

Mentally disabled seniors suffer in group home prison camp

By Kevin VonTungeln

<http://trustsandestatesblog.com/>

SAN BERNARDINO, Calif. (KABC) — Authorities in San Bernardino uncovered what are described as prison camp conditions at a group home. Investigators say seniors, some mentally disabled, were abused, crammed into chicken coops and forced to go to the bathroom in buckets.

Authorities say the facility was an illegal adult group home that was not licensed by the city or the state.

The home owner, 61-year-old Pensri Sophar Dalton, was arrested Friday. She's accused of forcing mentally ill adults to live in prison camp-like conditions; housing them in converted chicken coops with razor wire fences surrounding the facility and padlocked gates.

City Attorney James Penman says 22 people were living in three dilapidated buildings – none of them with indoor plumbing. He says residents used buckets as toilets.

“The house has been converted. We believe there may be some illegal conversions in the bedrooms. People were living in rooms as small as 6 to 15 feet, two beds and a mattress to the room,” said Penman.

He says the conditions were amongst the worst he's ever seen.

Dalton was charged with 16 counts of causing harm to elderly adults. She was booked at the West Valley Detention Center, where she remains in custody.

“I was wondering if that's illegal or not 'cuz that comes over on our property too and it's razor wire like they use in prisons,” said Kevin Milner, a neighbor.

The facility has been shut down. A city attorney investigator says most of the 22 residents were picked up by family members or taken to licensed care facilities.

Watch the video here:

http://abclocal.go.com/kabc/story?section=news/local/inland_empire&id=7000473

How can we make sure this doesn't happen to us or our parents?

(1) Make sure an estate plan is in place, and that the plan names who will take care us or our loved ones if incapacity strikes.

(2) Make sure the person given the authority to determine where you or your loved one lives is the correct person to do the job. Making sure the right person is: (a) paying your bills; and (b) determining where you live is the most important decision you will make regarding your estate plan. Don't pick a child just because they are your child, and don't pick a neighbor just because they are your neighbor. Watch closely how a person conducts their own affairs and how they treat other people. If the person you want to pick doesn't treat others with respect, odds are they won't treat you well, especially if you are incapacitated.

(3) Finally, consult a competent attorney to review your selections with you. An attorney who specializes in this area will be able to give you their experience and wisdom on picking the right person so that you don't end up living in a chicken coop when you can't speak for yourself.