

ADVERTISEMENT

CALIFORNIA

New Mexico county sees more lawsuits on inmate abuse claims

By RUSSELL CONTRERAS | ASSOCIATED PRESS

DEC. 10, 2019 | 9:29 PM



ALBUQUERQUE, N.M. — A New Mexico county involved in one of the largest prisoner civil rights settlements in U.S. history is facing more federal lawsuits over its treatment of inmates in its jail.

Attorney Matt Coyte recently filed two lawsuits in U.S. District Court on behalf of inmates who allege mistreatment and abuse at the Doña Ana County Detention Center in Las Cruces, New Mexico.

According to a lawsuit filed Monday, Susan Hylton, now 42, was placed in solitary confinement after she requested to report sexual and physical abuse. Hylton made the request after correctional officers ordered her to strip during a search for drugs, the lawsuit said.

Court documents said the guards ordered Hylton to remove a feminine hygiene product despite male guards walking near the search and in view. “Susan felt humiliated knowing male officers were able to hear her as she was instructed to remove her tampon” and other embarrassing tasks while naked, the lawsuit said.



The San Diego Union-Tribune

LOG IN



Special Offer \$1 for 8 weeks

Special Offer

\$1 for 8 weeks

SUBSCRIBE



When Hylton requested to speak to a coordinator to report sexual abuse, a female guard asked her, “Can’t we just work this out?” and placed her in solitary confinement, court documents said.

The lawsuit said Hylton spent 85 days in confinement and “received burnt food for every meal” in retaliation and lost 20 pounds (9 kilograms), the lawsuit said.

Hylton also had to endure a cell with no hot water and ran out of toilet paper despite complaints, court documents alleged.

Another lawsuit filed in June alleged that jail staff failed to give proper medical attention to inmate Antonio Reali, now 55, of Coarsegold, California, who later suffered a heart attack.

Reali had been extradited to New Mexico on drug charges and previously had a heart condition, documents said. But the lawsuit said staff failed to take Reali immediately to the hospital when he fell and reported severe chest pains.

Staff even laughed and joked while Reali remained unattended on a medial table after suffering a seizure and losing consciousness, the lawsuit said.

The Reali lawsuit also names Corizon Health — one of the nation’s largest for-profit medical providers for prisons and jails. The company faces several lawsuits nationwide over allegations of inadequate medical care.

Hylton and Reali are seeking an unspecified amount in damages.

ADVERTISEMENT

Kelly Jameson, a spokeswoman for Doña Ana County, said the county does not comment on pending litigation.

Corizon Health spokeswoman Eve Hutcherson said she was unfamiliar with the Reali lawsuit.

In 2013, Dona Ana County reached a \$15.5 million settlement in a case involving a man who was held in solitary

Special Offer

\$1 for 8 weeks **SUBSCRIBE**

×

Coyte represented Slevin.

ADVERTISEMENT

Follow Russell Contreras on Twitter at <http://twitter.com/russcontreras>

CALIFORNIA



Get Essential San Diego, weekday mornings

Get top headlines from the Union-Tribune in your inbox weekday mornings, including top news, local, sports, business, entertainment and opinion.

Enter Email Address

SIGN ME UP

You may occasionally receive promotional content from the San Diego Union-Tribune.

RUSSELL CONTRERAS

Show Comments

SUPPORT OUR JOURNALISM

SEND INVESTIGATIVE TIPS

REPORT A PROBLEM WITH THIS STORY

MORE IN THIS SECTION

CALIFORNIA

With COVID-19 surging, schools suspend in-person education

With COVID-19 infections and hospitalizations spiking to record numbers across the U.S. and abroad, many school districts are temporarily shutting down in-person classes as holidays loom

1 hour ago

CALIFORNIA

Restructured airline to return Alaska passengers to the air

Special Offer

\$1 for 8 weeks

SUBSCRIBE

