

SOUTH CAROLINA Lawyers Weekly

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■ AUGUST 22, 2025

VERDICTS & SETTLEMENTS

Autistic man dies after ingesting multiple medications

\$5.44 MILLION MEDIATION

Action: Mediation

Date: March 5, 2025

Date of incident: Sept. 21, 2022

Nature of claim: Wrongful death

Injuries alleged: Conscious pain and suffering, emotional trauma and death

Amount:
\$5.44 million

Case name: Madeleine A. Hawkins, Individually and on behalf of the other statutory heirs and as Personal Representative of the Estate of Quincy Jerome Dixon, Deceased, v. Lutheran Family Services in the Carolinas a/k/a Lutheran Services Carolinas, FB Residential Holdings LLC, Brian Anthony James, Myasia Toya McCoy, South Carolina Department of Disabilities and Special Needs, and Alliant ASO, Inc.

Case no: 2023-CP-16-00681

Court: Darlington County Court of Common Pleas

Tried before: Mediator

Mediator: William B. Darwin Jr., of Holcombe Bomar, Spartanburg

Most helpful exper

James Ballenger, M.D., of Charleston, effects of psychotropic medication

Attorneys: J. Michael Baxley and Douglas Jennings Jr. of Douglas Jennings Law Firm, Bennettsville, SC [for the plaintiff]; Evan Gessner and Christian Stegmaier, of Collins & Lacy, Columbia, (representing FB Residential Holdings); Ayla Luers Conner and Kenneth N. Shaw, of Haynesworth Sinkler Boyd, Greenville, (representing S.C. Lutheran Family Services); Kevin A. Hall, of Womble Bond Dickinson, Columbia (representing Alliant ASO); G. Murrell Smith and Alexander W. Atkinson, of Smith Robinson Holler DuBose & Morgan, Sumter (representing S.C. Department of Disabilities and Special Needs); David L. Williford and Timothy Maio, of Huff Powell Bailey, Greenville (representing Myasia McCoy); Todd W. Smyth and Allie Maples, of Smyth Whitley, Charleston (representing Brian James) [for the defendants]

Insurance carriers: Capital Indemnity Corp. and S.C. Insurance Reserve Fund

Decedent, 23, was an autistic man living with three other patients at the Briar Gate community treatment home near Darlington because his family could no longer meet his care needs at home. He was in the care and custody of the South Carolina Department of Disabilities and Special Needs.

Briar Gate is operated by Lutheran Family Services, an entity licensed by the department to provide residential services. The home was staffed on a 24-hour basis by Lutheran Family employees, who were responsible for supervis-



J. Michael Baxley



Douglas Jennings Jr.

ing and managing the daily activities of the home's residents, administering their medications and following their care plans. The decedent's plan required hands-on supervision and staff observation at least every 15 minutes when the decedent was awake. The medications included psychotropic drugs that had to be stored in a secure location.

On the morning of Sept. 21, 2022, the two defendant-employees were on duty at Briar Gate when defendant-employee Myasia McCoy removed the patients' medications from their secured box and placed them in open cups in the kitchen pantry, an area where residents had unrestricted access. The decedent later entered the pantry and took his medicines and those of the other patients.

The decedent's body was found that afternoon by Lutheran Family staffers in the home's backyard. The coroner estimated he had been dead for at least three hours when his body was discovered, and that he had died from suffocation due to pulmonary edema caused by the multiple medications taken.