

Harwinton Selectman Office

From: Michael Criss
Sent: Wednesday, June 7, 2023 2:55 PM
To: Harwinton Selectman Office
Subject: FW: Safety Concerns - STAR Home- Harwinton

Please print

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Sent: Wednesday, June 7, 2023 12:59 PM
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Subject: Safety Concerns - STAR Home- Harwinton

Good morning,

I am reaching out to you from the Harwinton Resident Trooper's Office with major safety concerns regarding the Bridge Family Center's STAR home located at [REDACTED] in the town of Harwinton. I have voiced these concerns over the past year with your department, Skye, and STAR Home management during our quarterly and emergency advisory meetings. Unfortunately, I have seen no major changes made to resolve these issues and they only continue to escalate.

From May 1st to June 6th of 2023, the Resident Trooper's office and Troop-L have responded to the STAR Home for (16) sixteen separate calls for service. These calls for service have resulted in (10) ten juvenile arrests and (8) eight incidents of juveniles being reported missing due to being AWOL from the program. A total number of (22) twenty-two juveniles were reported missing from the program during these calls for service. During one of these AWOL's on May 23rd, (5) five juveniles were missing from the STAR home at the same time. My understanding is that the STAR Home's total occupancy is (6) six juveniles and yet (5) five were unaccounted for with no staff following the residents.

On May 30th, Troopers responded to an active disturbance at the residence after staff contacted Troop-L reporting that they did not feel safe due to (4) four juveniles making threats and destroying property. Upon the arrival of Troopers to the residence, the juveniles barricaded themselves and locked staff outside. The juveniles dead bolted the doors and staff and Troopers could not access the juveniles until a Trooper climbed through an open window to unlock the door. One of the juveniles then assaulted a Trooper who had detained her in handcuffs. This juvenile struck the Trooper in the head with the handcuffs. A second Trooper was injured while trying to get another juvenile in custody. While on scene with the juvenile who assaulted the Trooper with a handcuff, she reported that this was the most fun she had ever had.

These behaviors continued on May 31st, when a neighbor called Troop-L after seeing (3) three of the same juveniles from the incident the previous day AWOL from the program. Upon locating the juveniles trespassing

on private property, Troopers contacted the STAR Home to find numerous staff members at the program and no staff out looking for the juveniles. Troopers spoke with STAR Home staff who reported that the juveniles had acted out again in threatening type behavior and had damaged property at the STAR Home to include a TV prior to going AWOL. When asked by Troopers why staff had not contacted State Police to report the incident and juveniles AWOL, staff informed Troopers that they had been directed not to contact the police by STAR Home management.

On June 5th, (2) two residents stole the STAR Homes transport vehicle after they locked themselves in the staff office the previous day for approximately (2) two hours with no call to State Police requesting assistance. It is my understanding that not only does this office house the keys to the transport vehicle, but it also houses other sensitive materials such as controlled medications, and staff cell phones / personal items, which these residents had unsupervised access to for (2) two hours and ultimately led to them obtaining the vehicle's keys.

Over the past year, the STAR Home has also had numerous incidents including assaults, sexual assault / misconduct involving residents / staff, and juveniles going out into Harwinton's Community and committing numerous crimes of larceny and burglary.

It appears that DCF continues to place juveniles at this program with acute behavioral issues that are well beyond the level of care that staff and the STAR Home program can provide. This practice puts STAR Home staff / residents, responding Troopers, Emergency Service Members and the Harwinton Community in danger and has resulted over the past year in the injury to Troopers, Staff and Juvenile Residents. The STAR Home is classified as a shelter yet juveniles on probation and with ankle monitoring bracelets continue to be placed at the STAR Home. I believe that many of the above incidents and injuries could have been prevented if these juveniles were placed in a proper program with a higher level of care.

It appears the STAR Home is now failing to report incidents to State Police in an attempt to lower their total calls for service. This yet again is causing more harm than good and can be directly attributed to why situations involving these juveniles are continuing to escalate.

I am again requesting that DCF take some type of action to safe guard the well being of these juveniles and the community you have placed them in. DCF's failure to take action is eventually going to result in someone being seriously injured at the STAR Home or a member of the Harwinton Community.

The next Harwinton Star Advisory committee meeting is scheduled for 6/15 at 1:00PM at the Harwinton Ambulance Association located at 166 Burlington Road. I hope you will all attend so we can find a solution to this growing problem and public safety issue!

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