Former inmate settles with CoreCivic over brain bleed after prison assault in Shelby

A former inmate has settled with the company that runs Montana’s private prison after alleging it failed to treat a head injury quickly enough, resulting in long-term damage that’s caused a speech delay and epilepsy. Ray Carpenter sued CoreCivic, which operates Crossroads Correctional Center in Shelby, in 2018. The case closed on Monday. Because the settlement was between private parties, the agreement is confidential. Carpenter had originally named the Montana Department of Corrections and other public entities as defendants, but they were dropped. Carpenter said that after being attacked in his cell one night in 2016, the prison and its contract medical providers, Correctional Medicine Associates, failed to respond adequately. Carpenter was attacked from behind, hit his head on a metal bunk while falling and then was kicked for minutes on end, including in the head, according to his lawsuit. Carpenter said that as medical staff was cleaning and stitching up his head wound early the next morning, a nurse told her supervisor she was worried that the deep gouge in the back of Carpenter’s head might have caused a severe concussion and a brain bleed, and that he needed to be taken to the hospital. Carpenter says her concerns were ignored. The prison and its medical provider admitted that five days after Carpenter was attacked, his medical records show he was taken to Great Falls for surgery to remove a subdural hematoma, or blood trapped on the brain’s surface. The surgeon found an active brain bleed during the operation, the companies admitted. But the companies denied they were at fault for what led to the emergency craniotomy. They denied that one of their nurses raised red flags and characterized the wound as a “small laceration.” CoreCivic and Correctional Medical Associates also denied without explanation Carpenter’s claims that his head swelled and he fell in and out of consciousness in the days before he was rushed to Great Falls for surgery. Carpenter said he now suffers from post-concussive epilepsy, memory loss, speech delays, persistent headaches and other problems because of the assault “and/or” the delay in medical care. Both sides declined to comment on the case, citing the confidential settlement agreement.