

## 'Life-Threatening' Conditions Lead State to Ban Admissions to Rosewood

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ANNAPOLIS - State officials have banned admissions to Rosewood Center, Maryland's largest institution for people with developmental disabilities, after a survey found "life-threatening health or fire safety conditions" there. The ban, which took effect last week and was announced Thursday, is the third such ban in a year by the Department of Health and Mental Hygiene and the second in a month.

"The survey reflects circumstances which are unacceptable," said state Health Secretary John Colmers. "We're committed to an immediate plan of correction." But some advocates said a temporary ban is not enough -- they are urging the health department to simply close the Owings Mill facility.

"There's no reason for any more delay," said Nancy Pineles, an attorney for the Maryland Disability Law Center. "We're really disappointed with him (Colmers)." Former Gov. Robert Ehrlich four years ago called for a plan to start closing state institutions, and the state health department three years ago recommended closing Rosewood, according to Pineles' organization. The survey, conducted Aug. 6-15 by the Office of Health Care Quality, found "extensive and far reaching" deficiencies in seven of eight mandatory federal standards, said Wendy Kronmiller, the office's director.

The annual survey found that one resident had between nine and 13 broken ribs that had been revealed on X-rays but had not been reported to the resident's family or guardian, as is required. Other deficiencies at Rosewood included failing to protect the safety of residents and failing to provide active treatment, including one incident where a staff member fell asleep when he was supposed to be supervising a resident prone to seizures. The report also said Rosewood was unsanitary facility, citing mold on the walls, dead cockroaches and rodent feces. A 2006 survey of Rosewood also led to a ban of admissions at the facility. Pineles said conditions have just gotten worse since then. "These deficiencies are far more extensive" than last year, she said. "We're talking about additional issues (this year) . . . and we're still talking about some of the same issues."

Admissions to Rosewood were banned Sept. 7 for 30 days. Kronmiller said her office will also require an outside monitor to spend 25 hours per week at Rosewood as the facility attempts to correct the deficiencies. Kronmiller said admissions were initially banned from Aug. 10 to Aug. 30 after the survey found residents' safety was in immediate jeopardy because of continued violent behavior by a court-ordered resident of the facility. "This is a problem that has been in the making for . . . much longer than the nine months" that he has been secretary, Colmers said. "That being said, we'll do what's necessary to address" these problems.

Colmers said his department is working to evaluate where and if Rosewood residents should be treated in the community, as required by the General Assembly last session. But he also stressed that bill "does not call for the closure" of Rosewood and that he has "great confidence" in Robert Day, Rosewood's current administrator. Day "has the experience to resolve these problems," Colmers said.

But Pineles counters that the deficiencies at Rosewood "are so deep that to fix all these problems wouldn't be a good idea." "This isn't a good treatment model," Pineles said. "Rather than try to pour more state funds into this very expensive facility, we should try and focus on getting better treatment" for Rosewood's residents in the community.

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