa Bay."

Beginning next week, the program will open its doors to clients in a plain, wood-frame house at 313 Osceola St. The house is owned by the Salvation Army, which is making it available to FACTS for free.

FACTS is now being supported by a 14-member board of trustees of which Hartz is president. The board has spent \$2,300 of its own money to get the program started, said Hartz. Wednesday, FACTS was issued an annual operating license by the Florida Department of Health and Rehabilitative Services and can now solicit contributions.

Four of FACTS' board members had children enrolled in Straight at one time, said Hartz. And one of the board members, Alfred Brunette Jr., was on Straight's executive committee until he resigned last month for personal reasons.

But Hartz said Friday that FACTS is not out to compete with Straight and that the program was not created because of dissatisfaction with the St. Petersburg-based treatment center.

Straight, which operates three branches in Georgia, Virginia and Ohio, is currently being sued by more than half a dozen former clients in three different states who contend that they were either physically abused or illegally imprisoned by the program. In May, a 20-year-old former client who claimed in federal court that he was falsely imprisoned by Straight for more than four months last year won \$220,000 in damages.

**THE PROGRAM'S** Sarasota branch, meanwhile, was the target of a year-long investigation by the Sarasota state attorney's office into charges of client mistreatment. No criminal charges were filed, but Straight was forced to close its Sarasota branch last July because of declining client enrollment.

Most of the violations charged against Straight are alleged to have occurred after Hartz resigned in July 1982. Hartz, who declined comment at the time, said Friday he left because of "personal frustration." He said that his duties at Straight had become administrative and that he preferred working in therapy with clients.

That position, however, was taken over by Miller Newton, who after Hartz's resignation became clinical director in charge of therapy at all of Straight's branches. Newton himself resigned from Straight earlier this month to start a new drug counseling program near New York City. He has not been replaced.

"Look," said Hartz on Friday, "there are a lot of people who are discontented with that program (Straight). That's not saying it's right or wrong. It was not a motivation for doing this. . . . We're doing this for positive reasons."

FACTS will be staffed by Hartz, who has a master's degree in psychology, and by Susann Russell, an alcohol abuse counselor for the Salvation Army. Clients being diagnosed for drug abuse will be examined by a physician and by Dr. William Giesz, a clinical psychologist.

**THE PROGRAM** planned by FACTS for Hillsborough County will be similar to Straight but with "some philosophical differences," Hartz said.

As at Straight, peer pressure in large group therapy sessions will be used to change clients' attitudes about drug use. In a fashion similar to treatment at Alcoholics Anonymous, clients, as they improve, will progress through stages until they finally graduate.

The treatment, which at Straight lasts an average of 11 months, is considered by some experts to be the most successful cure for drug abuse available. But FACTS will be less restrictive of its clients and their parents than Straight is, Hartz said.

"We don't want a restrictive environment. We would want a kid to come in making a commitment to get help. If a kid wants to leave, Hey, let him go," Hartz said.

The program will also remain locally oriented, Hartz added. Unlike Straight, which plans to open a fifth branch in Orlando in January, FACTS does not plan to expand



JAMES HARTZ