

COURAGE WORLDWIDE HOPES TO RE-OPEN COURAGE HOUSE IN NORTHERN CALIFORNIA BY YEAR-END AFTER MEETING NEW STATE REQUIREMENTS

ROCKLIN – Courage Worldwide said today it hopes to reopen its Sacramento area home for victims of child sex trafficking later this year as it works to meet new state requirements and contests some state rules Courage believes would put the girls it serves at risk.

The organization, which operates homes in Tanzania and Northern California as well as an extensive program to educate people about sex trafficking issues, voluntarily decided to temporarily close its Northern California site in June as it worked to meet new California regulatory requirements and have staff that met the new requirements.

The Tanzania home remains open and the organization continues its educational, advocacy and outreach programs as well as support for former residents of its homes.

“While we had hoped our closure would be very short, we now realize that we will need more time to be ready for new regulatory requirements to meet a state mandate that we operate as a short-term residential treatment center rather than the previous designation as a group home,” said Jenny Williamson, Founder and CEO of Courage Worldwide.

“Additionally, we are challenging state efforts to require us to allow girls in our care to have cell phones and other rules we believe would put the girls and our staff at risk,” Williamson said. “Cell phones link these victims with their abusers. Law enforcement agrees that this population of young people must not be further put at risk by allowing them this kind of access and potentially be connected to the very people who trafficked them.”

The organization raised the cell phone issue when the home first opened in 2011 and the state agreed that cell phones should not be allowed. Despite that, the state cited the lack of access to cell phones as a violation of the girls’ personal rights earlier this year.

Additionally, the state cited Courage House for infringing on a girl’s religious liberty by not allowing her to participate in Satanic worship.

“Our focus is always on what is in the best interests of the girls we serve,” Williamson said. “We will not allow our girls to be put at risk and will fight those rules and interpretations that we believe put them at risk.”

Courage House in Northern California opened in 2011 for girls age 11 to 17, providing round-the-clock treatment services 365 days a year. Girls generally stay for at least a year.

STATE ISSUE	COURAGE RESPONSE
<i>Personal Rights. Facility has a blanket policy of the clients not being allowed their own personal property, i.e. cell phones, computers, or MP3s in the home. (June 9, 2016)</i>	Appeal Filed. Cell phones are prohibited at Courage House because they can be used to connect girls with those who trafficked them. Law enforcement, including the California Attorney General's Office, agree our restriction on such devices is appropriate and in the best interest of the girls. Approved by state.
<i>Personal Rights. Personal Rights include the right to possess and use his/her own personal items unless prohibited as part of a discipline program. Client had personal cell phone confiscated. (March 30, 2016)</i>	Appeal Filed. See above. Approved program by state.
<i>Personal Rights. Personal Rights include the right to be free of unreasonable searches of personal belongings. Client's personal cell phone history was searched without reasonable cause. (March 30, 2016)</i>	Appeal Filed. See above. Some MP3 players have Internet. This is as dangerous as cell phones. Approved program by state.
<i>Personal Rights. LPA was made aware that the clients in care are not allowed to wear or possess their own articles of clothing. (June 9, 2016)</i>	Appeal Filed. We have a state approved dress code just like schools do.
<i>Advertisements and License Number (a) Licensees shall reveal each facility license number in all advertisements in accordance with Health and Safety Code Section 1514. Courage House does not list facility number on their website. (April 14, 2016)</i>	Appeal Filed. Courage House is concerned that this identifier will allow people to locate the confidential Courage House location.
<i>Advertisements and License Number (a) Licensees shall reveal each facility license number in all advertisements in accordance with Health and Safety Code Section 1514. Courage House does not list facility number on their website. (June 13, 2016)</i>	Appeal Filed. See above. Safety issue.
<i>Personal Rights. Personal rights include freedom to attend religious services or activities of his/her choice and to have visits from the spiritual advisor of his/her choice on a completely voluntary basis. Clients were not permitted to worship or attend religious services of their own choosing when requested. This poses a potential health and safety risk to clients in care. (June 9, 2016)</i>	Appeal Filed. Courage House respects religious freedom and works to ensure that every girl has access to opportunities to attend religious services. We have refused to allow a resident who requested to participate in Satanic worship, a practice the girl was indoctrinated into when she was trafficked for sex.
<i>Administrator Qualifications. Group homes shall have certified administrators. On 6/6/16, LPA learned that the facility no longer has an administrator nor does the facility have anyone qualified to take over as administrator at this time. (June 7, 2016)</i>	Courage informed the state on 6/6 that it was temporarily closing in part because of the resignation of a licensed administrator. No appeal necessary. Courage House had all staff required while girls were at Courage House.

STATE ISSUE	COURAGE RESPONSE
<p><i>Personnel Requirements. Facility personnel shall be competent to provide the services necessary to meet individual client needs and shall, at all times, be employed in numbers necessary to meet such needs. By their own admission, facility does not have adequate staff to meet the needs of the clients in care and as a result, have provided a 7 day notice to all clients/responsible parties that are currently living in the facility. (June 7, 2016)</i></p>	<p>Courage House informed the state that it would temporarily close in part because of anticipated staffing shortfalls in the future. While residents were at Courage House there were state required staffing ratios. No appeal necessary.</p>
<p><i>Personal Rights. Personal rights include dignity in personal relationships with staff and other persons. During interviews conducted at the facility, LPAs were made aware that the facility was infringing on the personal rights of residents when disclosing information said during therapy in front of other residents. (June 9, 2016)</i></p>	<p>Appeal Filed. Courage House doesn't disclose information and the state hasn't provided any information to substantiate this allegation – nor has the state interviewed the Clinical Director at Courage House.</p>
<p><i>Personal Rights. At admission, each child, and his/her authorized representative, shall be personally advised and given a copy of the child's rights. All reading materials or books that the clients in place choose to read are scrutinized and approved or disapproved according to the facility policy or administration. (June 9, 2016)</i></p>	<p>Appeal Filed. Courage House believes it is important to limit victims' access to materials that may be harmful in their recovery such as violent movies and music. The state approved this policy.</p>
<p><i>Planned Activities. Licensees shall develop, maintain, and implement written plans to ensure that indoor and outdoor activities are provided for all children. LPAs were made aware that the clients are not allowed to choose their own activity plans and are not allowed to deny participation in the planned activities without having consequences or points taken away. (June 9, 2016)</i></p>	<p>Appeal Filed. The state approved Courage House "trust system" which is a points system for program participation which shows how choices produce consequences.</p>
<p><i>Personal Rights. Personal rights include the right to live in a safe, healthy, and comfortable home where he or she is treated with respect. Photos of clients are posted on social media via Facebook. A photo identifying a client with tattoos across the face was identified. (January 26, 2016)</i></p>	<p>Courage House has never posted photos of girl's faces in any media but agree not to post photos that have any identifying marks. The photo was removed and no appeal was filed.</p>
<p><i>80070(c) Client Records. All information and records obtained from or regarding clients shall be kept confidential. Program used client's medical information for training purposes without obtaining permission from the client's representative. (July 9, 2016)</i></p>	<p>Appeal Filed. Courage has never used any client's medical information for training purposes. The reference is to images of brain scans from our service provider – not images of any our girls but from his marketing materials.</p>
<p><i>Personal Rights. Personal rights include the right to live in a safe, healthy, and comfortable home where he or she is treated with respect. Clients have been intimidated by staff and have not felt comfortable in the home due to inappropriate boundaries. (July 9, 2016)</i></p>	<p>Appeal filed. This was a single resident complaint that the state failed to interview the accused staff member.</p>