

# Child Sexual Abuse Lawsuit Filed Against Heartland Behavioral Health Services and Universal Health Services in Missouri

*Petition alleges child patients were sexually abused while receiving treatment and seeks accountability from facility operators and corporate leadership.*

SAINT LOUIS, MO, UNITED STATES, June 25, 2026 /EINPresswire.com/ -- Kayla Ferrel Onder, founder of Kayla's Survivors and a nationally recognized [sexual abuse attorney](#), has filed a [child sexual abuse lawsuit](#) against Heartland Behavioral Health Services, Universal Health Services, Inc. (UHS), and UHS of Delaware, Inc., alleging multiple children were sexually abused while receiving inpatient behavioral health treatment at the Missouri facility.

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*Kayla Ferrel Onder, founder and lead attorney of Kayla's Survivors*

The lawsuit, filed in Vernon County Circuit Court, alleges that vulnerable child patients were sexually abused by individuals entrusted with their care while undergoing treatment at Heartland Behavioral Health Services in Nevada, Missouri. The petition further alleges that the facility and its corporate operators failed to implement and enforce safeguards designed to protect children from sexual abuse and sexual assault.

According to the filing, one plaintiff alleges repeated sexual abuse by multiple staff members during separate admissions between 2017 and 2021. A second plaintiff alleges sexual abuse by a staff member while receiving treatment at the facility at age 10 in 2025. A third plaintiff alleges a sexual assault occurred during a facility-sponsored volunteer activity while under the supervision of Heartland staff.

The lawsuit alleges Heartland Behavioral Health Services and Universal Health Services failed to provide a safe environment for children receiving mental health treatment and failed to adequately supervise staff and patients. The petition further alleges failures involving employee screening, hiring, training, staffing, monitoring, and the investigation of sexual abuse complaints.

"When families place a child in a behavioral health facility, they are trusting that institution to

provide care, protection, and healing," said Kayla Ferrel Onder. "The allegations in this lawsuit describe children who were instead exposed to sexual abuse while receiving mental health treatment. Every child deserves safety and every family deserves accountability."

Behavioral health facilities, psychiatric hospitals, residential treatment centers, and inpatient mental health programs have a legal duty to protect children from sexual abuse, sexual assault, and exploitation. When facilities fail to implement appropriate safeguards, supervise staff, investigate complaints, or protect vulnerable patients, survivors may have legal rights.

The lawsuit further alleges that Universal Health Services exercised substantial control over facility operations, staffing, training, risk management, and patient safety practices while profiting from the care provided at the facility.

Kayla's Survivors represents survivors of childhood sexual abuse, institutional sexual abuse, behavioral health facility abuse, psychiatric hospital abuse, school abuse, church abuse, and other forms of sexual misconduct nationwide. Through a network of attorneys and advocates, the organization helps survivors understand their legal options and pursue accountability against both perpetrators and the institutions that enabled abuse.

"Sexual abuse in treatment facilities often remains hidden because children are among the most vulnerable members of our society," Onder said. "Our goal is to help survivors find their voice, understand their rights, and hold institutions accountable when they fail to protect those in their care."

The plaintiffs are seeking compensatory damages, punitive damages, and a jury trial.

A copy of the petition filed in John Doe #1, Jane Doe #1, and John Doe #2 v. Great Plains Hospital, Inc. d/b/a Heartland Behavioral Health Services, Universal Health Services, Inc., and UHS of Delaware, Inc., Case No. 26VE-CV00452, is available upon request. Individuals who experienced sexual abuse at a behavioral health facility, psychiatric hospital, residential treatment center, or other institution may contact Kayla's Survivors for a confidential consultation regarding their legal rights.

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