

Patient Suicide: Aide Awarded Worker's Comp For Post- Traumatic Stress.

While working at a group home which the hospital operated for its mentally-ill patients a certified nursing assistant discovered a client who had hanged herself in her room.

After the remains were removed the aide was told to clean up the room in which the client had committed suicide.

It all proved to be very traumatic for her. She began having flashbacks, nightmares and olfactory hallucinations. Three different doctors agreed those were symptoms of post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) caused by her personal involvement with the patient's suicide.

The aide has been restricted by her doctor from working in the facility where the patient died or from working anywhere else that reminds her of her experience at that facility.

The aide is able to work only with populations of patients with whom she is comfortable do not pose any real risk of suicide.

SUPREME COURT OF IOWA
December 23, 2010

The Supreme Court of Iowa ruled that PTSD from a highly traumatic on-the-job incident is a legitimate basis for a worker's compensation claim.

The Court accepted the aide's doctors' assessments. Her ability to function has improved since the incident, but she is still and will always be partially disabled. She is not able to exercise the same range of occupational choices she had before the incident which is a permanent partial disability for which she is entitled to compensation from her former employer. **Broad-laws Med. Ctr. v. Sanders**, __ N.W. 2d __, 2010 WL 5185469 (Iowa, December 23, 2010).