

## State investigating Straight Inc. drug program

[CITY Edition]

St. Petersburg Times - St. Petersburg, Fla.

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Date: Apr 27, 1993

Start Page: 3.B

Section: TAMPA BAY AND STATE

Text Word Count: 450

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### Document Text

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Straight Inc. was under investigation by the state before the controversial adolescent drug treatment program closed its St. Petersburg center this weekend.

Elaine Fulton Jones, spokeswoman for the state Department of Health and Rehabilitative Services, confirmed the ongoing investigation, but said she was barred from providing any details. She also said she knew of nothing to indicate the investigation had anything to do with the center's closing.

Richard Bradbury, a former Straight client who has become an activist against the organization, said he initiated an investigation by complaining to the governor's office.

Bradbury said he complained that an Orlando adolescent drug treatment center with ties to Straight had apparently been allowed to operate without insurance. He said he also had provided the names of former Straight clients who said the program had abused them.

Straight officials did not return phone calls Monday, but they issued a short news release blaming the closing on the economy.

Although the local center has been closed, Straight's national headquarters will remain in St. Petersburg. The organization faxed a letter late Friday to HRS to announce the closing.

Although regulations generally require a 30-day notice, there is no penalty imposed on an organization that must shut its doors on short notice, Fulton Jones said.

Fulton Jones said the 16 remaining clients and their families had been offered the option of transferring to a Straight facility near Atlanta. She said nine of them accepted the offer, and one was being admitted to a different program. She said she was not sure about the others. The center had room for 100 clients.

Straight's letter to HRS blamed the closing on "the depressed economy and lack of financial resources of many families."

Pinellas court records indicate some other areas of financial concern:

An \$872,642 default judgment from California has been entered in Pinellas County courts against Straight Inc. The judgment was entered because Straight broke a lease for a building in Yorba Linda, Calif., said Charles Buchanan of Davis Partners in Newport Beach, Calif.

Straight has had to sue some former clients for nonpayment within the past year. In one case, Straight said a Gainesville woman owed \$14,251 for her daughter's treatment. She said she was bankrupt.

Straight closed its treatment center in a Washington, D.C., suburb last year. It blamed that closing on the recession, too. Virginia officials in 1991 announced plans not to renew the center's license there because Straight had allegedly failed to provide proper education for youths in the program, had improperly allowed clients to be physically restrained and had made mistakes in evaluating clients' problems, The Washington Post reported. The center then moved to Columbia, Md., before announcing plans to close last year.

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### Abstract (Document Summary)

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