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# State Board Blocked in Narconon Case

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**FORT SUPPLY** — Efforts to license a Kay County substance abuse center operating without state approval were brought to a halt Thursday.

The State Mental Health Board, scheduled to act Thursday on certifying the Narconon Chilocco New Life Center, found itself crippled by a court ruling. The ruling blocked the board from using material prepared by Department of Mental Health and Substance Abuse Services staff on the 75-bed facility.

Mental health department officials said it was the first time a court tossed out a staff recommendation.

A ruling Wednesday by Oklahoma County District Judge Leamon Freeman, in response to a suit filed by Narconon against the mental health department and

## Ruling Throws Out Licensing Recommendation

board, also left board members without legal counsel for the meeting.

The state attorney general's office, which normally serves as legal representative for state agencies, is representing departmental staff in the Narconon suit and could not represent the board Thursday. Board members legally were outgunned, as Narconon officials showed up with six lawyers, including Boston attorney Earle C. Cooley, the Church of Scientology's national trial counsel.

The rehabilitation center, located at the old Chilocco Indian school north of Newkirk, has drawn criticism for its ties with the Church of Scientology and for using a treatment method developed by church founder L. Ron Hubbard.

Board members floun-

dered for three hours and drew jeers from Narconon supporters before deciding to appoint a committee and hire a lawyer.

"You need counsel," Neal Leader, an assistant state attorney general told the board. "It's a sad mistake for you to proceed or do anything without counsel."

Harry Woods, an Oklahoma City lawyer representing Narconon, told board members that Narconon officials demanded a full hearing Thursday so that the center could be certified. At the same time, Narconon has mounted a federal court challenge of the state's authority to license the Chilocco facility. Narconon attorneys argue that the state has no regulatory authority since the center is on Indian land.

Woods said part of the

state recommendation could be submitted as evidence the center meets state regulations. Narconon also was prepared to provide several experts to testify to the program's effectiveness, he said.

But board member Murray E. Abowitz of Oklahoma City said it was impossible to get a full hearing without getting expert comments from people other than those connected with Narconon.

Woods conceded one reason Narconon officials want certification is to appease a Kay County district judge who ordered that Narconon accept no new patients until it is certified.

Narconon Chilocco at the time of that ruling had 35 patients, but is down to about 24, Woods said.

"We're losing \$90,000 a week," Woods said.

None of the staff members who worked on the initial Narconon recommendation will be used in the upcoming evaluation of the program.

"I want to get a clean, untainted report on this evaluation," board member Stewart Beasley of Edmond said.

Meanwhile, Narconon, along with the Tonkawa tribe, challenged the state's authority to license the facility because it is on Indian land.

Narconon is leasing 167 acres from the Chilocco Development Authority.

Maynard Hinman, a member of the Ponca tribe, one of the five tribes involved in the authority, said his tribe is against Narconon hiding behind the mask of Indian sovereignty.

"It's in the lease for Narconon to obey all federal, Indian and state laws," Hinman said.