

Halton Rape Crisis Centre kept 'files'

By Oksana Buhel

Bev LeFrancois, executive director of the Halton Rape Crisis Centre (HRCC) in Burlington, may have slipped when she said the "files" compiled by a Centre employee should have been returned to her immediately.

The Centre is supposed to have a strict policy forbidding written documentation on

clients.

In a recent media release, it was stated all information gathered by staff and volunteers was confidential and property of HRCC.

Former employee Margaret Perry was more specific. "It's a very clear policy - nothing is written down which can identify the client." She explained written information can be used as evidence in a trial, and

a counsellor may be subpoenaed to court.

Perry, who was dismissed in early October because of what she calls a "personality clash" with LeFrancois, admitted Cheryl Williams (the counsellor who took files home) showed poor judgement by not bringing the existence of the files to the attention of the board of directors, but added Williams was being used as a scapegoat to cover up the bigger breach of policy.

Lynda Greer, the employee who wrote the reports, has not been reprimanded, despite the last line of the Centre's media release, which states, "In the event of a breach of confidence, appropriate action will be taken by the Centre." LeFrancois would not specify what this action would be, only that it will be "related to the incident."

Greer had been counseling an alleged male rapist, a practice which Perry referred to as "totally against the Centre's policy," when, inexplicably, the case was passed on to Williams, along with his file. In the file, Williams found six

other files of clients, some with their full description, their addresses, reports of telephone conversations and letters which had been written.

"I was stunned they existed," Williams admitted. "I didn't know what to do. I suppose now I should have given them back to Lynda, or reported the incident, but I felt if I turned them over, the issue would have been swept under the carpet, like other things have been before. I didn't want to leave them in the Centre so I took them home."

When LeFrancois discovered that people outside the Centre knew about the files, she came with a police officer to claim them - six months later.

"These weren't files, in the true sense of the word," LeFrancois insisted. "They were only hand-written notes."

Perry described the situation as "unethical and corrupt - only a symptom of what's going on there (HRCC)." Asked if it was illegal, Perry cynically responded, "Oh, probably not."

Punks abandon cars

Police are looking for two youth who broke into Riteway Auto Body on Armstrong Ave. in Georgetown Wednesday overnight, stealing two cars, driving them for a short while and finally abandoning them.

According to police, suspects entered the building by pulling out an air conditioner and climbing through the window. They took two sets of keys from the office, one set for a red 1993 Dodge Spirit, and one for a black 1988 AMC Jeep Cherokee, which were driven off the

premises.

The youths drove to the Oak Ridge Dr./Wildwood Rd. area and parked the vehicle. A neighbor called police when the youths got out of the cars and began wiping them down. Police are looking for two white males, both between the ages of 17 - 20. One youth wearing red baggy pants, a dark long sleeve shirt and a baseball cap was described as 6-feet, with dark hair. The second youth was 5'7" with sandy-brown hair, and was wearing a dark hooded sweatshirt and dark pants.

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