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More families come forward with complaints against the Grove

By Jim Newton

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The Illinois Department of Public Health has confirmed it is investigating “more than one” complaint of improper care at the Grove at the Lake Living & Rehabilitation Center in Zion.

Several local families have come forward alleging cases of neglect or abuse at the Grove, and the League of United Latin American Citizens (LULAC) is running an awareness campaign on the issue, although LULAC president Julie Contreras said the alleged victims are not just Hispanic.

“This is a human services crisis. It’s not limited to Latinos,” Contreras said.

Nancy Rivera was first to come forward, reporting her concerns about her mother Carmen Marrero’s treatment at the Grove to Zion Police, who confirmed they are investigating the incident.

Marrero has Alzheimer’s disease severe enough to require advanced care, and moved into the Grove three months ago. She has been transported to Vista Medical Center East twice since then.

Marrero was transported to the hospital Aug. 5, after The Grove notified Rivera that she had fallen and hit her head. She was examined and released. Then later last month, Rivera was informed her mother had an abscess in her mouth and was taken to the hospital with a black eye, bruising on her back and her jaw swollen due to being fractured in two places.

Rivera said a surgeon told her the injuries could not have resulted from an abscess, and were likely caused by a fall or other trauma.

Marrero had surgery to insert a plate in her jaw, and she is now staying at a facility in Elgin, Rivera said.

Since Rivera came forward, Contreras said five other families have contacted LULAC with concerns about family members at The Grove. One is the family of 52-year-old Roberta Christian, who has liver failure.

Christian’s sister, Genny Lowy of Winthrop Harbor, said Christian has had scabies mites five times since she moved into the Grove, and claims to have been sexually assaulted. Lowy said a rape test was done on Christian and the family is awaiting results. she said they, too, have filed a police report in Zion and she has visited administrators at The Grove.

“I was in there at least five times and they kept promising me it would get better,” Lowy said of The Grove. “This is her third year there and she has gone to hell and back.”

Lowy said her sister is scheduled to move to a facility in Kenosha this week.

The Grove declined to comment on the cases, with a spokeswoman stating that information regarding patients is private.

Melanie Arnold, communications manager for the Illinois Department of Public Health, said Tuesday that the the agency is investigating The Grove. Arnold said she could not release details at this time, but added that the investigation stemmed from more than one complaint.

Michael Bonamarte, a Chicago attorney retained by Rivera, said his firm has contacted the Grove and asked for Marrero’s medical records. He said the firm will attempt to find out through the records and from investigating agencies what has happened.

“Hopefully it was not abuse. Hopefully it was a fall,” Bonamarte said of Marrero’s injuries, but he added that the facility can be held liable for injuries from a fall depending on the circumstances.

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