

Adopt agency under kickback probe

By TIM McDARRAH

STATE authorities are investigating charges that the Brooklyn adoption agency where Mitchell Steinberg was placed demands kickbacks from prospective parents in exchange for babies.

The state Dept. of Social Services is reviewing tape recordings and other documents about Ohel, a Boro Park agency catering to Orthodox Jews.

DSS official John Stupp announced that Ohel was being reviewed.

One recording has an Ohel social worker telling a woman she must pay the agency "basic board money" she received from the state while she was a foster parent.

The Ohel worker is heard on the tape saying the money was to prove the family "really wanted" the adoption.

The woman, who lives in Monsey in Rockland County, made the tape available to The Post.

A DSS spokesman said the tapes are now being reviewed.

by the "quality control" unit of the agency.

"Every complaint we get is treated very seriously," said a DSS worker investigating the charges.

In another case under close scrutiny, a social worker allegedly threatened a Brooklyn woman who is trying to regain custody of her children.

Marlene Hazan of Flatbush told The Post her divorced husband took their 19 children while she was a foster parent.

brought them to Ohel to be put up for adoption.

Mrs. Hazan is allowed to visit her two boys, aged 7 and 11, once a month at their New Jersey foster home.

She claims an Ohel social worker threatened to have her arrested if she tried to take the boys from the foster home, even though he conceded the adoption wasn't legal.

Ohel president Max Wasser did not return calls yesterday.

A DSS worker told The Post...

that the agency tries to match a child's religious background with their foster home, and that Ohel was an "unusual" agency because they placed children almost exclusively in Orthodox Jewish homes.

The DSS regulates and issues operating certificates to adoption agencies.

"What I want to know is how that place got custody of Mitchell Steinberg," said a city Human Resources Administration worker.

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