VERDICTS & SETTLEMENTS

Prisoner's untreated addiction leads to life-threatening condition

$10 MILLION SETTLEMENT

Action: Verdict

Date: July 16, 2025

Date of incident: June 1, 2020

Nature of claim:
Medical malpractice

Injuries alleged:
Untreated benzodiazepine withdrawal leading to a withdrawal-induced stroke and brain damage

Amount: $10 million

Name of case: Christopher Williamson v. Southern Health Partners Inc. and Sara Thacker, NP

Case number:
2021-CP-45-00389

Court: Williamsburg County

Tried before: Jury

Name of judge: R. Kirk Griffin

Name of mediator: Karl Folkens.

Demand: Withheld

Highest offer: Withheld

Most helpful experts: Edward C. O'Bryan III, M.D., correctional medicine; Marshall White, M.D., neurologist; Christine Holmstedt, D.O., neurologist; Oliver Wood, Ph.D., economist

Attorneys: James B. Moore III and Scott C. Evans, of Evans Moore, Georgetown, and James Ervin of Ervin Law, Columbia (for the plaintiffs); James G. Long III and Amelia S. Waring, of Maynard Nexsen, Columbia

Insurance carrier: Withheld

The plaintiff was able to care for himself when he was jailed at the Williamsburg County Detention Center. While there, he suffered untreated benzodiazepine withdrawal, leading to a withdrawal-induced stroke that caused weakness and incontinence. He remained immobilized on his cell floor for nine days without adequate medical care or assistance. Upon hospital transfer, he was diagnosed with a life-threatening Stage IV pressure ulcer on his sacrum due to prolonged immobility and alleged medical neglect while detained.

Of the $10 million verdict, $700,000 was in economic damages and $9.3 million was in noneconomic damages. Ninety percent of the fault was attributed to Southern Health Partners Inc. and 10% to Sara Thacker, a nurse practitioner, both of whom were determined to be grossly negligent by the jury.

The case was settled post-trial for a confidential amount with the assistance of a mediator.