

Ensuring Safety and Care at Telecare La Casa

Who is Telecare?

Telecare Corporation is an Alameda based private, for-profit behavioral health company serving clients with serious mental illness, developmental disabilities, and histories of homelessness or incarceration.

LA County currently purchases reserved beds at Telecare's La Casa Mental Health Rehabilitation Center at rates up to \$446 per bed per day. **In 2012, LA County provided an estimated \$18.3 million through this arrangement.**

Stay Up to Date

For more information and connect with us go to:

www.seiu-uhw.org/safecare

Text **SAFETY** to **787753** for the latest text updates

What's the Problem?

As caregivers, safety is our top priority: for patients, caregivers, and the community.

Current conditions at Telecare La Casa Mental Health Rehabilitation Center (MHRC) leave both the facility's patients and caregivers at the facility at risk.

- × **215 assaults reported in 2012**
- × **More than 300 calls to the Long Beach Police Department ranging from patient escapes to rape from 2010 to 2013**
- × **12 AWOLs in March 2013 alone**

Our Solution

SEIU-UHW is currently negotiating our first contract for 183 healthcare workers at Telecare La Casa MHRC in Long Beach, and have prioritized contract proposals to address specific health and safety concerns, including:

- Create an escape prevention plan and training teams for staff
- Reviews of patient screening processes
- Minimum of two staff assisting with all group activities
- Improve debrief process to find solutions—not scapegoats

What YOU Can Do:

In order to protect quality of care, caregivers and patients, we need you to join us and help make sure Telecare is denied any further tax-payer dollars until safer staffing ratios and increased security measures have been taken.

**SEIU-
UHW**
United Healthcare Workers West

To: The Federal Mediation and Conciliation Service

Notice of Intent to Strike

We hereby notify you and the Employer involved, pursuant to Section 8(g) of the National Labor Relations Act, as amended by the health care institution amendments of 1974, of our intent to engage in an unfair labor practice strike at or near the following location(s) on the dates and hours set forth. SEIU United Healthcare Workers West hereby unconditionally offers to return to work at 4:00 PM Monday, July 1, 2013.

Employer with whom dispute exists:

Telecare La Casa

Fax : 562-529-2463

Location(s) where activity will take place:

6060 Paramount Blvd.
Long Beach, CA 90805

Date and hour set for commencement of activity:

The unfair labor practice strike will commence at 4:00 PM on Wednesday, June 26, 2013 and end at 4:00 PM on Monday, July 1, 2013.

BY: *UNION GIVING NOTICE*

SEIU United Healthcare Workers-West

Date: June 14, 2013

By: ***Hal Ruddick***
Hospital Division Director

CC: Employer
State Mediation & Conciliation Service
FMCS



Stand With Us To Ensure Safety and Care in Our Hospital

As caregivers at Telecare La Casa Mental Health and Rehabilitation Center in Long Beach, safety is our top priority: for patients, caregivers, and the community. Unfortunately, our dedication to quality care is being sidelined by hospital management's unfair labor practices.

As caregivers, we face a great deal of uncertainty on the job. We face hazards that compromise patient care and put staff at risk. In order to ensure safety and quality care, we have put forward contract proposals to address specific health and safety concerns ranging from creating an escape prevention plan to improving debrief meetings to better find solutions—but management has outright rejected all our suggestions for safety improvements.



We're calling on Telecare to take the safety and care of our patients, caregivers, and surrounding community as seriously as we do.

Join Our Fight for Quality Care

SEIU-UHW ULP Strike

June 26—July 1

Telecare La Casa MHRC

6060 Paramount Blvd, Long Beach

To Get Involved Contact: Jason Capell, (323) 236-4917.

**SEIU-
UHW**
United Healthcare Workers West



news RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
June 14, 2013

CONTACT: Sean Wherley
(323) 893-6831
swherley@seiu-uhw.org

Healthcare Workers File Unfair Labor Practice Strike Notice After Long Beach Hospital Fails to Protect Patients, Employees and the Public

*Mental Health Facility Site of Repeated Escapes, Violence
and More than 230 Separate Calls to Police*

LONG BEACH, CA – Licensed vocational nurses, rehabilitation counselors and other healthcare workers eager to protect patients at a Long Beach mental health facility and preserve public safety in surrounding neighborhoods filed a strike notice today against Telecare La Casa Mental Health Rehabilitation Center. Unless the company ends its unfair labor practices, members of SEIU – United Healthcare Workers West (SEIU-UHW) will strike as soon as June 26.

The hospital has drawn criticism for its lax safety measures that contribute to patients escaping regularly, employees being hospitalized after violent altercations with patients, and patients sexually assaulting one another. During a three-year period ending March 2013, the Long Beach Police Department responded to more than 230 calls at the facility.

“The last thing we want to do is strike, but it appears that’s the only option we have left to get the company to bargain in good faith and protect the safety of patients, employees, and the public,” said Tony Gann, a Mental Health Worker at La Casa. “Patients are here to get well, and they should not fear becoming the victim of a sexual assault. Employees are here to deliver care, and they should not fear being kicked, punched, or slammed into the ground. And the public should not have to worry about people with mental illness escaping from the facility and into their neighborhoods.”

La Casa employees, whose starting wage is less than \$9, have repeatedly seen their requests for improved safety measures – including an onsite security guard and a Plexiglas barrier around the nursing station – denied by management. In April 2013, one worker ended up in the emergency room after being knocked unconscious by a patient.

Under an agreement between the County of Los Angeles and La Casa, the county pays the facility nearly \$450 per patient for every day of care, an amount totaling \$18.3 million in 2012, and more than \$54 million since 2010. In order to receive county funding, La Casa must take patients who previously stayed at Twin Towers Correctional Facility or Metropolitan State Hospital.

La Casa is owned by Telecare, an Alameda-based private company which has more than 2,200 employees in six states, and reported net patient revenue of \$186 million in 2011.

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SEIU—United Healthcare Workers West (SEIU-UHW) is the largest hospital and healthcare union in the western United States with more than 150,000 members. We unite every type of healthcare worker with a mission to achieve high-quality healthcare for all. SEIU-UHW is part of the 2.2 million-member Service Employees International Union (SEIU), the nation's fastest-growing union. Learn more at www.seiu-uhw.org.

Press-Telegram

June 15, 2013

Workers set to strike at Telecare La Casa Mental Health Rehabilitation Center

By Karen Robes Meeks

LONG BEACH - Fed up with what they call "lax safety measures" at their workplace, employees at a North Long Beach mental health facility plan to stage a walkout later this month.

Workers at Telecare La Casa Mental Health Rehabilitation Center, whose 185 licensed vocational nurses, rehabilitation counselors and other mental health workers are being represented by SEIU - United Healthcare Workers West, formally filed a notice to strike on Friday.

The strike planned for June 26 follows months of negotiations between the Alameda-based Telecare owned hospital and SEIU over the workers' first contract.

The workers joined SEIU about a year ago.

At issue are wages and patient safety, which have resulted in more than 230 police calls to the facility in a three-year period, according to SEIU.

La Casa employees, whose starting wage is less than \$9, have asked the hospital to implement several safety measures, including the hiring of an onsite security guard and a Plexiglas barrier around the nursing station.

"The last thing we want to do is strike, but it appears that's the only option we have left to get the company to bargain in good faith and protect the safety of patients, employees, and the public," said Tony Gann, a Mental Health Worker at La Casa and a member of the bargaining unit.

"Patients are here to get well, and they should not fear becoming the victim of a sexual assault. Employees are here to deliver care, and they should not fear being kicked, punched, or slammed into the ground. And the public should not have to worry about people with mental illness escaping from the facility and into their neighborhoods."

Telecare spokesman Daniel Danzig refuted the allegations and added that the hospital recently underwent licensing review by the California Department of Social Services that pointed to a well-presented facility with excellent care.

"Telecare provides really high-quality care to our patients," Danzig said.

"We take quality very seriously. There is no truth to the statement that we provide anything less than excellent care."

Danzig said he hopes that both sides continue to talk.

Meanwhile, the hospital will work with management and non-union staff to provide care while workers strike.

LONG BEACH POST

June 14, 2013

Accusations of Employee Assault, Patient Sexual Assault Prompt Mental Healthcare Workers to File Intent to Strike

By Brian Addison

The SEIU-United Healthcare Workers West (SEIU-UHW) formally filed today an intent to strike against the Telecare La Case Mental Health Rehabilitation Center in North Long Beach.

The strike, filed largely under unfair labor practices (Section 8g of the National Labor Relations Act), follows a string of what the labor union described as lax safety measures which they say resulted in patient escapes, employees being assaulted and patients being sexually assaulted by other patients.

Between March of 2010 and March of this year, the Long Beach Police and Fire Departments responded to some 230 calls from the facility. This represents a decrease, according to the LBPD, from years before when more than hundred calls would come in annually.

"The union contacted us months ago," Sgt. Aaron Eaton of LBPD told the Post. "They had forewarned a strike would happen and this has been continually within the site of the department."

Given that oftentimes mental illness is involved and therefore requires medical attention, fire officials arrive before police when a response is needed. The facility is unlocked, leading to patients often leaving at-will--what nurses call going AWOL--which means that missing person reports make up a large number of the calls. Assaults, batteries and other acts of violence have also occurred.

Neilane Besana, a licensed vocational nurse for the facility, says she was attacked twice in the same week two years ago by a female client.

According to Besana, the client was not ready to enter the facility given that the focus is those ready to rehabilitate. After having a phone thrown at her by the client, Besana was sent home to recover, but the next day was assigned to the same unit where the client attacked her. That evening, Besana was once again attacked; this incident remains unacknowledged by management.

"The client had left the facility on her own beforehand--an AWOL--and then returned," Besana said. "She was already very aggressive towards other females and consistently getting into trouble. She soon became focused on me after she had already bothered and assaulted other clients and staff. Looking back, I didn't feel confident working there, but then again I didn't want to be called out for insubordination at that point since I was new... But it's like this revolving door where management continually permits those not ready for rehabilitation right back in."

Luz Flores, a mental health worker at the facility, has not returned to work since an altercation occurred on April 17. According to Flores, she encountered a female patient being repeatedly kicked by a male

patient and, after confronting the male, was thrown over a bench, hitting her head on the ground. Flores was knocked unconscious and did not come to until she was being transferred to a hospital.

"The worst thing is that I would find myself alone with all the clients by myself at some times," Flores said. "I would always request a change of unit and again and again I would be in that unit again. I feel foolish for doing what I had to do--it's like there is nothing I can change."

Though she filed a police report and was unable to walk, La Casa's clinic that assessed the altercation deemed Flores able and ready to return to work that day despite having lost consciousness. Kaiser, Flores's private medical provider, officially requested that she not return to work; La Casa ultimately denied the request.

"And while I was recovering--you know, a lotta clients care about me and some thought I was dead because I had knocked out... My staff loves me, you know?" Flores said. "So a get-well card was made for me and he [the male client who attacked me] had signed it. 'God bless you,' it said. What?"

The 16-bed facility, privately run through Telecare Corp., is largely funded through the County of Los Angeles, which provides the facility \$450 per patient per day of care as long as patients come from either the Twin Towers Correctional Facility--the nation's largest jail system--or Metropolitan State Hospital. Documents show the facility received \$18.3 million last year from the county.

According to union representative Sean Wherley, the union approached management--both formally at a bargaining table as well informally--to help heighten safety measures, such as including a security guard on grounds and barricading the nursing area with Plexiglass; however these requests were ultimately denied by management.

The facility has been under scrutiny from Councilmember Steve Neal's office, who represents the district where the facility is situated.

"A strike is always a last resort," said Rex Richardson, Chief of Staff for 9th District Councilmember Neal. "Any worker will tell you, 'I don't want to strike--but I will if I have to.' We encourage nothing but a fair solution as promptly as possible, one that comes from the bargaining table and protects patients and employees. In the end, we would obviously love to avoid a strike but if it comes down to that, we would ultimately support it."

Licensed nurses, rehabilitation counselors and other healthcare workers will ultimately abandon the facility for five days--June 26 through July 1--should demands not be met through management. It remains unclear whether the facility will continue to receive its county funding during the strike, should the strike occur.

"It's hard to promote safety when we're not a safe facility itself," Besana emphasized. "I don't want my clients or coworkers not feeling like they're not able to do the work we're able to--which is good work. We do good things."

La Casa administrators have been unavailable for comment.



June 14, 2013

Nurses Union Threatens Strike At Mental Health Facility

Harry Saltzgaver

Members of the SEIU-United Healthcare Workers have filed a notice of intent to strike at a north Long Beach mental health facility, citing unsafe conditions for workers and patients.

In the notice, SEIU-UHW claims that the Telecare La Casa Mental Health Rehabilitation Center at 6060 N. Paramount Blvd. has seen more than 230 calls to the police over the last three years, with patient escapes, employees being hospitalized after altercations with patients and more. The Unfair Labor Practice Strike is scheduled to start June 26 and end on July 1 unless Telecare management addresses the safety issues.

“The last thing we want to do is strike, but it appears that’s the only option we have left to get the company to bargain in good faith and protect the safety of patients, employees and the public, La Casa employee Tony Gann said in the release announcing the strike. “Patients are here to get well, and they should not fear becoming the victim of a sexual assault. Employees are here to deliver care, and they should not fear being kicked, punched or slammed into the ground.”

According to the notice, employee safety requests, including an onsite security guard and a Plexiglas barrier around the nursing station, has been denied by Telecare management. In April this year, a worker reportedly had to go to the emergency room after being knocked unconscious by a patient.

Telecare operates facilities in six states. The Long Beach location operates under a contract with Los Angeles County to accept patients from the Twin Towers Correctional Facility or the Metropolitan State Hospital. The SEIU-UHW statement says La Casa gets nearly \$450 per patient per day from the county.

Press-Telegram

May 28, 2013

Man dies while in custody of Long Beach Police Department

He had been arrested Saturday for allegedly breaking into cars

By Kelsey Duckett, Staff Writer

A suspect died this weekend after being taken into Long Beach police custody shortly after he allegedly entered employee vehicles on private industrial property in the 6200 block of Paramount Avenue in Long Beach.

The man, who has not yet been identified, was spotted by two security guards who pursued the man, police said. At one point the suspect tried to take the vehicle of one of the security guards; when that failed, he attempted to scale a nearby fence before being detained by the guards.

Long Beach police arrived on scene shortly after 6:45 p.m. Saturday and took the suspect into their custody and moved him into an "open space," at which point the suspect went into medical distress, according to a spokesman for the department.

Officers attempted life-saving measures and paramedics arrived and transported the subject to a local hospital; however, he was pronounced dead upon arrival.


As with all in-custody deaths, homicide detectives are conducting an investigation. In addition, the Los Angeles County Coroner's office will also conduct an independent investigation.

This is the second in-custody death this year for the Long Beach Police Department, with the first coming just a month ago after a woman who was arrested for possession of narcotics died while in a holding cell.

Anyone with information regarding this incident should contact Long Beach Police Homicide Detectives Malcolm Evans and Todd Johnson at (562) 570-7244. Anonymous tips may be submitted by calling 1-800-222-TIPS (8477), texting TIPLA plus your tip to CRIMES (274637), or visiting www.lacrimestoppers.org.



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