Michigan Office Of Attorney General Consumer Complaint Form

Web Complaint Number: 2009-cp10061309760-A Submitted: 10/6/2009 1:09:55 PM

Consumer Information

Your Last Name: C[redacted] First Name: [redacted] M.I.:
Your Street Address: [redacted] City: Frederick
Your State: MD Zip Code: 21701
Your County: Outside Michigan
Your Home Phone: 9[redacted] Your Work Phone: Ext.:
Fax Number: E-mail Address: [redacted]

Primary Company Or Person Your Complaint Is About

Company or Person? Company
Complainee Last Name: Complainee First Name:
Company Name: A Forever Recovery
Street Address: 216 St. Mary's Lake Road City: Battle Creek
State: MI Zip Code: 49017
County: Phone: 8774563313
Fax Number: E-mail Address:
Web Site Address: stopyouraddiction.com Product Offered: Rehabilitation
Primary Jurisdiction: None

Secondary Company Or Person Your Complaint Is About

Company or Person? Company
Complainee Last Name: Complainee First Name:
Company Name:
Street Address: City:
State: MI Zip Code:
County: Phone:
Fax Number: E-mail Address:
Web Site Address:

Motor Vehicle Warranty Complaint Information

Vehicle Make, Model, and Year:
Vehicle VIN No.:

Complaint Information

Incident Date\Time: 8/17/2009 4:00:00 PM
Incident Location: A Forever Recovery
Approximate Monetary Value:
Did you sign a contract? True
Where did you sign this contract? A Forever Recovery
Is a court action pending? False

Do you have an attorney representing you on this matter? False
Are you willing to testify in court regarding this complaint? True
Did you complain directly to the business? False
What was the response from the business?
If no complaint was given to the business directly, why? I have not sent them this complaint directly yet.
Was this complaint filed with any other agencies? False

Complaint Detail/Inquiry Information

To Whom it May Concern, On August 16th, 2009, I was contacted by David, an intake counselor at A Forever Recovery regarding their rehabilitation program. I was at a point in my life where I knew that I needed to stop [redacted] because it was negatively affecting every aspect of my life and damaging myself and my loved ones. I performed a search on the internet and called a 1-800 number and explained my situation and my needs. They told me about A Forever Recovery and moments later David contacted me. After speaking with David, I decided that I would like to try that program and he called my parents for the funding. I asked David many questions that I later found out were answered untruthfully. The condition of the facility, the quality of the food, the nutritional options for vegetarians and the programs available were all marketed to me inaccurately. David was criminally hyperbolic in his description of the program itself, the faculty and the facility. I was absolutely repulsed when picked up from the airport in a vehicle that reeked of cigarette smoke and then transported approximately two hours to the facility. Upon my arrival to A Forever Recovery, I was met by security who inundated me with paperwork and went thru my belongings, seizing any items that had [redacted] as one of the first three ingredients, a rule that David did not advise me of. I was left with hardly any toiletries, but advised that 10 days from then I would be able to purchase [redacted] free versions of these items from K-Mart. Though I signed paperwork obliging to a strip-search, no such search was performed making me question the ease in which [redacted] could be snuck into the facility. Perhaps the lack of strip search is convenient because if someone is caught with [redacted] in their system then they would have to go back to the [redacted] House" for an additional $5000.00 fee. After my belongings were searched and my "illegal" possessions taken from me, I took a urine analysis test and a breathalyzer test. The results of which was positive for [redacted] for the UA and 0.00 for the breathalyzer. Despite the fact that there are no dangerous adverse medical symptoms for [redacted] from [redacted] and that I had no [redacted] or other [redacted] in my system, I was taken the [redacted] House." I was told that everyone must go to the [redacted] house no matter what the case may be, a claim that I later discovered to be false when other clients came directly from the outside to the main facility. Upon my arrival to the [redacted] house, I was absolutely disgusted. The conditions were reprehensible, unsanitary and altogether unacceptable. The bathrooms were filthy. There were stains in the toilet, stains in the shower, scraps of soap from other clients strewn throughout the bathroom, bugs in the sink and on the floor, and dirt and grime everywhere. I refused to use the bathroom and began to limit my water intake so I could avoid urination there. When I absolutely had to go, I advised the staff that I would be going to the bathroom outside. They found that unacceptable and arranged for me to be escorted to the main building to use the restroom there. The kitchen was also a disgusting disaster. There was a pile of dirty dishes in the sink in murky water that were merely rinsed off, returned to a completely unsanitary, dirt-laden dish rack and then put away in dusty cabinets for the clients to use. The food in the refrigerator was not individually packaged and was fondled by all clients without regard to the spreading of germs. These are just a few infractions I witnessed at the [redacted] house, but I am certain that a thorough investigation from the health department would prove that the facility is rampant with health code violations that endanger the health of its occupants. Within the first couple hours of being at the [redacted] house, one is plagued with an abundance of paperwork to sign. The state of mind that most people are in upon arrival there almost ensures that one will sign this paperwork with little or no comprehension of what they are actually signing. The only paperwork that is sent to clients beforehand is the financial paperwork. Go figure. Once your stay at the [redacted] house is completed, you are walked over to the main facility and given an incredibly brief tour and a vague set of rules and regulations which you must adhere to during your stay. It is unclear at this point in time who your counselor is, when you will meet them or when you will begin your program. This just sets a precedent for the highly subjective, ever-changing, rules and regulations that plagues this program. There is no uniformity amongst the decisions of the staff, the protocol for procedures or the expectations of the clients. As trite as it may sound, the only thing constant at A Forever Recovery is change. This ever-changing environment is detrimental to clients' recoveries; however, it is pounded into their heads that these daily changes are in fact normal and healthy and will aid them with their recovery in the outside world. Clients are told constantly that they must accept these changes without question because acceptance is a vital part of their recovery. It is not acceptable to hire and fire faculty on a daily basis. It is not acceptable to change rules constantly. It is not acceptable to change schedules daily. These

changes happen because the administration is incredibly disorganized. They are in a state of constant chaos, always in panic mode trying to deal with crisis, never taking the necessary precautions to prevent them. Because of that, A Forever Recovery is always on the defense and just trying to function as a program without ever implementing an offensive strategy to anticipate future needs or stimulate positive growth within the program. The program remains chaotic and stagnant and breeds animosity amongst administration and staff which in turn trickles down to the relationship between staff and clients. Without proper administration, there is no hope for this program. It is obvious that a good portion of the faculty truly do care about the clients' healthy recoveries, but are limited in what they can do to ensure this because of the poor administration. The faculty is constantly apologizing to us for the injustices they must administer to us and can only explain this by telling us that the program is new and they are still ironing out the kinks. In short, the current and previous clients are guinea pigs for the program. It is not only immoral and unjust to treat clients this way, but it can also be deadly. Many people come to this program close to [redacted] searching for a final chance at life. They give their faith and money to A Forever Recovery as their last hope at recovering from [redacted] that have destroyed their careers, damaged their relationships and jeopardized their health. They need a solid program that will help nurse them back to health physically, mentally and emotionally in a safe, sanitary environment with skilled professionals. What they are given is a chaotic, unstructured, dysfunctional program in a sub par environment with unqualified administrators and faculty. People recovering from [redacted] are in such a fragile state and it is not right to subject them to such a disorderly atmosphere and expect them to recover. I briefly covered some of the ways in which the intake counselor representing A.F.R. misled prospective clients, but would like to revisit that at this time. One of the main attractions about this particular recovery program for people is that it is supposed to be highly individualized to meet clients' needs. The only individualization present is from 7-8 PM, Monday- Friday. That is a mere six hours per week that you are able to choose your own "track." These tracks are extremely disappointing however. During the first few weeks of my stay at A.F.R. many of the tracks were run by the clients. In addition, Yoga was promised to me by my intake counselor and that was not offered as one of the tracks. While on the subject of unqualified persons in positions of authority, I'd like to address the issue of the nepotism throughout the administration and faculty. The owners of the program, Pam and Per, are brother and sister with what I can gather no formal training in rehabilitation. Two of Pam's sons are employed at the company, as well as the sons' girlfriends- again I don't believe they have any formal training in [redacted] They do not tactfully address clients. They punish the whole lot of clients for the misconduct of a few instead of rewarding good behavior and not rewarding bad behavior. The punishments or "write-ups" are given when clients violate one of the rules of conduct. One is not informed when they receive a write-up; therefore, they do not have an opportunity to contest it. After receiving a certain number of write-ups (this number varying from client to client) then the client must wear an orange colored vest and be confined in their room for 3 days, only leaving to help with maintenance around the building and to eat meals. The staff does not attempt to discover the root of why the client is failing to follow the rules; they merely punish them. If they continue to misbehave then they are asked to pack up all of their belongings and driven to a homeless shelter for three days with only ten dollars. The homeless shelter is riddled with [redacted] and [redacted] and puts clients out on the street from 6 AM to 9 PM. The gravity of such a negative consequence certainly fosters relapse rather than recovery amongst already troubled clients. It is so easy for the clients to fall through the cracks at A.F.R. You must be your own advocate for everything. Clients are supposed to fill out weekly progress reports that address any problems or concerns that they have had throughout the week. These reports are supposed to be reviewed by a case manager in order to ensure that clients' needs are met. Not once in the six weeks that I was a client at A Forever Recovery did I go over a progress report with my case manager. The only other real one-on-one time that a client has to address their individual needs is when they meet with their counselor which only happens once a week. While the case managers and counselors are very skilled at their jobs, they are so overworked that there is no time for them to converse with each other about the individual clients to discuss growth and ensure that what is discussed during counseling is also present in the client's moral recognition therapy and vice versa. The aforementioned problems are universal weaknesses with the facility, faculty and program; now I would like to address the specific problems that I had with A Forever Recovery. The first part of the program, clients are asked to complete self-inventory and then advised to find a member of the faculty to go over this inventory with. After completing my inventory, I arranged to meet with a member of the staff to go over the two-hundred and seventy-six highly invasive questions about my life. The staff member that I presented my inventory to was highly self-involved, talking more about her own problems than mine and provided me with little to no feedback after I had poured my heart and soul out to her for over two hours. She mentioned several times throughout our meeting that she was anxious to have a cigarette. I felt rushed and irrelevant during what was supposed to be a cathartic experience. Afterwards, I found that others were having the same negative experience so we confided in another faculty member about our bad experience. She asked for permission to advise Paul Lawson, the program director, about what had happened. We told her that would be ok.

She approached me two days later and told me that she had expressed our concerns to Paul. Paul approached me about 4 days after that and apologized for the staff member's callous unprofessional behavior and asked if I would mind going over my inventory with him. I said sure and we made an appointment to do so. That appointment came and went. He apologized a few days later for missing that appointment and rescheduled with me. On the morning of the rescheduled meeting, I made it a point to ask Paul if he still wanted to meet with me later that day. He said that he did and would have security come and get me out of class when he was ready for me. That did not happen. At this point, I became highly agitated with the program and confided in another staff member about my quandary. He told me he was going to speak with Paul about it for me. The next day Paul approached me and told me he was working until 7 PM and asked me if I wanted to go over my inventory later that day. Again, I agreed. I decided to go lay outside for a couple hours before going to meet up with Paul. As I was laying outside in a bikini, I was approached by Paul who asked me if I wanted to meet with him then and there. I responded " I kinda wanna lay out in the sun right now," to which Paul responded " That's ok "and dangled the keys to the company boat. I said ok and hopped on the boat with Paul. Paul drove the boat approximately 10-15 minutes away, dropped anchor and then told me that instead of going through my inventory question by question, he could just ask me questions about my life. We breezed over my childhood and adolescence years and then focused on the more complex issues of my adult life. Paul pointed out that I seem to have troubles establishing boundaries with men. That is, I flirt with men to a certain point and then throw up a boundary without forewarning. He mentioned that he had observed me doing so during my time at A.F.R. and told me that he would keep an eye out for me doing it in the future and call me out on it. I told him that I felt that flirting with men was deeply ingrained in my personality and that if I did not do so, then I would probably have nothing to say to the opposite sex at all. Paul responded to me by saying: "You're talking to me right now. You're not flirting....had you taken 4 minutes to lay your towel down on the ground with your ass up in the air then that would have been flirting." While the comment took me aback a little, I did not really think anything of it. I chalked my feelings of discomfort up to the invasive process of the inventory in general and hushed the thoughts in my head saying "this is kind of weird to be out on a boat alone in a bikini talking about sexual experiences with the male director of the program." The whole process took about 3 hours. When we returned back to campus, I had mixed emotions about how things went. I didn't know whether the subject matter covered in the self-discovery process was what caused my ambivilance or whether the circumstances surrounding how I presented it did. Several clients approached me that evening and asked me about the trip on the boat with Paul. They were concerned that Paul had taken advantage of me. I was not sure how to respond because I was not sure how I felt about it myself. I advised them that physically nothing happened and I did not think that anything really inappropriate took place. They asked me if I wanted to write up an incident report about it and I told them that I did not. Two days later, I approached my case manager to tell her that I had fulfilled all of the requirements of the program and was ready to start on my after-care work. She asked me if I had anything that I wanted to talk to her about. I stated that I did not which prompted her to ask me specifically about the experience with Paul. I told her that I did not have a problem with what occurred, but other people may have. She told me that I would need to go speak with Pam, the co-owner of A.F.R. I immediately went to Pam's office and asked her if she wanted to speak with me. Pam said "yes, what happened?" She did not ask me to have a seat. She did not close the door. She did not ask the other person in the office to step out so that we could have a moment of privacy. I stood there and told Pam what I had just told my case manager. I said that I was ok. I didn't think that anything inappropriate occurred with Paul, but I knew other clients thought that the fact that he took me out on the boat in a bikini in the first place was inappropriate. Pam looked skeptical and began stating that I would not get in trouble if I told her the truth. To which I replied: "that is the truth." She then said "Well, what if I told you that a neighbor called and said something?" I told her I wasn't sure what a neighbor could have seen because nothing physically happened. She said ok and dismissed me from her office. I was mystified by the whole interrogation by Pam and left to ponder to myself for days about Paul's intentions for taking me out alone on the boat in my bikini. I felt confused and naïve. Had Paul taken advantage of me? Two days after speaking with Pam, an announcement was made that Paul had resigned. This announcement threw me into utter turmoil. Immediately rumors began to surface that Paul was terminated for acting inappropriately with a client. I knew that client was me. I felt undermined that Pam had taken such harsh actions against Paul after I told her that I did not feel he did anything inappropriate, but mostly I felt absolutely conflicted about whether Paul had acted inappropriately with me. I still feel conflicted about that. Staff members have tried to assuage my feelings of guilt over Paul's termination by telling me that Paul should have known better than to be alone with me in a bathing suit because he had a history of inappropriate behavior with female clients. They said that he had been warned about this in the past and definitely took advantage of me that day. I guess he did. I don't know. All I knew was that I just wanted to put the whole sordid event behind me. I thought I would be able to do so because I had completed the requirements for graduation when I was advised that I was not scheduled for graduation because Pam did not feel I was ready. At

this point, I had already booked my plane ticket and was adamant about leaving. I had done everything asked of me for completion of the program and was ready to leave. My case manager and counselor were very caring and kind when asking me to reconsider my decision to leave. They told me that they felt like "the program failed me; I did not fail the program" and that I was"worse off now than when I started the program. They understood though that I had already lost all faith in the program and agreed to assist me with my after-care even though I would not be able to technically graduate the program. At this point it became clear to me that Pam did not want me to graduate the program because she was afraid that I would go home and tell my story to my family and then sue A Forever Recovery because of Paul's "inappropriate" behavior. If I decided to sue, legally it would look much better for A.F.R. if I just left the program instead of completing it. Pam did not care about my [redacted] or [redacted] state. She cared only about covering her own ass. This selfish behavior was present from the moment she confronted me about the situation. I find it terribly disturbing to think about how Pam would have handled the situation if something terrible truly had happened. Luckily, my counselor, case-worker, and after-care contact all stood up for me to Pam and I was ultimately allowed to graduate. I am thankful that there are people who genuinely do care about clients' recoveries and do not just view them as income. It is unfortunate that the administration is so greedy, corrupt and inept because they are gambling with people's lives and the stakes are high.

[False] Check if this referral is just to give us information and you do not need us to respond to you directly.

[False] Check if you want to send documentation. After you submit this form you will be provided with a postal mail address, and facsimile number, to which you may send documents.

[False] Check if you want to sign up for the Consumer Protection Listserv.

[False] Check if you want to sign up for the AG Press Release Listserv.

[False] Check if you want to sign up for the Attorney General Opinions Listserv.

(*)I certify that the information on this form is true and accurate to the best of my knowledge.

(*)I consent to releasing to the Michigan Attorney General any information or document relative to the investigation of this complaint. By checking this box, I also certify that I have had the opportunity to review the Michigan Attorney General Privacy Policy before submitting this complaint.