New Jersey Failed Veterans in State-Run Homes During COVID-19



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On September 7, 2023, the Department of Justice (DOJ) released a report accusing two New Jersey state-run nursing homes for veterans of neglect and violating patients' constitutional rights by failing to implement infection control protocols and provide adequate medical care during the COVID-19 pandemic. The state-run nursing homes, located in Menlo Park and Paramus, had some of the highest COVID-19 mortality rates in the country during the early stages of the pandemic, resulting in at least 146 patient fatalities, with investigators suspecting that the actual death-toll might be even higher. The report followed a comprehensive three-year investigation that identified a range of problems, including lapses in basic hygiene and infection control, absentee supervisors, staff indifference toward residents, a culture of fear, inadequate safety measures for employees and a failure to properly administer medication. According to the report, many of the identified deficiencies continue today.

The DOJ has instructed the New Jersey Department of Military and Veterans Affairs, the agency that is responsible for administering these facilities, to promptly rectify the "deficient basic medical care" that these facilities provide to their patients. The DOJ has mandated that the facilities institute immediate improvements in areas such as medical care, infection control, medication administration and resident safety, and has given the State a 49-day window to rectify the deficiencies outlined in the report, failing which the U.S. Attorney General may initiate legal action to enforce necessary corrections for the identified deficiencies. The State previously paid $53 million to settle a lawsuit by families of residents in veteran nursing homes whose deaths resulted from the facilities' gross negligence in dealing with the pandemic.

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