The
Crimes Report

In conjunction with the Survivors Action Committee
http://www.isaccorp.com

Special Thanks to Wes Fager for all his
documentation and research. All reports are living documents.
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Introduction

This report was prepared in an effort to investigate whether or not Straight, Inc. did in fact commit any crimes at any time during it's years of operation. This report seeks to investigate the nature of those alleged crimes and to attempt to determine if there was a pattern to any crimes that were allegedly committed. This report also intends to document any evidence of any criminal activity on the part of Straight, Inc. or its staff.

The author recommends that you read the reports prior to this one, in order to learn the history and gain an understanding of Straight, Inc. and Ambassador Melvin Sembler and his wife Betty.

It is also important to note that the laws stated herein are Florida Laws and or United States law of today. These laws may or may not have been slightly different at the time that the alleged crime occurred. Where applicable, the paralegal reviewing this document has, to the best of his/her ability, removed any alleged activities that would not have been considered a crime at the time, even though it would be considered as such today.

The reader needs to further understand that some of the activity may fall under more than one category of crime and may be documented in the report more than once.

There are separate reports addressing the alleged crimes of Tax Fraud and Insurance Fraud.

This report is preliminary and does not address all of the alleged crimes by Straight, Inc. or Straight-like programs.

Notable Quotes

"Anyone who fully understands the dangers of drugs will agree that drastic measures are sometimes needed." (Source: Betty Sembler, 1999 Trend Magazine)

"He also defends the practice of politicians bending an ear to big money donors. He says he tries to influence politicians all the time" (Source: Ambassador Mel Sembler, 1999 Trend Magazine).

While the St. Petersburg program was closing under lawsuits and allegations of criminal child abuse, the St. Petersburg Times contacted Mel Sembler's office. His secretary told them "He will not answer any questions regarding Straight". (St. Petersburg Times May 14th, 1993).

Mel Sembler speaks proudly of an ACLU lawsuit filed against the Atlanta Affiliate.
(1999 Trend Magazine Inc.)

A reporter from Canadian advocacy magazine asked Betty Sembler in person about the horror stories he'd read from Straight, Inc. survivors. Sembler replied, "They should get a life. I am proud of everything we have done. There's nothing to apologize for." (Source: Radley Balko)

Ambassador Melvin Floyd Sembler, addressing the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, Oct 31, 2001, on the occasion of his hearing as George W. Bush's nominee to be ambassador to Italy.
"Mr. Chairman, members of the Committee, I believe that I have the qualifications necessary, if confirmed, to lead our diplomatic mission in Italy, to modernize it, and to strengthen it as an instrument to promote American interests in Italy. During my career in business, public service, politics, and diplomacy, I have worked hard and accomplished much. . . For the last quarter century, along with my wife, I have fought vigorously against the plague of drug abuse. In 1976 Betty and I helped found STRAIGHT, a non-profit, adolescent drug treatment and rehabilitation program with branches across the U.S., which successfully treated and graduated more than 12,000 young people nationwide. For 17 years, I served as chairman of the board of STRAIGHT. Other than our children, nothing was more rewarding than this effort. Betty and I initially agreed that if we helped one child it would be worth all the effort. With 12,000 successful graduates . . . It was a gratifying accomplishment."

A Hackensack, NJ newspaper quoted Miller Newton (Executive Director of Kids) is quoted as saying, " I will use every trick in the book to keep legal adults from leaving the program when they wish."

Section One: Falsifying Government Documents

US Code- Title 18,Part 1, Chapter 47, Sec 1001

Sec. 1001. - Statements or entries generally

(a) Except as otherwise provided in this section, whoever, in any matter within the jurisdiction of the executive, legislative, or judicial branch of the Government of the United States, knowingly and willfully -

(1) Falsifies, conceals, or covers up by any trick, scheme, or device a material fact;

(2) Makes any materially false, fictitious, or fraudulent statement or representation; or

(3) Makes or uses any false writing or document knowing the same to contain any materially false, fictitious, or fraudulent statement or entry;

Shall be fined under this title or imprisoned not more than 5 years, or both

Note: The reader must understand that this is United States code; there are different definitions and punishments for falsifying State documents.

Evidence To Date

Joseph Zappala:

On his application to the US Senate for Ambassador Mr. Zappala claims he has been with Straight, Inc. since 1979 and claims he was the co-founder of Straight, Inc. However, Straight was incorporated in 1976 and Mr. Zappala is not listed on the original documents. Mr. Zappala's name does not appear on any letterhead, newspaper article or any other documentation that we have found until 1979.

Mr. Zappala does not list Spanish as a language that he speaks, even though he is applying to be the Ambassador to Spain. He did however tell the Senate that he had been taking a Spanish language class for the last three weeks, although he provided no proof. Note: Mr. Zappala only has a high school education.

Joseph Zappala's application to the Senate is almost identical to that of soon to be Ambassador Mel Sembler. Senator Paul Sarbanes of Maryland points out the fact that their answers are nearly identical.

The focus here however, is on the statement that Mr. Zappala was a co-founder of Straight, Inc. In order for this to be a crime, he would have had to willfully and knowingly mislead the Senate. It appears to this author that Mr. Zappala would be fully aware that he, in fact, was NOT the co-founder of Straight, Inc. If Mr. Zappala was merely mistaken in regards to his statements about Straight, Inc., he repeated the mistake several times – on his written application, and under oath while being questioned by US Senators. If Mr. Zappala was incorrect, willfully or not, in his statement concerning Straight, Inc., it raises the possibility that he was incorrect in other statements as well.

Senator Pell asked Mr. Zappala his opinion on critics that say Straight, Inc.'s methods of treatment are unsound. Mr. Zappalla did not answer.

(Source: US Senate Hearings, http://thestraights.com/images/zap-senate4.gif)

See Attachment A1 for documentation.

Mel Sembler:

"In 1976 Betty and I helped found STRAIGHT, a non-profit, adolescent drug treatment and rehabilitation program with branches across the U.S., which successfully treated and graduated more than 12,000 young people nationwide. For 17 years, I served as chairman of the board of Straight Incorporated. Other than our children, nothing was more rewarding than this effort. Betty and I initially agreed that if we helped one child it would be worth all the effort. With 12,000 successful graduates . . . It was a gratifying accomplishment." Mel Sembler speaking at Senate confirmation hearings:

We do not believe that this figure is accurate nor can we find any document to support this figure. We further believe that there is no document that states how many successful graduates there are as we have not seen any study done on this matter. We also believe, that Mr. Sembler knew the figure he gave was false and misleading. We also suggest that the US Senate demand this document be produced so those who are on the list (If there is in fact one) can be removed if they wish.

Miller Newton (Former Clinical Director of Straight Inc and former Director of Kids and various other Straight Spin-offs):

All medical directors at KIDS (a Straight, Inc. spin-off) admitted in depositions that they allowed program graduate staff members or senior patients at the Hackensack rehabilitation facility to stamp their signatures on necessary regulatory forms and charts, letters and insurance claim forms.

Newton conceded that he could find no published study, report or book that advocated his treatment protocol.

Defendant Wancier admitted that he signed treatment plans for a client eight months after the plan allegedly was put into effect. He too, conceded to never actually meeting with the client.

Psychiatrist Edleman said in depositions that he tried to get Newton to change his methods, but Newton would not take the advice of a doctor.

In a deposition, a former staff member said Newton doctored and withheld records.

In 1999 the State of New Jersey filed a suit against Miller Newton for one million dollars in Medicaid over billings.

In litigation, former staff members said Newton instructed them to throw away requests to leave the program.
(Article by Tim O Brien)

Section Two: Corruption

838.021 Corruption by threat against public servant.

(1) Whoever unlawfully harms or threatens unlawful harm to any public servant, to his or her immediate family, or to any other person with whose welfare the public servant is interested, with the intent or purpose:

(a) To influence the performance of any act or omission which the person believes to be, or the public servant represents as being, within the official discretion of the public servant, in violation of a public duty, or in performance of a public duty.

(b) To cause or induce the public servant to use or exert, or procure the use or exertion of, any influence upon or with any other public servant regarding any act or omission which the person believes to be, or the public servant represents as being, within the official discretion of the public servant, in violation of a public duty, or in performance of a public duty.

(2) Prosecution under this section shall not require any allegation or proof that the public servant ultimately sought to be unlawfully influenced was qualified to act in the desired way, that the public servant had assumed office, that the matter was properly pending before him or her or might by law properly be brought before him or her, that the public servant possessed jurisdiction over the matter, or that his or her official action was necessary to achieve the person's purpose.

(3)(a) Whoever unlawfully harms any public servant or any other person with whose welfare the public servant is interested shall be guilty of a felony of the second degree, punishable as provided in s. 775.082, s. 775.083, or s. 775.084.

Whoever threatens unlawful harm to any public servant or to any other person with whose welfare the public servant is interested shall be guilty of a felony of the third degree.

839.25 Official misconduct.

(1) "Official misconduct" means the commission of the following act by a public servant, with corrupt intent to obtain a benefit for himself or herself or another or to cause unlawful harm to another: knowingly falsifying, or causing another to falsify, any official record or official document.

(2) "Corrupt" means done with knowledge that act is wrongful and with improper motives.

(3) Official misconduct under this section is a felony of the third degree.

Evidence To Date

Straight, Inc. closed on April 13, 1993 amidst an investigation of being conducted by Lowell Clary, Acting Inspector General for Florida's Department of Health and Rehabilitative Services (HRS). Mr. Clary had begun his investigation back in December because of damaging documents about Straight, Inc.'s operations, which he had received from Richard Bradbury. His report suggests that Melvin Sembler and "unnamed state senators" pressured HRS to grant Straight, Inc.-Saint Petersburg a license when an on-site inspection team was preparing to deny the license. According to the report, Harry Moffitt, an HRS senior program specialist, said that deputy assistant secretary Linda Lewis questioned why Florida would continue to let Straight, Inc. operate in spite of allegations of withholding medication and food from clients, depriving them of sleep and using excessive force against them. When Ms. Lewis brought this up to Ivor Groves, an assistant secretary to HRS, Groves told her she would be fired on the spot if she did not do as told. Groves denied the conversation and Lewis did not recall it.

Mel Sembler contacted then-HRS Secretary Gregory Coler several times concerning Straight, Inc. According to the Clary report, "It appears that Mr. Coler then called Dr. Ivor Groves about Straight."

The licensing team was ready to recommend the license not be renewed, because Straight, Inc. had not corrected a number of issues raised at an inspection three months earlier. HRS received telephone calls from state senators, who let it be known they strongly supported the program, "thus exerting a certain influence concerning Straight matters," the Clary report concluded. The senators were not named. (Source: Tampa Tribune July 8th, 1993.)

An audit has concluded that state officials renewed the license of controversial drug treatment center Straight Inc. because of pressure from state senators and one of the center's founders, Ambassador Melvin Sembler (Source: St. Petersburg Times July 8th, 1993)

James T. Russell was the prosecutor for Pinellas County, Florida in 1977. He had many opportunities to prosecute Straight, Inc. and it's exectutives, but refused to do so. He did not prosecute for the alleged beating of Jerry Vancil at Straight, Inc.-St Petersburg. Coincidentally, Vancil vanished while on his way to give evidence to the district attorney. As far as we know, to this very day, Jerry Vancil has never been seen or heard from since----dead or alive. Russell did not prosecute when Florida's Bureau of Criminal Justice Planning and Assistance (BOCJPA) confirmed several cases of abuse at Straight, Inc. in 1978. Russell also declined to prosecute when two former Straight, Inc. counselors signed sworn affidavits that Helen Petermann, then clinical director at Straight, Inc.-St. Petersburg, had repeatedly slapped a small youth and jerked him by his hair in an apparent outburst of temper—even though that had not been the only public accusation of abuse inflicted by Ms. Petermann [St. Petersburg Times, 2-12-78.]. James Russell did not prosecute Mel Sembler when there was probable cause to believe that Mel Sembler had interfered with a state health department attempt to close Straight-St Petersburg for a reckless pattern over the years of violating state regulations. Russell chose not to prosecute for the kidnapping of Gail Stephenson by Straight, Inc., even though it led to a Congressional inquiry since Ms. Stephenson was from Maryland.

Lowell Clary's findings were apparently not the only time Mel Sembler put pressure on state licensing officials. Straight had opened in 1976 and by 1978 was in danger of being shut down because of numerous allegations of serious child abuse. The man who led the investigation was Robert G. Marshall, district director of the state's licensing authority for drug rehabilitation programs in Pinellas County for the state office of Health and Rehabilitative Services (HRS). In an interesting turn of events, a special citizens committee called Parents Associated Inc. was then created to investigate Robert G. Marshall! Prominent on that citizens committee was Pinellas County Judge Jack Dadswell and Mack Vines who would become the chief of police by 1980. (Terry Hensley, another Saint Petersburg Police Chief, would later become the executive director of the Straight Foundation under its new name the Drug Free America Foundation.) A spokesperson for HRS Secretary William J. "Pete" Page, Jr. has admitted that Straight, Inc. officials had called to complain about Marshall. Straight, Inc. board member John White said that on one occasion a Straight, Inc. official complained to Page about Marshall, but he did not know who it was. Even Melvin Sembler confirmed that some Straight, Inc. officials had contacted Mr. Page about the HRS investigation of Straight, Inc., but according to a newspaper account of the time, he can't remember who they were. In any event Straight, Inc. did not close but the investigator Robert G. Marshall was fired! (Source: St. Petersburg Times)

A letter dated February 11, 1991 addressed to the Commissioner of the Department of Mental Health in Richmond, VA states: "A constituent has brought to my attention plans by the Commonwealth to close Straight Inc. In light of the President's new drug policy including $100 million in funding I would like to be receiving reports on any of the states' actions concerning Straight Inc." A member of the US House of Representatives signed the letter, but his name is being withheld from this report.

Read more about public figures, the police, and Straight, Inc. here:

http://thestraights.com/why-success/straight_and_the_judges_and_cops.htm

See attachment A2 for documentation

From an interview conducted in November 2002 between an ISAC investigator and a former member of the Board of Directors at Straight, Inc.

Investigator – I see, are you aware of the present and past allegations of abuse?

F- Yes, HRS gave us a hard time, shoot I remember one time we got the governor out of bed called him up or some high government official out of bed and asked him did he know what he was doing to us with all these investigations. Yeah, it was difficult dealing with the government.

F- I remember the articles the St. Pete Times wrote; the St. Pete times was never for Straight.

Investigator- I see.

F- Yeah and then Sixty Minutes came after us. Yeah some guy from Sixty minutes showed up asking questions and actually did a piece on us with all the allegations.

Investigator- So, you never saw any abuse?

F- HRS might call it abuse but I don't think it was abuse.

Investigator-To what are you referring?

F- like restraining, well sure we restrained kids but it was done in a proper manner, you know what blows my mind is that it was the police that wanted us to start the program.

Investigator- It was the St. Pete police that wanted the program?

F- Yes, they came to several key people, parents that had kids in the SEED and asked us to form the program because what they were doing wasn't working. But see I left after only a couple of years, I was busy, I had a lot to do and I felt like well, maybe someone else should do some of the work.

Investigator- so you left simply because you had other commitments or were busy.

F- Well, I didn't agree with some things.

Investigator- Anything specific?

F- Well like that case in Washington, I thought we should fight it not settle. Mel didn't want to fight. Well first of all we hired the wrong damn lawyer that was the first problem.

Investigator- What do you mean?

F- Well the damn lawyer was a member of the ACLU you see. We needed a tough lawyer not a left-winger.

Investigator- What were your thoughts on the St. Pete times article and the HRS investigation in the 80's.

F- Well some things came of it like we had to put these stupid signs up on the wall with a phone number to HRS telling the kids they could call. That was stupid. They (HRS) even had a lawyer that smelled bad, we use to joke about that, yeah I can't remember the name but that lawyer-smelled bad like against us.

Section Three: Abuse, Assault and Battery

Note: It is important for the reader to understand that the charge of assault and battery often accompanies charges of abuse.

784.03 Battery; felony battery.

(1)(a) The offense of battery occurs when a person:

1. Actually and intentionally touches or strikes another person against the will of the other; or

2. Intentionally causes bodily harm to another person.

(b) Except as provided in subsection (2), a person who commits battery commits a misdemeanor of the first degree.

784.045 Aggravated battery.

(1)(a) A person commits aggravated battery who, in committing battery:

1. Intentionally or knowingly causes great bodily harm, permanent disability, or permanent disfigurement; or

2. Uses a deadly weapon.

(b) A person commits aggravated battery if the person who was the victim of the battery was pregnant at the time of the offense and the offender knew or should have known that the victim was pregnant.

(2) Whoever commits aggravated battery shall be guilty of a felony of the second degree.

784.011 Assault.

(1) An "assault" is an intentional, unlawful threat by word or act to do violence to the person of another, coupled with an apparent ability to do so, and doing some act, which creates a well-founded fear in such other person that such violence is imminent.

(2) Whoever commits an assault shall be guilty of a misdemeanor of the second degree, punishable as provided in s. 775.082 or s. 775.083.

784.021 Aggravated assault.

(1) An "aggravated assault" is an assault:

(a) With a deadly weapon without intent to kill; or

(b) With an intent to commit a felony.

(2) Whoever commits an aggravated assault shall be guilty of a felony of the third degree.

827.03 Abuse, aggravated abuse, and neglect of a child; penalties.--

(1) "Child abuse" means:

(a) Intentional infliction of physical or mental injury upon a child;

(b) An intentional act that could reasonably be expected to result in physical or mental injury to a child; or

(c) Active encouragement of any person to commit an act that results or could reasonably be expected to result in physical or mental injury to a child.

A person who knowingly or willfully abuses a child without causing great bodily harm, permanent disability, or permanent disfigurement to the child commits a felony of the third degree, punishable as provided in s. 775.082, s. 775.083, or s. 775.084.

(2) "Aggravated child abuse" occurs when a person:

(a) Commits aggravated battery on a child;

(b) Willfully tortures, maliciously punishes, or willfully and unlawfully cages a child; or

C) Knowingly or willfully abuses a child and in so doing causes great bodily harm, permanent disability or permanent disfigurement to the child.

(3)(a) "Neglect of a child" means:

1. A caregiver's failure or omission to provide a child with the care, supervision, and services necessary to maintain the child's physical and mental health, including, but not limited to, food, nutrition, clothing, shelter,

supervision, medicine, and medical services that a prudent person would consider essential for the well-being of the child; or

2. A caregiver's failure to make a reasonable effort to protect a child from abuse, neglect, or exploitation by another person.

Neglect of a child may be based on repeated conduct or on a single incident or omission that results in, or could reasonably be expected to result in, serious physical or mental injury, or a substantial risk of death, to a child.

(b) A person who willfully or by culpable negligence neglects a child and in so doing causes great bodily harm, permanent disability, or permanent disfigurement to the child commits a felony of the second degree, punishable as provided in s. 775.082, s. 775.083, or s. 775.084.

(c) A person who willfully or by culpable negligence neglects a child without causing great bodily harm, permanent disability, or permanent disfigurement to the child commits a felony of the third degree,

Obligation To Report Abuse:

(1) A person who is required to report known or suspected child abuse, abandonment, or neglect and who knowingly and willfully fails to do so, or who knowingly and willfully prevents another person from doing so, is guilty of a misdemeanor of the first degree, punishable as provided in s. 775.082 or s. 775.083. A judge subject to discipline pursuant to s. 12, Art. V of the Florida Constitution shall not be subject to criminal prosecution when the information was received in the course of official duties.

(2) Unless the court finds that the person is a victim of domestic violence or that other mitigating circumstances exist, a person who is 18 years of age or older and lives in the same house or living unit as a child who is known or suspected to be a victim of child abuse, neglect of a child, or aggravated child abuse, and knowingly and willfully fails to report the child abuse commits a felony of the third degree, punishable as provided in s. 775.082, s. 775.083, or s. 775.084.

Evidence To Date

In 1978, Florida's Bureau of Criminal Justice Planning and Assistance (BOCJPA) confirmed several cases of abuse at Straight, Inc.

James Russell did not prosecute when two former Straight, Inc. counselors signed sworn affidavits that Helen Petermann, then Straights clinical director, had repeatedly slapped a small youth and yanked him by his hair in an apparent outburst of temper—even though that had not been the only public accusation of abuse by Ms. Petermann [St. Petersburg Times, 2-12-78.].

An agency inspector general's report has found a seven-month investigation into the defunct St. Petersburg-based drug rehabilitation center, which Sembler founded, which revealed "a definite pattern of abuse or excessive force used against clients at Straight facilities (Source: Tampa Tribune July 8th 1993).

Harry Moffitt, an HRS senior human services program specialist, told investigators of threats to fire a staff member who questioned why Florida would allow Straight to continue operating in spite of allegations of withholding medication and food from clients, depriving them of sleep and using excessive force against them. Similar problems forced closure of Straight treatment centers in other states. The HRS investigation also detailed physical abuse or neglect at Straight, including restraining clients who tried to escape or wouldn't sit straight in their chairs for as long as 12 hours; failing to provide follow-up medical treatment; and knowingly placing clients "in a dangerous situation."(Source: Tampa Tribune July 8th 1993)

October 1982- Margaret Heath (Staff Trainee and twice a seventh stepper) escaped from Straight, Inc. and ran to law enforcement officials with her complaints of torture, abuse, neglect, kidnapping and more. This started the Sarasota State Attorney's investigation into Straight, Inc. and led to the closing of Straight, Inc.-Sarasota. Margaret was held in the custody of the State (HRS) in a group home until a hearing by judge. Margaret Heath became the first person court ordered OUT of the program.

February 1982- Straight-Atlanta settled with 3 kids represented by the ACLU who claimed they were suffering "inhumane treatment".(6) An HRS report in April 1981 found that teenage clients at Straight, Inc. had been threatened by administrative staff members with either being court ordered into Straight, Inc. or being committed to a mental institution unless they voluntarily entered the program. Several former clients reported to the Saint Petersburg Times in 1981 that Straight, Inc. staff members had treated them in a similar manner.

July 14, 1982 - HRS sent a letter to Clinical Director Miller Newton confirming allegations of "Marathoning" (denying clients food and sleep and subjecting them to 12-hour periods of non-stop confrontations for days at a time), "The Spanking Machine," "Confrontations," and "The Peanut Butter Diet."

David Levin, former assistant state prosecutor for Sarasota County, Florida, led the criminal investigation of Straight, Inc.-Sarasota that resulted in the closing of that facility. The prosecutor's office in Sarasota publicly stated that the counselors inflicting the abuse at Straight, Inc.- Sarasota had admitted under oath that they had been trained in their abusive methods at Straight, Inc.-Saint Petersburg.

Benson Williams sued Straight, Inc.-Sarasota for beatings, pulling him by hair, hanging him by his underpants from a bedpost, and for torture.(14)

September 1983 – The Florida State Attorney's Office for Sarasota County released a damning 600 page criminal investigation of Straight, Inc.-Sarasota including statements from current/former counselors regarding kidnappings, false imprisonments, threats of being court ordered unless client voluntarily enrolls, enrolling clients who were not drug dependent, hair pulling, neck grabbing, throwing against walls.(15)

Jacqueline A. Stallings sued Straight, Inc.-St Pete for physical assaults and false imprisonment. She eventually won case #83012161C1. Straight, Inc. was found to have committed a "malicious act" against her.(19)

In 1987 the state of Ohio took Straight, Inc. to court to close it down for criminal child abuse. The day the trial was to start Straight, Inc. voluntarily closed and transferred its clients to its Atlanta and Detroit branches.

Straight, Inc.'s former national clinical director, Dr. Miller Newton, ran one of his KIDS programs in Yorba Linda. KIDS closed in 1989 under criminal investigation and Straight, Inc. moved into the facility and took over KIDS' clients. California forced Straight, Inc. to close down due to child abuse in 1990. Straight, Inc-California simply transferred its clients to Straight, Inc.-Dallas.

Two Canadian psychologists from Simon University visited Straight, Inc.-DC (Springfield, VA) for a first hand look. Professor Barry Beyerstein subsequently published the paper "Thought Reform Tactics: The Road to Hell is Paved with Good Intentions." He noted 17 methods that cults employ on their unsuspecting members, and concluded that Straight, Inc. was guilty of using every one of them. He further stated that Straight, Inc. could be fairly compared with prisoner of war camps.

Straight was under criminal investigation in Virginia when the state health department decided not to renew its license. Straight demanded a hearing before a judge, but voluntarily closed the day before the hearing and just "popped" open three days later in Maryland taking its clients with it.

Virginia sited Straight, Inc. for "failing to report sexual abuse and 44 other violations of Virginia State law."

According to Straight, Inc. internal documents, in the event that a child develops an illness while at the foster home, they are to administer medical care and contact "Junior Staff." Junior staff members were usually individuals who had been in the program but were not legal adults. This, in the opinion of this investigator, is negligence on the part of Straight, Inc.'s own procedures. This procedure does not constitute proper or reasonable care.

An internal document from James Hartz states: Upon admitting a new client to the program, he/she shall be taken to the appropriate rest room by two staff members (Note: most staff members were usually children themselves) of the same sex and searched thoroughly. Staff can request an advanced person in the program to assist if staff is not available. This procedure allowed CHILDREN to thoroughly strip-search other children.

Fred Collins' attorneys tried to show a pattern of abuse in the Straight, Inc. facilities that would have intimidated Collins. Leigh Bright of Oxon Hill, Virginia who was in the program with Collins in St. Petersburg, testified that she had a confrontation with program director Miller Newton, then Straight, Inc.'s national clinical director. Bright told the jury that Newton "grabbed me by the hair and threw me to the floor" and called her obscene names. (Source: Washington Post, May 11, 1983)

From an interview between one of our investigators and a former Executive Staff Member at Straight, Inc:

DB- Well I thought, the basic idea using peer pressure was a good one but things got out of hand.

Investigator- Out of hand, what do you mean?

DB- In my judgment, Dr. Newton was a megalomaniac he had deep seeded anger, and took it out on the kids. He was very sick and angry and never dealt with it. We conflicted in management styles.

From an interview between one of our investigators and a former Senior Staff Member at Straight, Inc:

Investigator-Did you ever tell a kid either sign in or get court ordered?

CP-Possible that we threatened court ordering

Investigator- Tell me about personal hygiene. I understand some kids lacked personal hygiene.

CP-We took their deodorant if it had alcohol in it.

Investigator-What did you do to replace it?

CP-We made them stink for a week until the parents would bring in a new one. (Laughing.)

Investigator-Tell me about the exercise raps where the kids exercised until the walls sweat?

CP- *Possible exercise program. I don't remember. Casselor was into* physical fitness. Sounds familiar *about exercise rap. Beat them while they're young; that's my motto. (Laughing.)*

Investigator- If the doors were opened and the kids were sitting there in front of these doors how did you stop them from bolting out the doors?

CP-Mind control if we thought they would run we would keep them away from doors in middle of group. They knew they would be stopped or restrained if they stood to run.

From an interview between one of our investigators and a former member of the Board of Directors at Straight, Inc:

HH- *Well, one thing was the "Come Down" raps were getting way out of hand.*

Investigator- *Can you explain to me what you mean by "out of hand".*

HH- Well you see in the SEED, only the senior staff could do come down wraps cause they were trained people, or were kids in the program that had been through the program and knew what they were talking *about. I started to hear from some of my foster children that they were letting everybody do the "Come down" raps. You know, like ev*en newcomers who had no idea what they were talking about, the whole *group was doing it and it didn't matter if they knew what they were saying was true or not. That bothered me a lot. You have to be careful with the "Come down" raps cause they can destroy someone's mind for good.*

Straight, Inc.-California closed because the State of California refused to issue operating license citing concerns over abusive treatment methods. (Source: State of California).

In 1988, after six months of treatment at Straight, Inc.-Dallas, a staff member telephoned Lynne Armstrong and told her to take her son Rob Seagall home because he was acting depressed. She says he could not complete a sentence when she got him back.

At Straight, Inc.-DC (Springfield, VA) client 90025 said she was spat upon, locked in a closet, had her shoulder dislocated and was raped with a curling iron by her oldcomers for not writing her moral inventory. Later, she slit her wrist.

In 1986 Straight, Inc.-St. Pete settled out of court for $15,000 with a minor who said he had psychiatric problems - not a drug problem - when he entered Straight, Inc. Deprived of food and beaten, he says he started carving on his arms in the program and claims other Straight, Inc. clients injured him further by pinning him down. He received an additional $10,000 for damages from the host home where he had been assigned.

In court proceedings to close down Straight, Inc.-Cincinnati, Dr. Ofshe, a noted Berkeley sociologist and mind control expert stated, "Straight conducts a program that practices psychological coercion and physical assault against children under the guise of treatment. I believe there is a reason to fear for the physical and mental safety of any child sent to the program."

A girl was kept in Straight, Inc.-Boston even though her attending physician stated she had no drug problem. She was admitted to a psychiatric hospital after she sliced her wrist in a suicide attempt at Straight, Inc. (Document not dated)

A Straight, Inc.-Maryland client who had made approximately eleven suicide attempts was found on the top of the roof drinking alcohol, but a psychiatrist did not see him for another eighteen days. (Document not dated)

In 1992 in a notarized statement to HRS, former client Ryan M. described his concerns for a child in the program. There were allegations that the child had engaged in sex with his sister. When the child refused to discuss the matter in front of the group, other clients were allowed to call him names such as "faggot," "gaffer," "Howdy Doody," and "shit-for-brains," all in the presence of staff members. The child spoke without permission one day during a group session and other clients were allowed to throw him on the floor and rub his face in the carpet, causing abrasions. Fellow clients also slapped his head and flicked his ears with their fingers, again in the presence of staff members.

In 1988 Ms. Daniels-Hobby sued Straight, Inc.-St. Petersburg for driving her son insane after he was diagnosed with schizophrenia. His psychiatrist testified that Straight, Inc. made him "ten times worse."

Victoria H., M.D., who spent 20 months in Straight, Inc. being treated for a drug problem she did not have states:

*"There was one girl brought in whom I'll never forget. Caroline was a young girl who heard voi*ces. Even then I knew she was mentally ill. She was initially shy and sad, and cooperative, but after the constant confrontation, she suffered a breakdown and was quickly sat on and marathoned. It was so sick that nobody there could tell she needed a psychiatrist, but the staff had very little education. Many of them were working on their GED, so I had more education at that point than most of them. It was awful to watch this and be completely unable to help her, as I was still on first phase, and then desperately trying to work my way up the phases to get out of there."

In a sworn affidavit former Straight, Inc. client W.E. states:

Do to embarrassment of being watched when going to the bathroom I was unable to urinate and was never treated by a physician for it and still have pain associated with it today. He also states that while in the program, a newcomer attempted to kill an old comer by wrapping a sheet around his neck. Staff was notified and the newcomer was allowed to stay in the program. To the best of his knowledge the attempted murder was never reported to the police and the old comer was taken to the hospital and treated for strangulation

and released. A common practice by the staff members in that warehouse was to keep the lower phase clients confined to their chairs for up to fourteen hours a day. Afterwards, there was little time to sleep due to having to write daily papers called moral inventories. This chore often took up to an hour to complete. He states he saw people being restrained on the floor by up to six people at a time, sitting on legs, chests and arms. Some people were made to stand for up to six hours at a time without sitting our restroom breaks. He further states that he was denied access to anyone including his parents except for those that were in the program.

In a sworn affidavit by former Straight, Inc. client MH, she states:

One day a newcomer approximately twelve years old stood up in morning rap crying, he told the then Senior staff Letha Yost in front of the group that he had been raped by his old comers. Letha confronted the old comers and to the best of her knowledge, never reported the incident to HRS and the old comers were simply put on a fourteen-day refresher. She was ordered by staff to take a girl in a room and *"beat her until she decided to cooperate". MH was a Staff trainee at the time, when she refused and stood in front of the* girl with a knife to protect her from getting beaten MH was started over. MH also states: She saw staff put a thirteen year old boy in very small room (6 by 6 feet approximately) for weeks on end and was never allowed to come out. When he was finally brought out he was paraded in front of the group and the group *was told this is what you will end up like if you don't get with your prog*ram. The child that had been in the room was now a shell of a person according to MH. MH witnessed a first-phaser who had been there about four months climb on the ledge of the building and attempt to jump off. On her intake she was told by staff that she would only have to stay fourteen days and then if she wanted to leave she could. Her brother as a sibling was brought in months later, MH states that Executive Director Helen Peterman told MH on her *brothers intake that "if she did not get him to sign the* papers that she would have her brother put in a mental *hospital". Mrs. Peterman pretended to be on the phone with a mental hospital during her brother's intake in* a scare tactic. MH convinced her brother to sign the paper. She states she was so afraid for her brother that she remembers holding his hand that had the pen in it and helping him sign the paper. Later MH found out that Mrs. Peterman was in fact actually on the phone to her daughter. She was finally court ordered out of the program almost four years later. MH affidavit includes statements of torture, neglect, abuse, attempted suicides by individuals, kidnapping, children held against their will, staff threats, sex raps where girls and guys where forced to give vivid details of their sex and sex life in front of both girls and guys, strip searches *where the same two guy staff members walked in on the girl searches frequently, children "going crazy" that came in the program sane with Straight A's and active in school, fire hazard host homes, roach inv*ested host homes, deprived of proper medical care, food and sleep. She states that her leg was broken by then Clinical Director Miller Newton because she was writing on her shoe. She was not taken to a physician for treatment. She never once recalls staff reporting ANY abuse to HRS that took place. She states she never once in the four years in Straight ever saw a psychiatrist or certified drug counselor. She witnessed the beating of her own brother whose head was thrown through a plaster wall; MH was on second phase at the time. When she jumped up out of her chair to go help her brother she was tackled by at least fifteen girls and pinned to the floor while she listened to her brother scream and she was promptly started over by staff. *She states that "Chris Casselor" executive staff told her "She would never get out of here because he knew what she would do". Meaning that he felt that she would run to the authorities because she had told him* openly in-*group repeatedly "when I get out, I am coming back with the law." MH got out and went directly to* the authorities, which started the investigation and subsequent closing of Straight Sarasota.

S. C. who spent 2 years in Straight, Inc. states:

"One day when I was on 5th phase, a boy named David who was only 12 years old, was confronted by a senior staff member Dean Mistretta who wanted to know why David was sitting in a puddle of blood. In front of the entire group, David said that he had been raped by his oldcomer. David was then taken out of group. A short time *later, Mistretta reminded all of us of the "confidentiality" rule, told us that anyone who spoke of* what had happened would be started over, and tore the page where the rape had been noted, out of the 5th *phase OBs book."*

This reporter questioned a former Senior Staff Member of Straight, Inc on or about October of 2002 and asked the former staff member if he was aware of allegation of a Sarasota Executive Staff sleeping with a fifth phaser. The Former Executive replied," Yes, we knew of her doing that and *sleeping with the young boy newcomers. That's why we fired her."*

Note: Under the law, this would be called "statutory rape."

From a statement by a former Junior Staff Member of Straight, Inc:

*"When I was confronted once on second phase, female senior st*aff left me alone in a room with *executive staff and he got on top of me and [ejaculated] and the other staff just walked away."*

THIS INVESTIGATIVE UNIT HAS RECEIVED COUNTLESS REPORTS OF RAPE AND SEXUAL ASSAULT. THOSE CASES ARE BEING TURNED OVER TO THE APPROPRIATE PROSECUTORS

Carolyn Henson was the wife of Straight, Inc. board member L. Hap Henson and a program volunteer. When her husband resigned she told a reporter at the Saint Petersburg Times in December 1977 that, "they (juveniles) are straight while they're there, but it's out of fear." She further stated that several former program counselors and clients had told her that juveniles have been mistreated while in the program and that she, Jim Hartz and others once witnessed Helen Petermann maliciously kicking a youth who was passively resisting Straight, Inc. officials.

In response to Mrs. Henson's allegations of abuses, Jim Hartz responded to a reporter that rumors of mistreatment constantly surface about Straight, Inc. but no incident has ever been proven. He did acknowledge to a Times reporter that three methods are used to discipline "disruptive" clients.

> 1. "Time out" known by some clients as "solitary confinement" where, according to Hartz," a client is put in a room by himself while a counselor stands outside to periodically check up on him". [One former 16 year-old client during those early days claimed she was kept in "solitary confinement" for five days in a row. For three of those days, she alleged, large strips of canvas bound her arms and legs. Hartz denied that charge.]

2. Running- Where juveniles are exercised forcibly if necessary. [Several persons interviewed by the Times at the time say they saw clients kicked and grabbed by the hair during these exercises.]

3. Marathon sessions- when a group of counselors yell remarks at a client designed to provoke the client into feeling guilty.

Note: Depending on which program you were in marathoning could mean keeping an individual awake for long periods of time or it could mean confronting an individual for long periods of time.

According to the Saint Petersburg Times of February 12, 1978, two former Straight, Inc. counselors (in sworn statements) said they had seen program director Helen R. Petermann repeatedly slap a small youth and yanked him by his hair in an apparent outburst of temper. "I saw maybe five good smacks," one ex-counselor had said. Another allegation was made by two former Straight, Inc. staff members, who said that Ms. Petermann once demonstrated different positions of sexual intercourse to a group of female clients, some in their early teens. When a Times reporter asked Jim Hartz about the alleged incident he said he knew nothing of the sex rap.

Two former staff members said that Ms. Petermann allegedly prepared two documents to scare clients into remaining at Straight, Inc. The police department reportedly signed one. After a client had signed the document, the two had alleged, he was told by Ms. Petermann, "Ah ha! Now we've got you. If you don't stay here now and you run away, we're gonna' send you away to Marianna (state juvenile home)." Another former staff member claimed that Ms. Petermann had threatened at least one other juvenile in the same manner. [Miller Newton once reportedly threatened a child in a similar manner in front of two HRS officers.]

Reporter Susan White of the Lexington Herald-Leader had written about Possibilities Unlimited, a Straight, Inc. spin-off, on May 27, 1985, page C3: "Not all of the kids come to Possibilities Unlimited eagerly, or even willingly. The walls of the intake rooms are decorated with jagged holes made by frustrated newcomers. Some sign their commitment papers only after long hours of persuasion by peer counselors, parents and Ross." In 1985 Dr. George Ross and six others associated with Possibilities Unlimited were indicted and tried for keeping young people in the program against their will in a trial where assistant prosecutor Jack Giles told the jury he would seek a jail sentence for Dr. Ross. [Lexington Herald-Leader, August 30, 1985, page B1] The complainants included a 23-year-old woman who alleged that Ross had threatened to have her "2-year-old baby taken from her if she didn't enroll in the program"; a 15-year-old boy who "alleged that Ross threatened to have him hospitalized and get a court order placing him in the program"; a 16-year-old boy; and a 19- year-old Frankfort teenager who alleged that "three Possibilities Unlimited workers came to his home and carried him back to the center after he had been allowed to leave." During the trial Douglas Patrick Smalley of Frankfort, Kentucky testified that his intake lasted four hours in an interview room where he had been physically restrained by Ross to prevent his escape. Just as in an earlier trial against Straight, Inc. in Virginia, Ross' attorney questioned Smalley about his admissions in Moral Inventories. [Note: This is in violation of the program's own "Confidentiality" rule] Smalley said that much of what he had admitted to was lies saying because "you had to invent things so they would leave you alone." [Lexington Herald-Leader, May 17, 1987, page B4, Section: City/State]

A letter from HRS to Mrs. Griffith of Growing Together (A Straight, Inc.-like program) dated March 8th 1990 states: It is evident to me that the program has been and is currently in non-compliance with several areas of Chapter 10E-16 of the Florida Administrative Code and Florida Statues Chapters 396 and 397. Of special concern are violations in the areas of client health and safety, use of restraint and physical holding by peer staff and other clients in your program and the

violations of client rights to privacy, communication and visitation. If the program is not in full compliance by May 8th 1990 I shall revoke your license to protect the health and safety of the clients and families involved.

A letter to Miller Newton from HRS dated July 14th, 1982 states: The following areas are still of concern after our site visit: Marathoning, Spanking Machine, Confrontation, Peanut Butter Diet.

In a Hackensack, NJ newspaper Miller Newton stated: " I will use every trick in the book to keep legal adults from leaving the program when they wish."

During a routine license inspection of Straight, Inc.-St. Petersburg on June 3 - 5, 1980 HRS officials found numerous incidences of kids being locked in bedrooms with locked windows. Jim Hartz, then executive director, was advised that the locks appeared to be in violation of Florida Statue 397.041 and that the situation could present a serious fire or other safety hazard. Hartz agreed to correct the problem. On March 16, 1981 HRS officials met with Miller Newton to discuss a March 5, 1981, finding that Straight was still locking kids in bedrooms at host homes. Dr. Newton indicated to these officials a lack of ability by the program to control what happens in the foster homes. Newton was advised that since Straight, Inc. had a role in sending kids to a foster home, it seemed reasonable that the program should bear some responsibility for what happens there.

In 1978 Edythe Mizereck placed her 13 year-old daughter in Straight, Inc.-St Petersburg, believing she had been court ordered there. The daughter claims she was once locked in a room for 12 hours and on another occasion a girl tried to grab her breast in the shower. She was made to live with a man and his daughter. In an apparent escape attempt she jumped from the man's third floor balcony and severely injured her back--requiring multiple operations, which included the insertion of metal rods. She sued Straight, Inc. and Straight, Inc. counter-sued, of all bodies, the state department of Health and Rehabilitative Services (HRS). Apparently, Straight, Inc. had taken the position that; after all, it was HRS who had granted them a license to operate in the first place. Straight, Inc. also claimed it was the state that had led the girl to believe she had been court ordered there. Straight, Inc. settled the lawsuit in 1981.(1)

In April 1981 Florida's Health and Rehabilitative Services Department (HRS) issued a report finding that Straight, Inc.'s clients "indicated that they were threatened with being court-ordered into the program or being committed to a mental institution if they did not voluntarily sign into the program." Around this time Florida Republican Representative from Saint Petersburg Robert Melby introduced a bill (at the request of "people with children in Straight") that would allow parents to force kids into treatment with the force of a court order.(2) Straight, Inc.'s detractors claim that once the program got a prospective parent in the door, the parent would hear testimony from kids at Open Meetings in which the kids admitted and often exaggerated drug use and the parents would be shown pictures of dead kids from drug related fatalities---thus making a prospective parent fearful of not putting their child into Straight, Inc. There are further claims that once one child was placed in Straight, Inc. undue pressure was placed on parents to enroll their other children as well.

A Straight, Inc. staff member was charged with the rape of two male teenagers, one was a Straight, Inc. client. The staff member received a 7-year prison sentence. (Source: Police report dated 07/1997).

Fourteen parents, seated in a circle, recently told the Herald-Tribune of conditions their teenaged children experienced at Straight, Inc. Some fought back the tears as they described physical and mental abuse they say their children were subjected to. The parents said they were often verbally abused themselves before removing their children from the program. I had one girl come to my home, one of the parents recalled, she was so thirsty she kept drinking and drinking until she vomited. That's how thirsty she was. One mother said

her daughter was only allowed to eat peanut butter for 28 consecutive days. "I hog tied kids that escaped" said another parent. "I'm ashamed of myself." One father stated that his daughters were among the girls in the room when certain male staff members came through the room during female strip searches. Another mother was equally upset about Straight, Inc. She began suffering from a stress-induced blindness while her son was in the program. Despite three doctor's letters verifying she needed thirty days' rest, she said Straight, Inc. officials refused to grant her an exemption from its mandatory parent sessions on Monday and Friday nights and her family was later kicked out of the program. One mother remembers being called an "ungrateful bitch" by staff members. (Source: Sarasota Herald Tribune).

Former Straight, Inc. staff members have confirmed allegations of abuse in return for immunity. Former staff members admitted among other things to signing siblings into the program that did not have a drug problem, to taking as many as twelve to thirteen hours to coax someone into the program, and to keeping people over eighteen years of age in the program even when they had requested to leave (Source: Herald Tribune September 14th, 1983)

The Massachusetts State Office For Children withheld Straight Inc.'s license due to the programs policy of conducting strip searches in front of peers, denying them privacy while showering or using the bathroom and depriving them of food and sleep, admitting children that did not have a drug or alcohol problem, and failing to determine whether the host homes met the needs of an individual child or even provided enough beds. (The Patriot Ledger)

In a document dated December 1989, the Texas Commission on Alcohol and Drug Abuse found the following:

- Straight, Inc. violated client's rights by denying clients personal privacy as related to toilet practices.
- Straight, Inc. had allowed host homes to use containers for urination.
- Straight, Inc. host homes failed to provide each client with a separate bed.
- Straight, Inc. inappropriately restrained clients when clients were not a danger to themselves or others
- Straight, Inc. engaged in confronting clients in an inappropriate and non-therapeutic manner.
- Staff members had restrained a client using a nylon rope.
- A host home had restrained a client using a nylon rope.
- Straight, Inc. had failed to post clients' rights.
- Straight, Inc. had failed to post client grievance procedures.
- A staff member choked and kicked a client
- Host homes for Straight, Inc. were overcrowded.

View more on all the civil and criminal cases against Straight, Inc.:

http://www.thestraights.com/legal/matrix-civil-criminal.htm

Section Four: Attempts, Solicitation, and Conspiracy

777.04 Attempts, solicitation, and conspiracy

(2) A person who solicits another to commit an offense prohibited by law and in the course of such solicitation commands, encourages, hires, or requests another person to engage in specific conduct which would constitute such offense or an attempt to commit such offense commits the offense of criminal solicitation, ranked for purposes of sentencing as provided in subsection (4).

(3) A person who agrees, conspires, combines, or confederates with another person or persons to commit any offense commits the offense of criminal conspiracy, ranked for purposes of sentencing as provided in subsection (4).

(4)(a) Except as otherwise provided in ss. 104.091(2), 828.125(2), 849.25(4), 893.135(5), and 921.0022, the offense of criminal attempt, criminal solicitation, or criminal conspiracy is ranked for purposes of sentencing under chapter 921 and determining incentive gain-time eligibility under chapter 944 one level below the ranking under s. 921.0022 or s. 921.0023 of the offense attempted, solicited, or conspired to. If the criminal attempt, criminal solicitation, or criminal conspiracy is of an offense ranked in level 1 or level 2 under s. 921.0022 or s. 921.0023, such offense is a misdemeanor of the first degree, punishable as provided in s. 775.082 or s. 775.083. If the offense attempted, solicited, or conspired to is a capital felony, the offense of criminal attempt, criminal solicitation, or criminal conspiracy is a felony of the first degree.

Evidence To Date

An internal Straight, Inc. document dated December 16th, 1982, written by Mel Riddle, director of Straight, Inc.-Virginia, states that if a child leaves the program "parents should not offer financial aid, food, emotional support, clothing, shelter and should return the child to the program." This is clearly directing a parent to commit a crime IF Virginia laws are the same in this respect to Florida laws.

The initial Treatment Plan which is an internal document dealing with diagnosis, condition, and special precautions does not give a signature line for anyone nor does it specify intake must be done by a medical professional. (Document undated)

Straight, Inc. opened suddenly in Boston in 1985, the same way it opened suddenly in Maryland and in California, without first seeking a license from the Massachusetts Executive Office of Health and Human Services, Office for Children (OFC) which regulates foster homes in that state. When the state finally learned about Straight, Inc. OFC issued a provisional six-month license on July 9, 1987. Six months later OFC refused to renew the license because of disturbing regulatory violations. Also OFC was beginning to receive complaints of physical and emotional abuses occurring at Straight, Inc. from the Department of Social Services. Straight, Inc. employed attorneys who argued that the program ran host homes, not foster homes, and thus should be under the Department of Public Health (DPH), not OFC. But DPH was receiving disturbing complaints against Straight, Inc. as well. The state of Massachusetts was receiving the same complaints as every other state in which a Straight, Inc. operated: improper restraints, denying education, failing to tell parents of suicide attempts, a staff member punching a kid in the face, admitting kids without chemical dependency problems including one 12 year-old who had sniffed glue once, allowing two pieces of toilet paper for clients to wipe themselves, sleep deprivation, spitting on kids. Finally on November 11, 1991, Straight, Inc. agreed to not operate foster homes and the state agreed that OFC would not regulate Straight, Inc. The program then refused a hearing with an administrative judge and closed down. Thus Straight, Inc. had managed to operate improperly in Massachusetts for six years on the basis of a provisional six-month license.[10]

By 1990, Straight, Inc.-DC (Springfield, VA) had amassed a large number of violations. You can view a sample of the abuses at the following web addresshttp://thestraights.com/thee-straights/st-nova/straight-dc-abuses.htm. Yet, strangely, Virginia Health Officials continued to grant Straight, Inc. a license. Finally on March 26, 1990 King E. Davis, Commissioner of Mental Health, informed Straight, Inc. that its license would not be renewed. Straight, Inc. officials balked, sought legal council, and managed to sign a consent agreement with the state on July 6, 1990 agreeing to correct outstanding deficiencies. In late 1990, a former client sued Virginia's Commissioner of Mental Health, the Secretary of Health and Human Resources, and the former Commissioner for not revoking Straight, Inc.'s license.

In 1987 the Texas Commission on Alcohol and Drug Abuse (TCADA) forced Straight, Inc. to stop strapping sanitary pads and towels on kids who were "acting out." In 1989, David Tatum, a TCADA administrator, says he began receiving complaints. Among the allegations: a staff member choked and kicked a client, a host-home father tied up a client with an automobile towing strap, and a client received a broken nose but was not given medical treatment. During an investigation ending in October 1989, Tatum received 15 complaints including: 5 incidents of kids restrained for trivial reasons such as "failure to sit up properly" and "failure to move." One staff member allegedly tied a client with a nylon rope to prevent him from escaping. Another did nothing while kids scratched themselves with pieces of metal. A parent reported that a staff member hit client Chad Barnes in the face. As a result of the investigation, Straight, Inc.-Dallas fired one staff member and signed an agreement order in December 1989 stating that only trained staff members would be allowed to restrain clients, that time-out rooms would be banned, and that host homes would be required to provide better living arrangements. In return Straight, Inc. would not have to admit to any of the allegations of abuse. But in January a reporter witnessed a client being restrained and noted that there were only 2 adults and 3 kids watching 100 clients. In August 1991 TCADA informed Straight, Inc.-Dallas that its license would not be renewed for consistently violating the law and for failure to abide by the 1989 agreement order. Among the citations cited in the order were the unsupervised dispensing of medications, treating clients who did not meet the program's own criteria of being chemically dependent, forcing clients to sleep in beds with other clients, failing to provide medical care to injured clients, and restraining clients with nylon rope. One finding was for a foster home which gave the kids only a container to urinate in the evening. Straight, Inc.-Dallas announced that it was closing for economic reasons.

Section Five: Hiring and Employing; Infliction of Pain or Suffering

450.151Hiring and employing; infliction of pain or suffering; penalty.

Any person who takes, receives, hires, employs, uses, exhibits, or, in any manner or under any pretense, causes or permits any child less than 18 years of age to suffer; who inflicts upon any such child unjustifiable physical pain or mental suffering; who willfully causes or permits the life of any such child to be endangered or his or her health to be injured or such child to be placed in such situation that his or her life may be endangered or health injured; or who has in custody any such child for any of the purposes aforesaid is guilty of a felony of the second degree, punishable as provided in s. 775.082, s. 775.083, or s. 775.084.

Evidence To Date

According to an internal document from Straight, Inc. "all staff are trained in the St. Petersburg facility for a period of three to five months."

Section Six: Kidnapping

Kidnapping

1)(a) The term "kidnapping" means forcibly, secretly, or by threat confining, abducting, or imprisoning another person against her or his will and without lawful authority, with intent to:

1. Hold for ransom or reward or as a shield or hostage.

2. Commit or facilitate commission of any felony.

3. Inflict bodily harm upon or to terrorize the victim or another person.

4. Interfere with the performance of any governmental or political function.

2) A person who kidnaps a person is guilty of a felony of the first degree, punishable by imprisonment for a term of years not exceeding life or as provided in s. 775.082, s.

Evidence To Date

A letter dated February 14th, 1978 from Florida HRS and addressed to Melvin Sembler, states the following: "This is to acknowledge the receipt of your updated letter concerning the Straight policy regarding holding a client against his or her will. It is my understanding that force will not be used to prohibit a child from leaving the program." (Source: Plaintiff Exhibit A, HRS)

On July 17, 1980 Michael Calabrese went to Straight, Inc. to visit his brother. He claims, Straight, Inc. staff members detained him for 9 hours. Who then threatened to retain him for two years with a court order unless he voluntarily admitted himself into Straight Inc. He says he got into a shouting match with then-director Miller Newton during this intake.[8]

Acting on a complaint on September 30, 1980, Florida state health officials (HRS) interviewed a male juvenile client at Straight, Inc.-St Petersburg whom they found being held against his will for treatment for a drug problem he did not have. Straight, Inc. officials released this minor.

An investigation by HRS responding to a complaint by an Orlando woman on March 4, 1981 found that her son was being held against his will at Straight, Inc. (She had previously filed a Writ of Habeas Corpus to get her other son out.)

On March 16, 1981, state officials Terrell Harper and Marshall met with Miller Newton and two female clients who had recently escaped from Straight, Inc.-St Petersburg but had been returned. In the presence of the state officials Newton threatened the two girls, saying they could be "sent to a mental institution." Newton then told one of the girls he was considering advising her parents to take her to a treatment program in Georgia where she could be "locked-up for 6 months" on just her parents' signature. HRS removed one of the girls the next day. Her mother at the recommendation of a court appointed guardian ad litem removed the other child three days later. State investigators found that the locks to the bedroom doors where these girls slept had been reversed to lock from the outside.(9)

October 1982- Margaret Heath (Staff Trainee and twice a seventh stepper) escaped from Straight, Inc.-Orlando and went to law enforcements officials with her complaints of torture, abuse, neglect, kidnapping and more. This began the Sarasota State Attorneys investigation into Straight, Inc. and subsequently the closing of Straight, Inc.-Sarasota. Margaret was held in the custody of the state (HRS) in a group home until a hearing by judge. At this point, Margaret had been in the program longer than anyone. Margaret was given a bodyguard to prevent "straightlings" from grabbing her off the street on her way to school. Margaret was brought before a judge and became the first person "court ordered OUT of the program."

October 23, 1981 - Arletha Schauteet attended a sibling interview in order to obtain permission to speak to her brother. At one point she escaped only to be kidnapped, in a violent 30-minute struggle, by her mother, two adult males, and another woman and taken back to Straight, Inc. Ms. Schauteet says Miller Newton told her that if she persisted in saying she was held against her will, "the state of Florida would take over and put my mother in jail for kidnapping." She was held against her will until April 21, 1982 when Detective Brown from the Sanford, FL Police Department secured her release. [Judge C. Vernon Mize signed a preemptory Writ of Habeas Corpus in the interest of Ms. Schauteet, the date is smeared, but appears to be 1982.]

Fred Collins escaped from Straight, Inc-DC (Springfield, VA). In a 1983 trial Fred was awarded $220,000 for false imprisonment.(11)

Jan 19, 1983 - an 18 year-old student intern in the Seminole County's Sheriff's Office named Hope Hyrons attended a sibling interview at Straight, Inc. so she could visit her brother. Staff members tried to force her to sign herself into the program. She resisted and was made to walk/hitch hike back to Longwood, Fl—a 2-hour drive. A month later she was kidnapped by her mother, father and two strange men and taken to Straight, Inc. She fought to get out of the intake room and was restrained. When she told her captors her legal rights were being violated, she says Miller Newton walked in and said, ""Well, I don't give a damn about your legal rights." Two days later a social services official secured her release. Miss Hyrons subsequently filed a lawsuit against Straight, Inc. and Miller Newton.(10)

Martin Brashears, an adult, sued Straight, Inc.-Atlanta for false imprisonment.(13)

The Florida state's attorneys office for Sarasota County released a damning 600 page criminal investigation of Straight, Inc.-Sarasota including statements from current/former counselors of kidnappings, false imprisonments, threats of being court ordered unless client voluntarily enrolls, enrolling clients who were not drug dependent, hair pulling, neck grabbing, and throwing clients against walls.(15)

A boy named Charles was brought to Straight, Inc.-St. Petersburg. Charles had been grabbed in Albuquerque, New Mexico by two private detectives hired by his mother, and placed in leg irons. A Florida judge later ordered his release because proper commitment procedures had not been followed, and because the judge found no evidence of drug addiction or abuse.(17)

Michael Keen sued Straight, Inc.-St. Petersburg for false imprisonment(18)

Jacqueline A. Stallings sued Straight, Inc.-St Petersburg for physical assaults and false imprisonment. She eventually won case #83012161C1. Straight, Inc. was found guilty of committing a "malicious act" against her.(19)

According to an internal document from Straight, Inc.-DC (Springfield, VA), a senior staff member states "Clients are not to make any reference to turning eighteen."

In a New Jersey case involving Kids of North Jersey (whose executive director was formally clinical director for Straight incorporated one Miller Newton), depositions by a former staff member indicate Newton doctored and withheld records.

In an interview with an I.S.A.C. investigator a former member of the Board of Directors for Straight Inc states:

MH- What about the kids that would turn 18 while in the program, some say they were held there against their will.

F- No, if they were 18 I would guess they could leave, I think staff handled that, now if the parents were concerned that the kid might leave when they turned 18 and they met with staff then staff would be prepared *to meet the situation at the parents' request. Often too, in open meeting the parents would tell the kids that* they would be court ordered if they wanted to leave when they were 18. I remember this one kid, he was rough, he was a tough case, I think he ended up leaving; he needed to be there, hell he should still be there.

In a Hackensack, NJ newspaper Miller Newton stated: " I will use every trick in the book to keep legal adults from leaving the program when they wish."

Florida state health officials found 13 youths who were enrolled in Straight, Inc. against their will and another 15 who said they had been coerced or tricked into enrolling. HRS told Straight, Inc. to stop this procedure. In response, Straight, Inc. sued HRS for the right to keep kids in treatment with their parents' consent.

In a document dated December 1989, the Texas Commission on Alcohol and Drug Abuse found that Straight, Inc. kept an emancipated minor against her will and medicated this client without her consent.

It has been brought to the attention of ISAC investigative reporters that in 1981 a volunteer parent from Atlanta donated a charter plane to transport clients from Straight St. Petersburg to Straight Atlanta. Clients were again transported in 1982 from Straight Atlanta to Straight Cincinnati. According to a statement by a parent Gulf Oil paid for the fuel. This would involve transporting minors across state lines. I.S.A.C. investigative reporters are looking into whether or not this was completed with parental consent and or minor consent where required as there are ALLEGATIONS that some were transported against their will.

Section Seven: Medical Malpractice and Medical Neglect:

893.05 Practitioners and persons administering controlled substances in their absence.

(1) A practitioner, in good faith and in the course of his or her professional practice only, may prescribe, administer, dispense, mix, or otherwise prepare a controlled substance, or the practitioner may cause the same to be administered by a licensed nurse or an intern practitioner under his or her direction and supervision only. A veterinarian may so prescribe, administer, dispense, mix, or prepare a controlled substance for use on animals only, and may cause it to be administered by an assistant or orderly under the veterinarian's direction and supervision only.

(2) When any controlled substance is dispensed by a practitioner, there shall be affixed to the original container in which the controlled substance is delivered a label on which appears:

(a) The date of delivery.

(b) The directions for use of such controlled substance.

(c) The name and address of such practitioner.

(d) The name of the patient and, if such controlled substance is prescribed for an animal, a statement describing the species of the animal.

(e) A clear, concise warning that it is a crime to transfer the controlled substance to any person other than the patient for whom prescribed.

(3) Any person who obtains from a practitioner or the practitioner's agent, or pursuant to prescription, any controlled substance for administration to a patient during the absence of such practitioner shall return to such practitioner any unused portion of such controlled substance when it is no longer required by the patient.

Medical Practice

458.327 Penalty for violations.

(1) Each of the following acts constitutes a felony of the third degree, punishable as provided in s. 775.082, s. 775.083, or s. 775.084:

(a) The practice of medicine or an attempt to practice medicine without a license to practice in Florida.

Evidence To Date

A Straight, Inc. internal document entitled "File Review Sheet" indicates that Senior Staff (which are not medical professionals and very often only eighteen years of age) and/or Executive staff shall sign the psychosocial form, which gives the details of the diagnosis and states that the treatment plan should be signed by a counselor (which would mean any staff member).

Straight, Inc. internal document # PA-7 dated October 1, 1984 states: "client request for medical care shall be reported during a Sick Call provided by the staff member supervising the self administration of medicines immediately after Group convenes in the morning. The staff member shall document the clients name, date, request and Sign the medical report form. (Staff members were often teenagers, NOT medical professionals).

Maryland health officials cited Straight, Inc.-Maryland in 1992 for not having a single certified drug or alcohol abuse counselor on its entire staff!

Straight, Inc.-Atlanta was cited in 1992 for having a counselor who possessed only a general equivalency diploma.

According to an internal document from Straight, Inc. "all staff are trained in the St. Petersburg facility for a period of three to five months."

In a New Jersey case involving Kids of North Jersey (whose executive director, Miller Newton, was formerly clinical director for Straight incorporated), Newton admitted that no one with any professional license ever diagnosed, evaluated or treated Ms. Rebecca Ehrlich. (Ms. Ehrlich sued and was awarded $4.5 million)

Chris Yarnold, a staff member at Straight, Inc., testified in federal court in Alexandria, VA that he "diagnosed" college-student Fred Collins' drug problem because Collins had red eyes "symptomatic of marijuana use" during Mr. Collins' intake. (Source: Washington Post May 11,1983)

In a interview with an I.S.A.C. investigator a former member of the Board of Directors for Straight Inc states:

MH- Did you have any licensed psychologist or psychiatrist on staff?

F- *{audible giggle} No, no we didn't have any o*f those on staff.

In an interview with an I.S.A.C. investigator a parent of a former Straight, Inc. client:

MH- Were any medical records kept during that time or at any time?

Glorya- NO, there were no records.

In a document dated December 1989, the Texas Commission on Alcohol and Drug Abuse found:

- Clients were able to obtain and consume Thorazine
- Clients were able to obtain and consume Prozac
- Straight did not actively prevent clients from inflicting wounds on themselves
- Straight, Inc. failed to plan for discharge of clients
- Straight, Inc. treated children that did not meet the program's own criteria of being chemically dependant
- Straight, Inc. failed to provide appropriate medical care to an injured client

Section Eight: Accessory After the Fact

777.03 Accessory after the fact.

(1)(a) Any person not standing in the relation of husband or wife, parent or grandparent, child or grandchild, brother or sister, by consanguinity or affinity to the offender, who maintains or assists the principal or accessory before the fact, or gives the offender any other aid, knowing that the offender had committed a felony or been accessory thereto before the fact, with intent that the offender avoids or escapes detection, arrest, trial or punishment, is an accessory after the fact.

(b) Any person, regardless of the relation to the offender, who maintains or assists the principal or accessory before the fact, or gives the offender any other aid, knowing that the offender had committed the offense of child abuse, neglect of a child, aggravated child abuse, aggravated manslaughter of a child under 18 years of age, or murder of a child under 18 years of age, or had been accessory thereto before the fact, with the intent that the offender avoids or escapes detection, arrest, trial, or punishment, is an accessory after the fact unless the court finds that the person is a victim of domestic violence.

S.C. was in Straight, Inc. for 2 years and states:

"I was in group when M.D. came back from the hospital. His newcomer, B.A. had tried to strangle him during the night with a belt. M.D. had been bleeding from the eyes, ears and nose. He had a horrible red ring around his neck. There was no, 'Gee. We're glad you're okay. Good thing you didn't die.' Instead, other members of the group yelled at him, told him he was 'irresponsible' and that what happened was his fault. The newcomer, B.A. was then brought into the room and confronted and cursed at. I was called on to confront him since I had known M.D. before entering the program. The group was reminded of the 'confidentiality rule' after B.A. was taken to an intake room, where he stayed for nearly a week. He was then re-introduced to group as if he had never been there before."

Section Nine: Culpable Negligence

784.05 Culpable negligence

(1) Whoever, through culpable negligence, exposes another person to personal injury commits a misdemeanor of the second degree, punishable as provided in s. 775.082 or s. 775.083.

(2) Whoever, through culpable negligence, inflicts actual personal injury on another commits a misdemeanor of the first degree.

Evidence To Date

The legal question here appears to be was Melvin Sembler and/or Betty Sembler, Straight, Inc., and/or any of its staff, guilty of culpable negligence due to the fact that they repeatedly approved unqualified personnel through the board. Are they negligent for allowing the abuse to continue after being originally warned back in 1978? In the opinion of this investigator, I believe that a jury would say they were negligent.

A Straight internal document "File Review Sheet" indicates that Senior Staff, which are not medical professionals and very often only eighteen years of age or younger, and/or Executive staff shall sign the psychosocial form, which details the diagnosis.

Internal Straight, Inc. document # PA-7 dated October 1, 1984, states: Client request for medical care shall be reported during a Sick Call provided by the staff member supervising the self administration of medicines immediately after Group convenes in the morning. The staff member shall document the client's name, date, request and Sign the medical report form. (Staff members were often teenagers, and were not medical professionals).

Maryland health officials cited Straight-Maryland in 1992 for not having a single certified drug or alcohol abuse counselor on its entire staff.

Straight-Atlanta was cited in 1992 for having a counselor, who possessed only a general equivalency diploma.

According to an internal document from Straight, Inc. "all staff are trained in the St. Petersburg facility for a period of three to five months."

In an interview with an I.S.A.C investigator a former member of the Board of Directors for Straight, Inc states:

MH- Were there any other professionals on staff?

F- No you get professionals in there and oh gosh, one begets the other, kind of like the LIFE program that was started by a doctor..

MH- You said that some kids were brought back in the program. Did straight have power of attorney at the time or how did that work? Did the parents sign the kids over?

F- *I wouldn't be surprised if the parents didn't sign anything on intake, no there wasn't much signing at all. That's where a lot of the la*wyers will jump on us.

In an interview with an I.S.A.C investigator a former senior staff member at Straight, Inc states:

SM- Tell me about the kids needing to be restrained?

CP-I remember a kid staring at the wall for days I mean he would just sit there and stare I think he was trying to count out the studs or something. Then suddenly he stood up bent at the waist and just ran head first into the wall he missed the stud and went right into the wall. Then he ran in another direction and ran his head into a steel door we restrained him because he was trying to hurt himself.

SM-Did you take this kid to the hospital to see if he had any cranial damage or a concussion?

CP-No

SM-Did you take him to a Dr or Psychologist to see why the kid tried to crush his own skull on a steel door?

CP-No

SM-What did you do?

CP-We restrained him and then confronted him in-group.

In an interview with an I.S.A.C investigator a former member of the Board of Directors at Straight, Inc. states:

MH- So the building was not properly maintained?

HH- *No, it wasn't and I'll be honest with you. One night they called me and asked me to go to the building and see if I could fix the safe. They couldn't get in it that day. So, I went to the building and when I walked in* I saw this light that was left on just dangling from the ceiling, it was one of the ones we had put a new fixture *on. I'm not so sure we wouldn't have had a fire that night if I hadn't walked in. So, I turned the light off and* went about fixing the safe. Well I got the safe open, and what do I find but a big bag of marijuana that was suppose to have already been turned over to the police. You see we had a policy that any drugs found on kids would be turned over to the police within three days.

MH-So it was there longer than three days?

HH-Yes.

MH- How do you know that?

HH- Well, you see the first fifty kids in the program were screened very thoroughly about five hours or so *with them and their parents. You see, we insisted on parental involvement because if the kid didn't hav*e the *right environment to return to or the parents weren't involved then it was a waste of time. So, we screened* the kids and I imagine that, that is when the pot was found, when those kids were first brought in. That just *won't fly. I mean here we are a* drug rehab and they are keeping pot in the safe.

MH- Did you say anything?

HH- *Yes, that's what prompted my leaving you see I had these complaints and I drafted a letter. Oh and Helen Petermann, you've heard of her?*

MH- Yes, I have.

HH- Well, she was *another problem. She was, well, I don't know how to put it. Hitler is the only way to put it. She was very dictorial, no warmth. She came in there like these kids are rotten and she didn't care how they* felt they were gonna do what she said. She loved the come down raps. You could see she loved every minute of it. That bothered me, we wanted Straight to have a heart and remember these are children we are dealing with. In fact, the vote to bring her in was one short of denial.

MH- She had only a high school diploma is that right or no she was a drop out.

HH- *I was gonna say if that, I don't think she even had her high school diploma. Then they brought in this guy Jim Hertz, you've heard of him?*

MH-Yes, what was his position?

HH- Well, he was introduced to us as someone who was a good youth administrator. I think the only reason *Helen voted him in was because she could control him. I think that was Jim's problem cause he was* basically a good guy but Helen had him wrapped around her finger.

MH-You mentioned earlier that you wrote a letter. What happened when you wrote the letter?

HH- Well, as I say I wrote this letter which prompted an executive meeting. In fact I remember telling one of the executives that we had better leave because if they continue like this we are going to be in court more times then we can count, cause they will get sued.

MH- Do you remember that meeting?

HH- Quite well.

MH- Can you tell me about it?

HH-Well they had my list of issues and there were a lot of people on the board on my side, like {name *withheld on this document}.. Anyway, I'll never forget it. Betty (Mel's wife) started out with "Pleasure to see you again HH". Then she read the issues and then she started "You son of bitch who do you think you are to* question an*ything my husband does". Well that was it for me, I got up and was walking out and she was still* yelling when I walked out the door. I think a few others might have walked with me too. I walked out and never looked back.

MH- So, us hearing that about eleven of you all left very early on Is true then?

HH-*Yes, its true, if they didn't leave that day, it was shortly after that.*

Straight, Inc.-DC (Springfield, VA) client number 89106 made a suicide attempt in Aug 1988 but there is no record that a psychiatrist was informed.

In January 1989 Straight, Inc.-DC (Springfield, VA) client # 89028, claimed he had been restrained and spat upon, then tried to hang himself. A psychiatrist prescribed Desipramine, but there was no follow up.

Commenting specifically about Straight, Inc. after a visit to Straight, Inc.-DC (Springfield, VA) Professor Barry L. Beyerstein in "Thought Reform Tactics: The Road to Hell is Paved with Good Intentions" wrote: "All such practices begin with a concerted assault upon the individual's personal identity, i.e., an attempt to destroy his or her sense of self and its relation to the pre-existing social matrix. By systematically undermining their sense of individual autonomy, target persons can be driven to a state of child-like vulnerability to outside influences, dramatic alterations in beliefs, and in extreme cases, psychotic-like behavior and suicidal tendencies."

After interviewing Nancy on October 27, 1989, Straight, Inc.'s consulting psychiatrist Dr. Ross Silverstein concluded in his written assessment, "I found it very difficult to assess the extent of Nancy's problem with drugs and alcohol." He recommended that Straight, Inc.: " . . . continue to evaluate her to get more evidence to determine whether or not she needs to be at Straight. Her current reports of drug use, in my opinion, would not warrant ongoing intensive treatment but we should continue to evaluate her. I would have Dr [Peter] Cohen also evaluate her for a second opinion concerning possible use of anti-depressant medication . . ." According to a report by the Virginia Department of Mental Health, Straight, Inc.'s records do not contain documentation to substantiate that Dr. Cohen did complete a second opinion as recommended by Dr. Silverstein. Nancy's record does not show that Straight, Inc. continued to evaluate her by gathering evidence to support whether her placement in the program was appropriate to meet her needs, as recommended by Dr. Silverstein. Dr. Silverstein had expressed doubts as to whether Nancy needed intensive treatment, however she received it anyway. After a month in Straight, Inc.-DC (Springfield, VA) Nancy still refused to admit that she was a drug addict. On November 11, 1989 A. N., then an adult counselor at Straight, Inc., now a juvenile substance abuse counselor for the City of Fairfax, Virginia, selected six kids to accompany himself and Nancy into intake room #2. Later A. N. wrote in his follow-up report that while Nancy was being confronted, she started fighting and A. N. and the six boys and girls had to defend themselves by restraining her. A. N. reported that several people, including him, had been scratched. A Dr. Nejad noted on November 29, 1989 that X-rays showed "a condylar fracture with very minimal displacement." A Fairfax Hospital Emergency Room note on November 26, 1989 by Dr. Kathryn Kenders states "fracture phalanx, . . . middle or proximal." Both notes indicate that restraint was implemented with unnecessary roughness. They had pulled Nancy's finger back too far, thus breaking it.

Note: in 1988, just the year before, a 19 year-old male client at Straight, Inc-DC (Springfield, VA) had his finger placed in a cast because, he reported to authorities, they had bent it back till it nearly touched his wrist.

In a court deposition Nancy stated that she was taken into the intake room because she refused to admit to having used drugs. Once inside the room the seven people surrounded her and screamed obscenities at her and spat on her. This is called the Bomb Squad in Straight. They screamed that she was fat and ugly, she alleges, and not pretty like her sister. A. N. stood there, she testified, and watched as they bent her finger back, until it touched her arm – then snapped. A little over ten years after Nancy's experience with the Straight, Inc. "Bomb Squad," on October 15, 2000, the Richmond, Virginia Police found her body outside

her apartment. She had plummeted, mysteriously, from her fourth floor apartment window and was killed instantly.

For more information on former Straight, Inc. clients who have committed suicide please see:

http://thestraights.com/theprogram/suicides.htm

Mr. Chris Yarnold had been Straight, Inc.'s senior intake counselor when Mr. Fred Collins was admitted. During deposition Mr. Yarnold admitted he did not know what laughing gas was, nor did he know the active ingredient in marijuana [THC]. When asked, in court, if he knew how the hallucinogenic factor in drugs worked, he replied, "No. All I knew was drugs affected people." He declared that he had known Mr. Collins had been smoking marijuana because his eyes had been red at intake. He admitted that contact lenses could make one's eyes red, but on physical examination of Collins at the trial, he failed to notice that Collins was currently wearing contact lenses. Mr. Yarnold, a former Catholic priest, had joined Straight in Aug 1981. Sixteen months later he was director of the infamous Sarasota Straight.

Just prior to Straight, Inc.'s opening in September 1976 Director Hartz told a reporter with the Saint Petersburg Times, "I happen to feel that you can communicate with an individual without degrading him, humiliating him and without depriving him of all his uniqueness." He had reportedly said that "cussing and swearing" in therapy sessions to force clients to bare their true feelings--one of the criticisms of The Seed--is the product of "untrained, unsupervised and unqualified staff--it's not going to happen here." Before the year was out five board members had resigned. Three resigned in mass in August 1977 and made a joint statement that, neither Hartz nor Petermann "have the necessary qualifications to rehabilitate preteens or teens that have a drug or alcohol problem". They concluded, "we feel we cannot recommend Straight Inc. to our friends or citizens of our community."

Carolyn Henson was the wife of Straight board member L. Hap Henson and a program volunteer for Straight. When her husband resigned she told a reporter at the Saint Petersburg Times in December 1977 that, "they (juveniles) are straight while they're there, but it's out of fear." She further stated that several former program counselors and clients had told her that juveniles have been mistreated while in the program. A former program volunteer told a Times reporter in December 1977 that she, Hartz and others once witnessed Mrs. Petermann maliciously kicking a youth who was passively resisting Straight, Inc. officials.

During cross-examination, Fayette County Assistant Attorney Phillip Moloney was critical of Dr. Ross' method for determining whether a young person had a drug problem and faulted him for making a determination without using any sort of psychological test. But Dr. Ross had said those tests were not needed, adding that it was not necessary to get a second opinion even though the parents of one of the accusers had told Dr. Ross they did not think their son had a drug problem.

A client progress report dated 3/7/86 has the following areas filled out:

Relating in raps…fair

Relating in foster home…fair

Motivation...fair

Expression of feelings…fair

Following daily rules...good

Overall attitude...good

This report is signed "Staff trainee" and as we have discovered staff trainees are individuals who have gone through the program with an average age of 16. These individuals have no counseling qualifications and many have not yet completed high school. However, they are given the task of reporting on the progress of clients.

Section Ten: Misleading Advertisements

817.06 Misleading advertisements prohibited; penalty.

(1) No person, persons, association, co-partnership, or institution shall, with intent to offer or sell or in anywise dispose of merchandise, securities, certificates, diplomas, documents, or other credentials purporting to reflect proficiency in any trade, skill, profession, credits for academic achievement, service or anything offered by such person, persons, association, co-partnership, corporation, or institution directly or indirectly, to the public, for sale or distribution or issuance, or with intent to increase the consumption or use thereof, or with intent to induce the public in any manner to enter into any obligation relating thereto, or to acquire title thereto, or any interest therein, or ownership thereof, knowingly or intentionally make, publish, disseminate, circulate or place before the public, or cause, directly or indirectly, to be made, published, disseminated or circulated or placed before the public in this state in a newspaper or other publication or in the form of a book, notice, handbill, poster, bill, circular, pamphlet or letter or in any other way, an advertisement of any sort regarding such certificate, diploma, document, credential, academic credits, merchandise, security, service or anything so offered to the public, which advertisement contains any assertion, representation or statement which is untrue, deceptive, or misleading.

(2) Any person, persons, association, co-partnership, corporation, or institution found guilty of a violation of subsection (1) shall be guilty of a misdemeanor of the second degree.

Evidence To Date

One Straight, Inc. brochure states: "Straight is supervised by professionals with years of experience in adolescent drug use counseling." Yet we see that even some of the Executive Staff members were high school dropouts. It further states, "Straight has succeeded time and time again where other approaches did not. "The title of the brochure is "Why does Straight have a high success rate?" However, there has been no scientific study to date that tells us their true success rate or lack thereof.

A document dated 1986 states: "Straight Inc.'s fee structure is as follows: the admission fee is $1,089.00 due and payable on date of admission. This fee covers medical exam, psychiatric, psychological and family assessment and group therapy for a period not to exceed fourteen days."

However, we know that in most cases a psychiatrist or psychologist or medical doctor never saw the children. We also know that in most cases there was not a single certified drug counselor on staff qualified to do family assessments and/or group therapy.

This document goes on to state: "Parents are responsible for payment of ANY medical or other incidental expenses; this includes drug screens and psychological and psychiatric consultation."

In the beginning of the document Straight, Inc. states they give the psychological assessment, and then they are saying the parents must. The fact that the parents are responsible for the drug screen would indicate to this researcher that drug screens were not done on admittance to what purports to be a drug rehabilitation center.

On several Straight, Inc. brochures, the program claims to be accredited by Joint Accreditation of Healthcare Organizations (JCAHO). However JCAHO has stated in writing that they never accredited Straight, Inc.

Several other Straight, Inc. brochures claim the program had been in business since 1976. However, if you have read the Sembler Report you know that the New Straight, Inc. (the one advertised in these brochures) had only been in business since approximately 1985.

Section Eleven: Liability for injury to parent

768.415 Liability for injury to parent.

A person who, through negligence, causes significant permanent injury to the natural or adoptive parent of an unmarried dependent resulting in a permanent total disability shall be liable to the dependent for damages, including damages for permanent loss of services, comfort, companionship, and society. This section shall apply to acts of negligence occurring on or after October 1, 1988.

Conclusion:

This researcher has found evidence of violations of the laws listed in this report. We have also gained evidence proving that Straight, Inc. has been in gross violation of some of the most basic human rights; the right to personal liberty, right to privacy, freedom of religion, freedom of speech, freedom of movement, the right to have protection from physical violence, the right to reasonable searches and seizures based on law, the right to attend school and many other basic human rights guaranteed to each individual under the United States Constitution and the US Bill of Rights. Therefore, International Survivors Action Committee has filed a formal complaint with the United Nations and requested a formal investigation by Amnesty international into any currently operating Straight-like programs. We have also turned over all relevant document to the federal and local law enforcement officials.

IMPORTANT NOTICE:

WE HAVE FILED A FORMAL COMPLAINT WITH THE UNITED NATIONS AGAINST FORMER STRAIGHT, INC. AND ITS AGENTS.INCLUED IN THE COMPLAINT ARE VARIOUS OTHER STRAIGHT-LIKE PROGRAMS THAT ARE CURRENLTY IN OPERATION.

BELOW ARE SOME OF THE RIGHTS ESTABLISHED BY THE UNITED NATIONS.WE BELIEVE THAT STRAIGHT, INC. AND SOME CURRENT STRAIGHT-LIKE PROGRAMS HAVE AGGRESIOUSLY VIOLATED THESE RIGHTS.

Article 1.

All human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights. They are endowed with reason and conscience and should act towards one another in a spirit of brotherhood.

Article 2.

Everyone is entitled to all the rights and freedoms set forth in this Declaration, without distinction of any kind, such as race, colour, sex, language, religion, political or other opinion, national or social origin, property, birth or other status. Furthermore, no distinction shall be made on the basis of the political, jurisdictional or international status of the country or territory to which a person belongs, whether it be independent, trust, non-self-governing or under any other limitation of sovereignty.

Article 3.

Everyone has the right to life, liberty and security of person.

Article 4.

No one shall be held in slavery or servitude; slavery and the slave trade shall be prohibited in all their forms.

Article 5.

No one shall be subjected to torture or to cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment.

Article 6.

Everyone has the right to recognition everywhere as a person before the law.

Article 7.

All are equal before the law and are entitled without any discrimination to equal protection of the law. All are entitled to equal protection against any discrimination in violation of this Declaration and against any incitement to such discrimination

Article 9.

No one shall be subjected to arbitrary arrest, detention or exile.

Article 12.

No one shall be subjected to arbitrary interference with his privacy, family, home or correspondence, nor to attacks upon his honor and reputation. Everyone has the right to the protection of the law against such interference or attacks.

(3) The family is the natural and fundamental group unit of society and is entitled to protection by society and the State.

Article 18.

Everyone has the right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion; this right includes freedom to change his religion or belief, and freedom, either alone or in community with others and in public or private, to manifest his religion or belief in teaching, practice, worship and observance.

Article 19.

Everyone has the right to freedom of opinion and expression; this right includes freedom to hold opinions without interference and to seek, receive and impart information and ideas through any media and regardless of frontiers.

Article 20.

(1) Everyone has the right to freedom of peaceful assembly and association.

(2) No one may be compelled to belong to an association.

Article 22.

Everyone, as a member of society, has the right to social security and is entitled to realization, through national effort and international co-operation and in accordance with the organization and resources of each State, of the economic, social and cultural rights indispensable for his dignity and the free development of his personality.

Article 24.

Everyone has the right to rest and leisure, including reasonable limitation of working hours and periodic holidays with pay.

Article 25.

(1) Everyone has the right to a standard of living adequate for the health and well-being of himself and of his family, including food, clothing, housing and medical care and necessary social services, and the right to security in the event of unemployment, sickness, disability, widowhood, old age or other lack of livelihood in circumstances beyond his control.

(2) Motherhood and childhood are entitled to special care and assistance. All children, whether born in or out of wedlock, shall enjoy the same social protection.

Article 26.

(1) Everyone has the right to education. Education shall be free, at least in the elementary and fundamental stages. Elementary education shall be compulsory. Technical and professional education shall be made generally available and higher education shall be equally accessible to all on the basis of merit.

Bibliography

Any reference of current law was obtained from the Florida Statues or Code of Federal Regulations.

Excerpt from news articles were obtained from the following:

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The Tampa Tribune

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The Orlando Sentinel

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The Bradenton Herald

The Salt Lake City Utah Press

Wes Fager of The Oakton Institute

Radley Balko

State of Florida Department of Health and Rehabilitative Services departmental reports

Fornits

State of Virginia Clerk of the circuit court

State of Florida Clerk of the circuit court

State of New Jersey Clerk of the circuit court

Interviews by Samantha M Monroe