

## NEWS

# Boy who died at wilderness camp was asphyxiated

**Staff Writer** The Ledger

Published 11:01 p.m. ET Feb. 7, 2000 | Updated 10:30 a.m. ET June 5, 2009

Ocala -- The investigation continued Tuesday into the death of a 12-year-old boy who was asphyxiated when he was restrained by a counselor at a wilderness camp for troubled children.

Investigators would not say Monday how the counselor restrained Michael Wiltsie, who they say became combative during a group counseling session Friday at Eckerd Wilderness Camp E-Kel-Etu. He slipped into unconsciousness and died Saturday at Shands Hospital in Gainesville.

The counselor, whose name has not been released, was placed on paid leave after the boy died.

Two state departments -- Juvenile Justice and Children and Families -- and the Marion County Sheriff's Department have launched investigations. Detectives and state prosecutors say they will meet Tuesday to discuss the case.

The boy's family has declined comment.

Wiltsie was one of almost 60 boys at the camp, which opened 24 years ago for boys with criminal records or severe problems at school.

The boys, ages 11 to 17, are required to keep the campground clean, cook their own meals twice a week and design their own tents.

Andy Anderson, a vice president for Eckerd Youth Alternatives, the nonprofit group that operates the camp and 16 others nationwide, said the program is designed to enhance the boys' self-esteem and catch them up in school.

"We think it is extremely therapeutic," Anderson said.

