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6:11 pm - July 09, 2013

State Hospital worker fired for hitting patient

Arkansas News Bureau

LITTLE ROCK — A State Hospital safety officer was fired Tuesday for roughing up a patient, the state Department of Human Services said.

DHS said the worker, a unit safety officer, was terminated after an investigation of a July 3 incident in which a patient became agitated and hit the officer. The officer responded by using an improper technique and hitting the patient with a closed fist. The patient was taken to a nearby emergency room for stitches, the agency said.

The officer was placed on administrative leave the same day pending the investigation, which ended Tuesday. The worker was fired for failing to comply with the hospital's seclusion and restraint guidelines. DHS withheld the officer's name pending possible appeal of the disciplinary action.

"As part of their daily jobs, State Hospital staff will encounter agitated and difficult patients," said State Hospital CEO Steve Henson said in a release. "To ensure the safety of staff and patients, we provide training on how to back away from dangerous situations, how to properly respond to a combative patient and how to call for assistance. Those things did not happen in this case."

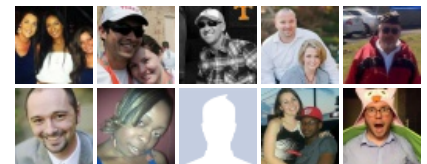
Henson said he has a zero-tolerance policy regarding any intentional abuse of patients.

The case file was turned over to the Pulaski County prosecutor's office for review, DHS said.

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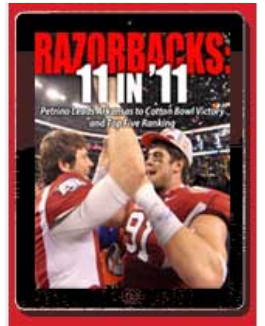
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