

## Lawmaker seeks probe of teen boot camps to root out possible fraud, abuse

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WASHINGTON - California Rep. George Miller is asking for a congressional investigation of teen boot camps, citing alleged child abuse and fraud at the facilities in the United States and abroad.

Miller sent a letter Wednesday to the Government Accountability Office, the investigative arm of Congress, asking for a report on the how the boot camps and boarding schools are regulated and financed, as well as a review at allegations of abuse and fraud.

"Across the country and abroad, treatment facilities that in many cases appear to be unregulated, unlicensed, and unaccredited are enrolling thousands of American children. In countless cases, children have reported acts of physical and emotional abuse by staff members at these facilities," Miller said in a statement.

"There is no issue more serious than the health and safety of our children. Congress needs this information so it can act to keep children safe," Miller said.

Ken Kay, president of the Utah-based World Wide Association of Specialty Programs, said he has invited Miller or his staff to visit any of the schools in the WWASP network and the congressman has not taken him up on his offer.

"He apparently has a vendetta," said Kay. "The public school teachers I'm involved with, they are in favor of having a place where they can send the disruptive kids that aren't working in the mainstream of education.

And I really honestly don't understand Miller's motivation."

The schools in the WWASP network - there are seven - have had some problems. An operation in Mexico was shut down by the Mexican government in 2004, and a school in New York was forced to reimburse parents \$1.6 million because it had issued diplomas, even though it was not accredited to do so.

Last year, a facility in Utah, Majestic Ranch, was investigated for allegations of child abuse and one staffer pleaded guilty to a misdemeanor.

Miller, the senior Democrat on the House Education and the Workforce Committee, asked then-Attorney General John Ashcroft in 2003 to investigate allegations of child abuse, human rights violations and fraud at schools affiliated with WWASPS, but no action has been taken.

He introduced legislation in April aimed at encouraging states to regulate the treatment centers and to prevent child abuse at facilities.



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