

State Denies License for Vets Nursing Home

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LARKSBURG -- State regulators have refused to issue a license for the West Virginia Veterans Nursing Home because of a host of problems, including failure to meet requirements for accident prevention and infection control.

In one incident, a sling on a mechanical lift was not correctly applied and the brakes on the patient's wheelchair were not locked, state inspectors said in a 120-page report issued last week by the state Office of Health Facility Licensure.

Other problems cited in the report include failure to meet requirements for therapeutic diets, care of pressure sores, vision and hearing, activities of daily living, menus and nutrition, quality of life, staffing and general maintenance.

Administrators at the \$26 million Clarksburg facility also failed to ensure that all job applicants were screened against the state's nurse aide abuse registry before they were hired.

"The staff is working diligently to resolve all the issues we need to resolve to get OHFLC back in there to issue a license," said Joe Thornton, spokesman for the state Department of Military Affairs and Public Safety. "I hesitate to give a specific date, but I hope by the end of this month we can resolve all the issues and ask for a re-inspection."

Thornton said the nursing home has 10 business days from receipt of the report on Jan. 11 to submit a corrective plan of action.

"This just needs to be worked through before they move forward," said Lara Ramsburg, spokeswoman for Gov. Joe Manchin. "We want to make sure that things are done correctly and we are confident that things are being addressed as responsible as possible."

The nursing home originally was expected to be completed in 2005. Its opening was pushed back several times for various reasons, including problems with its communications and air control systems.

"I have met a few people and some families that are trying to get into the nursing home, but the consensus seems to be among the local veterans that there is really no excuse for all these problems," said Bob Ryan, service officer at the Clarksburg American Legion and a Vietnam veteran. "There have been too many little things and too many blunders along the way."

Eight veterans have moved into the 120-bed nursing home since it opened in November. Thornton said four more veterans will be admitted after the problems are corrected and the state conducts another inspection.

Thornton said the nursing home also must pass an inspection by the federal Department of Veterans Affairs. Once that occurs, veterans will be admitted about 20 at a time. The home is expected to be fully occupied by the middle of the year.