

Lawsuit filed in jail death

Family says rights violated

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CAMDEN - The family of a Cherry Hill man killed in Camden County Jail filed a federal lawsuit Wednesday, charging county correctional officials with "reckless and deliberate indifference" in his death.

The suit charges that Joel Seidel's constitutional rights to medical care, due process and to be free from cruel and unusual punishment were violated while the former stockbroker was in custody.

The lawsuit was filed in U.S. District Court on behalf of Seidel's daughters, Sharon Clark and Devra Seidel, co-administrators of his estate.

"This tragedy was preventable and we intend to prove that the reckless and deliberate indifference of the prison guards and officials led to the death of Mr. Seidel," said [Tom Kline](#), of Kline & Specter of Cherry Hill, attorney for the Seidel daughters.

County officials had not been served with the lawsuit late Wednesday and because of that were unable to comment, according to a spokesman.

The suit alleges "negligent, reckless, intentional, wrongful, deliberately indifferent and unlawful conduct" on the part of prison officials.

The suit cites overcrowding at the prison in general and the failure to move Seidel to a hospital, psychiatric facility or his own cell and failure to provide adequate observation.

The suit names as defendants the Camden County Jail, Camden County Department of Corrections and Camden County; and Prison Health Services Inc. and Steininger Behavioral Care Services, both of which had contracts to provide services to inmates.

Also named as defendants are correctional officers James Foster, James McIntyre and Dorothy Williams; Warden Eric Taylor; and deputy county administrator and former Warden David Owens.

Seidel, a frail man incarcerated for violating a restraining order, was placed in the same psychiatric unit cell with Marvin Lister, 35.

Lister, an inmate accused of raping a psychiatric patient, attacked Seidel on Jan. 27, body-slammng him more than 100 times when the pair were left alone, authorities have said. The suit also alleges Lister threatened a cellmate just three days before Seidel was placed in the same cell with Lister.

That inmate was so frightened by the threats that he reported them to jail officials and was removed from Lister's cell and replaced by Seidel, the suit says.

Soon after Seidel was placed in the cell with Lister, he was beaten to death, authorities have said.

Lister was originally charged in Seidel's death but the case has been put on hold while authorities determine Lister's competence.

The Camden County Prosecutor's office launched a criminal probe into whether records that track how many times guards patrolled past jail cells were falsified.

Earlier this month, the prosecutor's office decided not to file criminal charges against any jail employee in connection with Seidel's death.

The results of a federal review of conditions at the jail by the U.S. Justice Department recommended the facility study jail population, staffing and consider self-imposing a cap on inmates.

Two other studies of conditions are ongoing.

Former state Human Services Commissioner William Waldman is studying how mentally ill inmates are treated at the jail.

Another federal consultant is studying the relationship between the courts and the issues that exist at the jail.

County officials say the results of both studies are expected in the coming weeks.

"There is a lot of grief and anguish over Joel Seidel's death. It is important to them that the truth be learned as to why their father died," said Kline.

"This was a horrible, preventable tragedy which was the result of the deliberate indifference of a number of individuals and Camden County," Kline added.