

ANCHORAGE DAILY NEWS

Alaska News

The last three psychiatrists working at API are resigning

✍ Author: Michelle Theriault Boots ⌚ Updated: March 21 📅 Published March 20

Alaska Psychiatric Institute's three remaining psychiatrists have all put in notice to quit, one of the doctors testified at a court hearing in Anchorage on Wednesday.

Dr. Deborah Guris testified that after the beginning of April, she will be the last psychiatrist on staff at the troubled public psychiatric hospital, which the state moved to privatize in February. Wellpath, the company the state gave the contract to, is supposed to take over full operation of the facility on July 1.

Guris then said her own last day will be May 3.

"I don't want to abandon my patients, but I also do not want to work somewhere that I can't ethically care for my patients," she said.

Guris was testifying at a hearing related to a lawsuit over a problem that has existed since last fall, and appears to be only getting worse: People in psychiatric crisis are being warehoused in emergency rooms and jail cells for weeks — or in a few cases, a month — because API doesn't have the capacity to admit them but they have been deemed too sick to be released.

[Ombudsman's report details dysfunction, abuse at API]

In October the Alaska Disability Law Center and Alaska Public Defender Agency filed suit in Anchorage Superior Court, asking a judge to make the state immediately stop housing people subject to civil commitment orders in jail — and either quickly provide mental evaluations required by law at the hospitals where the people are being held, or release them, according to court filings. The two cases were combined by the court.

The Disability Law Center has also asked that people subject to civil commitment orders are "immediately notified of their rights, provided a copy of the order authorizing their detention and given the contact information for their court-appointed attorney," according to attorney Joanna Cahoon.

A five-day hearing that kicked off Tuesday allows the plaintiffs and the defendants, the state of Alaska, to present their cases. Anchorage Superior Court Judge William Morse is expected to rule next week.

Witnesses, including executives from local hospitals and API itself, spent hours Tuesday and Wednesday describing Alaska's rickety infrastructure for dealing with people in a serious psychiatric crisis.

The testimony illuminated new and startling facts about the depth of the chaos at API — and the fact that by some measures, things have gotten worse instead of better in the last few months.

Guris testified that at the beginning of December, API had six psychiatrists.

Two were fired by the administration of Gov. Michael Dunleavy after they refused to submit required letters of resignation. Another resigned in early January. That left Guris and two other medical doctors, Dr. Andrew Pauli and Dr. Lee Ann Gee.

Both Gee and Pauli will be leaving in early April, Guris said.

Meanwhile, officials testified, alarming wait lists are stacking up, leaving vulnerable, mentally ill people stuck in places like jail or a hospital emergency room.

Tom Price, the director of the emergency department at Alaska Regional Hospital, testified Monday that his ER has been flooded by people in psychosis, with up to four people coming in per day, either on their own or brought by police.

By law, they are supposed to be sent to a “designated evaluation facility,” where a medical professional is supposed to meet with them and decide whether they meet the legal standard to be forced into a psychiatric hospital.

But because API has a long waiting list, most of those patients have no choice but to wait for days or weeks in an emergency room not designed to care for them. The patients are not free to leave the hospital while they wait, Price said.

While they wait, people are often confined to small ER rooms. They get to talk daily to a social worker located in Utah on a Skype-like apparatus, he said.

As of Wednesday, there were 36 people waiting to get into API, testified Mark Kraft, the director of social work at the hospital. Six were waiting in jail.

And testimony also revealed that an exodus of psychiatrists from API has caused the number of patients the hospital can handle to sink even lower.

In December, the hospital had around 40 patients, Guris testified. By Wednesday, the number had plunged to just 27 of 80 possible beds occupied — the lowest-ever patient census, Kraft testified.

Only 18 of those patients were civilly committed. The rest were criminal defendants ordered to be restored to competency by the court.

Guris said that the low bed availability in December had more to do with nursing staff shortages. Now, it has everything to do with the missing psychiatry staff, Guris said.

API has been trying to recruit psychiatrists for eight months without success, Guris said.

“There’s a national shortage of psychiatrists,” Guris said. “Hiring psychiatrists anywhere in the U.S. is going to be difficult.”

[Q&A with the ‘hospital fixer’ charged with saving the Alaska Psychiatric Institute]

“Wellpath’s team of 40+ dedicated healthcare recruiters is working with API to retain existing psychiatrists and to identify, recruit, and hire qualified professionals to vacant psychiatric positions,” Wellpath senior vice president Jeremy Barr said in an email.

It takes months for an out-of-state psychiatrist to be licensed and credentialed to work in Alaska, Guris said.

What’s going to happen when the last psychiatrist leaves in May? The number of patients API can handle is likely to sink even lower, Kraft said.

An attorney asked: Does Wellpath have a plan?

“I hope so,” he answered.

Alaska Department of Health and Social Services deputy commissioner Albert Wall and a Wellpath executive are scheduled to testify Thursday.

About this Author

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Michelle Theriault Boots is a reporter who covers news and features about life in Alaska.

Comments

ALASKA STATE LEGISLATURE



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NEWSCLIPS FOR CORRECT CARE RECOVERY SOLUTIONS

Correct Care Solutions is a private, for-profit prison healthcare provider based in Nashville, TN. It was formerly a spin-off of Geo Group before being renamed Correct Care. As Correct Care, its two primary owners were Audax Group and Frazier Healthcare Group, two private equity firms. HIG Capital financed and arranged its merger with Correctional Medical Group Companies to form Wellpath in Oct 2018.

[Leading For-Profit Prison And Immigration Detention Medical Company Sued At Least 1,395 Times](#)

-“...The firm, Nashville-based Correct Care Solutions, is one of the country’s biggest private providers of health care to prisons and immigration detention centers. The number of lawsuits contained in the document, not previously disclosed, is many times higher than previously reported.

While the two largest private prison companies, GEO Group and CoreCivic, are often at the center of debates over outsourcing imprisonment and immigrant detention, thousands of other companies like Correct Care Solutions are also involved in this multibillion-dollar industry. These companies are largely unknown to the public and even to some policymakers. Yet the health care companies, especially, can have life-and-death impacts.

A privately held company founded in 2003 and owned by two private equity funds, Correct Care Solutions has annual revenues estimated at \$1.2 billion. It turned over its litigation history of 1,395 cases “only after significant resistance and pursuit in court,” said Darold Killmer, a Denver-based civil rights lawyer who has represented multiple clients who have sued Correct Care Solutions.”

[Inmates with Hepatitis C claim Florida denying medical treatment](#)

“...Billy Morrison was tested positive for HCV while an inmate at Blackwater Correctional Institution. He was originally diagnosed in 1993, but it remained dormant until around 2014, when the disease became more life-threatening, his complaint said.

He was transferred to Graceville Correctional Facility in October 2015 to receive treatment. Both Blackwater and Graceville are private facilities run by the GEO Group, a Florida-based private prison owner.

Correct Care Solutions provided medical services at the time of the complaint. Jorge Luis Alvarez is a medical doctor who worked at Graceville. Gregory Poythress is an advanced registered nurse practitioner at Graceville. For two years they refused to provide DAAs to Morrison, the complaint alleged.

Even though they knew of Morrison's condition, they were "deliberately indifferent to the medical needs of Plaintiff by denying him direct acting antivirals," medicine he was entitled to receive under the Constitution, ADA and Rehab Act."

New Broward jail healthcare provider has grim history of lawsuits, deaths

"...Poor medical care and at least 15 needless deaths at the Broward County Jail since 2010 appear to have caught up with controversial Miami-based Armor Correctional Health Services, which has lost its bid for another multi-million, multi-year contract to provide medical services to county inmates.

But Sheriff Scott Israel's decision this month to bypass low-bidder Armor and deem similarly priced Correct Care Solutions LLC to be the successful bidder may also prove problematic. Correct Care has its own troubling history.

"...Meanwhile, Correct Care has faced multiple accusations of needless death and poor care in other states similar in nature to those that plagued Armor. And in Norfolk, VA, Correct Care is also a focus of a federal grand jury investigation that's examining the company's relationship to the Norfolk Sheriff's Office and former Sheriff Robert J. McCabe.

A subpoena issued last year commanded the Norfolk Sheriff's Office to turn over to the FBI more than a dozen kinds of records dating to 2004 about its dealings with Correct Care, including contracts, bid proposals, records of contract negotiations, memoranda and correspondence. Also sought were records of payments and gifts by Correct Care to McCabe, his campaign and sheriff's employees, including air travel, hotels, condominiums, tickets to sporting events, fishing charters, golf equipment and auto racing schools.

In New York last year, Correct Care was the successful bidder to replace Armor at the Nassau County Jail after Armor got the boot for "placing inmates' health in jeopardy." But within days of winning the bid, the Nassau County Sheriff halted contract negotiations after a New York Civil Liberties Union official came out against Correct Care and county Democratic Party leaders announced that their analysis of Correct Care's litigation record had left them "extremely concerned," Newsday reported. That record included Correct Care as a defendant in more than two dozen federal lawsuits in 15 states connected to inmate deaths, and 145 federal lawsuits involving allegations of negligent inmate health care, the newspaper reported."

Prison Health Care Provider Sued 140 Times Now Blamed for at Least Six Deaths

"...A treatable case of pneumonia turned deadly after medical staff at the Varner state prison refused to treat Lawrence, according to a lawsuit filed last week against the Arkansas Department of Corrections

and the prison's medical provider, Correct Care Solutions which provides mental and physical health care to more than 100 state and federal prisons and 333 jails. The lawsuit came the same week as reports that a county in Georgia ended their contract with Correct Care Solutions following the deaths of five inmates in 75 days.

More than 140 lawsuits have been filed against Correct Care Solutions since 2005, federal court records show."

Dangerous Detention: Treasure Coast mental hospital lacks staff, training, licensing, funding

"...There have been 87 reported batteries since 2007, including one in 2016 that killed a patient. But records and interviews with former staff show attacks have gone unreported.

Correct Care Solutions could curb the violence if it had enough people staffing the hospital, several former employees told TCPalm.

...The Treasure Coast hospital's problems have intensified during Correct Care Solutions' three-year tenure — versus Geo Group's seven — though both companies share many of the same administrators, medical officials and security guards.

Half the fines, a third of the reported assaults and two of the four patient deaths have occurred in the past 3½ years, a TCPalm analysis found.

"The officer-to-inmate ratio ...," former security guard Theresanne Garone said, "if there was a riot, there would be no way that we even could remotely hold that place down."

Mother of 5 who died while detoxing in Orleans jail endured 'difficult times,' family says

"...Hurst is the second person who has died in the New Orleans jail while on detox protocol in less than six months. Dennis Edwards, 41, died Dec. 15 in the jail's medical clinic while on detoxification protocol, the sheriff's office said then. Natalie Henderson, a nurse who was fired from her job at the jail in April, claims in a wrongful termination lawsuit that her supervisors at Correct Care Solutions ignored her complaints about the way Edwards' care was handled the morning he died. She said she asked a supervisor to send Edwards to the hospital, but her advice went unheeded. The coroner's office ruled Edwards died of natural causes from hypertensive cardiovascular disease, an autopsy report shows.

Three former hospital employees accused of beating patient

.. The state attorney's office has charged the three men with one count each of abuse of a disabled adult.

They are accused of "knowingly or willfully abusing a disabled adult by intentionally inflicting physical or psychological injury ... by striking him repeatedly, spraying him with cleaner and kicking him, without causing great bodily harm, permanent disability or permanent disfigurement," the charging document states.

Correct Care Recovery Solutions operates the State Hospital of South Florida. In a statement late Tuesday, a spokesman said the three men hadn't been employed by the company since 2014.

The Florida Department of Children and Families said an adult protective services investigation began the day of the alleged beating and was closed two months later."

"DEATH ON THE WARDS 14 people who didn't have to die in Florida's mental hospitals

"...A highly medicated Luis Santana, 42, died in a scalding bathtub on July 6, 2011, at South Florida State Hospital in Pembroke Pines. When hospital workers found him, they noticed his skin was "sloughing" off his face, chest, abdomen, back, arms and legs.

Santana, a paranoid schizophrenic who was taking five psychiatric medications, had tried to injure himself before, so he was supposed to be checked every 15 minutes. Mental health technician Patricia Bush missed one of the required checks and returned to find Santana floating beneath the running faucet with his mouth open, according to a police report. The water temperature was 118 degrees, leaving second-degree burns all over his body.

Associate Medical Examiner Lance G. Davis ruled that the burns did not kill Santana. He listed the cause of death as "undetermined." Police closed the case.

Meanwhile, officials with the private company that ran the state-funded mental hospital at the time did not disclose Santana's death to the Department of Children and Families abuse hotline, as required. "Facility had not reported death to DCF because they believed, once the ME stated that the resident had not drowned, that the death was due to cardiac problems," the DCF report states. Bush was fired for inadequate supervision. Officials with Correct Care Recovery Solutions said the hospital has installed hot water monitoring equipment."

Wellpath testimony reveals new CEO, but no plan for evaluation backlog at API



By Grant Robinson | Posted: Tue 5:14 PM, Mar 26, 2019

ANCHORAGE, Alaska (KTUU) — In an Anchorage courtroom Tuesday morning, a Wellpath company executive overseeing the company's takeover of the Alaska Psychiatric Institute took the stand, detailing the company's plan to bring the hospital back to full capacity and revealing the hospital's next CEO. But the executive could not provide a plan for handling a backlog of people awaiting a court ordered psychiatric evaluation.

The testimony came on the fifth day of evidentiary hearings in a lawsuit against the State of Alaska for detaining people in jails and emergency rooms while awaiting psychiatric evaluation despite having not been charged with or convicted of a crime.

Since early February, Wellpath Senior Vice President for Hospitals George Gintoli has been overseeing the transition at API, implementing new management, policies and training at the institute.

In his testimony on Tuesday, Gintoli described the changes that have already been implemented at API since Wellpath took over management at the hospital.

Gintoli says Wellpath has hired two full time and one part time psychiatrist that will start in early April. Gintoli also testified that two of the three psychiatrists who announced plans to leave the institution last week were now considering staying on board.

Gintoli also testified that Matt Dammeyer will be API's new CEO. Dammeyer formerly worked as Chief Operating Officer at Central Peninsula Hospital in Soldotna.

There are currently only around 20 patients at the institute. Wellpath's original contract obligates the company to return API to operating at its 80 bed capacity by July 1. Gintoli testified that a modified contract is being worked on, and the new deadline for returning API to full capacity would be in September.

When Judge William Morse asked how Wellpath plans to handle patients who are waiting for psychiatric evaluation, Gintoli couldn't provide details of a plan.

"One of API's obligations is to provide evaluations to people who are subject to a court order for that evaluation, and because bed spaces are roughly 19 for those folks, people are languishing in emergency rooms and Department of Corrections facilities. Does Wellpath have any plan to address those individuals before full capacity is reached?" Morse asked.

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Gintoli said that he believes that in conjunction with the state, Wellpath will have a plan before then, but there have been no discussions on it.

After Gintoli's testimony, the state called one more witness.

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Bad Press and Lawsuits Are No Obstacle to a \$610 Million Prison Loan

By [Davide Scigliuzzo](#), [Kelsey Butler](#), and [Sally Bakewell](#)

September 21, 2018, 3:00 AM AKDT

► [HIG borrowing to merge prison and jail health-care providers](#)

► [Correct Care seeking leveraged loan to back HIG's July buyout](#)

[Correct Care Solutions](#) operates in an industry that lots of people love to hate.

It provides health care to prisons and jails, a sector that's subject to frequent litigation and often critical scrutiny from public officials and inmate-advocate groups.

Now, along with that baggage, it wants a loan carrying risky terms -- and Wall Street is happy to provide it. While a few investors balked, Correct Care has won enough lender support for \$610 million in leveraged loans backing its buyout by private equity firm [HIG Capital LLC](#), according to people familiar with the matter.

The deal's expected success shows again how lenders, flush with money, are accepting aggressively structured deals -- even from risky borrowers -- because there aren't enough higher yielding assets to meet rising demand. That's even though one of the year's biggest [leveraged-loan](#) deals was inked this week and new loans are on track for a record-setting year, according to data compiled by Bloomberg.

Biggest Player

HIG agreed to buy Correct Care Solutions LLC in July to merge it with [Correctional Medical Group Cos.](#), a regional rival already in its portfolio. The combined company is expected to become the biggest player in the correctional health-care sector in the U.S., according to Moody's Investor Service.

In response to a request for comment, a Correct Care representative referred to the firm's annual combined client retention rate of 97 percent, citing it as a key element of each company's organic growth that surpassed levels in the market. Miami-based HIG didn't return an email and a phone call seeking comment. Credit Suisse Group AG and Jefferies, the two main banks arranging the financing, declined to comment.

Correct Care, based in Nashville, Tennessee, now gets nearly half of its revenue from local detention centers, which hold inmates awaiting trial or serving short sentences, according to S&P Global Ratings. Another third is from state and federal institutions holding inmates on longer sentences.

Boosting Debt

Investors who signed on to the loan say the merger will help the company gain a bigger footprint into the largely untapped behavioral health segment, which includes providing mental illness and addiction services, according to people familiar with the matter.

Yet the financing -- from a combination of existing and new creditors -- would boost Correct Care's debt, relative to earnings, to a high level, according to ratings agencies. Leverage for the combined company will balloon to about 10.6

times this year before falling to about 7.5 times in 2020, according to S&P. Deals that go above 6 times leverage are generally considered aggressive.

One investor, who asked not to be identified, said he was put off by those financial terms as well as the negative publicity the company has received because of lawsuits. There have been hundreds of suits involving Correct Care or its affiliates in the past five years, according to data compiled by Bloomberg. Complaints against the company include prisoner conditions, medical malpractice and wrongful death.

Prison Profit

Companies that seek to profit from prisons have found themselves in hot water before.

Securus Technologies Inc. and Global Tel*Link Corp., two leading providers of phone services to detention centers, faced serious threats to their business models in 2015, when the U.S. Federal Communications Commission imposed caps on the price they could charge inmates for calls.

Prison health-care companies have their own problems, including significant delays in care because of too few medical staff, said Bianca Tylek, founder of Corrections Accountability Project, a nonprofit opposed to privatization in the criminal justice system.

"As with all monopoly concerns," she added, "the bigger these companies get, the more problematic they become and largely because they're serving a captive market, literally."

In this article

0129892D	CORRECT CARE SOLUTIONS LLC	Private Company
1309196D	CARE SOLUTIONS	Private Company
61128Z	HIG CAPITAL LLC	Private Company
CSGN	CREDIT SUISS-REG	11.39 CHF ▼ -0.08 -0.65%
MCO	MOODY'S CORP	179.40 USD ▲ +1.56 +0.88%

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CORRECTIONAL MEDICAL GROUP COMPANIES (AND SUBSIDIARIES) NEWSCLIPS

Correctional Medical Group Companies was founded in 1983 and is a for-profit healthcare provider for prisons and correctional facilities. It's component corporations included California Forensic Medical Group, Southwest Correctional Medical Group, Southeast Correctional Medical Group, Midwest Correctional Medical Group and Northwest Correctional Medical Group. In 2012, it was bought by HIG Capital and in 2018 merged with Correct Care Solutions to form Wellpath.

California for-profit company faces allegations inadequate inmate care

"...The company responsible for the jail's health care, California Forensic Medical Group, was accused by Hatfield's family of negligence in his death and settled the case for an undisclosed amount. It has faced allegations that it failed to provide proper care in dozens of U.S. District Court cases over the last decade.

CFMG is the state's largest for-profit correctional health care company, delivering medical service in 27 counties, including El Dorado, Placer and Yolo. The company also provides jail mental health service in 20 counties.

"...At least three county grand juries have criticized the company's role in inmate deaths. Some investigations have been spurred by a spike in deaths – four people in Sonoma County in an 11-month period ending in 2007 and four people in nine months in Santa Cruz County after CFMG took over health care in 2012."

Alameda County May Switch New Health Care Provider for Jails

"...Correctional Medical Group Companies is the parent company of California Forensic Medical Group, which provides health care for correctional facilities in 27 counties in the state.

The company is facing a class-action lawsuit in Monterey County over medical and mental health care and has been sued by inmates across California for substandard care.

Civil rights attorneys and inmate advocates familiar with the company said it has similar shortcomings when it comes to screening inmates for mental health and substance abuse issues.

"Corizon was pretty bad, so one would hope that another company would be better. It's just that the statistics for CFMG around the state are pretty bad as well," said Michael Haddad, a civil rights attorney who has filed numerous lawsuits against the company."

Buncombe Jail Death Lawsuit Alleges 'wanton, reckless disregard' for safety

"...The lawsuit filed in Buncombe County Superior Court names Sheriff Van Duncan, former Capt. Charles J. Wilhelm, five jailers and a nurse, Tina Cox Miller, as well as her company, Southeast Correctional Medical Group. The insurer for the Sheriff's Office, Western Surety Co., is also named as a defendant.

Michele Quantele Smiley, a 34-year-old mother of six, died Oct. 6, 2017, after being booked into the county jail on a probation violation. The lawsuit, as well as two witnesses the Citizen Times previously interviewed, state Smiley informed jailers she had ingested "a lot" of methamphetamine to avoid prosecution for possession of the powerful, illegal stimulant.

A state report later found deficiencies in the jail's handling of Smiley's case, including a failure to check on her frequently enough. The Sheriff's Office administers the county jail."

County settles inmate death claim for \$50k

"...The U.S. District Court for the Western District of Arkansas plans on holding a hearing to consider the default judgment it plans on entering against the county's former inmate health care contractor, Southwest Correctional Medical Group. Toby Carter sued Southwest and jail staff last year, alleging that his leg was amputated as a result of the jail and Southwest denying him access to the charger for his battery-operated wound vacuum.

The complaint he filed in July said he suffered a compound fracture to his ankle and leg prior to his October 2016 intake at the jail.

U.S. District Judge Susan O. Hickey directed the court's clerk to enter a default against Southwest in March. Her order said the company failed to respond to the complaint despite being served with a summons through its registered agent in July and at the jail in November. The order said a damages hearing will be held at a later date."

Settlement Reached in Wrongful Death Lawsuit Against County of Monterey, California Forensic Medical Group, and Members of Law Enforcement

"...Larra Ann Gillis died in the hospital after having spent roughly 28 hours in police custody without receiving proper medical treatment."

A lawsuit against the Monterey County Jail is about to get bigger – here's a look at what the Public Defender and the ACLU say is wrong with medical care at the facility.

"...It's a horror-show list of allegations being claimed. In one case, the suit alleges, the jail deprived a

diabetic prisoner of insulin. In other cases, jail doctors delayed referring inmates to specialists. In another, an inmate was kept in a cell and not given food for 38 hours.

"My brother was not given a death sentence by the courts," Amy says. "This jail staff sentenced him to death."

Lawsuit: Inmate Denied Meds, Had 200 seizures in Douglas County Jail

"A federal lawsuit filed on behalf of a man who suffered numerous seizures during a twenty-day stay at the Douglas County jail last year claims that jail officials "purposefully destroyed" video evidence in the case — and that the facility's private, for-profit medical provider has a pattern of denying treatment and resisting sending inmates to hospitals, even in life-threatening emergencies.

Kevin Hartwell, 55, was arrested and taken to the Douglas County jail on November 10, 2016, to await trial on a misdemeanor domestic-violence charge of obstructing use of a telephone. When he left in the wee hours of November 30, it was in an ambulance bound for the emergency room at Castle Rock Adventist Hospital, after being in an almost constant state of seizure for the previous eight hours — more than 200 seizures captured on a surveillance camera during that period, according to the complaint.

Hartwell had a broken hand when he arrived at the jail. Staff were also informed that he had diabetes, high blood pressure, and a seizure disorder that he'd been successfully controlling with medications taken three or four times a day. Over the next few days, Hartwell's blood sugar and blood pressure levels fluctuated between dangerous extremes. The lawsuit claims that a doctor who consulted by telephone and other members of the jail's medical staff, all employees of Southwest Correctional Medical Group, were slow to correct dosages and inadequately monitored his condition; Hartwell was also denied access to his seizure medication."

Spies Family Awarded More Than \$1 Million For Wrongful Death

"El Dorado County and California Forensic Medical Group will pay more than \$1 million to settle a wrongful death lawsuit for the death of Lawrence "Jake" Spies Jr., who died while an inmate in custody at the Placerville jail El Dorado County Jail in 2015.

The settlement calls for El Dorado County to pay \$500,000 and CFMG to pay \$550,000, according to court documents."

Former Santa Rita Inmate Sues Alameda County For Barbaric Treatment During Birth

"A woman who says she gave birth in solitary confinement in the Santa Rita Jail last year has sued Alameda County and its health care provider for inmates.

The suit, filed in U.S. District Court this morning, accuses the Alameda County Sheriff's Office of "barbaric conduct" by forcing Candace Steel to give birth alone in a dirty, concrete cell with no blankets or towels a few days after she was booked into the Dublin jail.

Alameda County is already facing a class action suit accusing the sheriff's office and its private medical provider, California Forensic Medical Group (CFMG), of providing inadequate care to women in their custody."

County Reaches \$2 million settlement in federal lawsuit over 2015 jail suicide

"The county of Lake has reached a \$2 million settlement in a federal lawsuit filed by the son of a woman who died by suicide in the Lake County Jail in 2015.

The case involves the in-custody death of Elizabeth Dara Gaunt, 56, of Santa Rosa.

In the settlement, the county has agreed to pay \$2 million to Gaunt's son, Dane Shikman, while denying allegations of wrongdoing, according to case documents. The county's settlement payment will be paid by its insurance.

"I believe it to be the highest sum ever recovered in the state of California involving the suicide of an inmate," said attorney Michael D. Green of the Santa Rosa law firm Abbey, Weitzenberg, Warren & Emery.

"It was just a fairly egregious case," he said.

He said a settlement with the county's private jail medical provider – identified in case documents as California Forensic Medical Group – is confidential. Neither Green nor Shikman could discuss it due to terms of that settlement."

ANCHORAGE DAILY NEWS

Opinions

State shouldn't outsource Alaska Psychiatric Institute management to global private equity firm

✍ Author: **Jeremy Mohler** | Opinion ⓘ Updated: March 18 📅 Published March 18



The Alaska Psychiatric Institute, photographed Wednesday, Jan. 30, 2019. (Loren Holmes / ADN)

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Gov. Mike Dunleavy's decision to privatize the Alaska Psychiatric Institute came almost 10 years to the day after an eerily similar deal was made in Chicago — one that continues to haunt the Windy City.

In February of 2009, Chicago inked a contract with private investors, including JPMorgan Chase and from as far away as Abu Dhabi, not for managing a psychiatric hospital but for operating parking meters. The deal was championed by then-Mayor Richard M. Daley, who announced it publicly before City Council members knew the details.

Once the dust settled, Chicagoans quickly learned the bad news. Parking rates quadrupled within the first year of the contract, which lasts until 2083. The city's inspector general eventually found that taxpayers lost at least \$1 billion in the deal.

The Dunleavy administration's rushed attempt to privatize Alaska's only psychiatric hospital looks just as misguided and has the same air of deception.

There's no denying that services at Alaska Psychiatric Institute need to be improved. But is privatization the right tool for the job?

The answer is: No. In fact, outsourcing would likely lead to worse patient outcomes, less transparency into an already struggling operation and a higher cost for taxpayers.

Providing psychiatric care is a far cry from collecting parking fees, but the similarities between the two deals are uncanny.

There's the lack of public input. Chicago's City Council had two days to read and evaluate the complex contract's details before voting on it. The Dunleavy administration declared an emergency to ram through a no-bid contract with few specifics. Before July 1, a decision will be made whether to extend the contract for five years based on criteria that haven't been made public.

There's the wheeling and dealing with global financiers. In the midst of the 2008 recession, Chicago signed a deal with some of the very banks that had just crashed the economy. Dunleavy's contractor, Wellpath, is the product of a recent merger between two correctional health care companies, one of them—Correct Care Solutions—a former subsidiary of the private prison corporation GEO Group.

Correct Care Solutions has a disturbing track record littered with medical malpractice and wrongful death lawsuits. According to a Department of Homeland Security watchdog report, it was sued a staggering 1,395 times in federal courts in the decade prior to merging.

Wellpath itself is owned by a global private equity firm based in Miami that also owns companies producing everything from dog food to gin. Doing business with contractors is one thing, but private equity ramps up the pressure to put profits over service quality.

Like when water and sewer rates went up 28 percent after a New Jersey town leased its municipal utility authority to a private equity firm. Or when an ambulance company owned by private equity investors sent a bill for hundreds of dollars to an infant girl born in one of its ambulances, threatening her with the possibility of a bad credit report.

There's the faulty math. Last year, Chicago even had to pay investors an extra \$20 million to make up for lost revenue. Privatizing the Alaska Psychiatric Institute will likely not save the state money and may end up actually taxpayers costing more.

That's what a third-party consultant found in 2017. "Cost-benefit analysis revealed that (privatization would fail) to produce cost savings, making it infeasible on fiscal grounds," the consultant reported. "Our findings demonstrate that continued state management is not only the most advantageous route for generating overall cost savings, but that it also avoids many of the risks involved in contracting out the management of critical public infrastructure."

But most significantly, there's the shunning of responsibility. Instead of doing the dirty work of leading Chicago through a tough time, the Daley administration signed a Band-Aid contract that ended up being a horrendous deal. Gov. Dunleavy appears to be doing the same.

Yes, the government should lean on the private sector for certain tasks. It probably doesn't make sense for Alaska's Office of Information Technology to manufacture its own computers.

But when it comes to caring for human beings, particularly the most vulnerable, privatization is not mere negligence — it's cruelty.

The Alaska Psychiatric Institute has already suffered through years of underfunding and understaffing. It needs care and public investment, not more cruelty at the hands of someone else thousands of miles away.

Jeremy Mohler is communications director of *In the Public Interest*, a national nonprofit that studies public goods and services, and his writing has appeared in the *Washington Post*, *USA Today*, and other publications.

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