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'Bullied', 'shamed', 'abused': Why 26 former Vista residents are suing this Utah teen treatment program

The lawsuit was filed Wednesday against Vista, which has locations in Sandy and Magna.



(Leah Hogsten | The Salt Lake Tribune) Vista Sage located at 3149 E 9800 S in Sandy, March 18, 2022. 27 former residents of Vista are suing the organization.

By Becky Jacobs and Jessica Miller Schreifels | March 23, 2022, 1:45 p.m. | Updated: March 24, 2022, 8:20 a.m.

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Editor's note: This story discusses allegations of sexual violence. If you need assistance or [resources](#), Utah's 24-hour sexual violence crisis and information hotline is available at 1-888-421-1100.

Surrounded by staff, therapists and other kids, M.O. was forced to sit and listen as one person after another berated her, she said.

They told her she was horrible and that she was to blame for everything — including that “one of the best staff members there had to leave,” she recalled.

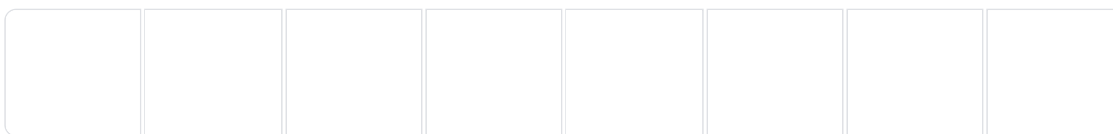
She was supposed to be getting therapy during her stay at Vista Dimple Dell, a residential teen treatment center in Sandy.

But in these “accountability circles,” M.O. said she was “totally brainwashed” into believing that the sexual and emotional abuse that she allegedly experienced there in 2018 and 2019 was somehow her fault.

“It was so predatory,” M.O. said in an interview. “They bullied us. ... They picked on us everyday. They made us feel bad about ourselves. They drove us against one another.”

M.O. is one of 26 former Vista residents who filed an amended lawsuit Wednesday in 3rd District Court against the facility, which operates two locations in Sandy and a third in Magna. The group of plaintiffs are also suing Toni Mazzaglia, Kristin Adams and Ryan Pepper, who are licensed treatment providers employed by Vista, according to a complaint.

The plaintiffs, who are now adults, were residents at Vista’s facilities between 2003 and 2019. They are identified in court records by their initials “to protect their privacy as victims of trauma and assault,” the complaint states.



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Vista is one of the [more than 100 teen treatment programs in Utah](#), which cater to parents and out-of-state agencies who care for struggling teenagers. Several programs have been accused of abusive tactics that allegedly left young people traumatized. Some have faced lawsuits, though none in recent history have been accused by dozens of former clients in a single legal action.

“The relationship that each of these claims have with another really paint the complete picture of what was happening at Vista,” argued Michael Young, an attorney representing the plaintiffs, “and why the behavior at Vista wasn’t OK.”

The lawsuit alleges that Vista’s staff engaged in harmful group therapy tactics, shamed young people for expressing their sexuality, put clients in painful physical restraints and gave them unneeded medication. It also alleges that the program













