

CHANELL BURNETTE

#1188812 *Fluvanna Correctional Center for Women* P.O. Box 1000 Troy VA 22974

Prison Legal News

P.O. Box 1151

Lake Worth, FL 33460

To whom it may concern:

My name is Chanell Burnette and I am currently an offender at Fluvanna Correctional Center for Women.

I write to you in regards to the inadequate medical care that we women are receiving here at this institution.

I have been housed at this facility since 2006 and am aware of the class action lawsuit filed against this facility and, and to date have seen no improvements in the quality of care that we have been receiving. For some of us, this has only gotten worse. I, for one can validate this claim.

Many of us suffer from chronic and debilitating conditions that are not being treated properly. Some of us experience severe pain and are not being administered adequate pain management. The doctors are minimizing our complaints of our pain levels. They are misdiagnosing our conditions and withholding vital information that could prevent detrimental effects on our health, or as even in numerous cases, even our deaths.

This facility contracts with the healthcare provider, Armor Correctional Health Services Inc. This corporation has failed us continuously and has contributed to the loss of lives of several women here at this institution. Too many have met their untimely demise due to the negligence of medical staff

CHANELL BURNETTE

#1188812 *Fluvanna Correctional Center for Women* P.O. Box 1000 Troy VA 22974

members. Can you fathom having to make the call to a family member to inform them that their loved one has died inside of these cold, lonely walls? All because someone did not care enough to take the time to listen and render the help that was needed.

In addition to the class action lawsuit, several civil suits are pending as a result of the negligence and treatment that continues to occur. This facility has been the subject of several television news reports. Fluvanna Correctional Center for Women has been in a negative limelight for a number of years.

To represent our concerns, a compliance monitor was elected, Dr. Nicholas Scharff, MD. He reports directly to The Department of Corrections. Dr. Scharff visits the institution regularly to not our questions and concerns. However, I have yet to hear of any responses to any of the questions voiced at the forums we attend.

I was informed that Dr. Scharff rates each institution by the number of letters of complaint he receives. His last rating for this institution for this facility was high. This concerned me so I sent him a letter informing him that the reason he does not receive many letters of complaint is because he does nothing to help us! I have yet to hear a response from that letter.

I submit this on behalf of all the women suffering here in this institution. I am only one, but strongly feel that our voices need to be heard. We are human beings before we are offenders, and should still be treated as equals. Should we not be offered the very same healthcare as someone whom has not made a mistake? None of us are perfect; and this should be kept in the forefront of the minds of those whom took an oath to care for us.

This facility is deemed the "medical facility". Some women have been shipped here as a result of a medical condition which requires continuous care. Some of our conditions are deteriorating, but

CHANELL BURNETTE

#1188812 *Fluvanna Correctional Center for Women* P.O. Box 1000 Troy VA 22974

somehow fail to meet the criteria to be classified as a "chronic care" condition. Therefore, we are not able to be provided with charge-free provider visits. The medical co-pay charge is \$5.00. Some offenders are indigent and do not have the funds to pay for a sick call triage visit. So, this in turn results in them acquiring a debt to the state of Virginia. For those who are able to pay, this results in an enormous amount of money spent on healthcare which has proven to be ineffective.

As of recently, we are no longer charged for our medication. In the past, the cost was \$2.00 per prescription ordered, excluding mental health medication.

The re-ordering and renewal of medication has proven to be a serious issue as well. Several incidents have occurred as a result of this form of negligence. Instead of re-ordering the medication when it gets low, medical staff allows the prescription to run out completely before it is re-ordered. The same goes for the renewals of medication. Instead of alerting offenders when a medication needs to be renewed so we are able to submit a sick call, once again, they allow the prescription to run out completely.

As a result of this, several devastating incidents have occurred. Some as devastating as the unnecessary suicides of women reaching out for help. No medication should lapse; be it for a medical condition, or a mental health condition. Apparently, the condition is severe enough to warrant medication; so why does this continue to subsist?

Instead of being respected as an individual and not just a ward of the state with a seven digit number for identification, we are not even being provided for sufficiently. Even down to the issuing of items as miniscule as sanitary napkins and toilet paper, we continue to be deprived of necessities essential to our womanhood. As citizens on the other side of these diabolical gates, our families pay taxes for items such as these to be furnished. Once again, why does this continue to subsist?

CHANELL BURNETTE

#1188812 *Fluvanna Correctional Center for Women* P.O. Box 1000 Troy VA 22974

In a facility specially designed for medical care, the doctors are incompetent and unsympathetic. Many are specialists in a specified field; yet they are operating in a sphere outside of their area of expertise. How can one advise about a condition they are not fully knowledgeable about? This leads to the misdiagnosing of conditions and the delay of treatment, which in turn leads to unnecessary surgeries to rectify these conditions.

This institution has been under several different administrations. With each new warden, the promise of better healthcare has yet to transpire. The turnover rate for medical staff is astounding! There are funds being allocated for unnecessary things such as new doors for the chow hall; and white lines on the concrete to confine offenders to a single file line during walking recreation. To me, this is a misappropriation of funds. If funds can be spent on such insignificant things, why can't funds be utilized to hire a competent medical staff to ensure that we offenders are awarded our rights to the adequate healthcare we are entitled to by law? Possibly, this could prevent direct violations of our 8th Amendment rights and could obviate the number of civil suits that will ensue from the results of acts of negligence and malpractice.

Response time to medical emergencies poses a risk factor as well. When emergencies are not responded to in a timely manner, life-threatening instances emanate. Instead of rushing to the aid of an individual in need, medical staff is slow to arrive, and quick to depart without even a second thought regarding how to help someone in distress. Emergency response times have also been the cause of several catastrophic events. Unfortunately, death seems to always be the end result in this institution.

Another concern plaguing us, is the admission to the infirmary. I myself, can speak from personal experience. The majority of nurse are employed through different agencies. As unfortunate as it is, many

CHANELL BURNETTE

#1188812 *Fluvanna Correctional Center for Women* P.O. Box 1000 Troy VA 22974

are not trained in simple procedures. Even down to the transferring a patient from a stretcher to a bed, produced an iniquitous episode.

I am also aware that when someone is admitted to the infirmary, regardless of how long the stay, they are constantly ignored and neglected. The officers as well as the nurses are ignoring the call buttons when people need assistance. Scheduled medication times are being missed as nurses nap during the night.

Something else which has become problematic is the charge for submitting an emergency grievance. Since when does our right to file paperwork come with a cost? Especially when the majority of the emergency grievances submitted are in regards to issues related to medical care.

Speaking from personal experience, I submitted an emergency grievance due to my medication not being available. I was told for four days that it had to be re-ordered. The new "police" is that when an emergency grievance is submitted, you are escorted to the infirmary for a triage visit. From my own experience, when I arrived at the infirmary for my triage visit, a very helpful, efficient nurse located my medication immediately. She stated that my medication had been there for the four days that the other nurses stated that it was not available. Other women have stated that when they files the emergency grievances, not only were they charged, they got no results from the visit; and were told to submit a sick call slip, another \$5.00 charge.

I spoke with the assistant warden Snoddy regarding this issue. He stated that we would be charged if medical staff deemed that our plight was not an emergency. What qualifies any medical staff to deem what is or is not an emergency? What if it were their pain medication? Would that not be deemed an emergency to them? Is our pain no more important than theirs because we are offenders.

CHANELL BURNETTE

#1188812 *Fluvanna Correctional Center for Women* P.O. Box 1000 Troy VA 22974

Thank you for taking the time to read my letter. I am just striving to let the public know the things that ail us on a daily basis. I hope that you will inform others in an attempt to gain the attention of anyone willing to assist us in our fight. Thank you for your time and effort in this matter.

Respectfully Submitted,

Chanell Burnette

Chanell Burnette #1188812