



U.S.

Prison Health Provider Agrees to Changes in California

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SAN FRANCISCO — One of the largest U.S. for-profit prison healthcare providers has agreed to change how it staffs California jails, part of a settlement announced on Tuesday that ends a wrongful death lawsuit against the company.

Corizon Health, a privately-held firm which services over 345,000 inmates in 27 states, was sued in 2011 after an inmate in Alameda County, Calif. outside San Francisco died in jail. The inmate's family accused Corizon of failing to properly diagnose the inmate, who suffered from alcohol withdrawal and was allegedly beaten by guards.

The quality of prisoner healthcare has long been an issue in the most populous U.S. state. California's statewide prison health system has been run by a court appointed receiver for several years, and complaints about unsafe conditions in county jails are also common.

As part of the Corizon settlement announced on Tuesday, the company will stop using licensed vocational nurses to do the work of registered nurses, according to attorneys for the inmate's family. For every LVN that did the work of an RN, Corizon saved 35 percent in costs, attorneys Michael Haddad and Julia Sherwin said in a statement.

The settlement currently impacts Corizon contracts in four California counties, though the company intends to grow in the state, the attorneys said.

Corizon and Alameda County also agreed to pay \$8.3 million, which the attorneys called the largest single wrongful death settlement in state history.

Representatives for Corizon and Alameda County could not immediately be reached for comment.

(Reporting by Dan Levine; editing by Andrew Hay)

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