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State revoking license of Joliet nursing home

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State public health officials confirmed Wednesday they are in the process of revoking the license for a troubled Joliet nursing home.

Hillcrest Nursing and Rehabilitation Center, 777 Draper Ave., also was scheduled to be decertified for Medicare on April 1, said Melaney Arnold, communications manager for the Illinois Department of Public Health.

Arnold could not confirm Wednesday that the center was scheduled to close May 15. A woman who answered the phone at Hillcrest on Wednesday said Amy Sparks, who is listed as the administrator of the facility on both the IDPH website and the facility's website, no longer was working there. No administrators were available to comment, the woman said.

On her LinkedIn.com profile, Sparks wrote that she was Hillcrest's administrator through March.

Joliet Mayor Tom Giarrante said he called the Illinois Department of Public Health on Wednesday to ask if the state could do another inspection on Hillcrest before it closed. He did not hear back as of Wednesday afternoon.

"I'm not trying to get them to keep it open," Giarrante said. "I just want them to do another inspection before May 15 to see if it will pass."

Giarrante said he did not know if the facility could be kept open with another inspection. But he said he was concerned about people losing jobs once Hillcrest closes.

In April, the IDPH investigated complaints from 10 out of 16 residents who were transferred out of the facility between March 17 and 23. The state found residents were transferred without regard to their preference of facility.

One resident is quoted in a state report as saying: "All the residents were told (Hillcrest) was closing. We were told it was because of (a resident alleged to have sexually and physically assaulted 23 residents) ... and funding problems. They said the facility ... did something very wrong and everyone had to go."

A separate IDPH investigation found that between May and October, a 26-year-old male Hillcrest resident sexually, physically or mentally abused at least 23 other residents.

Residents told investigators the man exposed himself and assaulted male and female residents,

threatening to “come back with a gun” if they reported the incidents.

That incident is not the first complaint filed against Hillcrest, which has a history of state investigations going back at least 10 years.

In February the state investigated an incident where a resident was discovered dead in her room, a coaxial cord wrapped around her neck and mouth.

In March, state investigators found the facility staff gave a resident too high a dose of a prescription seizure medicine, which resulted in hospitalization.

Chicago attorney Steven Levin, whose firm specializes in cases of nursing home neglect and abuse, has sued the Hillcrest facility at least two times.

In March, Levin filed a lawsuit for the family of a Hillcrest resident who was allegedly burned by another resident that said Hillcrest staff did not report the incident to the IDPH.

“As long as 10 years ago, that home had difficulty preventing residents from injuring other residents,” Levin said. “They’ve had a very spotty regulatory record that is filled with incidents of neglect and, frankly, it’s about time that the state and the federal government took the appropriate action to shut that home down.”

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