

Pa. Psych Hospital Faces Multiple Abuse Lawsuits

By **P.J. D'Annunzio**

Law360 (May 14, 2026, 9:28 PM EDT) -- A Pittsburgh-area psychiatric hospital has been hit with five state court lawsuits alleging it allowed patients as young as 10 years old to be physically and sexually abused by staff members and other patients, despite multiple investigations and warnings.

The suits, filed Tuesday in the Allegheny County Court of Common Pleas, claim that Southwood Psychiatric Hospital was negligent in its duty to provide a safe environment for minors with severe emotional, behavioral and neurodevelopmental disabilities.

Each complaint details instances of abuse the patients say they suffered, sometimes while restrained, which they claim left them with physical injuries and emotional scarring.

They also claim that the abuse could have been prevented if the hospital were adequately staffed and had learned from past infractions.

"Southwood has a documented history and uncorrected pattern of abuse against its patients, including vulnerable minor patients whose parents and guardians have turned to Southwood for treatment," one **complaint** said.

The lawsuits pointed to a 2009 False Claims Act settlement between the U.S. Department of Justice and Southwood in which the hospital agreed to stop using face-down restraints on patients and to maintain a care staff-to-patient ratio of at least 1:5 during waking hours and at least 1:8 during sleeping hours.

The patients also claim that a 2010 Pennsylvania Health Department inspection revealed Southwood was not compliant with Medicaid requirements that included providing patients with avenues to file grievances.

"Prior to and during the time that plaintiff resided at Southwood, Southwood knew or should have known that its minor patients were regularly victims of abuse as a result of inadequate staffing, policies and procedures," one of the suits says. "Despite knowing that the minor Southwood patients were regularly victims of abuse as a result of inadequate staffing, policies and procedures, Southwood failed to make necessary changes to protect their patients."

Southwood did not immediately respond to a request for comment Thursday.

"When our clients entered Southwood, there was an obvious power imbalance at play," Kline & Specter PC, the firm representing the patients, said in a statement. "They left the facility worse off and are still grappling with the lifelong effects of the trauma they were forced to endure there. We commend them for having the courage to come forward and look forward to helping give them a voice in hopes of preventing similar failures."

The plaintiffs are represented by Tom Kline, Jack O'Neill, Marni Berger, Helen Lawless and Michelle Paznokas of Kline & Specter PC and Amy Mathieu of HKM Employment Attorneys LLP.

Counsel information for Southwood was not immediately available Thursday.

The cases are Grossman v. Southwood Psychiatric Hospital LLC, case number GD-26-005172, Mihalik v. Southwood Psychiatric Hospital LLC, case

number GD-26-005173, Henley v. Southwood Psychiatric Hospital LLC, case number GD-26-005175, Devore v. Southwood Psychiatric Hospital LLC, case number GD-26-005177, and Dunn v. Southwood Psychiatric Hospital LLC, case number GD-26-005179, in the Court of Common Pleas of Allegheny County, Pennsylvania.

--Editing by Melissa Treolo.