

CCHR Says For-Profit Psychiatric Hospitals Need Stronger Penalties for Abuses and Deaths

CCHR warns despite \$485M jury award to a sexually abused foster child, poor oversight in the behavioral healthcare system lets facilities get away with abuse

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/EINPresswire.com/ -- Incidents of abuse against both patients and staff are prevalent in America's behavioral-psychiatric treatment facilities. [Citizens Commission on Human Rights \(CCHR\) International](#)

says too often the penalties for patient violations and fraud are so meager that they fail to curb such abuse. However, CCHR says a recent \$485 million jury verdict against a giant in America's behavioral treatment system should be an example of the stiffer penalties needed in psychiatric hospitals where serious patient abuses have been documented.



The inadequate penalties imposed on the multi-billion dollar for-profit behavioral companies, as well as the treating psychiatrists and staff, have proven ineffective in deterring abuses.

The jury verdict was in relation to an eight-year-old girl who was repeatedly sexually abused in a behavioral hospital chain's New Mexico's treatment foster care system. It involved a now-closed psychiatric center that had a history of egregious abuse allegations, including failing to protect patients from physical and sexual abuse from its workers and other patients, multiple lawsuits, and losing certification from state regulators. The facility staff had placed the child in the care of a foster care parent who was a known sexual predator.[1]

Since 2015, CCHR has filed tens of thousands of complaints about the psychiatric-behavioral industry abuse with state legislators, including those in New Mexico. In a 2019 article, titled "[A-Z Update on For-Profit Psychiatric Industry Abuse](#)," CCHR exposed the New Mexico facility where the 8-year-old girl was later abused and is one of the numerous examples of "business as usual" in the for-profit sector of behavioral health. Allegations persist of beating, bullying, fraud, mistreatment, negligence, physical assault, deaths, and prioritizing profits over the care and rights of patients.[2]



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Jan Eastgate, President CCHR International

However, the inadequate penalties imposed on the multi-billion dollar for-profit companies, as well as the treating psychiatrists and staff, have proven ineffective in deterring abuses.

In June 2023, a federal workplace safety investigation found that a psychiatric facility in Jacksonville, Florida, had failed to improve worker safety procedures, resulting in dozens of incidents involving workers being assaulted. The U.S. Department of Labor's Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) reported 182 alleged incidents in 2022, nearly 70% of which required police response in a

six-month period, and 10 alleged violent incidents in less than two months in late 2022.[3] OSHA said the findings of its investigation were “shocking.”[4]

Yet the “shocking” findings amounted to a fine of only \$15,625 despite the same facility and another in Florida owned by the same company having received dozens of calls from patients who said they were held longer than medically necessary to milk their insurance.[5] In 2016, the same company closed another of its Florida behavioral residential facilities after patient abuse allegations.[6] It further paid \$122 million to settle federal investigations into its practices. The government’s long-running investigation had stemmed from at least 18 whistleblower lawsuits.[7]

CCHR is critical of how behavioral industry companies are allowed to enter into non-prosecutable settlements and Correction Plans and/or Corporate Integrity Agreements (CIAs) with government agencies when exposed for abuse, only to become repeat offenders without further action.[8] An immediate overhaul of the industry is necessary, it says, to strengthen penalties for patient violations and fraud, including criminal prosecutions and the closure of offending hospitals.

As the Judge David L. Bazelon Center noted, the company’s “facilities continue to commit the same violations again and again,” and their “record of repeat violations seems even more alarming when considered in light of some of the company’s statements and its increasing role in our mental healthcare system.” Further, “Federal and state agencies require ‘plan of correction’ after ‘plan of correction’ to no avail” and same violations are committed “again and again.”[9]

In 2019, two Utah psych facilities owned by a third for-profit behavioral hospital company closed following the Utah Department of Human Services finding numerous claims of sexual assault, violence, and neglect.[10] Similar abuses continued to be exposed in 2023 when a counselor working at a residential behavioral facility owned by the same company in Utah was arrested and pleaded guilty to forcible sexual abuse and sexual exploitation of a minor. He was sentenced to serve between 1-15 years in Utah State Prison.[11]

Jan Eastgate, president of CCHR sums up the lack of effective action that contributes to ongoing patient harm: "The behavioral-psychiatric for-profit hospital system is full of graft, greed, cruelty, and appalling levels of abuse—'business as usual' masked as mental health care. Reform of the system must be more than lip service and include commensurate penalties to fit the crime and to act as a warning against further patient harm being committed."

[Read full article here.](#)

[1] https://www.nashvillepost.com/acadia-facility-closes-amid-abuse-allegations/article_707ab44b-adbf-5af8-bf6a-5b48ac61127d.html

[2] <https://www.cchrint.org/2019/04/26/a-z-update-on-for-profit-psychiatric-industry-abuse/>

[3] <https://www.firstcoastnews.com/article/news/local/hundreds-of-violent-incidents-jacksonville-health-facility/77-6cc130e8-4f68-4fcf-8ef2-591b5a3adef5>

[4] <https://www.osha.gov/news/newsreleases/region4/06152023>

[5] [https://www.cchrint.org/2017/03/01/mental-health-watchdog-supports-state-authorities-refusing-to-allow-uhs-psych-chain-to-open-facilities/;](https://www.cchrint.org/2017/03/01/mental-health-watchdog-supports-state-authorities-refusing-to-allow-uhs-psych-chain-to-open-facilities/)
<http://www.actionnewsjax.com/news/local/most-duval-county-mental-health-patients-dont-get-hearings-required-by-law/491955592>

[6] <https://www.cchrint.org/2016/04/04/concerns-increase-about-abuses-at-uhs-behavioral-centers/> citing <http://www.nbcnews.com/news/us-news/national-deaf-academy-hit-abuse-allegations-closing-n497516>.

[7] <https://www.jdsupra.com/legalnews/universal-health-agrees-to-pay-122-57061/>

[8] https://www.cchrint.org/2017/03/01/mental-health-watchdog-supports-state-authorities-refusing-to-allow-uhs-psych-chain-to-open-facilities/#_edn12

[9] [https://www.cchrint.org/2020/10/27/uhs-multiple-child-sexual-abuse-charges-and-127m-lawsuit/;](https://www.cchrint.org/2020/10/27/uhs-multiple-child-sexual-abuse-charges-and-127m-lawsuit/) <https://www.scotusblog.com/wp-content/uploads/2016/03/15-7bsacJudgeDavidL.BazelonCenterForMentalHealthLaw.pdf>, p. 4

[10] <https://www.10tv.com/article/news/investigations/10-investigates/sequel-pomegranate-closes-advocates-paris-hilton-call-change-troubled-teen-industry/530-540a17cc-22fb-42e7-9227-0d529507b04c>

[11] <https://www.stgeorgeutah.com/news/archive/2023/06/23/cgb-sex-offender-working-with-troubled-teens-in-washington-county-arrested-for-failure-to-register/>

Amber Rauscher
Citizens Commission on Human Rights
+1 323-467-4242

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