

Newly released documents reveal pattern of sexual abuse at Washington state boys home for troubled youth

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SPOKANE, Wash. – Newly released documents reveal multiple allegations of sexual abuse stretching back more than 25 years at a home for troubled boys and indicate problems have continued in recent years.

State Department of Social and Health Services records obtained by The Spokesman-Review newspaper for a story published Sunday include five allegations of sexually inappropriate interactions between boys and adults associated with the Morning Star Boys' Ranch in the past decade.

The 871 pages of documents, released in response to a public records request by the newspaper, also include several accounts of molestation and rape among the residents of the home, which has been shaken in recent months by allegations of physical and sexual assaults that date back decades.

In addition to the allegations against adults, the documents include several accounts of violent or coerced sexual encounters among the boys.

Morning Star officials said they would not comment on individual cases, but insisted that the ranch has updated its policies to better protect boys, including offering residents locked single rooms and barring group showers.

Dan Kuhlmann, assistant director of the Roman Catholic boys home, said Morning Star has "always taken a strong position that when we become aware of a problem or situation, we report it."

The documents included allegations that in 1992, an 18-year-old resident whose psychological evaluation indicated he was "predatory" repeatedly raped a younger boy. The alleged perpetrator had a previous rape conviction and threatened the 15-year-old resident, who initially fought the older boy but later "just endured it." Later, the documents said, the 15-year-old began victimizing younger children.

They also allege that in 1996, Morning Star failed to properly report a resident's complaint that he had been fondled by a man during an overnight stay at the man's home.

In a statement released Friday, Morning Star said: "All social service organizations have some type of incident report – they are NOT unique to Morning Star. Reports are used to identify and solve problems and improve practices over time."

The documents show that Morning Star began to tighten its reporting standards in the 1990s after incidents of sexual activity among the boys and allegations of rape against a counselor.

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