

KIDS OF GREATER SALT LAKE LOSES ITS LICENSE, WILL LEAVE THE AREA, STATE OFFICIALS SAY

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- By Associated Press
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State officials have suspended the license of KIDS of Greater Salt Lake, a controversial youth program whose methods of handling teen drug and alcohol problems drew criticism and lawsuits.

The group, based in New Jersey, will ultimately close and leave the area, said Pat Kreher, director of the state Office of Licensing. Meanwhile, parents of the 65 or so teens enrolled in the program are shopping around for a replacement, she said.

The parents, many of whom compose the KIDS board of directors, had talked with the state about getting out of KIDS and into another program prior to Friday's license suspension, Kreher said.

The parents wanted out partly because of recent negative publicity about the program, she said, but also because some "anticipations and expectations" were not being met.

Kreher said her office has been closely monitoring the program, which came to the Salt Lake area about a year ago.

"There were some improprieties in terms of policy and procedures," she said.

The KIDS program gained attention in January when two "peer" counselors allegedly used physical force to return a 19-year-old man to the program. The two counselors were later charged with misdemeanor assault and unlawful detention.

In late 1989, an 18-year-old woman filed a \$6.5 million lawsuit against KIDS alleging she was held against her will at the center. She escaped once from the facility but was returned by her parents. A second attempt ended in her breaking an arm and leg while jumping from a second story roof, the suit said.

A second suit, this one in state 3rd District Court, was filed recently by Brett Nielsen. The suit is seeking damages on 10 causes of action ranging from false imprisonment to negligence.

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