Drug center holds onto client-restraint policy

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PINELLAS PARK - Straight Inc. administrators will continue allowing patients to restrain each other despite warnings from state officials that the practice may be dangerous.

Though a revision of the center's policy says only adult staff members will restrain uncontrollable clients in the future, Straight's vice president of operations said Tuesday that clients will continue to restrain clients in instances of self-defense.

The proposed revisions are in response to a Health and Rehabilitative Services (HRS) letter mailed Aug. 25 ordering Straight officials to revise their restraint policy before the center's operating license expires Sept. 6. Straight officials mailed the proposed revisions Tuesday.

If the revision is not acceptable, it is possible HRS will revoke the drug and alcohol treatment center's license, said HRS spokeswoman Elaine Fulton-Jones. "But Straight officials have been negotiating and cooperating with us, so we really don't expect that to be the case," she said.

The order, written by HRS program supervisor Martha Lenderman, said, ``The (revised) policy must specifically prohibit any physical restriction of movement of clients by other clients. It is the responsibility of staff, not clients, to protect clients from harm by other clients.``

Straight's vice president Page Peary said HRS officials have agreed that in instances of self-defense, clients will be allowed to restrain clients until an adult staff member can take over. He said this always has been Straight's practice, and that the HRS order is more in response to a change in Florida law.

While Ms. Fulton-Jones acknowledged that the law now requires specific language in such policies, she also said Peary may be misinterpreting the order.

Children restraining children "is our concern and has been our concern and continues to be our concern," she said.

"We've never prescribed (client-to-client) restraint," Perry said. "It has never been part of the treatment of Straight. However, if a young person slugs another young person, we have to stop that. But that's not restraint, that's self-defense."

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Abstract (Document Summary)

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