

## Doctor: Center at fault in sodomy

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SAN BERNARDINO Failure by administrators to act on reports of a counselor's misconduct at a group home for mentally disturbed teen-agers led to him molesting an 11-year-old boy there, a psychologist testified Monday in Superior Court.

Dr. Gilbert Kliman testified in the civil trial of Chico-based Victor Treatment Center and its subsidiary, Colton-based Chaparral Treatment Center, both being sued by the boy's family for monetary compensation for the child's psychological treatment because of the molestation.

Steve Ayala, 30, a former counselor at the Bronson House in Muscoy where several of the molestation acts occurred, pleaded guilty to sodomy in December 1999 and is serving six years in state prison.

Officials at Victor Treatment Center have referred all media inquiries to their attorney, Timothy Stafford, who has repeatedly declined comment.

But Roy Alexander, the center's executive administrator, previously said the incident has affected employees and administrators of the company.

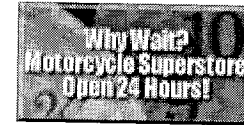
"It's devastating to all employees at all levels of the organization. This is the greatest fear anybody who works in this business has," Alexander said.

Bronson House, where the 11-year-old was living, is one of four group homes for mentally disturbed teens, classified as "Level 14s" in the social services system, is owned by Victor Treatment Center. Patients at "Level 14" suffer severe psychological problems but are a step below the level required for hospitalization in a mental institution.

Another teen group home owned by Victor Treatment Center the Chestnut House in Rialto had its license revoked by the California Department of Social Services after allegations of counselors raping and molesting residents there surfaced and were investigated, said Blanca Barna of the state Department of Social Services.

Chestnut House has until Friday to relocate its residents and shut its doors for good unless Victor Treatment Center files a successful appeal, Barna said.

Kliman, the boy's psychiatrist, testified Monday that the boy, now 13, suffered post-traumatic stress disorder and will require at least two years of inpatient therapy at a mental hospital B1



the boy and resident counselor Steve Ayala.

Seflin also testified he had no knowledge of inappropriate touching that occurred between the two at the time.

The boy would later complain to Bronson House staff of rectal bleeding, and no appointment was made for him to see a doctor, according to records filed with the state Department of Social Services.

Ayala, 30, pleaded guilty in December 1999 to sodomizing the boy, who is living with his father and grandmother in Rancho Cucamonga. Ayala is serving a six-year sentence in state prison.

Anthony questioned what he called lax supervision at the home, where the boy also was stripped naked by another counselor in front of other residents, ridiculed and referred to as "fat" by residents and counselors, court records show.

Anthony also presented house logs from Aug. 12, 1999, that allegedly show Seflin ordering staff at Bronson House not to "allow any social workers into the facility, even if they are in possession of court documents."

"I believe the reason they did that is because they didn't want the social workers to know what was going on," Anthony said after Monday's proceedings.

