



## Abuse allegations at a treatment facility for girls in Montgomery County

By Brittany Jeffers - Reporter

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The Care Cottage is seen along I-45 South

**WILLIS, Texas** - The Montgomery County District Attorney's office issued a search warrant at The Care Cottage in Willis on Wednesday evening.

The Care Cottage is a state-funded residential treatment facility for at-risk girls ages 6 to 17. The investigation was prompted by numerous reports from children who were living at the facility.

Montgomery County Attorney J.D. Lambright's office handles juveniles and Child Protective Services divisions. He said he was originally notified by the Willis superintendent that children at the facility had reported abuse to teachers and nurses. Lambright said 93 cases of abuse were reported at the facility in the last 16 months.

"We are talking about sexual assault and physical abuse, said Lambright. "Every single one of these was reported to the state,' Lambright said.

He said several entities got involved and the district attorney issued the warrant and seized computers, cellphones and other documents and records from the facility.

Among the allegations, the affidavit states that a child was hogtied as punished and that one teenager who was restrained suffered fractured arms.

The Care Cottage did not respond to KPRC's request for comment.

Representatives with the district attorney's office said no arrests have been made but criminal charges are expected.

The media contact for Houston area Texas Department of Family Protective Services issued a statement that the "safety of these children and our actions will be guided by that sole priority."

**Full statement:**

- Since each of these 56 children and youth were placed at Care Cottage, CPS caseworkers have been meeting with them individually, and they will continue to do so. Nothing is more important than the safety of these children and our actions will be guided by that sole priority.
- All of the abuse/neglect allegations reported to us have been or are being investigated by DFPS. Since yesterday's law enforcement operation, CPS has met with the children at the facility and have determined that they are currently safe. While CPS continues to look into the situation and provide information to law enforcement as requested, it is important that these children continue to receive all their needed services, go to school, and focus on their individual situations.
- The Care Cottage employee suspected of sexual abuse, and four other employees, were dismissed prior to Wednesday's law enforcement operation.
- Following state law, we share all reports of abuse or neglect with local law enforcement. Any allegation of abuse or neglect reported to the 24-hour DFPS hotline is automatically duplicated with complete information and immediately sent by email to a specific local law enforcement address for CPS reports.

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