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\$600,000 settlement reached against Alden Wentworth Rehabilitation and Health Care Center in the neglect, abuse and death of 46-year-old disabled Chicago woman

CHICAGO—Lawrence B. Finn of the Chicago-based law firm Levin & Perconti received approval from the Circuit Court of Cook County for a \$600,000 settlement on behalf of Bernice Hall (Chicago), the mother of 46-year-old disabled Bernetta Hall, who died as a result of the neglectful treatment she received while in the care of Alden Wentworth Rehabilitation and Health Care Center.

Bernetta Hall was admitted to Alden for long term care after she developed degenerative organic brain syndrome in early 2000 which left her with limited cognitive function and unable to care for herself. She was totally dependent on Alden to provide for her needs. Prior to her admission to Alden, Bernetta lived with her mom, Bernice Hall (Chicago), for several years.

When Bernetta was admitted to Alden on November 14, 2000, she had one tiny healing pressure ulcer on her sacrum. Sadly, in only five weeks, she was neglected so badly by Alden's staff that the sacral ulcer worsened and became infected, eventually requiring hospitalization for multiple surgical debridements. Bernetta also developed pressure sores on her heels, buttock and ear. By the time she was taken to the hospital

for treatment, she was septic, malnourished and dehydrated, all of which contributed to her deteriorating medical condition.

Attorney Lawrence Finn alleged that Bernetta developed multiple and worsening pressure ulcers because Alden failed to provide the care and support necessary to promote healing of the existing pressure ulcer and prevent new pressure ulcers from forming. Specifically, Alden failed to keep Bernetta from developing pressure ulcers by not performing daily skin checks or turning and repositioning her. Her nutritional status was also allowed to decline which caused her wounds to worsen.

Finn commented, "When Bernetta was admitted to Alden, she was ill and totally dependent on the facility to provide for her needs. Alden was responsible for ensuring that protocols for preventing malnutrition, pressure ulcers, and dehydration were in place for Bernetta who was at risk for these problems. They were responsible for assigning nurses and staff to carry out the protocols. Patients with complex medical issues like Bernetta need not develop painful and life threatening pressure sores. Bernetta had a right to expect that Alden would provide the care she needed. Unfortunately, Bernetta suffered avoidable indignities and pain because Alden did not provide even the minimal level of care."

Finn added, "Unfortunately, the nursing home admissions department provides assurances to the family that their loved one will be cared for properly and with compassion. As a result of these broken promises, patients like Bernetta become innocent victims of neglect."