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# State: Boys Town violated rules

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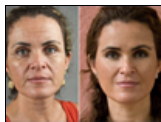
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### WORLD-HERALD EXCLUSIVE

The state has temporarily stopped referring state wards to two Boys Town programs because investigators found staffers improperly restraining and isolating children.

Staffers at a Boys Town National Research Hospital program, for instance, sometimes placed children facedown on gurneys and locked them into place with belts. They used the practice, which has been discontinued, to prevent children from harming themselves and others.

That practice and others violated federal standards, state investigators found in June and July. The programs in question are four "specialized treatment group homes" on the Boys Town campus and the intensive residential treatment center at the Boys Town National Research Hospital, 555 N. 30th St.

The programs deal with especially troubled and aggressive children, said John Arch, administrator of Boys Town National Research Hospital.

Arch said Boys Town and the state and federal governments all want the same thing.

"We're on the same page when it comes to the safety of the child," he said. "And we continue to take good care of the kids."

The state temporarily stopped referring state wards to the programs in late August. A state spokeswoman said the wards are being placed at other facilities, such as Epworth Village in York and Uta Halee Girls Village in Omaha.

State records obtained by The World-Herald show that state investigators found the following violations:

>> A program director at the hospital reported 19 times in the last year that drugs were used to calm patients, although Boys Town says it doesn't use drugs.

>> Hospital staffers kept children in seclusion in some cases for 45 minutes past the point where the child had calmed down.

>> The four-home Boys Town program "failed to establish a restraint and seclusion" policy that met federal standards. For instance, a medical practitioner must evaluate a child's well-being immediately after restraint ends. Boys Town thought it had an hour to conduct the assessment.

The program in question on the Boys Town campus provides 55 beds for children with psychiatric diagnoses.

The hospital's intensive residential treatment center has 47 beds.

At the hospital, investigators cited a case in which a child acted like she was trying to choke herself with a hair tie while in seclusion. Staffers failed to intervene because they believed she was faking passing out. Arch said that ultimately the surveyors agreed the child was faking it.

Investigators also cited an instance in which inadequate follow-up occurred after a child suffered a broken finger while in seclusion and another where a child had a bloody nose after being restrained.

State authorities said Wednesday that the state might soon lift the hold on referrals of state wards to the four group





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homes.

However, the state continues to investigate concerns at the hospital's intensive treatment center. A hold will remain on state referrals there until those concerns are cleared up, said Vivianne Chaumont, who heads the state's Medicaid program.

Chaumont said there hadn't been any other holds on referrals to facilities dealing with such children in her three years in her current position.

"Safety is of utmost importance to us," said Todd Reckling, director of the Nebraska Department of Health and Human Services division of children and family services. "We're looking at all of those (concerns) in totality."

Boys Town has complied with the state and written a plan to address violations.

Boys Town administrators deny they use drugs to restrain difficult children.

Arch said he believed an investigator misquoted a Boys Town program director.

"I trust my surveyors," said Dr. Joann Schaefer, the state's chief medical officer. Schaefer's division of public health oversaw the investigations.

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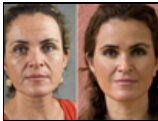
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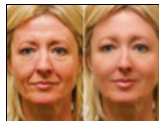


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