

# Court agrees with state on foster kids

ALEXIS KRELL; STAFF WRITER

**Published:** May 22, 2013 at 3:00 a.m. PDT— **Updated:** May 22, 2013 at 3:00 a.m. PDT

The state will not have to return 15 troubled foster teens it removed because of safety concerns from three private facilities, including one in Lacey, a Thurston County Superior Court judge has ruled in part of an ongoing lawsuit.

The state Department of Social and Health Services said an April inspection found safety issues at the group homes run by New Vision Programs that stretched to September 2010 and included:

- n Foster children restraining their peers.
- n Medication errors.
- n Inadequate supervision.
- n Failure to provide adequate food.
- n A lack of background checks and training for staff members.

The company sued the state earlier this month, contending the youths were removed without proper notice or explanation. It asked for a temporary order to get the children back. Judge Christine Schaller denied the request Friday.

“We strongly reject those allegations,” New Vision attorney Tom Rask said Tuesday about the safety concerns. He said the lawsuit is still being reviewed and that his client’s goal is “to keep open and get kids back.”

“We’re asking the judge to do that in the lawsuit,” he said.

The state removed the youths from one home in Lacey and two in Vancouver and moved them to other foster placements or to the care of relatives. Children were not removed from another New Vision home in Lacey and two in the Portland area.

DSHS officials said they worked with New Vision to address the safety concerns, and some were fixed, but others arose. A complete report was given to the company, the state said.

“These are children with behavior challenges, a lot of them have some pretty serious criminal records or behavioral problems, and some of them require constant supervision,” DSHS spokeswoman Chris Case said Tuesday.

The New Vision homes are designed to help stabilize the youths with behavioral rehabilitative services. Washington pays the company per youth for all its services, which amounted to about \$170,000 in total in December 2012.

That month, a foster youth was seriously injured jumping off the second-story roof of one of the homes, according to the state. An unsupervised staff member had been left with the youths, and New Vision workers tried to withhold and falsify records of the staff member’s presence at the home and her lack of required training, DSHS alleged in court documents.

State officials said the incident happened a week after New Vision director Trent Hall agreed in writing not to leave youths with unsupervised staff members before they had cleared a background check.

“We deny any wrongdoing,” Rask said.

Alexis Krell: 253-597-8268

alexis.krell@thenewtribune.com

Read more here: <http://www.thenewtribune.com/2013/05/21/2606483/state-wont-have-to-return-foster.html#storylink=cpy>