

Family awarded \$1.8 million in death of boarding school student

(AP) – The family of Cindy Sohappy-Gilbert, who died of alcohol poisoning in a boarding school jail cell, has accepted \$1.8 million to settle its case against the U.S. government, according to the lawyer representing the family.

Cindy Sohappy-Gilbert died Dec. 6, 2003, at the Chemawa Indian School near Salem.

The 16-year-old from Warm Springs had a blood alcohol level of 0.37 percent when her body was found in a holding cell for intoxicated students that was supposed to be checked every 15 minutes.

The death resulted in a Senate investigation and claims that Bureau of Indian Affairs officials ignored the risks to children



Cindy Sohappy-Gilbert

at Indian boarding schools for years. On the second anniversary of the death, the family

filed a \$24 million lawsuit.

A report by the Interior Department released in July found that a "historical pattern of inaction and disregard for human health and safety" contributed to the girl's death.

Nedra Darling, a spokeswoman for the Bureau of Indian Affairs, which is part of the Interior Department, said she could not comment on the settlement because the litigation still was considered pending.

She said the report prompted the Bureau of Indian Affairs to provide additional training for staff at all schools.

"We found it very helpful that it stressed the importance of BIA employees following the appropriate policies and proce-

dures," Darling said.

Foster Glass, the lawyer who represented Sohappy-Gilbert's family, told The Oregonian newspaper that the settlement was reasonable because litigation could have dragged on for years.

Sohappy-Gilbert was placed in a detention cell after staff found her drunk. A staff member checked on her at 8:40 p.m., but not again until after 11 p.m. By then she had died.

The Interior report said BIA officials failed to act on long-standing safety concerns at Chemawa, and the school's staff had not received training for detaining students or monitoring intoxicated students.

Clinic receives accreditation

The Warm Springs Health and Wellness Center has achieved accreditation by the Accreditation Association for Ambulatory Health Care. The Accreditation Association for Warm Springs Health and Wellness Center has passed a series of rigorous and nationally recognized standards for the provision of quality health care, said Carol DeVaney, chief executive officer of the clinic.

Over 2,600 ambulatory health care organizations across the United States are accredited by the AAAHC. "Accreditation underscores our long-standing commitment to providing the highest possible levels of quality health care to the community we serve," said DeVaney. "We are pleased and proud to have our efforts recognized with this accreditation."

Ambulatory health care organizations seeking accreditation by the AAAHC undergo an extensive on-site, peer-based survey of its facilities and services. Not all ambulatory health care organizations seek accreditation; and not all undergoing the on-site survey are granted accreditation.

Among the types of ambulatory health care organizations that can seek AAAHC accreditation are ambulatory and office-based surgery centers, single and multi-specialty group practices, college health centers, dental group practices, community health centers, occupational health centers and managed care organizations.

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