

This is a staff list for Midwest Academy in Keokuk, IA
(a.k.a. Premier Education Seminars, [World Wide Association of Specialty Programs](#) (and Schools), WWASP, WWASPS, Family Support Network, Resource Realizations)

This program is now closed.
(we are working to acquire the complete records for ALL years)

We advise current and/or former staff to report any abuses you may have witnessed while working at Midwest Academy. For information on your rights and how to take action, visit www.heal-online.org/blowthewhistle.htm. If you were fired or forced to resign because you opposed any illegal and/or unethical practices at Midwest Academy, you have the right to take action.

If you were harmed (family or survivor) by Midwest Academy, please contact info@heal-online.org if you remember the long-term employees and from which years. This will help! Also, if you recognize any of these staff as having worked at another program, [please send in any information about their past or present employment at other facilities](#) and/or cults.

Please don't place your loved one in [Midwest Academy](#) and rescue them if they are there now.

Name	Unit/Position	Additional Information
James Posz	Staff	Runs the group sessions and "anger management". Started at Midwest Academy in 2006. Posz is not a licensed mental health counselor, psychologist, nor therapist in Iowa. Posz is licensed solely as an independent social worker in Iowa and has been since 1998. Source: https://eservices.iowa.gov/ibpl/index.php?pgname=pub_verify Posz is not a licensed educator in Iowa. Source: https://www.iowaonline.state.ia.us/boee/controller.aspx Posz reportedly formerly worked as a kidnapper (transporter--arrives at family home in middle of night, wakes child, manhandles child (possibly using physical restraints) and drags them to unregulated and/or abusive facility) for WWASPS.
Ben Trane	Director/Owner	Trane is not a licensed mental health professional in Iowa. Source: https://eservices.iowa.gov/ibpl/index.php?pgname=pub_verify Trane is not a licensed educator in Iowa. Source: https://www.iowaonline.state.ia.us/boee/controller.aspx
Gary LaChapelle	Staff	Counseling and group leader. Started at Midwest Academy in 2004. LaChapelle is not a licensed mental health professional in Iowa. Source: https://eservices.iowa.gov/ibpl/index.php?pgname=pub_verify LaChapelle is not a licensed educator in Iowa. Source: https://www.iowaonline.state.ia.us/boee/controller.aspx
Julie Dorothy	Staff--Counselor	Has worked in the residential "treatment" industry for 23 years (unspecified programs). Began at Midwest Academy in 2008/2009. Dorothy is not a licensed mental health counselor, psychologist, nor therapist in Iowa. There is a Juliann Finnegan Dorothy (may be a different person) that is solely licensed as a master social worker and has been since 1997. Source: https://eservices.iowa.gov/ibpl/index.php?pgname=pub_verify Dorothy is not a licensed educator in Iowa. Source: https://www.iowaonline.state.ia.us/boee/controller.aspx
Tara Sparrow	Marketing	Sparrow is not a licensed mental health professional in Iowa. Source: https://eservices.iowa.gov/ibpl/index.php?pgname=pub_verify Sparrow is not a licensed educator in Iowa. Source: https://www.iowaonline.state.ia.us/boee/controller.aspx
Jordan Roberts	Boys' Shift Leader	Jordan A. Roberts (may be a different person) is licensed solely as an athletic coach. Source: https://www.iowaonline.state.ia.us/boee/controller.aspx Roberts is not a licensed mental health professional in Iowa. Source: https://eservices.iowa.gov/ibpl/index.php?pgname=pub_verify
S. Tyler McGhghy	Family Representative	Also Board Member of Keokuk Public Schools. McGhghy is not a licensed educator in Iowa. Source: https://www.iowaonline.state.ia.us/boee/controller.aspx McGhghy is not a licensed mental health professional in Iowa. Source: https://eservices.iowa.gov/ibpl/index.php?pgname=pub_verify
Katie Thompson	Academy Supervisor	HEAL requires the full name (including middle name) of Thompson to verify whether or not she is a licensed educator in Iowa. Source: https://www.iowaonline.state.ia.us/boee/controller.aspx Thompson is not a licensed mental health counselor, therapist, nor psychologist in Iowa.
Shasta Thurman	Team Leader	Thurman is not a licensed educator in Iowa. Source: https://www.iowaonline.state.ia.us/boee/controller.aspx Thurman is not a licensed mental health professional in Iowa. Source: https://eservices.iowa.gov/ibpl/index.php?pgname=pub_verify
Jared Stewart	Academy Assistant	Jared P. Stewart (may be a different person) is licensed solely as an athletic coach. Source: https://www.iowaonline.state.ia.us/boee/controller.aspx Stewart is not a licensed mental health professional in Iowa. Source: https://eservices.iowa.gov/ibpl/index.php?pgname=pub_verify Stewart reportedly no longer works for this program.
Jack Turner	Teacher	Jack W. Turner (may be a different person) has not been a licensed educator in Iowa since 2010. He was formerly licensed to teach 7th-8th grade only and he is not licensed to teach the following subjects: Art, Music, Ind. Art, P.E., Special Education, nor Reading. Source: https://www.iowaonline.state.ia.us/boee/controller.aspx Since Turner is listed solely as a teacher, HEAL chose only to check his educator credentials. Turner is not currently licensed in Iowa.
Debbie Chapman	President, Midwest's Parent Support Assoc.	There is a Deborah S. Chapman (may be a different person) that is a licensed educator in Iowa and she has been since 2011. Source: https://www.iowaonline.state.ia.us/boee/controller.aspx Chapman is not a licensed mental health professional in Iowa. Source: https://eservices.iowa.gov/ibpl/index.php?pgname=pub_verify
Nathan Teggerdine	Family Representative	Teggerdine is not a licensed educator in Iowa. Source: https://www.iowaonline.state.ia.us/boee/controller.aspx Teggerdine is not a licensed mental

		health professional in Iowa. Source: https://eservices.iowa.gov/ibpl/index.php?pgname=pub_verify Teggerdine reportedly no longer works for this program.
James Paulus	Asst. Dir. of Students	
Jessica Paulus	Family Rep.	
Mike Holker	Student Family Rep.	
Greg Warosh	Staff	
Mike Davis	Staff	
OTHER	OTHER	OTHER PROGRAM AFFILIATIONS: Academy at Ivy Ridge (Academy at Ivy Ridge) in New York Spring Creek Lodge in Montana Camas Ranch (for 18 year olds+ young men) in Montana Carolina Springs Academy in South Carolina Cross Creek Programs in Utah Also see: www.provotruthexposed.com for video testimony from a family defrauded by Cross Creek/WWASPS. Horizon Academy in Nevada Darrington Academy (reportedly closed) in Georgia Eagle Point Christian Academy in Mississippi Tranquility Bay in Jamaica (reportedly closed) High Impact in Mexico (reportedly closed) Casa by the Sea (reportedly closed)

*(Midwest Academy, like many other programs in this industry, keeps a "tight lid" on any specific information regarding their staff, qualifications, and practices. Please [contact us](#) with the names of any staff of which you have firsthand knowledge or experience. Thank you for your help.)

Midwest Academy is one of several WWASPS programs named as defendants in the current [class action lawsuit](#).

2 search warrants executed at Midwest Academy in Keokuk; press conference Friday By KHQA Thursday, January 28th 2016 2 search warrants executed at Midwest Academy in Keokuk 114shares [3850 shares](#). Alex Murphy, the Public Information Officer at the Iowa Department of Public Safety, has confirmed with KHQA that currently there are several officers at the Midwest Academy in Keokuk. Midwest Academy is a boarding school. Two search warrants were executed around 12:30 p.m. at the Midwest Academy campus, 2416 340th Street, and Midwest Treatment Center, 2818 Highway 218 in Montrose. The search warrants stem from an investigation of alleged sexual abuse involving a staff member of the Academy and a former student of the Academy. This is the only allegation that the Iowa DCI has received at this time involving the Midwest Academy. The Midwest Academy is a therapeutic boarding school that has students enrolled from around the country and the world. Agents continue to work together to thoroughly investigate this very complex, large area. The Iowa Department of Public Safety's (DPS) Iowa Division of Criminal Investigation (DCI) Major Crime Unit (MCU), Special Enforcement Operations Bureau (SEOB), Internet Crimes Against Children Task Force (ICAC), Iowa DCI Crime Lab Crime Scene Team, State Fire Marshal Division (SFM), Iowa State Patrol (ISP) Division of Intelligence and Fusion Center (DOI), along with the Federal Bureau of Investigation and the Lee County Sheriff's Office are all assisting in these executions. The Iowa Department of Human Services was also called to assist with this investigation. As a result, DHS investigators have currently conducted 28 assessments at the Midwest Academy. No charges have been filed or arrests made at this time. Agents continue to work together to thoroughly investigate this very complex, large area. A press conference was held at 10 a.m. in Montrose. KHQA's Michael Polarchy was there. Richard Rahn, special agent for Iowa Criminal Division says they've received phone calls from parents regarding Midwest Academy. Rahn says evidence was taken from both Midwest Academy locations in Keokuk and Montrose, Iowa. Polarchy talked with a former student of the Academy. See the entire interview tonight on KHQA news at 5, 6, & 10. Source: <http://khqa.com/news/local/happening-now-2-search-warrants-executed-at-midwest-academy-in-keokuk>

Raid on Keokuk boarding school in sexual abuse investigation By [Marcia Lense](#) Published: January 28, 2016, 4:20 pm KEOKUK, Iowa (AP) – Two search warrants have been executed at a southeast Iowa boarding school in response to an alleged sexual abuse investigation. The Iowa Division of Criminal Investigation, along with several other state agencies, announced Thursday that two search warrants have been executed that stemmed from an investigation of alleged sexual abuse between a staff member and former student of Midwest Academy, a therapeutic boarding school that has students enrolled from around the country and world. The first search warrant is being executed at the school's campus in Keokuk and the other is at a location affiliated with the academy in Montrose. Source: <http://kwqc.com/2016/01/28/raid-on-keokuk-boarding-school-in-sexual-abuse-investigation/>

Agents Investigating Abuse Claims at Iowa Boarding School By ryan j. foley, associated press IOWA CITY, Iowa — Jan 29, 2016, 4:41 PM ET 87 Shares [Email](#) Star 87 Shares [Email](#) Dozens of state and federal investigators are looking into allegations of [child abuse](#) at a privately-owned residential boarding school for troubled teens in southeastern Iowa, authorities said Friday. Agents descended on the Midwest Academy campus in Keokuk to serve a search warrant on Thursday and Friday, seizing documents and interviewing students and employees. The investigators also served a second warrant at the related Midwest Treatment Center in nearby Montrose. The Iowa Division of Criminal Investigation said the warrants were fully executed Friday and stemmed from a complaint alleging that a staff member of Midwest Academy sexually assaulted a resident. An academy employee has filed a lawsuit claiming she was fired last month for reporting the sexual abuse of a female student to authorities. But the investigation appears to have grown. The Iowa Department of Human Services was also involved and had conducted child abuse assessments of 28 students, authorities said. DCI officials did not release additional information about the alleged assault. No one had been arrested or charged as of Friday, but the DCI said agents from several teams "continue to work together to thoroughly investigate this very complex, large area." Several other agencies, including the county sheriff's office, were involved. The FBI, meanwhile, opened a separate but related federal inquiry into Midwest Academy, which bills itself as a therapeutic boarding school for children 12 and up with behavioral and academic problems. Parents from all over the country pay tuition to voluntarily send their children to attend and live at the academy, which is located near where Iowa's border touches Illinois and [Missouri](#). Iowa officials said no students were placed there by court order. Authorities urged anyone who had information about wrongdoing at the academy to contact the FBI, where a spokeswoman declined comment. DHS spokeswoman Amy McCoy said any founded abuse allegations would be shared with local prosecutors and could cause the agency to add the caretaker responsible to the state's child abuse registry. A former employee, Cheyenne Jerred, alleges

in a recent lawsuit that she became aware Nov. 28 that a female student at the school claimed she had been sexually assaulted and harassed by an employee. Jerred alleges that she encouraged the resident to report the abuse, and that Jerred also reported the case to DHS on Dec. 4. Jerred claims that she was fired the next day and told by academy leaders "that she should not have made the report nor encouraged the resident to report the sexual abuse." She is seeking damages for wrongful discharge and whistleblower retaliation. Jerred's attorney, Curt Dial, said it's hard to say how her case fits into the investigation. A woman who answered the phone at Midwest Academy said officials had no comment and hung up on a reporter. The president of the academy and the treatment center is listed as Benjamin Trane in state business filings, which show the academy was incorporated in 2003. McCoy said neither the academy nor the treatment center is licensed by DHS. Source: <http://abcnews.go.com/US/wireStory/agents-investigating-abuse-claims-iowa-boarding-school-36605090>

Who is behind Midwest Academy? The Register's Editorial 9:18 a.m. CST February 7, 2016 Buy Photo Register editorial(Photo: The Register)Buy Photo State and county records indicate that in 2003, a partnership run by Robert Lichfield of Utah bought the Midwest Academy property in Keokuk from Lee County, paying \$500,000 for it, and three years later transferred the deed to a limited liability company called Midwest Twister. Lee County tax records indicate that company's mailing address is the office of Lichfield's R & B Management company in Utah. Lichfield is the founder of the World Wide Association of Specialty Programs and Schools, a company that, according to court records, has had ties with at least 26 different boarding schools or treatment centers around the world, generating up to \$90 million in annual gross revenue. Midwest Academy consists of eight buildings, including residence halls, a gymnasium, a metal shop and an auditorium, with an assessed value of just under \$2 million. Between 2005 and 2012, five federal lawsuits were filed against WWASPS, Lichfield, R & B Management or their affiliates, each alleging some form of fraud or mistreatment of the students enrolled in the company's boarding schools or treatment centers. All of the cases were dismissed prior to trial. Allegations included unsanitary living conditions; physical, verbal and emotional abuse; and prolonged periods of isolation. One student's family claimed their son was subjected to sexual abuse, locked in a dog cage, forced to eat his own vomit, and ordered to use the same toothbrush with which he scrubbed toilets. **DES MOINES REGISTER Editorial: Who is looking out for these kids?** Court records indicate that in 2004 a counselor at WWASPS' Majestic Ranch Academy in Utah was convicted of child abuse in the form of neglect. In 2005, the WWASP-affiliated Academy at Ivy Ridge in Ogdensburg, N.Y., entered into an agreement with the state attorney general who had accused the school of "repeated and persistent fraudulent and illegal conduct" by handing out high school diplomas it had no legal authority to award. In 2007, the director of the Lichfield-affiliated Royal Gorge Academy in Colorado was convicted of false imprisonment and assault after being accused of mistreating students there. Also in 2007, the state of Nevada suspended the license of the WWASPS-affiliated Sky View Academy after confirming that two students at the school had sexually assaulted a third student, and that staff members were involved in "hazing" the students. Source: <http://www.desmoinesregister.com/story/opinion/editorials/2016/02/07/who-is-behind-midwest-academy/79867582/>

Former students say a private boarding school for troubled teenagers in Iowa routinely kept them in small concrete rooms for days and even weeks at a time By RYAN J. FOLEY Published: 2/13/16 11:44 am EST - Updated: 2/13/16 11:44 am EST [AAA](#) IOWA CITY, Iowa — A boarding school for troubled teenagers in Iowa that is being investigated by the FBI routinely kept pupils in small concrete "isolation boxes" for days or weeks and wouldn't let them out unless they sat in a specific posture for 24 hours, according to several former students. Six former students recently told The Associated Press about abuse they say they suffered while attending Midwest Academy in Keokuk, a city along the Mississippi River where Iowa borders Illinois and Missouri. They said the dark, cell-like punishment rooms were often filled with the sounds of students' screams and motivational recordings piped in through speakers. Surveillance cameras and staff members kept watch. "You spend your time pounding your head against the wall. You can't sleep because there is a lot of noise. A lot of girls like to scream in there. You basically look forward to bathroom breaks and those moments when you can get out of your box," said Emily Beaman, 17, of Wheaton, Illinois. Beaman said that after weeks of isolation, she got out in July only after cutting herself with a bottle cap and begging emergency responders to place her elsewhere. She said an earlier escape attempt failed. The students, who attended the academy between 2008 and last September, said they and their classmates mutilated themselves, hated the lack of activity and natural light and lost weight due to small meals. Some said they were scarred by the experience months or years later. Officers raided the academy Jan. 28 to investigate allegations that a staff member sexually assaulted a student. The investigation has since expanded to other possible criminal activity and abuse. Academy owner Ben Trane declined to comment on abuse claims at a news conference this month and didn't respond to AP interview requests. The academy's 90 students were removed and it has been temporarily closed. Three students interviewed by the AP said they had spoken with the FBI. Lauren Snyder, 17, of Springfield, Missouri, recalled begging to get out of isolation last year, after an employee turned up the audio recordings so loud that the speakers blew out and were making a screeching noise. "It was complete hell," she said. Snyder said she eventually attempted suicide by tying a sock around her neck, and was sent to a psychiatric hospital the next day. After being placed in isolation her first day for refusing to take out a belly button ring, Sarah Wilson said she made a point not to return. "I knew I would lose my mind in there," said Wilson, 20, of Rock Island, Illinois. The academy says it provides "struggling teens with a safe, structured and disciplined environment." Many middle- and upper-class families from Midwest states and beyond sent misbehaving teenagers to the academy, which costs roughly \$5,000 per month. Trane has said the students were fortunate to have its staff in their lives. Other supporters include parents who say the program saved teens' lives. As a privately funded school without state-ordered placements, the academy didn't require a license to operate and was otherwise unregulated. "It flew under the radar," said Drake University professor Jerry Foxhoven, an Iowa juvenile law expert who'd never heard of the program previously. Foxhoven said long-term isolation can be very damaging for juveniles, exacerbating mental illnesses and causing lasting effects that may include post-traumatic stress disorder. He said parents wouldn't be allowed to keep children in isolation for weeks without facing abuse allegations, and the academy shouldn't, either. Former students said the school kept parents in the dark by strictly limiting and monitoring their communications. Only now, they say, are some of their claims being taken seriously. A typical academy day started with physical education, followed by hours of online-based school work and meetings. Former students said the goal for many was to avoid an "out-of-school suspension" for violating rules, recalling that fighting and insubordination were some reasons they were put in isolation. "That is the worst I've ever been treated," said Shaun McCarthy, 19, of Avoca, Iowa, who said he was lucky to go into isolation only twice. "It's not humane." McCarthy complained about the small meals and lack of stimulation, but said it was worse for others. Students who reach "level 3" in the academy's points-based advancement system help staff watch the boxes. In that role, McCarthy said he saw one girl puncture her finger, draw on the walls with her blood and go to the bathroom on the room's floor before staff intervened. No one else would clean up the bodily fluids, so it fell to him. To get out, students said they had to sit in a certain way for 24 hours. Sometimes, lengthy essays were required. "They use seclusion preemptively and as a punitive measure," said former student said James Farris, 24, a nursing assistant in St. Petersburg, Florida. "This is illegal in public health care settings, yet somehow they get away with it." Farris recalled waking up in an isolation box on his 18th birthday and demanding his release, screaming when it took hours to accomplish. He said he had nightmares for years. Rachel Adkisson, 19, of Des Moines, said she was put in isolation for refusing to run during gym and had lost 20 pounds when she left two weeks later. She said she told the FBI about another girl who tried to kill herself by tying her bra strap around her neck. "It's like torture," Adkisson said. "You think it's never going to end. You think, how can a human do this to another person?" Source: <http://www.therepublic.com/view/story/2291af0614174c58b3b3aa94a6d2b130/US--Boarding-School-Abuse-Investigation>

FBI probes alleged abuse at Iowa boarding school for troubled teens Former students say they were subjected to forced isolation and unpleasant noises at the since-closed Midwest Academy. By RYAN J. FOLEY The Associated Press Share 7 Comments Read Article IOWA CITY, Iowa — A boarding school for troubled teenagers in Iowa that is being investigated by the FBI routinely kept pupils in small concrete "isolation boxes" for days or weeks and wouldn't let them out unless they sat in a specific posture for 24 hours, according to several former students. Six former students told The Associated Press about abuse they say they suffered while attending Midwest Academy in Keokuk, Iowa. They said the dark, cell-like punishment rooms were often filled with the sounds of students' screams and motivational recordings piped in through speakers. Surveillance cameras and staff

members kept watch. Ben Trane Shaun McCarthy Search photos available for purchase: [Photo Store](#) → “You spend your time pounding your head against the wall. You can’t sleep because there is a lot of noise. A lot of girls like to scream in there. You basically look forward to bathroom breaks and those moments when you can get out of your box,” said Emily Beaman, 17, of Wheaton, Illinois. Beaman said that after weeks of isolation, she got out in July only after cutting herself with a bottle cap and begging emergency responders to place her elsewhere. The students, who attended the academy between 2008 and last September, said they and their classmates mutilated themselves, hated the lack of activity and natural light, and lost weight due to small meals. Some said they were scarred by the experience months or years later. Officers raided the academy Jan. 28 to investigate allegations that a staff member sexually assaulted a student. The investigation has since expanded to other possible criminal activity and abuse. Academy owner Ben Trane didn’t respond to AP interview requests. The academy’s 90 students were removed and it has been temporarily closed. Three students told the AP they had spoken with the FBI. NOISE TORTURE Lauren Snyder, 17, of Springfield, Missouri, recalled begging to get out of isolation last year, after an employee turned up the audio recordings so loud that the speakers were screeching. “It was complete hell,” she said. Snyder said she eventually attempted suicide by tying a sock around her neck, and was sent to a psychiatric hospital the next day. After being placed in isolation her first day for refusing to take out a belly button ring, Sarah Wilson said she made a point not to return. “I knew I would lose my mind in there,” said Wilson, 20, of Rock Island, Illinois. The academy says it provides “struggling teens with a safe, structured and disciplined environment.” Many middle- and upper- class families from Midwest states and beyond sent misbehaving teenagers to the academy, which costs roughly \$5,000 per month. Trane has said the students were fortunate to have its staff in their lives. LARGELY UNREGULATED As a privately funded school without state-ordered placements, the academy was largely unregulated. “It flew under the radar,” said Drake University professor Jerry Foxhoven, an Iowa juvenile law expert. Foxhoven said long-term isolation can be very damaging for juveniles, exacerbating mental illnesses and causing lasting effects that may include post-traumatic stress disorder. He said parents wouldn’t be allowed to keep children in isolation for weeks without facing abuse allegations, and the academy shouldn’t, either. Former students said the school kept parents in the dark by strictly limiting and monitoring their communications. Only now, they say, are some of their claims being taken seriously. A typical academy day started with physical education, followed by hours of online-based school work and meetings. Former students said the goal for many was to avoid an “out-of-school suspension” for violating rules, recalling that fighting and insubordination were some reasons they were put in isolation. “That is the worst I’ve ever been treated,” said Shaun McCarthy, 19, of Avoca, Iowa, who said he was lucky to go into isolation only twice. “It’s not humane.” To get out, students said they had to sit in a certain way for 24 hours. Sometimes, lengthy essays were required. “They use seclusion preemptively and as a punitive measure,” said former student said James Farris, 24, a nursing assistant in St. Petersburg, Florida. “This is illegal in public health care settings, yet somehow they get away with it.” Source: <http://www.pressherald.com/2016/02/13/fbi-probes-alleged-abuse-at-iowa-boarding-school-for-troubled-teens/>

Iowa teen boarding facility under investigation for sexual assault against student Posted 4:51 pm, February 13, 2016, by [Sarah Tisinger](#) Iowa teen boarding facility under investigation for sexual assault against student KEOKUK, Iowa (AP) — Federal, state and county law enforcement officials have returned to a southeast Iowa boarding school for troubled teens following abuse allegations. The Keokuk Daily Gate reports officials with the FBI and the Iowa Division of Criminal Investigation returned to Midwest Academy on Thursday to execute a search warrant for records following an initial search of the academy on January 28th and 29th. An FBI officer said a U-Haul truck parked outside the building would be filled with records from the facility. In January, dozens of state and local officers served a search warrant over two days at the academy in response to a complaint alleging a resident was sexually assaulted by a staff member. Another staff member claims she was fired for reporting a sexual assault to authorities. Source: <http://wqad.com/2016/02/13/iowa-teen-boarding-facility-under-investigation-for-sexual-assault-against-student/>

Midwest Academy: 5 Fast Facts You Need to Know Published 1:20 pm EST, February 13, 2016 Updated 1:28 pm EST, February 13, 2016 [1 Comment](#) By [Stephanie Dube Dwilson](#) 2k [Share](#) 71 [Tweet](#) [Share](#) [Email](#) [Follow](#) Midwest Academy is accused of keeping students in isolation boxes. It may be connected to the World Wide Association of Specialty Programs and Schools (WWASPS), which has been the subject of many abuse and neglect lawsuits. Midwest, whose property was bought by WWASP founder Robert Lichfield, has denied the connection. (Google Maps) Former students at Midwest Academy in Keokuk, Iowa, are accusing school administrators of keeping them in isolation, cell-like rooms for days and hours on end, in conditions that felt like torture. The boarding school for troubled teens may be part of the controversial WWASPS (World Wide Association of Specialty Programs and Schools), which has faced lawsuits before for fraud and abuse of students. Here’s what you need to know. 1. Midwest Academy Is Accused of Locking Students in Tiny Isolation Boxes for Days or More (Google Maps) Midwest Academy, located in Keokuk, Iowa, came under scrutiny after allegations that a staff member had sexually assaulted a student. The school was raided in late January and temporarily closed, [WNCN reported](#). Six former students have since come forward with allegations of abuse. They said they had to sit in small, isolation rooms in a specific posture for 24 hours on end. The rooms were harshly lit and filled with sounds of screaming or motivational recordings. All the noise makes it impossible to sleep, one student said, and you only get out for bathroom breaks, WNCN reported. Some students are kept in isolation for weeks, former students said. One girl said she only got out because she cut herself with a bottle cap and begged for medical help. Another student said the loudspeakers made loud, screeching noises and it was so terrible that she tried to commit suicide in her cell. Another student said he saw a girl draw on the wall with her own blood because of the conditions. An Iowa juvenile law expert [told WNCN](#) that this type of treatment can be especially damaging for youth who have mental illness and can lead to PTSD. The school itself hasn’t yet commented. [But WGEN spoke with](#) Tyler McGhyghy, who worked at Midwest for seven years, and he said the accusations were false. He said the school had an extensive protocol to limit interactions between adults and minors. 2. The School Says It Provides Structure and Discipline for Struggling Teens According to Midwest Academy’s [website](#), it’s a “therapeutic boarding school” that helps provide “struggling teens with a safe, structured, and disciplined environment.” It says that its seminars, therapy, and academic programs help teens excel. [WNCN reported](#) that because the school is privately funded and has no state-ordered placements, it doesn’t require a license to operate and is pretty much unregulated. It’s not designated a psychiatric medical health institution or a residential treatment center, so it’s not subject to relevant Iowa codes and oversight. It’s not registered as a boarding home either, 3. Midwest Academy May Be Connected to the Frequently Sued WWASPS, But Denies This Connection Midwest Academy (Google Maps) [The Des Moines Register](#) did a little digging and discovered that Midwest Academy’s property was purchased in 2003 by a partnership run by Robert Lichfield of Utah. He later transferred the deed to a limited liability company called Midwest Twister. That company’s mailing address is Lichfield’s R&B Management company in Utah, The Des Moines Register reported. Lichfield is the founder of the World Wide Association of Specialty Programs and Schools, a company that has ties to 26 or more boarding schools and treatment centers around the world and brings in about \$90 million in gross revenue every year. Meanwhile, Midwest Academy denies any affiliation with WWASPS. [On a YouTube video](#) the school posted (posted under Fact #2), one commenter complained about their association with WWASPS. Midwest’s YouTube account owner wrote, four years ago: “Just to clarify with you we have never and are NOT affiliated or associated with the WWASP organization. However, we were utilizing marketing services and billing services, that were owned by the same owners of WWASP.” The commenter went on to say that when the association began to negatively affect their school, they terminated the marketing services and distanced themselves from the WWASP name. However, [a New York Times article from 2013](#) stated that Lichfield, family members, and business partners have financial interests in many schools through a network of limited liability companies and property ownership. These entities may oversee marketing, business, and educational services for many schools and get up to one-third of the school’s gross revenues. One anonymous owner of a school said that even after ownership was transferred to him, Lichfield still controlled the money flow. This 2013 article listed Midwest Academy as one of the programs with ties to Lichfield, according to testimony and business filings. 4. WWASPS Has Been Sued and Accused of Abuse on Numerous Occasions WWASPS has come under intense legal scrutiny and is the subject of many complaints. [According to The Des Moines Register](#), WWASPS was the subject of five federal lawsuits between 2005 and 2013, each claiming fraud or abuse of students at its boarding schools. The cases were dismissed prior to trial. Accusations included unsanitary living conditions, isolation, sexual abuse, and being locked in a dog cage. In 2004, a

counselor at a WWASPS school in Utah was convicted of child abuse. In 2007, a director of a Lichfield-affiliated school in Colorado was convicted of false imprisonment and assault of students. Another WWASPS school in Nevada lost its license after two students were sexually assaulted in 2007. [An article run by The New York Times in 2013](#) brought up many of these accusations, saying that the Utah-based “tough love” boarding school was forced to close almost 24 programs because of child abuse claims. Lichfield told The New York Times that he no longer owned any of the schools and didn’t know about any children being harmed. He said he only supplied business and educational services for more than a decade. But he did say that such accusations are common when working with troubled adolescents: All schools working with disturbed teens have a few students who are angry and manipulative, with long histories of lying and dishonesty, who will make allegations...” He said the satisfaction rate for the past 20 years was about 96 percent. However, many people dispute those numbers. In fact, a website called [WWASP Survivors](#) has been set up to give support to alumni. An article written by [The Huffington Post](#) in 2011, when discussing a class-action suit by 350 former students against WWASPS, quoted the lawsuit as saying: In many instances, the abuse could be accurately described as torture of children...” 5. Online Reviews of the Expensive Midwest Academy Are Mixed Online reviews for Midwest Academy on Google are mixed. (Google Reviews) According to WNCN, Midwest Academy costs about \$5,000 a month to attend. On the website [Teen Revitalization](#), which advertises Midwest Academy, month-to-month rates are \$3,490, prepaid monthly fees are \$3,190, and registration is \$2,000. Although Teen Revitalization doesn’t name Midwest as the school on its website, [this school newsletter](#) shows Midwest as being one of their schools. The online reviews for the academy are mixed. One former student wrote on Google that when she first got there she hated it, but she grew in ways unimaginable as she progressed through the system. A mom said she had great success when she sent two of her kids to the school. Another reviewer said that the 14 months she spent there were the worst of her life. The Google reviews continue the same, alternating between 5 stars and 1 star. Source: <http://heavy.com/news/2016/02/midwest-academy-keokuk-iowa-wwasp-robert-lichfield-world-wide-association-of-specialty-schools-lawsuit-student-abuse/>

Ex-Students Say They Were Kept In Cells, Screams Piped In Through Speakers [World | Associated Press](#) | Updated: February 15, 2016 10:50 IST
EMAIL PRINT COMMENTS A Uhaul is parked outside Midwest Academy in Keokuk, Iowa. Federal, state and county law enforcement officials have returned to the southeast Iowa boarding school for troubled teens following abuse allegations. IOWA CITY: A boarding school for troubled teenagers in Iowa that is being investigated by the FBI routinely kept pupils in small concrete "isolation boxes" for days or weeks and wouldn't let them out unless they sat in a specific posture for 24 hours, according to several former students. Six former students recently told The Associated Press about abuse they say they suffered while attending Midwest Academy in Keokuk, a city along the Mississippi River where Iowa borders Illinois and Missouri. They said the dark, cell-like punishment rooms were often filled with the sounds of students' screams and motivational recordings piped in through speakers. Surveillance cameras and staff members kept watch. "You spend your time pounding your head against the wall. You can't sleep because there is a lot of noise. A lot of girls like to scream in there. You basically look forward to bathroom breaks and those moments when you can get out of your box," said Emily Beaman, 17, of Wheaton, Illinois. Beaman said that after weeks of isolation, she got out in July only after cutting herself with a bottle cap and begging emergency responders to place her elsewhere. She said an earlier escape attempt failed. The students, who attended the academy between 2008 and last September, said they and their classmates mutilated themselves, hated the lack of activity and natural light, and lost weight due to small meals. Some said they were scarred by the experience months or years later. Officers raided the academy on Jan. 28 to investigate allegations that a staff member sexually assaulted a student. The investigation has since expanded to other possible criminal activity and abuse. Academy owner Ben Trane declined to comment on abuse claims at a news conference this month and didn't respond to AP interview requests. The academy's 90 students were removed and it has been temporarily closed. Three students interviewed by the AP said they had spoken with the FBI. Lauren Snyder, 17, of Springfield, Missouri, recalled begging to get out of isolation last year, after an employee turned up the audio recordings so loud that the speakers blew out and were making a screeching noise. "It was complete hell," she said. Snyder said she eventually attempted suicide by tying a sock around her neck, and was sent to a psychiatric hospital the next day. After being placed in isolation her first day for refusing to take out a belly button ring, Sarah Wilson said she made a point not to return. "I knew I would lose my mind in there," said Wilson, 20, of Rock Island, Illinois. The academy says it provides "struggling teens with a safe, structured and disciplined environment." Many middle- and upper- class families from Midwest states and beyond sent misbehaving teenagers to the academy, which costs roughly \$5,000 per month. Trane has said the students were fortunate to have its staff in their lives. Other supporters include parents who say the program saved teens' lives. As a privately funded school without state-ordered placements, the academy didn't require a license to operate and was otherwise unregulated. "It flew under the radar," said Drake University professor Jerry Foxhoven, an Iowa juvenile law expert who'd never heard of the program previously. Foxhoven said long-term isolation can be very damaging for juveniles, exacerbating mental illnesses and causing lasting effects that may include post-traumatic stress disorder. He said parents wouldn't be allowed to keep children in isolation for weeks without facing abuse allegations, and the academy shouldn't, either. Former students said the school kept parents in the dark by strictly limiting and monitoring their communications. Only now, they say, are some of their claims being taken seriously. A typical academy day started with physical education, followed by hours of online-based school work and meetings. Former students said the goal for many was to avoid an "out-of-school suspension" for violating rules, recalling that fighting and insubordination were some reasons they were put in isolation. "That is the worst I've ever been treated," said Shaun McCarthy, 19, of Avoca, Iowa, who said he was lucky to go into isolation only twice. "It's not humane." Shaun McCarthy, of Avoca, Iowa, poses for a photo in Omaha McCarthy complained about the small meals and lack of stimulation, but said it was worse for others. Students who reach "level 3" in the academy's points-based advancement system help staff watch the boxes. In that role, McCarthy said he saw one girl puncture her finger, draw on the walls with her blood and go to the bathroom on the room's floor before staff intervened.. To get out, students said they had to sit in a certain way for 24 hours. Sometimes, lengthy essays were required. Rachel Adkisson, 19, of Des Moines, said she was put in isolation for refusing to run during gym and had lost 20 pounds (9 kilograms) when she left two weeks later. She said she told the FBI about another girl who tried to kill herself by tying her bra strap around her neck. "It's like torture," Adkisson said. "You think it's never going to end. You think, how can a human do this to another person?" (This story has not been edited by NDTV staff and is auto-generated from a syndicated feed.) Source: <http://www.ndtv.com/world-news/ex-students-say-they-were-kept-in-cells-screams-piped-in-through-speakers-1277426>

Students say they were locked up, starved, at pricey boarding school under FBI investigation Published time: 14 Feb, 2016 21:18 Edited time: 14 Feb, 2016 21:22 [Get short URL](#) © ParentHelp911 / YouTube Former students at the \$60,000-a-year Midwest Academy – a “therapeutic school” for “struggling teens” – claim they were placed in solitary confinement, forced to listen to round-the-clock pumped-in noise, and denied sufficient food as punishment. The school, established in 2003, is located in Keokuk on the corner where Iowa, Missouri, and Illinois meet, and vows to provide “a safe, comfortable, structured and disciplined environment.” With monthly fees averaging between \$3,000 and \$5,000 Midwest offers a fast, if expensive, academic boot camp for teenagers, who have mostly been kicked out of other schools - with most pupils staying for less than 18 months. It hit the headlines last week after the FBI conducted a two-day raid on the institution resulting in an investigation being opened into sexual abuse, which was later expanded to cover other potential forms of maltreatment. Lee County Sheriff’s Department has told the Des Moines Register that there have been 80 calls to the police from the academy in the past three years, with five alleged instances of sexual abuse. The Sheriff has also stated that 19 complaints were “founded” – suggesting there was, in fact, evidence of illegal behavior. The incident that sparked the raid was a report from a student that she had been assaulted by a member of staff. Sixty staff have been laid off by the owners, and 90 students sent home or allocated to state-run care homes, but several current and former attendees agreed to speak to Associated Press, as well as testify to investigators. Normal sleeping dorms at Midwest Academy © ParentHelp911 / YouTube ‘Inhumane treatment’ “They use seclusion preemptively and as a punitive measure. This is illegal in public health care settings, yet somehow they get away with it,” said James Farris, 24, a nursing assistant and former student. According to Farris and others, students were placed in small concrete “isolation boxes” for at least 24 hours at a time, and could only escape by sitting still in a set position or

writing an essay admitting their culpability for the offence that had landed them in the cell. Several students said that the punishment could be extended to several weeks. While they were confined, motivational recordings would be blasted into their cell through speakers, though on at least one occasion the speakers blew out, subjecting the detainees to white noise similar to that employed at Guantanamo. "You spend your time pounding your head against the wall. You can't sleep because there is a lot of noise. A lot of girls like to scream in there. You basically look forward to bathroom breaks and those moments when you can get out of your box," said Emily Beamon, a 17-year-old who cut herself with a bottle cap to be relocated to the medical unit. The secure unit was watched over by staff, surveillance cameras, and students deemed trustworthy enough. Shaun McCarthy, 19, described seeing a girl puncture her finger and relieve herself on the floor of her cell before anyone came to the rescue, leaving him to clean up. "That is the worst I've ever been treated. It's not humane," said McCarthy of his own two stays in the facility. Initial confinement could be prompted by relatively trivial offenses that went against the zero-tolerance ethic of the academy. Twenty-year-old Sarah Wilson was interned for refusing to remove a belly button ring, while Rachel Adkisson, 19, refused to go for a gym run, and subsequently lost 20 pounds in her cell in two weeks, after intentionally being allotted meager food portions. Advertisement: Replay Ad Ads by ZINC "It's like torture. You think it's never going to end. You think, how can a human do this to another person?" said the former student, who said she had personally witnessed a suicide attempt. With many of the students already psychologically vulnerable, the harsh treatment often resulted in trauma, with some interviewees claiming they are still haunted by nightmares of the facility. Reports have revealed that, as the Midwest Academy was entirely privately funded and had no license either as an educational or psychiatric institution, it had not been subject to any systematic checks throughout its history. The Iowa Department of Education has stated that claims about official accreditation on the Midwest Academy website are "very concerning." "We consider the students at Midwest Academy to be home-schooled," said state Education Department spokeswoman Staci Hupp. Links with previous abuse scandal schools The academy was founded by Bob Lichfield, the owner of the notorious World Wide Association of Specialty Programs and Schools (WWASPS), an umbrella group that once operated more than two dozen ultra-strict schools in the US, Mexico, and the Caribbean. All but a handful have been shut down due to abuse allegations and licensing shortcomings, with the company having to change its name due to a steady stream of lawsuits, one of which specifically involved Midwest students. Current owner Ben Trane has said that Midwest has severed all links with WWASPS, but has refused to or reveal its ownership structure, or give media interviews. However, another teacher, Tyler McGhghy, who had worked at the facility for seven years, dismissed the allegations out of hand. Tyler McGhghy © Keokuk School Board "The accusation of physical and emotional abuse is absolutely false. Like in public education, people have bad experiences. But, it did shock me," he told local NBC affiliate WGEM. "Talking about the kids being manipulative and dishonest, that's probably 80 percent of the reason they're there. They've lied to their parents, they've been dishonest to their parents," summed up the teacher, who said that the school observed strict protocols for student-staff relations, specifically to avoid the kind of legal fallout that has now occurred. (WWASPS LIES--NOT THE KIDS) Source: <https://www.rt.com/usa/332442-midwest-academy-solitary-abuse/>

DHS chief: Midwest Academy used outdated methods [Lee Rood](#), lrood@dmreg.com 6:14 p.m. CST February 18, 2016 In this photo taken on Thursday, Feb. 11, 2016, a Uhaul is parked outside Midwest Academy in Keokuk, Iowa. Federal, state and county law enforcement officials have returned to the southeast Iowa boarding school for troubled teens following abuse allegations. The Keokuk Daily Gate reports officials with the FBI and the Iowa Division of Criminal Investigation returned to Midwest Academy on Thursday to execute a search warrant for records following an initial search of the academy on Jan. 28 and 29. (Photo: Cindy Iutzi/Daily Gate City via AP) Iowa Department of Human Services Director Charles Palmer said Thursday that Midwest Academy used outdated methods to deal with troubled teens that would not be used by licensed facilities in Iowa today. "That boot-camp or military style or approach has become less and less popular," Palmer said. "I would hope we've gone beyond that." Students at the school reported the [frequent use of isolation](#) and restraint. Several reported being forced to sit or stand in certain positions for extended periods of time. Heads were shaved, shoes were taken, long sleeves and pants were prohibited. Students were initially not allowed contact with family, or, at times, even to look at others. Zachary Devereaux (Photo: Special to the Register) Zachary Devereaux, 16, who lived at the school from November 2013 to November 2014, said there was no way a student with no privileges could make a child abuse call or report. Devereaux said he was sent to an isolation cell 11 times, once for reporting bad food and rodents in the kitchen. The concrete isolation rooms for boys sometimes had no bedding or pillows. He says he once spent six days in one — with static piped in over speakers. "There were multiple times I was restrained with cuts and bruises and my mom had no clue about it," said Devereaux, who lives in New Jersey. The Iowa Division of Criminal Investigation [conducted a search at the academy](#) in Keokuk and at a Montrose site in late January after a student reported she was sexually assaulted. The FBI was called in to help with the investigation, and the state attorney general and the U.S. Attorney's office have been consulted as the case progresses. MORE: [Documents: Midwest Academy owner is sex abuse suspect](#) Records released by the Lee County sheriff's office at the Register's request show five reports of sexual offenses at the boarding school in the past three years and [73 other incidents](#) ranging from runaways to assaults on staff and students to suicide attempts. DHS staff is reviewing legislation by Sen. Herman Quirmbach of Ames that would require any facility like the Keokuk school to be licensed and overseen by the departments of human services, education and inspections and appeals, he said. "I think he is attempting to address a void," Palmer said of Quirmbach. "I do believe there should be oversight of this type of facility." Palmer said he realized parents are having a difficult time finding places anywhere in the country to house children who may have severe behavior and mental health issues. "I think that's why you had people coming (to Midwest Academy) from all over the country." [DES MOINES REGISTER Lee County sheriff: Midwest Academy needs oversight](#) The state agency, he said, is trying to build more capacity and services for troubled youth, providing enhanced rates to cover the cost of certain services they may need, he said. Requiring state licensure of any such facility would change its nature, he said. "I would not even say we would license a place" like Midwest under existing rules, he said. EDITORIALS: [Who is looking out for these kids? Who is behind Midwest Academy?](#) If Midwest had been licensed, DHS would be referring children there and providing funding, so it would be monitoring programs, he said. The eyes of more workers would be on the children served. DHS staffers have reviewed the 19 "founded" abuse cases at Midwest, and Palmer said he believes those cases were handled appropriately. The outcomes were shared with law enforcement. "We're not in the determining of criminality business," he said. Source: <http://www.desmoinesregister.com/story/news/2016/02/18/dhs-chief-midwest-academy-used-outdated-methods/80551784/>

Incidents at Boarding School Often Delayed, Sheriff Says By Associated Press | Posted: Thu 10:31 AM, Feb 18, 2016 KEOKUK, Iowa (AP) Lee County sheriff's records show that dozens of reports about runaways, assaults and suicide attempts by troubled teens at Midwest Academy in Keokuk often were not made until days after they occurred. Sheriff Jim Sholl says that in some of the incidents, law enforcement was notified only after the state Human Services Department got involved. The Des Moines Register says (<http://dmreg.co/IPTmNF3>) most of the 73 reports released by the Lee County Sheriff's Office were not criminal in nature. Officers raided the boarding school for troubled teenagers and a nearby treatment center on Jan. 28 and Jan. 29 to investigate allegations that a staff member sexually assaulted a student. **The facilities have since been closed.** Academy owner Ben Trane didn't immediately return a call Thursday from The Associated Press. <http://www.kcrg.com/content/news/Incidents-at-Boarding-School-Often-Delayed-Sheriff-Says-369280811.html>

Lawsuit Accuses Iowa Boarding School of Culture of Abuse By ryan j. foley, associated press IOWA CITY, Iowa — Mar 15, 2016, 3:08 PM ET 26 Shares [Email](#) Star 26 Shares [Email](#) Six former students have filed a lawsuit alleging that an Iowa boarding school kept them in isolation boxes for days, allowed sexual harassment and abuse, provided inadequate medical care and kept filthy conditions. Several of the students' parents also joined the lawsuit filed Monday against the now-closed Midwest Academy, in Keokuk, and its owner, Benjamin Trane. The parents allege the high-priced private school for troubled teens made false representations to persuade them to enroll their children and then failed to "provide appropriate and quality education, medical and therapeutic services." "My role here is to try to use the law to bring some fairness and justice to this horrible situation," said one of the plaintiffs' attorneys, David Ferleger, of [Pennsylvania](#). He announced the lawsuit on Tuesday in Keokuk, a [Mississippi](#) River community of about 11,000 residents that borders Illinois and Missouri. Trane and the school are the subjects of a state and FBI investigation of wide-ranging alleged

abuse, including that Trane sexually abused a female student and that the school kept students in prolonged detention in small, concrete isolation rooms. The school, which had operated without state oversight since 2003, abruptly closed after a law enforcement raid in late January, sending its nearly 100 students home and laying off 60 workers. "Midwest Academy maintains a culture of punishment, confinement, coercion, physical confrontation and violence. It seeks to break the will of the vulnerable children entrusted to its care through a harsh and inflexible indoctrination system," according to the lawsuit, which was first reported by the Des Moines Register. George B. Jones, an attorney for Trane and Midwest Academy, said Tuesday that he needed to review the allegations before deciding whether to comment. A male student alleges that he was sexually abused by other students in April 2015, an incident he reported to the Department of Human Services. The lawsuit contends that he was victimized again the next month after the academy "failed to separate the children involved from one another." The lawsuit accuses Trane of seeking to interfere with the abuse investigation by taking the boy out to lunch, offering to buy him books and telling him, "I can make sure you get things." The department ruled in August that the abuse allegations were founded for "failure to provide proper supervision" and that Trane would be considered the perpetrator, according to the lawsuit. A department spokeswoman said [child abuse](#) findings are confidential, as are any appeals. Trane also taught a class on body image for girls, who were required to fully or partly undress in the academy's uniform room, look into mirrors and then come out and tell Trane about their body types, the lawsuit alleges. One female student says she was humiliated by that requirement. Parents say they were not told how the brightly lit isolation rooms were routinely used as punishment. Students were required to sit on the cement floor for 19 hours in a specific posture before getting a chair, and had to spend a minimum of 24 hours in the rooms, which were often "filthy with urine and feces," the lawsuit alleges. Students were fed a minimal diet while in the rooms that wasn't close to the amount of calories they needed, it says. Several students say they didn't receive necessary medical care in a timely fashion, and that rats and mice were a constant presence. The lawsuit includes 13 claims, including fraud and educational malpractice, and seeks unspecified damages. Source: <http://abcnews.go.com/US/wireStory/lawsuit-accuses-iowa-boarding-school-culture-abuse-37667100>

Bisignano: Setting standards for boarding schools State Sen. Tony Bisignano 3:45 a.m. CDT March 16, 2016 State Sen. Tony Bisignano The Iowa Senate voted to increase state oversight of boarding schools like the now-closed Midwest Academy in southeast Iowa. Unfortunately, the Republican House didn't take up this important protection for students. Midwest Academy and its founder are under investigation by local, state and federal authorities for child abuse allegations. Officials from the departments of Education, Human Services and Inspections & Appeals told legislators that current law allows such private facilities to operate with little oversight. When children live at a private or state-run residential facility, it must adhere to safety regulations. Although there are only a handful of these facilities in Iowa, the health and safety of the students matter just as much as that of students attending any other school or receiving treatment at any other facility. According to Midwest Academy's [website](#), it's a "therapeutic boarding school" that has no state-ordered placements, and doesn't require a license to operate. It was unregulated by the state. [SF 2235](#) would have established basic certification and oversight for such facilities by allowing state authorities to investigate them and ensure the well-being of their students. The bill set minimum standards for the safety, health and education of children, protecting them from mistreatment, abuse and neglect, and appropriate use of seclusion, restraint or other restrictive interventions. Background and records checks of those providing care would also have been required. Under the bill, an approved children's residential facility would provide education and appropriate services by contracting with the local school district or an accredited nonpublic school, or becoming accredited as a nonpublic school. In addition, the facility would be required to publish a description of its services online and in brochures, and include fees and return policies in promotional, advertising and marketing materials. STATE SEN. TONY BISIGNANO, D-Des Moines, represents District 17. The district includes portions of central and south Des Moines. He can be reached at 281-3371 or tony.bisignano@legis.iowa.gov. Source: <http://www.desmoinesregister.com/story/opinion/2016/03/16/tony-bisignano-midwest-academy-boarding-schools/81849200/>

Iowa Boarding School Accused of Sexual Harassment and Abuse by Former Students By [Staff Writer](#) Mar 16, 2016 09:59 AM EDT Tags [Iowa Boarding School](#), [Midwest Academy in Iowa](#), [Iowa boarding school sexual harassment](#), [Benjamin Trane](#), [Iowa sexual abuse cases](#) image: <http://images.lawyerherald.com/data/images/full/30333/iowa.png?w=600> Iowa(Photo : Interesting on the Planet/ YouTube) Six former students have filed a lawsuit against an Iowa Boarding School located in Keokuk. The students have accused the owner, Benjamin Trane and the now-closed Midwest Academy of sexual harassment and various kinds of abuse. As [Yahoo](#) reported, the students claimed that they were kept in isolation boxes and were provided with insufficient medical care and improper living conditions. The lawsuit against the Iowa Boarding School alleged that the expensive therapeutic school for struggling teens failed in their mission to provide appropriate and quality education, medical and therapeutic services. Several parents have joined the students in their fight against the Iowa boarding school. Like Us on [Facebook](#) "My role here is to try to use the law to bring some fairness and justice to this horrible situation," said one of the plaintiffs' attorneys, David Ferleger, of Pennsylvania. According to [ABC News](#), the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) and the Department of Human Services (DHS) investigated Trane and the Iowa Boarding School for a series of offenses. There were reports claiming Trane assaulted a female student. Another claim tells that students were kept in a small and concrete isolation room and they were not fed properly as a punishment. The school officials were also accused of forcing students to listen to 24-hour pumped-in noise. A former student claimed that Trane offered him lunch and books after he was interviewed by the investigators. "This was an effort by Benjamin Trane to interfere with the FBI and State of Iowa investigation," the lawsuit alleges. According to [Desmoines Register](#), the Iowa Boarding School was charged with negligent hiring and violations of Iowa's Consumer Fraud Act, fraud, negligent misrepresentation, educational malpractice, battery, assault, false imprisonment, negligence, and intentional infliction of emotional distress. The lawsuit names Trane, Midwest Academy, Midwest Academy Treatment, Midwest Twister, and the Midwest Academy Scholarship Fund as the defendants. The plaintiffs include former students, Grace Ferguson Hunt, Roger Palinsky, Kodi Dick, Radhi Choukaier, Elijah Meyer, and a minor identified as Z.D. Trane nor his lawyer, George Jones, haven't commented publicly on the charges against him and the Iowa Boarding School. He was placed under the state's central child abuse registry after DHS' probe. Read more at <http://www.lawyerherald.com/articles/38931/20160316/iowa-boarding-school-accused-sexual-harassment-abuse-former-students.htm#40S5FO3fRPdrkfAY.99>

From Utah to Iowa: Marketing a profitable fix for troubled teens [Lee Rood](#), lrood@dmreg.com 8:47 p.m. CDT April 16, 2016 [Skip Ad](#) x Embed x Share Midwest Academy and the criminal shadow over boarding schools nationally Cindy Iutzi/Daily Gate City The Iowa Division of Criminal Investigation conducted a search at Midwest Academy in Keokuk, above, and another site in January after a student reported being sexually assaulted. In this photo taken on Thursday, Feb. 11, 2016, a Uhaul is parked outside Midwest Academy in Keokuk, Iowa. Federal, state and county law enforcement officials have returned to the southeast Iowa boarding school for troubled teens following abuse allegations. The Keokuk Daily Gate reports officials with the FBI and the Iowa Division of Criminal Investigation returned to Midwest Academy on Thursday to execute a search warrant for records following an initial search of the academy on Jan. 28 and 29.(Photo: Cindy Iutzi, Cindy Iutzi/Daily Gate City) Wendy and Keith Couch of Athens, Ala., didn't know where to turn when their son was acting up last year, so they tried doing their own research on the internet. When Keith stumbled onto AnswersforParents.com, he thought he was getting exactly what was advertised: a free referral service to help the couple identify "some of the top Youth Development Programs in the world." In fact, the Couches now believe they were unwittingly steered toward Iowa's Midwest Academy by a business more geared toward profit than therapy. In Utah, where AnswersforParents is based, a whole industry surrounding troubled teens has delivered cash and kids to controversial residential facilities for more than 30 years, experts say. "In hindsight, I didn't realize I was being drawn into it," Keith Couch said. "I would get pushy phone calls daily. ... It got to the point the phone calls were becoming an annoyance." Neither AnswersforParents nor others who helped persuade the Couches to send their son to Midwest returned The Des Moines Register's phone calls seeking comment for this story. Raided at the end of January, the now-closed Midwest Academy in Keokuk is at the center of investigations by the FBI, Iowa's Division of Criminal Investigation, the state's attorney general and the Legislature. The academy is one of several private boarding schools for youths

that began in states such as Iowa with little or no regulation of such facilities. Legislation has been introduced at the Statehouse to provide more oversight. Ben Trane Ben Trane, the director and owner of Midwest Academy, has no criminal record in Iowa. (Photo: Cindy Iutzi/Daily Gate City)

Midwest's director, Ben Trane, distanced his facility from a Utah network of tough-love boarding schools called the World Wide Association of Specialty Programs and Schools after news broke of the criminal probe. In emails to the Register, Trane said in February that Midwest was a stand-alone company with "no ties" to other schools in the network, also known as WWASPS. A former student has accused Trane of sexual abuse, according to a search warrant application filed by the Lee County attorney. Trane has not commented since on allegations against him or the school, and his lawyer, George Jones of Lamoni, did not return phone calls. Experts say schools associated with the network and others modeled after them have made millions of dollars marketing fixes to parents with out-of-control or drug-addicted teens. The schools get new clients from troubled-teen websites in which consultants are paid for referrals. [Powered by Bounce Exchange®](#) YOU QUALIFY FOR AN EXCLUSIVE \$19.99 PER YEAR DIGITAL ONLY FULL ACCESS SUBSCRIPTION [Activate My \\$19.99 Offer](#)

"A lot of good, well-intentioned parents have gotten sucked into this because they didn't know it was a marketing thing," Maia Szalavitz, a former Time magazine health reporter, told the Register. Szalavitz penned the first book on the so-called troubled-teen industry a decade ago. "The thing is, there's no diagnosis for 'troubled teen.' It's a thing made up to sell these programs." Szalavitz said parents could afford the best in psychiatric care daily for what they spend on private tough-love programs. "In any other area of medicine, they would be sued for not providing a standard of care," she said. Indeed, Szalavitz and others critical of the facilities' methods say no research shows they are effective for youths battling mental health or addiction issues. The [National Institutes of Health](#) has said teen programs using "fear and tough treatment" are not successful and can worsen existing behavioral problems. MORE: [Former Midwest Academy employee says student spent 47 days in isolation Midwest founder helped create troubled-teens industry](#)

Network's history of investigations The WWASPS boarding schools and marketing businesses created by their founders have faced a series of lawsuits and federal criminal probes over the years stemming from allegations that sound eerily similar to those leveled at Midwest Academy: child abuse, sex abuse, fraud, false marketing and bogus claims of accreditation. The U.S. State Department first looked at association schools in the 1990s. "It was clear back then these places were connected to each other. The (State Department) sent out a warning, but they didn't move to shut them down," Szalavitz said. The schools quietly settled some lawsuits, including one in 2013 involving a 16-year-old who hanged herself at a Montana facility, and succeeded in having others dismissed, news reports show. Several U.S. facilities, as well as overseas facilities in Samoa, the Czech Republic, Costa Rica and Mexico, were shut. One school in New York was ordered to pay \$1 million to parents for falsely claiming to provide legitimate diplomas. In 2010, Ken Kay, then-president of the WWASPS schools, told Forbes magazine the association went "out of business" after the recession and publicity surrounding the abuse claims. Robert Lichfield, founder of the Utah-based network, told The New York Times in a 2013 email that he supplied business and educational services to some remaining programs but no longer owned any schools. But state records in Utah show that the corporation, and a handful of related consulting and marketing companies created by WWASPS founders or their relatives, are still active. In Iowa, Lee County property records show Midwest Academy is still owned by Midwest Twister, a corporation created by Lichfield. He remains a manager of Midwest Twister, and the academy's property tax statements are sent to its mailing address, Utah and Iowa records show. Complex corporate structures make it difficult to track financial connections between WWASPS schools and related businesses. After reports by the U.S. Government Accountability Office highlighted abuse and deaths at some boarding schools, the Federal Trade Commission warned the public that referral services claiming to be independent may actually be operated or paid by the treatment program operators. "Some companies may provide services, claiming to match troubled kids with an appropriate treatment program. Be aware that although some of these services represent themselves as independent, they may not be," the commission said in 2008. "They may actually be operated or paid by one or more of the treatment programs." One big lawsuit filed in 2009 against the WWASPS network was dismissed — not for lack of merit, but because the judge did not consider federal court in Utah the most appropriate venue.

Parents: A hard sell It's unclear whether some other companies recruiting new clients for Midwest Academy have ties to WWASPS. AnswersforParents was founded by David Arslanian, a former college football coach who co-founded Eagle Ranch Academy, a troubled-teens school in St. George, with his brother. Neither Arslanian nor his brother returned the Register's telephone calls to Eagle Ranch seeking comment. Mark Brady, an admissions and enrollment consultant for a company called Top Youth Programs, responded to the Couches' inquiry on the AnswersforParents website. Brady was a former admissions director at Eagle Ranch. Keith Couch said Brady didn't stop contacting him until he and his wife decided to enroll their son Jesse in Midwest Academy in spring 2015 because of drug use. He said they had also been eyeing a smaller residential program in Asheville, N.C., but Brady pushed for Midwest and steered him away from the Asheville school. Couch said Brady also insisted that they use USA Guides, a youth transport outfit located next to Eagle Ranch Academy in St. George, to bring their son to Iowa. He said a tattooed bald man and a woman flew from Utah to Nashville, then drove to Athens to pick up Jesse and bring him to Keokuk and Midwest Academy, another nine hours away. The couple paid about \$2,000 for the transportation service, Wendy Couch said. A telephone call to USA Guides seeking comment was not returned. As happened with other parents, Brady also gave the Couches a list of preapproved families to contact to vouch for Midwest. Jesse, now 18, lasted seven days there. "Worse than a prison" Wendy Couch says she got a letter from her son, emailed from the school. He said he hadn't been allowed to shower in days. He had diarrhea and a skin rash, and described rats in the ceiling and bathrooms that were "beyond unsanitary." Students told Jesse his letter would be thrown out or censored. "I honestly believe the only reason I got it was that his handwriting was so bad," his mother said. PREVIOUSLY: [Senate unanimously OKs Midwest Academy-inspired bill Religious exemption added to boarding school oversight bill](#)

Wendy Couch and her mother drove 14 hours to see her son. She says she arrived in Keokuk to find him dirty, covered in scabies and wearing the same pair of pajamas he put on after his arrival. He was so hungry, he had been eating tubes of toothpaste. He had not seen a textbook or a counselor since he arrived, she said. "I was told my child was adjusting well, that he was talking and laughing with other children," she said. "It was all lies. They weren't even allowed to talk at that stage." The Couches say the environment at Midwest was "worse than a prison." But they said they never formally complained to the state or filed a lawsuit because they were given a refund. After Jesse was placed at the school, Brady, the man who made the referral, would not return their phone calls, the Couches said. "If I was in Vegas, I'd put \$100 bill on it that it was all a setup," Keith Couch said. "It turned out to be the Hanoi Hilton for my stepson. And I have a lot of guilt over that. He came home really shook up, and I don't know if he really is over it." The letter These are excerpts from a six-page letter Wendy and Keith Couch received from their son Jesse last year complaining about conditions at Midwest Academy. After receiving an e-mail containing the letter, Wendy Couch drove 14 hours from their home in Athens, Ga., to Keokuk in southeastern Iowa and removed Jesse from the facility after just seven days there. Others made Midwest referrals Core Solutions out of Winchester, Calif., also referred students to Midwest. Tara Akers, former admissions director at Midwest Academy, mentions Core Solutions founder Randall Cook in emails some parents provided to the Register. Cook was a former student at Paradise Cove in Western Samoa. That WWASPS-affiliated school, which housed as many as 450 boys at one time, was closed by the Samoan government in 1998 after a series of child abuse allegations, according to news reports. Cook has said in marketing materials that he provides "immediate and long-lasting solutions for parents whose teens are making poor choices and engaged in risky behaviors that are putting their health and safety in jeopardy, and undermining the well-being of the family." His website features pictures of Midwest Academy, and promotional materials online say he has been a consultant in the creation of several therapeutic boarding schools. He also has administered a Struggling Teens site and other online bulletin boards related to the industry. Discounts for testimonials Other Midwest Academy parents say they were told they could receive tuition discounts if they agreed to having their own websites promoting the boarding school. If someone clicked on the URL provided and enrolled a son or daughter in the academy, the parent to whom the site belonged would qualify for a discount. Laura Gillings, a suburban St. Paul, Minn., mother, whose son Joshua Martinson attended the school in 2006, said she was assigned a web page at <http://jnzmmom.parentshelpingteens.com>, which is no longer in use. Parents searching the internet using terms such as "teen help" or other phrases parents of troubled youths might use could be directed to the site. She said she was also encouraged to post the link in online forums about those topics. "It was a generic page for every parent, with information on

troubled teens and how to get help," Gillings said. "It had links to the different schools, and an 800 number to call and talk with someone on admission and any questions. "If someone would click on it and enroll, I could get a discount on tuition," she said. "I can't remember how much it was now, but it was something like \$5,000." Jenna Devereaux of Sacramento, Calif., said she found Midwest Academy through USBoardingSchool.com, another now-defunct website. When she emailed the site to place her son Zach, she got a call back from Akers, the former Midwest Academy admissions director. While Midwest is one of only a handful of unregulated facilities in Iowa, Utah has more than 115. Since at least 2005, facilities in that state housing more than four youths have been subject to regulations governing everything from mental health care and staffing to food service and distribution of medications. Yet the Utah schools continue to draw new students — and new controversy. Last month, Mount Pleasant Academy in St. George was the latest to make headlines. An employee who previously reported sodomy and sex abuse of children to reached out again to Utah child welfare officials, according to a story published by ProPublica, an online investigative news organization. This time, the employee told the Utah Department of Human Services that several boys as young as 13 were having sex with each other — and one of its staffers shared a video with other employees. State and local officials confirmed to ProPublica that an investigation was underway in March. Lee Rood's Reader's Watchdog column helps Iowans get answers and accountability from public officials, the justice system, businesses and nonprofits. Contact her at lrood@dmreg.com, 515-284-8549 on Twitter @leerood or at [Facebook.com/readerswatchdog](https://www.facebook.com/readerswatchdog). Source: <http://www.desmoinesregister.com/story/news/investigations/readers-watchdog/2016/04/16/utah-iowa-marketing-profitable-fix-troubled-teens/82671274/>

Investigation into abuse allegations at MWA prompts lawsuits, legislation [Story](#) [Print](#) [Create a hardcopy of this page](#) Font Size: [Default font size](#) [Larger font size](#) Posted: Friday, April 29, 2016 10:53 am [Investigation into abuse allegations at MWA prompts lawsuits, legislation](#) By Cindy Iutzi dgceditor@dailygate.com The investigation into alleged sexual abuse at Midwest Academy in Keokuk has been ongoing for three months as of this Thursday. A multi-agency force including federal, state and county officers executed two search warrants on Jan. 28 at the self-described therapeutic boarding school just outside of town. The Department of Human Services conducted 28 assessments of students that day, and on the day after gave parents 24 hours to pick up their children. On the next day, investigators with the Iowa Department of Criminal Investigation and Federal Bureau of Investigation confiscated a U-Haul truckload of files, records and other materials from academy grounds. Not long after the school's students were sent home or away, the staff was laid off and Midwest Academy closed its doors. Since the days immediately following the raid, no public communiques have been issued by the DCI. No state or federal charges have been filed, and nothing is known about the status of the case. In response to queries by the Daily Gate City, DCI media relations officer Alexander Murphy wrote in an email on March 30, "It's still an on-going investigation and we have no updates at this time." On Thursday, Murphy wrote, "There are no criminal charges as of today." An additional follow up request to the DCI for information recently has been made. Lee County Attorney Mike Short recently said that when he turned the case over to state and federal investigators and the Iowa Attorney General's Office, as far as he is concerned, it's out of his hands. investigation, lawsuits As tight-lipped as investigators are, plenty is happening around the periphery of the case. Two civil suits have been filed against Midwest Academy LLC, Midwest Twister LLC, Midwest Academy Treatment LLC, Midwest Academy Scholarship Fund and owner-director Benjamin Trane — one on behalf of a half-dozen former students and their parents, and in a separate matter, one by former Midwest Academy employee, Cheyenne Jerred. Jerred claims she was fired for reporting the alleged sexual abuse of a student by Trane. The students/parents want financial damages awarded for the school's "illegal environment" and "culture of punishment, confinement, coercion and physical confrontation and violence," including sexual abuse and harassment, according to court documents. Iowa legislators have been negotiating a bill that requires oversight of boarding schools operating in the state. See the sidebar on this page for a legislative progress update. Former students, survivors watching Progress of the investigation and the two lawsuits is being monitored by former Midwest Academy students, and by a group of former therapeutic boarding school members. Several websites and Facebook pages allow survivors, as they call themselves, to contact, vent and provide support to each other. recorded motivational speakers and sit in a special way — hands flat on the table, knees together, he said. Writing an essay about whatever they learned from the tapes also was a popular consequence. "They had a complex system," he said. "You had to attend seminars to attain higher levels. I wasn't finding emotions deep enough for them. I was fortunate I hadn't been abused at home, but they weren't satisfied with my efforts, so I made things up so I'd be able to wear boxers, have more food." Seminar attendees were at times required to "roll up towels and beat them on the floor until your hands get bloody, while they're telling you to think," he said. "I'd say, 'I'm leaving next week so I don't really care.' They'd ask, 'don't you want level 4?'" Bullying occurred, especially by other kids, according to Michalski. He blames much of the bullying on the hierarchy created by the level system. Higher-level students would pick on kids, call them "every name in the book," he said. "Kids who needed help would drive staff crazy, get rule violations and get thrown around," he said. "Some staff members didn't mesh with students." Source: http://www.dailygate.com/news/article_7e1e9862-0e22-11e6-87a0-5b39c41bb721.html

Boarding school owner charged with abusing teenage students By ryan j. foley, associated press IOWA CITY, Iowa — Sep 8, 2017, 2:01 PM ET 0 Shares [Email](#) [Star](#) The Associated Press In this Sept. 6, 2017 in a booking photo released by the Lee County Sheriff's Office in Montrose, Iowa, former Midwest Academy owner Ben Trane is shown. The sheriff's office says he is charged with third-degree sexual abuse, sexual exploitation and child endangerment. (Lee County Sheriff's Office via AP) [more +](#) 0 Shares [Email](#) The owner of a boarding school for teenagers coerced one student into a sexual relationship, had girls undress during "body image therapy" sessions and put some students in solitary confinement for days, Iowa prosecutors alleged Friday. Former Midwest Academy director Benjamin Trane, 39, pleaded not guilty to charges of third-degree sexual abuse, sexual exploitation by a counselor and child endangerment. A judge ordered that he be held at the Lee County Jail on a \$500,000 cash-only bond. The charges come after a 19-month investigation into alleged abuse at the private, for-profit boarding school in Keokuk, in Iowa's southeastern corner. The school, which enrolled about 100 students from mostly well-off families across the United States, closed in January 2016 after investigators served search warrants there. Division of Criminal Investigation special agent Joe Lestina alleged in criminal complaints that Trane abused his power to pursue sexual relationships with students while putting others at risk by keeping them in isolation. Trane performed multiple sexual acts on one girl throughout 2015, coercing her to engage in them "in order for her to successfully participate and 'level up' in the program and to be able to contact her family members," Lestina wrote. Trane held counseling sessions that included "body image therapy" in which girls would undress and stand in front of a mirror to discuss their bodies, the complaint said. Trane engaged in sexually explicit conversations with students, made them answer written questionnaires about sex and had physical contact with some "for the purpose of sexual arousal, gratification and attempted grooming," Lestina wrote. Trane also enforced policies that "created a substantial risk to the students' physical, mental or emotional health and/or safety, including but not limited to solitary confinement for extended periods of time," he wrote. Former students have said that they were forced to stay in small concrete "isolation boxes" for days or weeks at a time. Former student Kennedy Thayer, who was at the academy in 2015 and interviewed multiple times by investigators, said she was relieved Trane was charged and jailed. "He might finally understand a little bit of what we went through," said Thayer, now a 19-year-old cheerleader at [Nebraska](#) Wesleyan University. "But jail is nothing compared to that place. It was horrible." She recalled Trane commenting on the shape of her body, taking three of her younger classmates shopping for lingerie at Victoria's Secret, and forcing her to answer a questionnaire about her sexual history and fantasies. Thayer said she reported some of Trane's actions to her mother, who called to complain. "He flipped out and said, 'you can't do things like that because I can make you stay longer'," Thayer said. Trane had been living in [Idaho](#) Falls, Idaho, since the school's closure and told the court he's unemployed. He's married and has several children. Several former students have filed a lawsuit seeking damages for their treatment from Trane, his company and Midwest Twister LLC, which is owned by Utah businessman Robert Lichfield. Midwest Twister owned the academy's campus, and leased it to Trane's corporation in exchange for payments based on student enrollment. Lichfield, who has a long history of involvement in controversial boarding schools, argues his company had no control over the academy's operations and is asking to be dismissed. David Ferleger, the students' attorney, said Friday's charges back up their claims that they were abused for years in a facility that had no state oversight and charged

families \$5,000 per month. "It's a great blessing for the kids that the FBI and state police took it over and freed them from this awful abuse," he said. Source: <http://abcnews.go.com/US/wireStory/boarding-school-owner-charged-abusing-teenage-students-49702156>

Boarding School Owner Accused of Having Girls Undress for 'Body Image Therapy' [Associated Press](#) Updated: Sep 08, 2017 2:27 PM ET (IOWA CITY, Iowa) — The owner of a boarding school for teenagers coerced one student into a sexual relationship, had girls undress during "body image therapy" sessions and put some students in solitary confinement for days, Iowa prosecutors alleged Friday. Former Midwest Academy director Benjamin Trane, 39, pleaded not guilty to charges of third-degree sexual abuse, sexual exploitation by a counselor and child endangerment. A judge ordered that he be held at the Lee County Jail on a \$500,000 cash-only bond. The charges come after a 19-month investigation into alleged abuse at the private, for-profit boarding school in Keokuk, in Iowa's southeastern corner. The school, which enrolled about 100 students from mostly well-off families across the United States, closed in January 2016 after investigators served search warrants there. Division of Criminal Investigation special agent Joe Lestina alleged in criminal complaints that Trane abused his power to pursue sexual relationships with students while putting others at risk by keeping them in isolation. Trane performed multiple sexual acts on one girl throughout 2015, coercing her to engage in them "in order for her to successfully participate and 'level up' in the program and to be able to contact her family members," Lestina wrote. Trane held counseling sessions that included "body image therapy" in which girls would undress and stand in front of a mirror to discuss their bodies, the complaint said. Trane engaged in sexually explicit conversations with students, made them answer written questionnaires about sex and had physical contact with some "for the purpose of sexual arousal, gratification and attempted grooming," Lestina wrote. Trane also enforced policies that "created a substantial risk to the students' physical, mental or emotional health and/or safety, including but not limited to solitary confinement for extended periods of time," he wrote. Former students have said that they were forced to stay in small concrete "isolation boxes" for days or weeks at a time. Former student Kennedy Thayer, who was at the academy in 2015 and interviewed multiple times by investigators, said she was relieved Trane was charged and jailed. "He might finally understand a little bit of what we went through," said Thayer, now a 19-year-old cheerleader at Nebraska Wesleyan University. "But jail is nothing compared to that place. It was horrible." She recalled Trane commenting on the shape of her body, taking three of her younger classmates shopping for lingerie at Victoria's Secret, and forcing her to answer a questionnaire about her sexual history and fantasies. Thayer said she reported some of Trane's actions to her mother, who called to complain. "He flipped out and said, 'you can't do things like that because I can make you stay longer'," Thayer said. Trane had been living in Idaho Falls, Idaho, since the school's closure and told the court he's unemployed. He's married and has several children. Several former students have filed a lawsuit seeking damages for their treatment from Trane, his company and Midwest Twister LLC, which is owned by Utah businessman Robert Lichfield. Midwest Twister owned the academy's campus, and leased it to Trane's corporation in exchange for payments based on student enrollment. Lichfield, who has a long history of involvement in controversial boarding schools, argues his company had no control over the academy's operations and is asking to be dismissed. David Ferleger, the students' attorney, said Friday's charges back up their claims that they were abused for years in a facility that had no state oversight and charged families \$5,000 per month. "It's a great blessing for the kids that the FBI and state police took it over and freed them from this awful abuse," he said. Source: <http://time.com/4933443/boarding-school-owner-students-undress/>

Iowa boarding school owner charged with sexually abusing teenage students Boarding school owner charged with abusing teenage students Sep 8, 2017 Updated Sep 8, 2017 [0 Buy Now](#) In this Sept. 6, 2017 in a booking photo released by the Lee County Sheriff's Office in Montrose, Iowa, former Midwest Academy owner Ben Trane is shown. The sheriff's office says he is charged with third-degree sexual abuse, sexual exploitation and child endangerment. (Lee County Sheriff's Office via AP) HOGP IOWA CITY (AP) | The owner of an Iowa boarding school for teenagers coerced one female student into a sexual relationship, had others undress during "body image therapy" sessions and kept classmates in solitary confinement for long stretches, prosecutors alleged Friday. Former Midwest Academy owner and director Benjamin Trane, 39, is charged with third-degree sexual abuse, sexual exploitation by a counselor and child endangerment. He turned himself in Thursday at the Lee County Jail to face warrants that were issued for his arrest last week. The charges were filed after a 19-month investigation into allegations of abuse at the private, for-profit boarding school in Keokuk, in Iowa's southeastern corner. The school, which enrolled about 100 students from mostly well-off families across the United States, closed in January 2016 after investigators served search warrants there. In criminal complaints released Friday, Division of Criminal Investigation special agent Joe Lestina alleged that Trane abused his power to pursue sexual relationships with some students while enforcing policies that put others at risk by keeping them in isolation for days or weeks at a time. Trane performed multiple sexual acts on one student throughout 2015, coercing her to engage in them "in order for her to successfully participate and 'level up' in the program and to be able to contact her family members," Lestina wrote. Trane was the girl's counselor and point of contact for her family. Advertisement Play Current Time 0:00 / Duration Time 0:00 Remaining Time -0:00 Stream TypeLIVE Loaded: 0% Progress: 0% 00:00 Fullscreen 00:00 Unmute Playback Rate 1 Subtitles subtitles off Captions captions off Chapters Chapters Trane also held individual and group counseling sessions with female students that included "body image therapy," in which they would undress and stand in front of a mirror to discuss aspects of their bodies, the complaint said. Trane engaged in sexually explicit conversations with the students and physical contact with some of them, all "for the purpose of sexual arousal, gratification and attempted grooming," Lestina wrote. Trane enforced policies and oversaw a harsh school environment "which created a substantial risk to the students' physical, mental or emotional health and/or safety, including but not limited to solitary confinement for extended periods of time," he wrote. Former students have told The Associated Press that they were forced to stay in small concrete "isolation boxes" for days or weeks and that staff wouldn't let them out unless they sat in a specific posture for 24 hours. The charges carry a total maximum punishment of 12 years behind bars. Trane had been living in Idaho Falls, Idaho, since the school's closure and listed his occupation as unemployed in court documents. His cellphone rang unanswered and it wasn't clear if he had an attorney. Source: http://globegazette.com/news/iowa/iowa-boarding-school-owner-charged-with-sexually-abusing-teenage-students/article_51845b69-3d9b-5f32-a6e8-5217e5a0d470.html

Boarding school owner charged with abusing teenage students By RYAN J. FOLEY Associated Press Sep 8, 2017 Updated Sep 8, 2017 [\(0\)](#) In this Sept. 6, 2017 in a booking photo released by the Lee County Sheriff's Office in Montrose, Iowa, former Midwest Academy owner Ben Trane is shown. The sheriff's office says he is charged with third-degree sexual abuse, sexual exploitation and child endangerment. (Lee County Sheriff's Office via AP) HOGP prev next IOWA CITY, Iowa (AP) — The owner of a boarding school for teenagers coerced one student into a sexual relationship, had girls undress during "body image therapy" sessions and put some students in solitary confinement for days, Iowa prosecutors alleged Friday. Former Midwest Academy director Benjamin Trane, 39, pleaded not guilty to charges of third-degree sexual abuse, sexual exploitation by a counselor and child endangerment. A judge ordered that he be held at the Lee County Jail on a \$500,000 cash-only bond. The charges come after a 19-month investigation into alleged abuse at the private, for-profit boarding school in Keokuk, in Iowa's southeastern corner. The school, which enrolled about 100 students from mostly well-off families across the United States, closed in January 2016 after investigators served search warrants there. Division of Criminal Investigation special agent Joe Lestina alleged in criminal complaints that Trane abused his power to pursue sexual relationships with students while putting others at risk by keeping them in isolation. Trane performed multiple sexual acts on one girl throughout 2015, coercing her to engage in them "in order for her to successfully participate and 'level up' in the program and to be able to contact her family members," Lestina wrote. Trane held counseling sessions that included "body image therapy" in which girls would undress and stand in front of a mirror to discuss their bodies, the complaint said. Trane engaged in sexually explicit conversations with students, made them answer written questionnaires about sex and had physical contact with some "for the purpose of sexual arousal, gratification and attempted grooming," Lestina wrote. Trane also enforced policies that "created a substantial risk to the students' physical, mental or emotional health and/or safety, including but not limited to solitary confinement for extended periods of time," he wrote. Former students have said that they were forced to stay in small concrete "isolation boxes" for days or weeks at a time. Former student Kennedy Thayer, who was at the academy in 2015 and interviewed multiple times by investigators, said she was relieved Trane was charged and jailed. "He might finally understand a little bit of what we went through," said Thayer, now a 19-year-old cheerleader at Nebraska

Wesleyan University. "But jail is nothing compared to that place. It was horrible." She recalled Trane commenting on the shape of her body, taking three of her younger classmates shopping for lingerie at Victoria's Secret, and forcing her to answer a questionnaire about her sexual history and fantasies. Thayer said she reported some of Trane's actions to her mother, who called to complain. "He flipped out and said, 'you can't do things like that because I can make you stay longer'," Thayer said. Trane had been living in Idaho Falls, Idaho, since the school's closure and told the court he's unemployed. He's married and has several children. Several former students have filed a lawsuit seeking damages for their treatment from Trane, his company and Midwest Twister LLC, which is owned by Utah businessman Robert Lichfield. Midwest Twister owned the academy's campus, and leased it to Trane's corporation in exchange for payments based on student enrollment. Lichfield, who has a long history of involvement in controversial boarding schools, argues his company had no control over the academy's operations and is asking to be dismissed. David Ferleger, the students' attorney, said Friday's charges back up their claims that they were abused for years in a facility that had no state oversight and charged families \$5,000 per month. "It's a great blessing for the kids that the FBI and state police took it over and freed them from this awful abuse," he said. Source: http://www.herald-dispatch.com/ap/ap_nation/boarding-school-owner-charged-with-abusing-teenage-students/article_2bfe51a6-5732-58f9-8502-d1478de7485e.html

SE Iowa School Owner Facing Charges of Sexual, Child Abuse By [Jason Parrott](#) • Sep 11, 2017 [TweetShareGoogle+Email](#) Multiple law enforcement agencies were involved in a raid at Midwest Academy in January 2016 that was carried out because of claims of abuse at the boarding school for troubled teens. Now, the owner of the school in Lee County is facing multiple charges in connection with the investigation. Ben Trane of Idaho Falls, Idaho turned himself in to the Lee County Sheriff's Office last week. He is charged with 3rd Degree Sexual Abuse, Sexual Exploitation by a Counselor, and Child Endangerment. The criminal complaints against Trane were filed by Joe Lestina, Special Agent with the Iowa Division of Criminal Investigation. Listen Listening... 0:00 / 1:05 The radio story 3rd Degree Sexual Abuse (Felony) The criminal complaint against Trane states he exercised control of a female student, identified only by her initials in court documents, from January 2015-December 2015 in his role as owner and director of Midwest Academy. "On multiple occasions, [Trane] performed sexual acts on [the student], including, but not limited to, digital vaginal penetration, oral sex, and sexual intercourse. [Trane] coerced [the student] to engage in the sex acts in order for her to successfully participate and 'level up' in the program and to be able to contact her family members." Ben Trane Credit Lee County Sheriff Office Sexual Exploitation by a Counselor (Felony) According to Special Agent Lestina, from September 2014-January 2016 (prior to the raid), Trane served as a counselor and therapist, participating in "body image therapy" with female students. "The 'body image therapy' involved [Trane] having the female students undress and stand in front of [a] mirror to discuss what aspects of their body they did not like or felt uncomfortable with. [Trane] further engaged in sexually explicit conversations with female students through conversation and written questionnaires and had physical contact with some of the female students. These acts were done for the purpose of sexual arousal, gratification, and attempted grooming. Child Endangerment (Aggravated Misdemeanor) Court records state that Trane had custody and control over the students at Midwest Academy. "[Trane] implemented and enforced policies and maintained an environment which created a substantial risk to the students' physical, mental or emotional health and/or safety, including but not limited to solitary confinement for extended periods of time." Trane is being held in the Lee County Jail on \$500,000 cash only bond. His next court appearance is Sept. 18. Midwest Academy has been the subject of two lawsuits since early 2016. A group of students filed a lawsuit alleging sexual abuse, a lack of proper nutrition, and untrained staff and employees. That lawsuit, filed in March 2016, is pending. A former employee filed a wrongful termination lawsuit, claiming she was fired for bringing forward allegations of sexual abuse from a student. The school defaulted on that lawsuit. The agencies involved in the Midwest Academy investigation include the Iowa Division of Criminal Investigation, the FBI, the Lee County Attorney's Office, and the Lee County Sheriff's Office. Source: <http://tspr.org/post/se-iowa-school-owner-facing-charges-sexual-child-abuse>

Update on Iowa boarding school abuse case By KWQC Staff | Posted: Tue 11:54 AM, Sep 12, 2017 KEOKUK, Iowa (AP) — An attorney appointed to defend an Iowa boarding school owner against abuse charges says he can't take the case because the defendant has sued him in related matters. Curtis Dial was appointed last week to represent former Midwest Academy director Ben Trane, 39, who's charged with sexual abuse, sexual exploitation, and child endangerment. Dial, a contract public defender, said Tuesday he's withdrawing due to his conflict, which was unknown to the judge who appointed him. Investigators allege Trane used his position at the for-profit Keokuk school to pursue sexual relationships with teenage students while keeping others in solitary confinement. He's pleaded not guilty. Dial represented an employee who obtained a \$748,000 judgment this year against Trane's corporation after alleging she was fired for reporting that a student had been sexually assaulted. Dial also briefly represented students suing Trane over alleged abuse. Source: <http://www.kwqc.com/content/news/Update-in-Iowa-boarding-school--443990433.html>

Boarding school owner charged with abusing teenage students by: RYAN J. FOLEY, Associated Press Updated: Sep 8, 2017 - 2:01 PM 0 Share this with your friends! From To Compose your message Boarding school owner charged with abusing teenage students <http://www.wpxi.com/news/national/boarding-school-owner-charged-with-abusing-teenage-students/605372209> IOWA CITY, Iowa (AP) - The owner of a boarding school for teenagers coerced one student into a sexual relationship, had girls undress during "body image therapy" sessions and put some students in solitary confinement for days, Iowa prosecutors alleged Friday. Advertisement Play Current Time 0:00 / Duration Time 0:04 Remaining Time -0:04 Stream TypeLIVE Loaded: 0% Progress: 0% 0:00 Fullscreen 00:00 Mute Playback Rate 1 Subtitles subtitles off Captions captions off Chapters Chapters undefined Former Midwest Academy director Benjamin Trane, 39, pleaded not guilty to charges of third-degree sexual abuse, sexual exploitation by a counselor and child endangerment. A judge ordered that he be held at the Lee County Jail on a \$500,000 cash-only bond. The charges come after a 19-month investigation into alleged abuse at the private, for-profit boarding school in Keokuk, in Iowa's southeastern corner. The school, which enrolled about 100 students from mostly well-off families across the United States, closed in January 2016 after investigators served search warrants there. Division of Criminal Investigation special agent Joe Lestina alleged in criminal complaints that Trane abused his power to pursue sexual relationships with students while putting others at risk by keeping them in isolation. Trane performed multiple sexual acts on one girl throughout 2015, coercing her to engage in them "in order for her to successfully participate and 'level up' in the program and to be able to contact her family members," Lestina wrote. Trane held counseling sessions that included "body image therapy" in which girls would undress and stand in front of a mirror to discuss their bodies, the complaint said. Trane engaged in sexually explicit conversations with students, made them answer written questionnaires about sex and had physical contact with some "for the purpose of sexual arousal, gratification and attempted grooming," Lestina wrote. Trane also enforced policies that "created a substantial risk to the students' physical, mental or emotional health and/or safety, including but not limited to solitary confinement for extended periods of time," he wrote. Former students have said that they were forced to stay in small concrete "isolation boxes" for days or weeks at a time. Former student Kennedy Thayer, who was at the academy in 2015 and interviewed multiple times by investigators, said she was relieved Trane was charged and jailed. "He might finally understand a little bit of what we went through," said Thayer, now a 19-year-old cheerleader at Nebraska Wesleyan University. "But jail is nothing compared to that place. It was horrible." She recalled Trane commenting on the shape of her body, taking three of her younger classmates shopping for lingerie at Victoria's Secret, and forcing her to answer a questionnaire about her sexual history and fantasies. Thayer said she reported some of Trane's actions to her mother, who called to complain. "He flipped out and said, 'you can't do things like that because I can make you stay longer'," Thayer said. Trane had been living in Idaho Falls, Idaho, since the school's closure and told the court he's unemployed. He's married and has several children. Several former students have filed a lawsuit seeking damages for their treatment from Trane, his company and Midwest Twister LLC, which is owned by Utah businessman Robert Lichfield. Midwest Twister owned the academy's campus, and leased it to Trane's corporation in exchange for payments based on student enrollment. Lichfield, who has a long history of involvement in controversial boarding schools, argues his company had no control over the academy's operations and is asking to be dismissed. David Ferleger, the students' attorney, said Friday's charges back up their claims that they were abused for years in a facility that had no state oversight and charged

families \$5,000 per month. "It's a great blessing for the kids that the FBI and state police took it over and freed them from this awful abuse," he said. Source: <http://www.wpxi.com/news/national/boarding-school-owner-charged-with-abusing-teenage-students/605372209>

Judge Denies Trane's Request to Return to Idaho By [Jason Parrott](#) • Nov 14, 2017 [TweetShareGoogle+Email](#) A judge denied Ben Trane's request to return to Idaho to see his family and pick up some computer equipment and Midwest Academy records. Ben Trane will not be allowed to leave the state ahead of his [upcoming trial on sexual and child abuse](#) charges. A judge denied his request following a hearing Monday afternoon in Keokuk. Trane owned Midwest Academy, a former boarding school for troubled teens that closed in early 2016 after local, state and federal law enforcement agents raided the school, which is near Keokuk, and removed the students amid abuse allegations. Listen Listening... 0:00 / 1:10 The radio story Trane turned himself in at the Lee County Sheriff's Office in early September on charges that included child endangerment and 3rd degree sexual abuse. He spent about a month in jail before a judge lowered his bond from \$500,000 to \$50,000, which a local resident posted on his behalf. The terms of his bond included a curfew and prohibited him from leaving the state of Iowa. Ben Trane's trial is scheduled to begin Dec. 12 in Keokuk Credit Lee County Sheriff's Office Trane has been staying at an apartment in rural Lee County since his release. He asked the court to grant him a seven day furlough to return to his home in Ammon, Idaho. Hearing Trane testified during the 30-minute hearing on Monday that he was on vacation with his family in early September when he received an urgent message from his father that the FBI and other law enforcement officers were at his home in Idaho with a warrant for his arrest. Trane said he drove 21 hours, without returning home, to turn himself in, leaving his own family to ride home with other family members. "I didn't have my clothes," said Trane. "I had basically three outfits of beachwear for after I got out of jail." Trane said he would like to return to the home he rents in Ammon with his wife and their five children to pick up: Clothing Personal care items Computer equipment A box of Midwest Academy records Trane testified that he needs the computer equipment for work at Polaris Education Systems LLC. The Idaho Secretary of State's Office shows Trane's wife, Layani, [registered the company on May 12, 2017](#). Trane said he works for the company but does not make any money because the company is not making any money yet. He has claimed to be indigent due to the lack of a job and no income. Trane said if he has all of his computer equipment, he will be able to work at the apartment he is living in in rural Lee County as he awaits trial. "I pretty much don't leave the apartment," said Trane. Trane said he also needs the box of records to help in his defense for the criminal trial. Trane said he would also like to spend Thanksgiving and his wife's birthday with his wife and children. "It has been really hard on them," said Trane, adding that when he talks to them on the phone, "They cry about every time, asking when I am coming home, if I am coming home." Trane told District Court Judge John Wright that his in-laws brought him a vehicle that he would drive back to Ammon in if the furlough is granted. "I have a vehicle I would drive out," said Trane. "That is what I would prefer so I can bring stuff back." Trane said he would be willing to submit to additional check-ins via phone or email as well as having local law enforcement in Idaho stop in as needed. "Anything would be fine," said Trane. Denise Timmins with the Iowa Attorney General's Office is prosecuting Trane. She asked why his in-laws did not bring the clothing, personal items, Midwest Academy records, and the computer equipment when they brought the vehicle to him. Trane said they did bring a few things, but they did not have time to locate everything he needed, adding that some of the items are in storage in a barn on his father's farm in Idaho. Timmins said the state opposed the furlough because it is an undue burden. "I don't think the state should have to spend the time and money to oblige," said Timmins. "Although understandable, we have jails filled with people who do not get to spend Thanksgiving with others due to their actions." Ruling During his testimony, Judge Wright asked Trane why his application did not include the family visit as a reason for furlough request. "That was not in the application," said Wright. "That is just icing on the cake." "I did not know it needed to be," said Trane. Wright said, in making his ruling from the bench, that the court is placed in a difficult situation with this request due to "competing interests in this application." "Frankly, I'm torn on which way to go with this," said Wright. "I can see the defendant finding the box, boxing up the computer, and spending time with his kids... but the purpose of picking up these two items seems to be risky and unnecessary." Wright said while he did not consider Trane a flight risk due to his previous actions related to this case, he felt someone could easily find the items Trane requires and have them shipped to him in Lee County. "I see the danger in allowing Mr. Trane to leave the jurisdiction outweighing the benefit of returning to Idaho," said Wright. Wright then asked Trane if he is allowed to leave Lee County. Trane said only with the permission of his parole officer. Wright said if Trane requested, he would provide a court order that said Trane could leave Lee County, but not the state, to pick up the items he requested if someone is willing to drive them to Iowa. Trane's trial is scheduled for December 12. Source: <http://tspr.org/post/judge-denies-tranes-request-return-idaho>

Prosecution Wants to Move Trane Trial Out of Keokuk By [Jason Parrott](#) • Nov 20, 2017 [TweetShareGoogle+Email](#) Originally published on November 20, 2017 10:10 am Ben Trane is scheduled to stand trial December 12 on sex and child abuse charges related to his time in charge of Midwest Academy. The prosecution wants the court to move the trial out of Keokuk; it's worried about being able to seat an impartial jury. Denise Timmins, Assistant Iowa Attorney General, filed a change of venue motion in south Lee County District Court Friday. [In her motion](#), Timmins said Midwest Academy (MWA) "employed numerous individuals from the local community and had many ties to local organizations and public agencies. MWA also used local government and community groups as references for prospective families." She attached an undated flier from "MWA Admissions" that encourages families to get "feedback about us from those who know us best. The names on the list included: Former Keokuk Police Chief Tom Crew Former Lee County Sheriff Buck Jones Former Keokuk School Superintendent Jane Babcock Former Keokuk School Board President Tyler McGhghy Former Keokuk Mayor Dave Gudelg Timmins also cited the media coverage surrounding Midwest Academy and Ben Trane, both before the boarding school for troubled teens was closed in early 2016 and after the closure. Local, state, and federal agents raided the school and removed the students amid abuse allegations. "Media coverage of this case has been ongoing, thorough and comprehensive, making it likely that the potential jury pool will have been saturated with news accounts of the crime," said Timmins. Trane is charged with: Sexual Abuse – 3rd Degree Sexual Exploitation by a Counselor Child Endangerment "The cumulative effect of pretrial publicity, the significant community ties and involvement with MWA prior to its closure, and the polarization to one side or the other within the community after the closure of MWA creates the substantial unlikelihood that a fair and impartial jury without connections to MWA or preconceived notions or opinions about the case, could be picked in Lee County," said Timmins in her motion. Timmins said witnesses who are traveling a long distance for the trial could be affected if the parties are unable to pick a jury in Lee County and the trial is relocated. She did not identify where the prosecution would prefer the trial be held. A hearing on the change of venue motion has not been scheduled. Source: <http://wvik.org/post/prosecution-wants-move-trane-trial-out-keokuk#stream/0>

Ex-boarding school students win lawsuit over mistreatment November 23, 2017 Updated: November 23, 2017 10:20am KEOKUK, Iowa (AP) — An Iowa judge has awarded a default judgment to parents and former students who sued a southeast Iowa boarding school, alleging it used isolation boxes and allowed sexual harassment and abuse. Lee County documents say the owner of Midwest Academy, Ben Trane, and the other entities never responded to the lawsuit filed against them in March 2016. The judge granted the complainants' judgment motion last week. A hearing to establish damages will be held after Trane's criminal trial, which is scheduled to begin Dec. 12. He's pleaded not guilty to sexual abuse, sexual exploitation and child endangerment charges. Trane and the school were the subjects of state and FBI investigations into wide-ranging abuse allegations, including that the Keokuk school kept students in prolonged detention in the small isolation chambers. Source: <http://www.houstonchronicle.com/news/education/article/Ex-boarding-school-students-win-lawsuit-over-12379785.php>

Ex-boarding school students win lawsuit over mistreatment. By The Hawk Eye Thursday Posted Nov 23, 2017 at 6:21 PM Updated Nov 23, 2017 at 10:19 PM Share KEOKUK — An Iowa judge has awarded a default judgment to parents and former students who sued a southeast Iowa boarding school, alleging it used isolation boxes and allowed sexual harassment and abuse. Lee County documents say the owner of Midwest Academy, Ben Trane, and the other entities never responded to the lawsuit filed against them in March 2016. The judge granted the complainants' judgment motion last week. A hearing to establish damages will be held after Trane's criminal trial, which is scheduled to begin Dec. 12. He's pleaded

not guilty to sexual abuse, sexual exploitation and child endangerment charges. Trane and the school were the subjects of state and FBI investigations into wide-ranging abuse allegations, including that the Keokuk school kept students in prolonged detention in the small isolation chambers. In May, District Judge John Wright awarded \$748,800 in damages to a 22-year-old woman who reported to authorities in 2015 what she believed to be abuse of a student at the Midwest Academy boarding school in Keokuk. The judge entered the default judgment against Midwest Academy after the woman, Cheyenne Jerred, testified about the damages she incurred since “turning in” Trane to the Iowa Department of Human Resources for abusing a student at the boarding school. Wright awarded the damages to Jerred after no one appeared in court in to represent Midwest Academy. Source: <http://www.thehawkeye.com/news/20171123/ex-boarding-school-students-win-lawsuit-over-mistreatment>

Boarding school owner doesn't want sex abuse trial moved By Associated Press | Posted: Tue 9:28 AM, Nov 28, 2017 KEOKUK, Iowa (AP) -- A former boarding school owner wants his trial on sex abuse and other charges to remain in South Lee County District Court. The Hawk Eye reports that the attorney for Ben Trane told a judge Monday that her client believes an impartial jury can be fielded so he can receive a fair trial in a Keokuk courtroom. Prosecutors are seeking a new location, citing pretrial publicity and Trane's extensive community ties. The judge said he'd rule later on the prosecution's motion. Investigators allege Trane used his position at the for-profit Midwest Academy in Keokuk to pursue sexual relationships with teenage students. A judge has awarded a default judgment to parents and former students who sued, alleging the school used isolation boxes and allowed sexual harassment and abuse. Source: <http://www.kcrg.com/content/news/Boarding-school-owner-doesnt-want-sex-abuse-trial-moved-460526823.html>

Sex abuse trial of former boarding school owner not moving Nov 30, 2017 Updated 11 hrs ago [0 Facebook](#) [Twitter](#) [Email](#) [Facebook](#) [Twitter](#) [Email](#) [Print](#) [Save](#) KEOKUK, Iowa (AP) — The sex abuse trial of a former boarding school owner will remain in South Lee County District Court. On Tuesday Judge John Linn denied the prosecution's request for a change of venue regarding Ben Trane, who owned and operated the now defunct Midwest Academy in Keokuk. Linn says the prosecution's evidence and arguments regarding pretrial publicity and Trane's extensive community ties didn't convince him that an impartial jury couldn't be empaneled. Investigators allege Trane used his position at the for-profit academy to pursue sexual relationships with teenage students. A judge has awarded a default judgment to parents and former students who sued, alleging the school used isolation boxes and allowed sexual harassment and abuse. The trial is scheduled to begin Dec. 12. Source: http://www.theeagle.com/news/nation/sex-abuse-trial-of-former-boarding-school-owner-not-moving/article_81ef376b-cafb-5100-86d3-a41dc85267f2.html

Prosecution Lays Out Criminal Case Against Former Boarding School Owner By [Jason Parrott](#) • Dec 14, 2017 [Tweet](#)[Share](#)[Google+](#)[Email](#) Iowa Asst. AG Denise Timmins (left) addressing Judge Mark Kruse following the seating of the jury in the Criminal Trial of Ben Trane. Jason Parrott / TSPP Denise Timmins sat up from her chair and walked in front of the newly seated jury at about 3:00 p.m. Wednesday in the south Lee County Courthouse's district courtroom. She proceeded to read the criminal charges against Ben Trane and then begin her opening statement. Trane, the former owner of Midwest Academy, is charged with Sexual Abuse in the 3rd Degree, Sexual Exploitation of a Child by a Counselor, and Child Endangerment. He has pleaded not guilty to all charges. Timmins, an Assistant Iowa Attorney General, is handling the prosecution. Her opening statement to the 9 men and 3 women on the jury lasted about 40 minutes. She emphasized a singular point throughout the statement: that Trane was in complete control at Midwest Academy. “He was the director,” said Timmins. “He wrote the rules and the policies. He decided who to hire and who to fire. He had staff living in apartments there on the campus. He had control of everything.” Timmins said Trane also had the trust of the parents who sent their kids there and the students themselves because he could give them treats and be a little lax with the rules. “The evidence will show that that trust was abused and that power was abused and it was the kids who paid the price for it,” said Timmins. Description of Midwest Academy for Jury Timmins said Midwest Academy opened in the early 2000's, describing itself as a therapeutic boarding school where parents could send their troubled teens. “Parents were told their children would be cared for, kept safe, given a good education, and taught discipline,” said Timmins. “Students were told that the program was tough, but that you would be better for going through it. “For some students, that might have been true and it was a positive experience. For other students, it was definitely not true. There was no positive experience.” Timmins described the structure of Midwest Academy as rigid. She said every student entering the school was considered a Level 1, adding that they could become Level 2, 3, etc. based on their actions. Timmins said many did not move beyond Level 1 while at the school. “Level 1 had certain restrictions,” said Timmins. “Food was a privilege there. So as a Level 1, you could not eat catsup and mustard and you could not have the salad dressing at the salad bar. You had to earn condiments.” “As a Level 1, you couldn’t talk to people. There were certain people you could talk to... but Level 1's were not able to talk to each other. They weren’t allowed to talk to staff. It was part of the discipline.” Timmins focused a great deal during her opening statement on what she called the OSS room. She said students were sent to an OSS room if they got in trouble, a room she described as having a door without a handle on the inside, so when it shuts, it is locked. “It’s very small, it’s concrete, there’s nothing in there, the lights are on 24/7. There is a camera watching you at all times. You are expected to sit in structure.” Timmins said an example of sitting in structure is sitting on the concrete with their legs extended and their arms at their side. She said they could not move or talk during a 24 hour period, during which they could sometimes earn a chair and a mattress. “If you were bad and you weren’t sitting quietly or you were yelling or throwing a fit because you wanted to get out, you wouldn’t get a mattress. You would sleep on the concrete floor if you slept at all. So that’s what could happen on a bad day at Midwest Academy.” Timmins said the OSS meals were also limited to a sandwich or even a special meal consisting of the foods they disliked. She said it was an incentive to make the right choices. Timmins also talked about staffing policies and procedures and students’ access to parents to try to paint a picture of how the state viewed the school. Sexual Abuse/Sexual Exploitation Timmins said Trane is accused of sexually abusing a female student at the school. Tri States Public Radio is not identifying the student. Timmins said the student arrived at the school in 2015. She said the student noticed early on that Trane was paying more attention to her than the other students. “The defendant started to touch the student,” said Timmins. “It started with very quick moments. Nothing that took too long of a time.” “‘Mr. Ben’ could pretty much do what he wanted there,” said Timmins, noting that students called Trane ‘Mr. Ben’, “and no one questioned if Mr. Ben went here or went there.” Timmins said the former student will describe to the jury what happened in her own words during the trial. Timmins said this was taking place while Trane was also serving as a counselor in the school, prompting the second criminal charge against him. She said Trane even became the female student’s family representative, allowing him to spend more time with her. Timmins said witnesses will testify regarding the sexual nature of counseling sessions at the school and the attention Trane paid to the student he is accused of sexually abusing. But she said there will not be a witness called to verify the account of that student. “Nobody else is going to say they saw the defendant have sex with [the student],” said Timmins. “You need to know that right now. The only person that’s going to corroborate what happened in these sexual acts is [the student] because she was there. Because it happened to her and you just have to listen.” was there. Because it happened to her and you just have to listen.” Child Endangerment Timmins said this charge deals more with the behavioral policies developed by Trane. She said parents were assured that their children would not spend long periods of time in the room. But Timmins said two male students, in particular, spent the vast majority of their time at Midwest Academy isolated in the OSS room. She said that led to the students falling behind in their education and losing a great deal of weight due to a lack of nutrition in the OSS rooms. Timmins said one of the two male students will not be able to testify about his time at Midwest Academy. She said he cannot talk about it. But she said the other will be able to describe his time in the room. “You won’t hear from the evidence that it was the defendant who was shutting the door,” said Timmins. “You won’t hear that it was the defendant that was picking them up and dragging them down the hall and putting them in the control room. But what you will know is that it is the defendant’s rules. It’s his policies, it’s his procedures and his employees are expected to follow them. He was in charge.” Defense Opening Statement Deferred Defense Attorney Lisa Schaefer had the opportunity to give her opening statement following Timmins’ statement. Schaefer declined, though, choosing to present her statement following the conclusion of the state’s case. Source: <http://tspr.org/post/prosecution-lays-out-criminal-case-against-former-boarding-school-owner>

Trane Spends Hours on Witness Stand Wed.; Cross Examination Thurs. By [Jason Parrott](#) • 10 hours ago [TweetShareGoogle+Email](#) Ben Trane testified Wednesday afternoon in his criminal trial in Keokuk. John Lovretta / Burlington Hawkeye Ben Trane testified for nearly 3 ½ hours Wednesday afternoon in his criminal trial in Keokuk. He's accused of sexual abuse and child endangerment during his time as owner of Midwest Academy, a shuttered boarding school for troubled teens in Lee County. Trane became emotional toward the end of his testimony, struggling to explain how it felt to be accused of the crimes facing him. "To be accused of something you fought your whole life to stop, it is just the most horrible thing in the world," said Trane. "I would never do that and put myself in a position to do that." A former student at Midwest Academy testified, last week, about a dozen instances in which she said Trane either touched her inappropriately or sexually abused her in 2015, including oral sex, masturbation and intercourse. She said they occurred both at the school and at Trane's home near the school. Trane's attorney, Lisa Schaefer, asked him about each individual claim. He denied each allegation, stating that he was never alone with her. He also testified about an incident that occurred in mid-November involving he and his accuser. Trane said members of her family were supposed to visit the school at Thanksgiving 2015 and take her off-campus for an outing. He said the student became very angry after the trip fell through, stating "she did not want to have anything to do with me after that." It was about a week later that the student told a staff member that Trane "did things to her." Search Warrants Trane said the student was removed from the school in late 2015. He said things seemed to eventually return to normal, until Jan. 28, 2016. More than two dozen local, state and federal law enforcement agents descended upon Midwest Academy that day with search warrants related to abuse allegations. Some spent more than 16 hours on site executing the search warrants and interviewing students. Trane testified Wednesday that he anticipated law enforcement coming to the school after the Iowa Department of Human Services was contacted regarding allegations against him by a female student. "I knew with the allegations, I would hope they would come and investigate," said Trane. "I was not expecting them to come in, remove our students and shut down the school. Trane said after the raid, the school's structure fell apart, saying the students rioted and tore the school apart. He said it took about a week for all of the parents to come and pick up their students. "Blown So Out of Proportion" Trane testified about several interactions between he and the students that were raised on multiple occasions during the previous six days of testimony, starting with body image sessions. Several former students said Trane brought a group of female students to the uniform room, which had a mirror. They testified that Trane told them they could take their clothes off in the room and look in the mirror to help them determine their body size. Trane said there were only 2-4 sessions and that they had nothing to do with sexual gratification. "This has been blown so out of proportion," said Trane. He said a female student was being bullied about her weight, so he printed some handouts about body shapes and gave them to her. He said eventually more and more girls wanted the paperwork. Trane said the students were allowed to look in the mirror if they wanted, but he did not pressure them to get undressed. He said, looking back, he would not have allowed the students to use the mirror. "Truthfully, it was very annoying," said Trane. "I had better things to be doing. If it meant a lot to them, though, I could easily do the session." Trane also testified about female students shopping at Victoria's Secret with him. Trane said certain students were allowed to go on shopping trips with staff members, including to the malls in Quincy and Burlington. He said a couple of times, the students wanted to go to Victoria's Secret and if they did not have money, he said the school would purchase items for the students. "I did not see it as a big deal at the time," said Trane, adding that he understood the perception and that it would have been better for other staff members to visit that type of store. Trane also said that he provided students with an anonymous study about sexual activity to help him prepare for a family and marriage seminar he conducted each year. He said the staff used the results to determine lesson plans for students, not for his own sexual gratification. The surveys were found by law enforcement agents during the execution of a search warrant. Trane told the jury he threw them away, but they re-appeared in one of the rooms on campus. He said he took them back to the office to throw them away again. Opening of Midwest Academy Trane's attorney spent more than an hour talking about how Midwest Academy got its start. Trane said he started out in pre-med in college in Utah before discovering his passion. "I fell in love with working with troubled teens," said Trane. "I love seeing families come back together and be happy." He said he knew he wanted to establish some sort of residential education facility, so he visited sites across the country. He said one night, he happened upon Keokuk. Trane said he was interested in purchasing the former middle school, but he said its age and condition prevented it from being a viable option. He said Keokuk returned to his radar a short while later when former Mayor Dave Gudgel told him that a former county building outside the city was for sale. "It was perfect," said Trane. Trane said the school officially opened with one student in the summer of 2003. He said by the end of that year, there were 50 students and dozens of employees. he said at its peak, the school housed nearly 300 students and employed people. He said at the time of its closure in early 2016, there were about 80 students in attendance. Trane said he started out a minority owner of the school, but he was able to purchase it outright from three other partners in 2007. He said his priority was to charge a lower tuition than similar schools and to not kick students out if they could not pay the tuition of up to \$5,000/month. "Most of the kids, if they did not do something, they would be dead or in jail," said Trane. Cross-Examination Thursday Trane finished answering questions from his attorney at just after 5:00 pm on Wednesday. After consulting with the attorneys, District Court Judge Mark Kruse chose to adjourn for the day instead of allowing Iowa Assistant Attorney General Denise Timmins to begin her cross-examination. He told jurors to return to the courthouse at 8:30 AM on Thursday, about 30 minutes earlier than normal so they can get right into the cross examination. The trial is entering its eighth day after originally being scheduled to last six. Source: <http://tspr.org/post/trane-spends-hours-witness-stand-wed-cross-examination-thurs>

Trane jury begins deliberations - News - The Hawk Eye Newspaper - Burlington, IA. T District judge Mark Kruse listens as defense attorney Lisa Schaefer gives her closing argument Thursday at the South Lee County Courthouse in Keokuk, during the sexual abuse and child endangerment trial of Benjamin Trane, who owned and operated Midwest Academy. The school was shut down by state and federal authorities in 2016. [John Lovretta/thehawkeye.com] Hide caption Benjamin Trane, who owned and operated Midwest Academy, listens as Denise Timmins, an assistant Iowa attorney general who is prosecuting Trane for sexual abuse and child endangerment, gives her closing argument, Thursday at the South Lee Country Courthouse in Keokuk. The school was shut down by state and federal authorities in 2016. [John Lovretta/thehawkeye.com] Hide caption Denise Timmins, an assistant Iowa attorney general who is prosecuting Benjamin Trane, for sexual abuse and child endangerment, gives her closing argument Thursday at the South Lee County Courthouse in Keokuk. Midwest Academy, the school Trane owned and operated, was shut down by state and federal authorities in 2016. [John Lovretta/thehawkeye.com] Hide caption District judge Mark Kruse listens as defense attorney Lisa Schaefer gives her closing argument Thursday at the South Lee County Courthouse in Keokuk, during the sexual abuse and child endangerment trial of Benjamin Trane, who owned and operated Midwest Academy. The school was shut down by state and federal authorities in 2016. [John Lovretta/thehawkeye.com] Hide caption Benjamin Trane, who owned and operated Midwest Academy, listens as Denise Timmins, an assistant Iowa attorney general who is prosecuting Trane for sexual abuse and child endangerment, gives her closing argument, Thursday at the South Lee Country Courthouse in Keokuk. The school was shut down by state and federal authorities in 2016. [John Lovretta/thehawkeye.com] Hide caption Denise Timmins, an assistant Iowa attorney general who is prosecuting Benjamin Trane, for sexual abuse and child endangerment, gives her closing argument Thursday at the South Lee Country Courthouse in Keokuk. Midwest Academy, the school Trane owned and operated, was shut down by state and federal authorities in 2016. [John Lovretta/thehawkeye.com] Hide caption District judge Mark Kruse listens as defense attorney Lisa Schaefer gives her closing argument Thursday at the South Lee County Courthouse in Keokuk, during the sexual abuse and child endangerment trial of Benjamin Trane, who owned and operated Midwest Academy. The school was shut down by state and federal authorities in 2016. [John Lovretta/thehawkeye.com] By [Andy Hoffman](#) Thursday Posted Dec 21, 2017 at 8:07 PM Updated Dec 21, 2017 at 8:07 PM Share KEOKUK — The fate of Benjamin Trane's future is now in the hands of a South Lee County jury. The nine-man, three-woman jury deliberated for about one hour late Thursday afternoon before recessing for the night at about 4:45 p.m. District Judge Mark Kruse ordered the jury to return to the courthouse at 8:30 a.m. today to resume its attempt to determine if Trane is a guilty of third-degree sexual abuse, exploitation of a child by a counselor and child endangerment. The charges stem from incidents that occurred at Midwest Academy, a private, for profit therapeutic boarding school, where Trane was the owner and director. The 39-year-old Trane spent almost three hours on the witness stand Wednesday being questioned by his attorney, Lisa

Schaefer, about activities at the school. He repeatedly denied sexually abusing a female teenager at the school while he was her counselor. He also denied putting other students in danger by placing them in isolation rooms, withholding food and preventing them from talking to students and staff as punishment for violating the school's strict policies. He returned briefly to the witness stand Thursday, where he again repeatedly denied the accusations while being systematically questioned by Denise Timmins, an assistant Iowa attorney general, who is prosecuting him. However, the jury spent most of Thursday listening to closing arguments from the two attorneys, who offered dramatically different versions of what was happening at the school located just north of Keokuk. Timmins admitted there are no eyewitnesses to the alleged sexual assault, nor is there any forensic evidence to confirm the victim's claims of sexual abuse at the hands of Trane. However, Timmins said there was a vast amount of corroborating testimony from other people, who were called as state's witnesses. "The (victim) said it happened," Timmins told the jury during her three-hour closing summation. "And he said it didn't happen. You have to determine who you find to be more believable, more credible ... The victim had nothing to gain ... She had no motive to lie ... The defendant, on the other hand, has everything to lose (if he is convicted)." She asked jurors to ignore Trane's repeated denials and his request to "simply believe" him that nothing he did at the year-around boarding school put any children in danger. "The defendant had all the power and control over these kids," she told the jury. "He abused that power. He is not powerful here (in the courtroom). You are the ones who have the power now. Use that power to seek the truth to do justice. Find Ben Trane guilty." Schaefer, a private attorney in Burlington appointed by the court to represent Trane, also asked jury members to use their common sense to make the correct decision and find the accusations against her client were baseless, and the result of a troubled teenager who was angry with Trane for punishing her after she violated school rules. "Reasonable doubt abounds everywhere in this case," she told jurors. "There is a significant lack of evidence that is needed to find my client guilty. This is truly a 'he said, she said,' case. "The prosecutor is asking you to readily accept everything the (alleged victim) said occurred and reject everything Mr. Trane said on the stand did not happen." She said that when "you take all of her (the victim) stories as a whole, they just don't add up ... It just doesn't make sense. There are too many things that don't match. You know why? Because they didn't happen." Trane is charged with three specific crimes: • Third-degree sexual abuse. To prove that charge, prosecutors must convince the jury Trane forced the teenager to have digital, oral or vaginal sex with him. • Sexual exploitation of a child by a counselor. To prove that charge, prosecutors have to prove he forced the girl to have sexual contact with him while he was acting as a counselor or a mentor. • Child endangerment of a person under 14 years of age. Prosecutors must prove that Trane "knowingly acted in a manner which created substantial risk to the emotional, health or safety of children at the school." Timmins used two examples of the third charge to prove that children in his care were placed in danger by school rules, which included forcing disruptive students into an "isolation room" where they could be kept until their behavior changed. Two boys, one 12 years old and the other 13, were named as victims in that charge. According to Timmins, one of the youths spent 133 days out of 210 days he was enrolled in the school in an isolation room, almost 63 percent of the time he was at Midwest Academy. The second boy spent 163 days out of the 233 days he was at the school in isolation, almost 50 percent of his stay at the school. She told the jury both boys suffered dramatic weight loss while at the school, including one of the boys who had to be hospitalized the day after his mother took him out of school. Witnesses testified the child had to be fed intravenously because of malnutrition. The school closed permanently in January 2016 following the execution of search warrants at the school by federal, state and local authorities after officials from the Iowa Department of Human Services received a call on its hotline indicating children were being abused by staff at the school. Trane was arrested in September following a 19-month investigation into the abuse charges. He originally spent 30 days in the Lee County jail before a friend posted a \$50,000 cash-only bond on his behalf. If convicted of the charges, he could be sentenced to a prison term not to exceed 17 years and must also register as a sex offender. Source: <http://www.thehawkeye.com/news/20171221/trane-jury-begins-deliberations>

Iowa boarding school director guilty of abuse charges [Associated Press](#) [Facebook](#) [Twitter](#) [Print](#) [Email](#) KEOKUK, Iowa – A southeast Iowa jury on Friday found a former boarding school director guilty of abusing students, days after he tearfully testified that he hadn't hurt any children. The jury found Benjamin Trane guilty of assault with intent to commit sexual abuse, sexual exploitation of a child by a counselor and child endangerment, according to the Burlington Hawk Eye . The jury didn't find Trane guilty of a more serious charge, third-degree sexual assault, which could have meant a 10-year prison sentence. The nine-man, three-woman jury began deliberating Thursday afternoon. Trane will be sentenced early next year and could face up to nine years in prison. Trane was the owner and director of Midwest Academy in Keokuk. The school was closed in January 2016 after being raided by federal, state and local officials, prompting about 100 students to be sent home or to other schools. Earlier in the trial, Trane had at times tearfully rejected charges he sexually and physically abused children at the school. Asked about testimony that he'd abused students, Trane told jurors Wednesday, "It's absolutely not the truth." On Friday, Trane, 39, remained stoic as District Judge Mark Kruse read the verdict. Several supporters of Trane in the courtroom choked back tears. Source: <http://www.foxnews.com/us/2017/12/22/iowa-boarding-school-director-guilty-abuse-charges.html>

Jury finds former owner of Midwest Academy in Keokuk guilty December 22, 2017 By [Dar Danielson](#) The former owner and director of the Midwest Academy in Keokuk, 39-year-old Ben Trane, has been found guilty by a jury of sexual exploitation of a student by a counselor, child endangerment, assault with intent to commit sexual abuse. The final charge was a lesser charge the jury was allowed to consider if it did not think Trane was guilty of the more serious charge of third-degree sexual abuse. The academy was a boarding school for troubled teens until it closed in early 2016. The state began investigating in December of 2015 after a teen girl said she had been sexually assaulted by Trane. The jury began deliberating Thursday after listening to more than three hours of closing arguments. The prosecutor said Trane had all of the power at the boarding school and used it to do what he wanted. Trane's defense said the girl who accused him of sexual abuse was mad at Trane and made the accusations to get him in trouble. A sentencing date has not yet been set. Source: <https://www.radioiowa.com/2017/12/22/jury-finds-former-owner-of-midwest-academy-in-keokuk-guilty/>

Ben Trane, Midwest Academy director, found guilty of child exploitation and endangerment By [Andy Hoffman](#) Friday Posted Dec 22, 2017 at 11:54 AM Updated Dec 23, 2017 at 12:03 AM Share KEOKUK — The former owner of Midwest Academy was found guilty Friday of child exploitation, child endangerment and assault with intent to commit sexual abuse. Benjamin "Mr. Ben" Trane, 39, remained stoic as the verdict was read about 10:30 a.m. by District Judge Mark Kruse on the second-floor of the South Lee County Courthouse. Several of Trane's supporters, who have been in the courtroom for most of the two-week trial, choked back tears when the verdict was announced. His wife, Layani, who testified on his behalf, lowered her eyes and looked down at the floor. She later could be seen wiping tears from her eyes as she left the courtroom. The nine-man, three-woman jury deliberated about three hours over two days before finding him guilty of the lesser charge of assault with intent to commit sexual abuse, sexual exploitation of a child by a counselor and child endangerment. The jury did not find him guilty of the most serious charge, third-degree sexual assault, which carried a 10-year prison sentence. He now faces a total of up to nine years in prison. He also must register as a sex offender. He will be sentenced by Kruse within the next eight weeks, following a pre-sentence investigation. Trane's convictions carry a mandatory, indeterminate prison sentence. He remains free on a \$50,000 cash-only bond that was posted by a friend about 30 days after his arrest on the charges in September. Trane, who had been vocal publicly about his innocence prior to the trial, refused to comment as he stormed from the courtroom shortly after the verdict was announced. He met behind closed doors for several minutes in a room adjacent to the courtroom with his attorney, Lisa Schaefer, his wife and several supporters. "My client does not agree with the verdict, but he respects the jury's decision," Schaefer said, after talking briefly with Trane. "We will be reviewing the case file and (trial transcripts) to see what our next step will be." She declined to say if Trane will appeal the jury's verdict. Denise Timmins, an assistant Iowa attorney general who prosecuted Trane, said she was pleased with the verdict. "Yes, we are happy with the jury's decision," she said. "It's been a very long trial. The jury had a lot of evidence to take in. They had a very difficult job." While the jury found him not guilty of the most serious charge — third-degree sexual abuse — two of the convictions relate to him having improper sexual contact with the victim that was done "with the specific intent of to commit a sex act by force or against the will" of the teenager. One of the main elements of the charge of exploitation of a child by a counselor is that Trane acted with the "specific intent to arouse or satisfy his sexual desires" while acting as the student's

counselor. The child endangerment conviction found Trane, or members of his staff acting at his direction, physically and mentally harmed at least two students through punishments they imposed for violating rules at the military-style school for troubled children. The trial, which included an in-depth look inside the workings of the private, for profit therapeutic boarding school, involved testimony from students, parents, faculty and Trane himself. During more than three hours on the witnesses stand this week, Trane repeatedly denied claims by a [17-year-old female student](#) at the school that he sexually abused her between “seven and 10 times” during the year she spent at the school in 2015. The victim, now 19, was not in the courtroom when the verdict was read. She was removed from the facility in November 2015 after a 23-year-old staff member at the school, [Cheyenne Jerred](#), called the Iowa Department of Human Services hotline to report allegations of abuse at the year-round boarding school. Jerred was fired by school officials several days later after they learned she had notified DHS of possible child abuse at the school. She filed a lawsuit against Trane and Midwest Academy, which resulted in her being awarded a default judgement of \$748,000. Her telephone call led to a raid at the school in January 2016 by federal, state and local officials. Two search warrants were executed at the school during the raid in attempt to find evidence of illegal activities. The school, which housed about 100 students at its residential facility, was closed permanently about five days later. Trane was arrested about 19 months after the raid and charged with the crimes. Six other former students and their parents filed a separate lawsuit in March 2016 against Midwest Academy in South Lee County District Court, claiming the school not only physically and sexually abused them, but also emotionally scarred them for life. David Ferleger, a civil rights attorney from Pennsylvania who filed the lawsuit, said at the time Midwest Academy “demonstrated shocking callousness directed at each of the (six) children and its actions and failure to act constituted a willful and wanton disregard for the rights and safety of the vulnerable children.” “Midwest Academy maintained an illegal environment and a ‘culture’ of punishment, confinement, coercion and physical confrontation and violence, including sexual abuse and harassment,” Ferleger said in the lawsuit. A default judgement against Trane and Midwest Academy also was declared in Ferleger’s lawsuit after Trane failed to hire legal representation or defend himself on the charges. A hearing will be held early next year in South Lee County District Court to determine the amount of damages to be paid by Trane to those students and their families. During the two-week trial, Timmins called 18 witnesses, including the victim, other students and their parents, a Federal Bureau of Investigation agent and a Iowa Division of Criminal Investigations. She also called two Harvard-educated experts in the field of child sexual abuse and the affects of keeping youths in “isolation rooms” for hours and days at a time. Schaefer called four witnesses in addition to Trane, including his wife, two faculty members and a former student at the academy. During the trial, [Trane testified for several hours](#) on the witness stand. He repeatedly denied sexually abusing the female teenager at the school while he was her counselor. He also denied putting other students in danger by placing them in isolation rooms, withholding food and preventing them from talking to students and staff as punishment for violating the school’s strict policies. In her closing argument, Timmins admitted there were no eyewitnesses to the alleged sexual assault, nor was there any forensic evidence to confirm the victim’s claims of sexual abuse at the hands of Trane. However, Timmins said there was a vast amount of corroborating testimony from other people, who were called as state’s witnesses. “The (victim) said it happened,” Timmins told the jury during her three-hour closing summation. “And he said it didn’t happen. You have to determine who you find to be more believable, more credible ... The victim had nothing to gain ... She had no motive to lie ... 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Source: <http://www.thehawkeye.com/news/20171222/ben-trane-midwest-academy-director-found-guilty-of-child-exploitation-and-endangerment>

PROGRAM NAME/LOCATION	UNLICENSED	RESTRAINT	SOLITARY	INCOMMUNICADO	DECEPTIVE
Midwest Academy More Info (This Page)	?	Y	Y	Y	Y

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