

Calhoun Liberty submits corrective action plan



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(Photo: Joe Rondone | Tallahassee Democrat)

Calhoun Liberty Hospital submitted its corrective action plan to the Florida Agency for Health Care Administration on Wednesday, three days ahead of schedule.

The plan addresses 10 deficiencies found by AHCA in an early January investigation. Among many measures, the plan ensures medical staff will reassess patients based on changes in conditions, provide medical screening exams and file incident reports.

The plan, which was due today, is the first step required by AHCA. The state is seeking \$45,000 in fines against the hospital. If the hospital doesn't correct all of its issues by March 1, it will be suspended from the Medicaid program, which amounts to about 15 percent of its annual operating budget.

The AHCA investigation came in response to a December incident involving 57-year-old Barbara Dawson, who was led from the facility in handcuffs after being discharged. Dawson complained of trouble breathing, collapsed in the hospital's parking lot and died a short time later..

The deficiencies were found in connection with Dawson's treatment and another patient who came into the hospital but was never treated.

Calhoun Liberty CEO and administrator Ruth Attaway said the hospital will meet all of AHCA's deadlines.

"This is a thorough plan that details how our hospital will move forward to implement the corrective actions by March 1, meeting the state's deadlines and continuing to serve our community," Attaway said. "We are extremely grateful to the members of the medical community who have supported us and are helping us meet these requirements, including the Florida State University College of Medicine and Tallahassee Memorial Hospital."

Tallahassee Memorial HealthCare has lent the hospital a consultant physician certified in emergency medicine to provide three trainings at the hospital by March 1, another AHCA requirement. Attaway had feared the hospital wouldn't be able to find a physician to do the training in that time frame. However, Dean John Fogarty of the FSU College of Medicine, Dr. Alma Littles, chair elect of the TMH Board of Directors and TMH president and CEO Mark O'Bryant worked out a way to get the hospital a doctor in time.

The plan says the hospital has instructed staff on the importance of medical screening exams, examinations that AHCA found the hospital failed to provide in the case of Dawson and the other patient. Audits on emergency department records will be performed semiannually.

The hospital is also requiring its emergency room and nursing staffs to review the policies and procedures manuals related to each department. Staff is also being educated on documenting patients' vital signs and following up on patient grievances.

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