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Payout over teen's boot camp tragedy

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The parents of a teenager beaten to death by staff at a boot camp in Hubei Province this month have been awarded 350,000 yuan (US\$51,000) in compensation.

The money, which will be paid by a local education bureau, comes less than three weeks after Yao Jian, 14, died on an outward-bound training program intended to boost his confidence.

"The money will not ease the agony of losing our son," his father Yao Jun, 37, told *China Daily* yesterday. "We can only hope this tragedy will ring alarm for parents and the government to avoid such incidents."

He said a local police report last Friday showed the Xiaoxita No 1 Middle School student had died on Aug 5 of acute renal failure caused by extensive soft-tissue injuries.

The headmaster of the Yichang-based Tianhai Boot Camp School, Zhang Yangyong, and seven other staff members have been detained.

Yao Jian joined the six-day program, which cost 740 yuan, with more than 50 other youngsters on Aug 2, when they were all ordered to walk more than 70 km from Wujiagang to a Dangyang training base in two days.

The police officer leading the investigation, surnamed Tian, said camp trainers had "punished" youths who walked too slow and, in the end, Yao had to be transported to Dangyang on Aug 4 by car due to extreme exhaustion.

He said the trainers believed Yao was pretending to fall unconscious so beat him on Aug 4 and 5 before sending him to hospital. The teenage died on the way.

"We heard our son was sick at about 7:30 pm but, when we arrived in Dangyang, we could only see his dead body, which was covered with injuries to his arms and legs," said his father.

The Tianhai boot camp was shut down last Friday.

A private school, it was set up in 2007 with permission from the local commercial and industry bureau to help troubled youngsters overcome Internet addictions and other problems.

The Hubei incident came just days after the beating to death of Deng Senshan, 15, of Nanning in the Guangxi Zhuang autonomous region, also at a Net addiction camp.

(China Daily August 24, 2009)

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