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Seattle counselor fired after being caught in online sex sting

By Maureen O'Hagan
Seattle Times staff reporter

A Seattle-area counselor surrendered his health-care credentials last week after he told the Department of Health he engaged in a sexually explicit online chat with an adult posing as a teen three years ago.

Malcolm McKay was a counselor in private practice and also counseled troubled youths at the Ruth Dykeman Children's Center when the activities came to light. The Internet site for the Seattle Institute for Sex Therapy, Education and Research also lists him as one of its "educators."

The Dykeman Center immediately "terminated his employment," according to Tom Rembiesa, president and CEO.

The center reported him to police, Child Protective Services and the DOH.

The investigations did not turn up any evidence of inappropriate behavior with his clients. McKay was never charged with a crime.

DOH documents say that over two days in September 2004, McKay chatted online with an adult posing as a 14-year-old boy. The adult worked with Perverted-Justice.com, a group that targets online child predators. McKay transmitted "naked, graphic photos" of himself and appeared "to be grooming his chat-mate for a sexual relationship," the DOH statement of charges said.

A short time later, supervisors at the Dykeman Center learned of the activities, which McKay didn't exactly deny, said Rembiesa.

"He had a story. A very complicated story that he knew it wasn't a kid," Rembiesa said.

Rembiesa said computer problems Wednesday prevented him from immediately accessing McKay's employment history, but Rembiesa believed McKay worked at the Dykeman Center for at least five years.

McKay could not be reached for comment Wednesday evening.

McKay told the Department of Health in a December 2005 letter that he had a "sexual addiction" that was "out of control," according to department documents. He became a registered counselor in Washington in 1988 and a licensed mental-health counselor in 2004. Over the years McKay had a private practice as a counselor and was an educator for the Northwest AIDS Foundation. He was quoted several times in The Seattle Times on topics related to sexuality.

In surrendering his credentials, McKay agreed not to practice as a mental-health counselor in Washington

again.

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