

# Inmate advocate loses job

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— LEWISBURG -- A cut in funding stemming from investment losses has forced the elimination of the Lewisburg Prison Project attorney position.

Cheryl Humes had been serving as an advocate on behalf of inmates throughout Central Pennsylvania, organization officials said. She has been laid off from the job she held for two years and in which she served 11 state institutions, 33 county jails and six federal prisons in Central Pennsylvania.

The Lewisburg office still employs paralegal Dave Sprout and a secretary and will continue to address complaints and concerns from inmates.

Humes said the nonprofit inmate advocacy group -- that has been operating in Pennsylvania for 25 years -- will also still serve the legal needs of the prison population with attorneys from Philadelphia and Pittsburgh.

The Lewisburg Prison Project works in conjunction with the Pennsylvania Institutional Law Project.

"It's definitely a loss," executive director Angus Love said Thursday of the elimination of the attorney and a paralegal position in Pittsburgh.

The positions were cut due to a \$178,000 loss in interest on its lawyers' trust-bearing accounts, which is the primary funding for legal aid to the poor, he said.

Love said the organization still has four attorneys on staff, three in Philadelphia and one in Pittsburgh, who will pick up the pending cases Humes was working on.

One of the cases is a class-action lawsuit filed in federal court earlier this year by 12 Northumberland County Prison inmates alleging the Sunbury jail is unsafe and they are provided poor medical care and unequal treatment.