

Hopevale; Home For Troubled Teens In Hamburg Closing

Dave McKinley ■ Date last updated: 12/19/2010 3:09:05 AM

[Smaller](#)

[Larger](#)

[Print Article](#)

[Close Page](#)



Another blow to the Western New York economy with word Friday that Hopevale Inc., a long-time youth and family treatment agency located in Hamburg, will close soon.

HAMBURG, NY-- It was started 155 years ago by the Sisters of Charity as a home for wayward girls.

Now [Hopevale](#), a Hamburg based agency which offers services to abused children and troubled teens, is shutting down after more than a century and a half of service.

"We've got significant financial problems and we just couldn't go forward any more. We're out of money...I don't know how to put it to you clearer than that," said Jim Walter, a management consultant brought on to assist at Hopevale six months ago.

Walter says a combination of factors have steered Hopevale toward financial ruin to the point where its directors have decided to cease operations and, regrettably, will have to lay off 190 full and part time

staff.

"Most of the income for this not for profit agency comes from the residential treatment center," explained Walter, who says changing trends in the methods deployed to assist troubled teens were a significant factor in Hopevale's financial plight.

"In general, the use of residential treatment centers has dropped off -- they're trying to keep the child at home where they can and residential treatment is an expensive thing for counties to afford, so they look at alternatives a lot more closely than they used to," Walter told WGRZ-TV.

Walter also noted some troubling incidents in the past year which caused Hopevale to temporarily cease accepting placements to its residential program, which also helped to contribute to dwindling enrollment to the point where there are only half as many kids as a year ago.

"We shut down because there were concerns with regard to child safety and some concerns with regard to the effectiveness of the programs...when we did that, as we were working to improve our programs, we lost census," Walter said.

The first order of business now will be to place the roughly 40 or so teens remaining here with another agency.

"Who that is we don't know yet, and we're working with the state and the county to figure out the best move for them," said Walter.

"The staff members are going to be out of jobs and it's probably going to happen very quickly," Walter told 2 On Your Side, saying that the decision to put qualified workers on the street was "heart wrenching".

"That's one of the most difficult parts of this whole decision...you've got a lot of dedicated people and I hope if (potential employers) come across somebody with this on their resume as a place where they worked, that they will take a good hard look at them."

The decision also impacts the Hopevale School, created by a special act of the NYS Legislature to serve the youth in residence at the Howard Road campus. School officials will work with the state and officials from the several area school districts they serve to determine its future

The 50 acre campus will likely be sold, according to Walter, who says it's unclear whether even that will erase the entirety of the agency's debt and obligations.

In response to inquiries by 2 On Your Side, the [NY State Office of Children and Family Services](#) issued the following statement:

The New York State Office of Children and Family Services (OCFS) can confirm that Hopevale, Inc. is closing. We have been notified that the Board voted to close effective December 24, 2010. However, as of this time OCFS has not received Hopevale's official close-down plan.

Nonetheless, an emergency meeting took place this morning with OCFS and local counties who have children placed at Hopevale to immediately plan replacing the young people in a safe and least disruptive fashion. Erie, Niagara, Monroe, Cattaraugus, Chautauqua, Onondaga and Schoharie counties are aggressively working with OCFS to obtain alternative placements and deal with the impact of this untimely closure.

Click on the video icon to watch the story from [2 On Your Side Reporter Dave McKinley](#) and Photojournalist Norm Fisher