

Kline, Inscho file two lawsuits against prison

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Lehigh County Prison sued for alleged wrongful deaths of two inmates

Two separate wrongful death lawsuits were filed against Lehigh County Prison in the last month stemming from inmates who died while serving time.

The suits were filed by the families of David Campbell, 25, of Allentown, who died after a struggle with guards in October 2011, and Travis Magditch, 27, of Fountain Hill, who was found dead in his cell in January 2012.

Campbell's lawsuit claims he was stripped naked, pepper sprayed, assaulted and placed into a restraint chair by corrections officers before he succumbed to his injuries.

The suit filed for Magditch alleges the prison is liable for his death because he was not given an inhaler even though a prison health screening identified him as asthmatic.

Ed Sweeney, Lehigh County director of corrections, did not comment on the lawsuits except to refer to news releases issued by the prison shortly after the inmates' deaths.

The prison has claimed proper protocol was followed in restraining Campbell, and that he had no obvious injuries after the struggle, nor was he being treated for any prior serious health condition.

In the news release first released shortly after Magditch's death, the prison said he "did not appear to have any significant medical ailment."

Campbell and Magditch were among four inmates who died in unrelated incidents at the prison over a six-month period.

Andrew Czonstka, 25, of Slatington, hanged himself in his cell on Jan. 1, 2012. Tyquann McCord, 32, of Allentown, died of natural causes in his cell Aug. 17, 2011.

Magditch was found unresponsive under the bed sheets in his cell on Jan. 5, 2012, after a corrections officer, believing him to be asleep, attempted to wake him.

Magditch, who had been arrested Jan. 3 for illegal possession of heroin, was asthmatic and had a prescription for a rescue inhaler when attacks occurred. The lawsuit alleges the prison did not give him one.

Magditch called out from his cell for help the night before his death, but nobody from the prison responded to him, according to the suit.

Prison officials previously said Campbell died following a struggle with a guard after he was being transferred to a suicide prevention cell for special monitoring due to "bizarre behavior."

The lawsuit says after Campbell was stripped naked, he refused to change into a special smock intended to prevent inmates from hanging themselves with their clothing.

Prison officials said he became "extremely combative with staff" and, according to the lawsuit, Campbell told the officers he was hearing voices.

Campbell was restrained by as many as eight guards, including one who "gave multiple knee strikes" as he was being held face-down on the floor, according to the lawsuit.

The suit also claims a prison official turned off the security camera that was recording the incident.

Campbell was awaiting trial on charges he kidnapped and assaulted his girlfriend.