



Boy claims he was sexually assaulted at Valpo shelter

BY BOB KASARDA

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VALPARAISO | A 13-year-old boy claims in a lawsuit to have been sexually assaulted in May by a fellow resident of the Hanson House, an emergency shelter for troubled teens.

The suit accuses the shelter of negligence, but both an in-house and state investigation found no wrongdoing, said Dennis Morgan, executive director of the Porter County Family & Youth Services Bureau, which operates the Hanson House.

"We were and remain satisfied that the proper policies and procedures were and are in place," he said. "Family & Youth Services Bureau residential staff have and continue to do their job sensitively and competently in very demanding circumstances."

The service bureau board discussed the possibility of the lawsuit after the alleged incident arose, Morgan said. The board stood firm with its goal of providing residential care to adolescents, despite the high-risk nature of the work and potential liabilities, he said.

"If you do the work that we do, you accept the risks that go with it," Morgan said.

The shelter staff is accused in the lawsuit of being unfit to supervise the young residents. The staff is accused of negligently placing residents in a position where they could come into contact with younger residents unsupervised.

As a result, the 13-year-old boy suffered physical and emotional injuries, including fear and humiliation, the suit says.

The Hanson House operates and leases space at the Porter County Juvenile Services Center, located just south of U.S. 30 on Ind. 2. The county was not targeted in the lawsuit.

The civil suit was assigned to the courtroom of Porter Circuit Court Judge Mary Harper, who said she will offer to waive it to another judge considering she signs off on the orders sending young people to the Hanson House.

The Hanson House was in the news in October when a 17-year-old female resident was found dead in her room.

Officials are still awaiting the autopsy results for Chesterton resident Marisa Hudson.

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