



This copy is for your personal, noncommercial use only. You can order presentation-ready copies for distribution to your colleagues, clients or customers [here](#) or use the "Reprints" tool that appears above any article. [Order a reprint of this article now.](#)

Former Partlow workers to return

Workers were fired after patient's death in 2010

By Dana Beyerle

Montgomery Bureau Chief

Published: Friday, March 16, 2012 at 3:30 a.m.

MONTGOMERY | Four Department of Mental

Health employees who had been fired from W.D. Partlow Developmental Center but sued to get their jobs back are scheduled to return to work in Tuscaloosa today, their attorney said.

Tuscaloosa attorney Joel Sogol said Thursday that three of the four have accepted jobs at the Mary Starke Harper Geriatric Psychiatry Center or the Taylor Hardin Secure Medical Facility.

The State Personnel Board had ordered the mental health department to reinstate them.

One of the four, Cecil Gordon, plans to retire soon, Sogol said. Eddie Williams, a fifth employee who was also involved in the suit, has retired.

The other reinstated employees are Terry Wilson, Loretta Wiggins and Michael Richardson.

"I'm just glad this phase of a traumatic experience is behind us," Wilson said.

The board also ordered that the employees receive back pay and benefits. Sogol said their back pay will be reduced by taxes, repayment of any unemployment benefits and what they would have paid into their retirement and benefit plans.

The five were fired from Partlow, which is now closed, after a 300-pound patient died while being restrained after he started fighting. They were fired effective Feb. 11, 2011, based on the incident in October 2010.

The mother of the patient, Ricky James White, 44, filed a wrongful death lawsuit in Tuscaloosa County Circuit Court in January, claiming that White died of asphyxia while being improperly restrained.

A grand jury heard the evidence and declined to indict the employees, Wilson said.

Wilson's record revealed that he once saved a patient's life and possibly saved another when he performed the Heimlich maneuver on a patient who was choking.

The Personnel Board order did not identify White, but said he had a history of violence and aggression. He once pushed another patient down a flight of stairs, resulting in the patient's death, according to testimony in previous proceedings.

Copyright © 2012 TuscaloosaNews.com — All rights reserved. Restricted use only.

