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CoreCivic settles lawsuit in 2017 Nashville jail scabies outbreak

CoreCivic has settled a 2017 class action lawsuit alleging Metro-Davidson County Detention Facility staff failed to provide proper medical treatment and retaliated against prisoners who sought treatment amid a widespread scabies outbreak. The Nashville-based private prison company will pay \$150,000 to settle the lawsuit filed by Wendy Snead, who was formerly jailed at the detention facility. Hundreds of prisoners were treated for scabies, a parasitic mite that burrows under the skin, after the 2017 outbreak, which also spread to attorneys and staff at Nashville's courthouse. Concern over the outbreak led judges to delay court hearings and a murder trial. In her lawsuit, Snead alleged she was infected with the parasitic mite after jail employees transferred another woman, who had already complained to staff about a rash in January 2017, into Snead's eight-person cell. A trained nurse held in the same cell identified the rash as scabies, but jail staff ignored pleas for treatment, the lawsuit alleged. By May 2017, the parasite was spreading through the jail, and staff began retaliating against prisoners asking for help, threatening to put women in solitary confinement or take away phone privileges if they mentioned the outbreak to family members. Snead managed to tell her family that she needed to see a doctor, the lawsuit alleged, and the family informed Metro Health Department officials. Snead saw an outside physician for treatment, but she later alleged jail staff retaliated against her by refusing to fill her prescription and placing her in solitary confinement without food or a mattress. Officials began treating hundreds of inmates in June 2017, and emails obtained by The Tennessean showed at least 16 district attorney or court staff sought treatment as well. Snead, later joined by 20 other affected people who were jailed at the facility during 2017, alleged chronic absences among jail medical staff led to mismanagement of medication and medical negligence. The class action lawsuit was set to go to trial in 2020 but was delayed by COVID-19. Both parties agreed to settle earlier this year, and a federal judge officially approved the settlement and dismissed the lawsuit last week. CoreCivic will also pay nearly \$10,000 in attorneys fees. "Our employees followed the standard of care and accepted protocols in correctional health care for managing these types of situations, and we're pleased to have reached a resolution in this case," Matt Davio, CoreCivic public affairs manager, said in an emailed statement. CoreCivic no longer manages the facility following a hand-off to Nashville's sheriff office last fall.