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Chicago Tribune

TRIBUNE WATCHDOG DEADLY NEGLECT

Kathleen Clark with son Jeremiah, 9, in a hospital on the day he died. He is among 15 residents of a Chicago care facility whose deaths have led to state citations since 2000.

THE FINAL HOURS OF JEREMIAH CLARK

For two days, a boy with profound disabilities grew mortally ill, yet no one at his care facility called a doctor. Not his case manager. Not a day nurse, and not his right name. As the third day dawned, another nurse finally called for help. But it was too late. Jeremiah became the most recent fatality in a pattern of harmful care at Alden Village North.

By Sam Roe and Jared S. Hopkins
TRIBUNE REPORTERS

Nine-year-old Jeremiah Clark survived for years and years, but he still ate, go to the bathroom by himself or eat without a chewing tool because he has no teeth. He lived at Alden Village North, a care facility in Chicago that closed last year, when the facility for children with developmental disabilities closed off at school, teachers alarmed to see Fields had been left alone in a room for so long. Fields tube entered his abdomen. His shirt and pants were soaked with urine. He lay in a puddle of his own waste under his wheelchair.

When Alden Village North picked him up, teachers were outraged when he returned to class the next day. They found Fields' body slumped in a chair, lethargic and motionless. Teachers placed him on a mat,

where he shook in the fetal position.

A school nurse said she demanded that Alden Village North take him to a hospital, but the facility stalled, billing her to give him Tylenol. Three days passed before Fields' mother, Kathleen Clark, thought the facility is a five-minute walk away back at Alden Village North. She called the facility, then, three times during the night or even call a doctor and the next day, she found Fields dead.

Before Jeremiah Clark's death, a doctor told his mother, Kathleen, that surgery could be tried, but they would have to wait until the next day. She said: "He's been through enough."

Sam Roe and Jared S. Hopkins photo

ELECTION 2010

Obama goes all-in for Giannoulias

Visit boots morale, funds, shows president fully backs Democrat in tight race for Senate

BY MICHAEL PAGETTE
CHICAGO TRIBUNE STAFF WRITER

John Kass
Advice to newlyweds:
Get a man chair
See text, Page 2

WEATHER
S.A.M. 74° / 78°
N.OON. 74° / 78°
G.P.M. 74° / 78°
See Tom Skilling's forecast
on the back of today's section.

OBAMA GOES ALL-IN FOR GIANNOULIAS

President Obama dropped into his hometown for a rally Saturday, showing his support for the Democratic candidate, Alton Giannoulias, looking for a highly symbolic midterm victory by capturing

Illinois' 10th congressional district.

The campaign has been dominated by ads attacking Giannoulias's record as a state senator and calling his military record as a captain in the Illinois National Guard into question.

"In some very tough circumstances, he has shown a leadership environment, he has not run over people and that's the kind of

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TRIBUNE WATCHDOG DEADLY NEGLECT

The final hours of Jeremiah Clark

For two days, a boy with profound disabilities grew mortally ill, yet no one at his care facility called a doctor. Not his case manager. Not a day nurse, and not his night nurse. As the third day dawned, another nurse finally called for help.

But it was too late. Jeremiah became the most recent fatality in a pattern of harmful care at Alden Village North.

By Sam Roe and Jared S. Hopkins

Tribune reporters
Friday, Oct. 8, 2010

Nine-year-old Jeremiah Clark survived for years not being able to walk, talk, go to the bathroom by himself or eat without a feeding tube.

But ultimately he could not survive living at Alden Village North.

One morning last year, when the facility for children with severe disabilities dropped Jeremiah off at school, teachers were alarmed to see fluids leaking profusely from the hole where his feeding tube entered his abdomen. His shirt and pants were soaked, and a teacher had to use a mop to clean up the puddle under his wheelchair.

The school had Alden Village North pick him up, but teachers were outraged when he returned to class the next morning looking worse than before — pale, lethargic and moaning. Teachers placed him on a mat, where he shook in the fetal position.

A school nurse said she demanded that Alden Village North come for him immediately, but the facility balked, telling her to give him Tylenol. Three hours passed before Alden picked up Jeremiah, even though the facility is a five-minute walk away. Back at Alden, records show, staff did not assess his illness, monitor him during the night or even call a doctor until the next morning.

Jeremiah soon died in a hospital of shock, infection and a bowel obstruction. Before Jeremiah's death, a physician

told his mother that surgery — though physically punishing and an extreme long shot — could be attempted.

"No," his mother responded. "He's been through enough."

Jeremiah is among 13 children and young adults at the North Side facility whose deaths have led to state citations since 2000, a Tribune investigation has found. Some of these deaths, records show, might have been prevented had officials at the facility taken basic steps, such as closely monitoring residents and their medical equipment.

Despite the mounting deaths, the facility has not improved its care over the years, records show. The state has found more serious violations there in the past three years than at the other nine Illinois homes for children with disabilities combined.

Shannon Moffitt, one of Jeremiah's teachers at Gale Elementary, said her school would need a full-time staffer just to deal with all of the day-to-day issues involving the students living at Alden, from poor hygiene to lack of proper clothing.

"I hold my breath every time I send my kids back home there," she said.

Alden Village North, formerly known as Mosaic Living Center and the Pediatric Rehabilitation Institute, has had three owners in 10 years. According to the state, the operator since 2008 has

been Floyd A. Schlossberg, president of Alden Management Services. His firm runs more than 20 nursing facilities in Illinois, primarily providing care for the elderly.

Schlossberg did not respond to requests for an interview or to questions about Jeremiah's care and a suit his mother filed against the facility. In a brief statement, his company said it could not comment on matters involving pending litigation.

To piece together Jeremiah's final days, the Tribune interviewed key witnesses and reviewed state documents obtained through the Freedom of Information Act, including inspection reports on Alden, statements by facility employees and notes by Illinois Department of Public Health investigators.

A former nurse at Jeremiah's school, Felicia Wenz, told the newspaper that his death was one of the most egregious cases of child neglect she has seen. "That had to be the most painful death imaginable," she said.

Moffitt said Jeremiah did not have to die.

"It's just sick," she said. "It's disgusting. It still haunts me."

'It's going to be OK'

Kathern Clark never wanted to put her son in a nursing facility.

For years she had cared for Jeremiah



Kathern Clark with son Jeremiah, 9, in a hospital on the day he died. He is among 13 residents of a Chicago care facility whose deaths have led to state citations since 2000.



Before Jeremiah Clark's death, a doctor told his mother, Kathern, that surgery could be tried, but that it would be an extreme long shot. "No," she said. "He's been through enough." **FAMILY PHOTOS**



The state cited Alden Village North, above, for several violations, including neglect, in the death of Jeremiah Clark. For example, regulators said Alden didn't promptly notify a doctor of his condition. Alden is contesting the citations and a \$35,000 fine. **ALEX GARCIA/TRIBUNE PHOTO**

Chicago Tribune

Deadly Neglect



Above: Jeremiah Clark at a hospital on the day he died of shock, infection and a bowel obstruction. Two days earlier, a school nurse sent him back to his care facility after seeing fluid leaking from a hole where his feeding tube entered his abdomen. The facility returned him to school ill the next day.

Left: Jeremiah Clark, diagnosed with profound cognitive disabilities, could not walk or talk. He had lived at the North Side care facility since 2004.