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Teen Help network sued by mother of abducted boys

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Donna Burke's 14 and 16-year-old sons were forcibly abducted from their hometown in Utah and taken to a residential "treatment" facility for teens in Tranquility Bay, Jamaica.

Burke was frantic when her sons didn't arrive home from school.

Then she discovered that her ex-husband had arranged for the abduction, had paid the facility, and had even received court permission to take one of the sons there because he had used marijuana.

The other son, she says, had no reason for treatment. When she learned they were in Jamaica she contacted Teen Help, but was told she would not be allowed any contact with them.

Donna Burke tried writing to her sons, but letters were not delivered. She even flew to Jamaica, but Teen Help directors would not allow her to see her sons.

When the boys were released, they seemed fearful. According to the lawsuit Burke has filed against Teen Help, her sons were "afraid, haunted by nightmares, subject to panic attacks," and would not "go anywhere near a beach" or "voice an opinion on their own, fearful that it might not find approval."

The Utah-based Teen Help program is facing other lawsuits as well, which claim as Burke's does that the teen treatment centers use cultic tactics of control, including physical abuse, humiliation, and meager allotments of food.

Burke's lawsuit accuses the program of negligence, negligent child abuse, false imprisonment, intentional and negligent infliction of emotional distress, and breach of fiduciary duty.

Burke is seeking damages from the network of centers and people associated with Teen Help, including: Tranquility Bay, The Caribbean Center for Change, Worldwide Association of Specialty Programs, Brightway Hospital, Resource Realizations, R&B; Billing, Dixie Contract Services, Teen Escort Services, Key Kay, Robert B. Lichfield, Karr Farnsworth, Brent M. Facer, Jay Kay, Jean Davis, Lorraine Black, Delbert Goates, and David Gilcrease.

Brightway Hospital in Utah was closed last year by the Utah Department of Health's bureau of licensing.

Teen Help founder Robert Lichfield says the centers are effective.

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