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



## Prison, medical firm acknowledge investigation of former employees' allegations

BY JUSTIN STRAWSER (STAFF WRITER JUSTIN\_S@NEWSITEM.COM)

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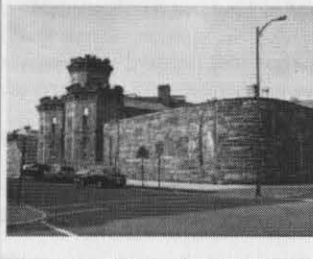
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SUNBURY - An investigation into allegations that medical staff of Prime Care Medical were not properly treating inmates at Northumberland County Prison is under way, commissioner and prison board chairman Stephen Bridy said.

An administrator with the Harrisburg-based medical provider confirmed a company investigation, too, into the allegations by two former employees, one who was fired and one who resigned.

"We take any concerns that have been brought to our attention very seriously," said Todd Haskins, vice president of operations. "I'm also not going to give satisfaction to former employees who were in the facility, running the facility, and now they're coming back to make those accusations. I find it hard to believe."

The two former employees, who spoke anonymously to The (Sunbury) Daily Item, claim inmates were not treated in a timely manner; that medicines would run out and inmates would have to wait up to a week for refills; that medical records and charges included untrue statements to make the provider look more professional than it was, and that documented reports of inadequate treatment or misconduct by supervisors were ignored.

The former employees' names were obtained by The News-Item, but they could not be reached to discuss their allegations directly.

Bridy said the allegations were brought to the county's attention on March 7, after which county officials met with prison board members to discuss the issue. Bridy said he also sat in on one of the exit interviews.

The Daily Item reported that a nurse, whose concerns were ignored, was fired, and a supervisor resigned because of the situation.

### Meeting with company

A special prison board meeting was called Wednesday, March 13, and the board met with Prime Care representatives in an executive session, Bridy said.

"We're trying to do what's right," he said in an interview Monday.

Findings from Prime Care's investigation will be compared with the grievances filed with the county, Bridy said.

Haskins, while he would not address each accusation individually, he said the company is in its 27th year and is currently providing health care to correctional facilities in nearly half of the state's 67 counties.

"It is never our practice or policy to do any of these things we are accused of," he said. "We will fully explore concerns that people who work for us or has worked for us have. We are in the process of reviewing those concerns to see if any corrective measures need to be taken," he said.

He further noted that there have been inspections and certifications that would indicate a positive business.

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Bridy said Monday that Warden Roy Johnson, who could not be reached for comment Monday and Tuesday, told commissioners he was surprised about the allegations because no employee or inmate brought them to his attention.

Because Prime Care is certified and hired as a private and contracted business, the county would not be liable for any wrongdoing, Bridy said.

Hired in 2010

In February 2010, Prime Care was hired by the county commissioners with a \$550,996 contract to provide comprehensive medical services at the prison beginning April 1, 2010. The county was providing medical services prior to Prime Care.

The original contract called for Prime Care to provide four licensed practical nurses, one registered nurse, a psychiatrist, a medical doctor, a medical supervisor, medications for inmates and malpractice insurance to protect itself and the county from lawsuits.

The move into contracted services was a result of a federal lawsuit filed by the Lewisburg Prison Project, a nonprofit inmate advocacy group, on behalf of inmates who complained of inadequate health care and unsafe housing conditions. A \$1.5 million settlement was reached in 2010, and the county upgraded the building and hired Prime Care.

A final inspection was held in April 2012, resulting in the Lewisburg Prison Project agreeing to file no further action against the county and the prison. The prison earned a certificate of accreditation from the National Commission on Correctional Health Care for its compliance with the organization's standards for health service in jail.

Clausi, Shoch silent

Both Commissioners Richard Shoch and Vinny Clausi declined discussing the details of the allegations.

"It's a personnel and litigation type matter. We're taking the appropriate steps to talk to the parties involved without confirming or denying the allegations," Shoch said.

Clausi said he would "love to spill the beans," but he was not going to discuss the issue until he had all the evidence in his hands.

Commander Brian Wheary could not be reached for comment Tuesday.