

NEWS

Mother Settles in Juvenile Hanging Case

Jan 15, 2003



The mother of a 14-year-old boy who was found hanged in state custody at a juvenile lockup has settled her lawsuit with the company that runs the facility.



Louisa Dunn, the mother of Dionte Pickens, reached the settlement with Huntsville-based Three Springs Inc. and four employees of the company, which contracts with

Alabama to run two juvenile facilities, said Dunn's attorney, Wendy Crew.

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Crew said the settlement, reached last month, included a financial payment but the amount is confidential. A message left with Mark Givhan, an attorney for Three Springs, was not immediately returned Thursday.

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Pickens had been locked up in Tuscaloosa for truancy. He was transferred about 160 miles to the Three Springs center in Tuskegee without his mother being informed, Crew said.

Pickens was found hanging in a closet on Oct. 15, 2000, with a black leather belt looped around his neck.

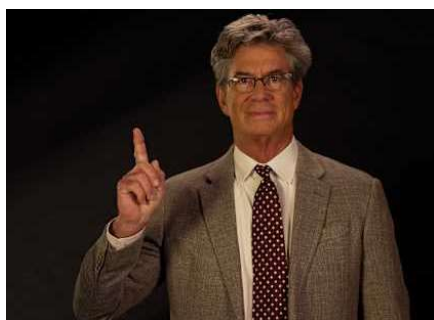
The lawsuit contended that Pickens' designated supervisor was playing a video game when Pickens died. A medical examiner said the body was discovered in a bedroom closet about 9 p.m. The bedroom was adjacent to a common room used by about 20 other teenagers.

The lawsuit claimed Three Springs either allowed Pickens to be murdered by hanging or let him commit suicide. It also said autopsy results showed that medication Pickens required was not in his system when he died.

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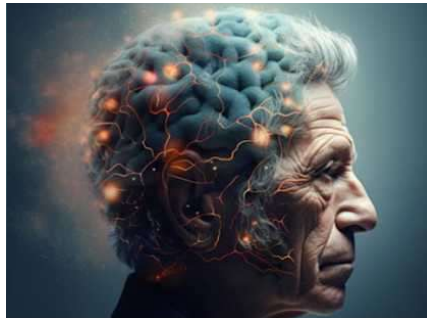
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