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## Visions for Youth program probed

By Emanuel Cavallaro

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Springfield, Ohio — Authorities are investigating a Clark County program for troubled teens after a video showing what appears to be abuse by a staff member was leaked to the media last month.

The boot-camp-style program called Visions for Youth operates four facilities in the county and at one time served as many as ten counties, housing teens ages 13 to 18. Following allegations of abuse and the release of the video, most counties have pulled their kids from the program.

In the video, reportedly footage taken by a hidden security surveillance camera at the Inside-Out Community Center on August 2, a Visions for Youth staff member is seen body-slamming a 16-year-old boy in a hallway and then holding him down.

William Stout, a pastor with the Community Christian Church, one of three churches that meet in the building, said the counselor – later identified as Dante Smith – had found the teen sleeping during a Saturday night church service.

The teen is seen in the hallway holding his neck because Smith woke him up by striking him in the throat, Stout said.

"We have hidden cameras in there for security purposes, and I guess their staff didn't realize they were on camera," Stout said. "The kid didn't do anything."

As of Sept. 11, the Clark County Children services, along with law enforcement and the Ohio Department of Jobs and Family Services, has been investigating the program, which faces possible the revocation of its license and criminal prosecution of its employees.

But Stout said he has been trying to get the attention of local authorities since mid-August, but was ignored until he leaked the footage to the media and showed it to the Montgomery County Department of Job and Family Services.

"I made at least a dozen telephone calls to the Clark County prosecutor's office and to this public defender (representing the 16-year-old in the video)," Stout said. "The public defender stopped returning my calls, until the media got involved."

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