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## **Court paper: Settlement likely in beating of mentally ill Sedgwick County inmate**

By Tim Potter  
The Wichita Eagle

Lawyers expect a settlement soon in a lawsuit seeking \$4.5 million over the 2008 beating of a mentally ill inmate at the Sedgwick County Jail, a court document says.

Attorneys expect a settlement that could be authorized by Sedgwick County commissioners Tuesday, according to a court document filed recently by Arthur Chalmers, an attorney representing the Sheriff's Office in its defense against the lawsuit.

Commissioners will meet in executive session at 9 a.m. Tuesday before their regular weekly meeting with staff, County Manager William Buchanan said Monday. Buchanan said he expected an announcement would result from the executive session.

Chalmers, the attorney, couldn't be reached for comment Monday.

Larry Wall, the lead attorney bringing the lawsuit, said he couldn't comment.

The lawsuit, on behalf of inmate Edgar Richard Jr., has been scheduled to go to trial March 25 in federal court in Wichita.

On Feb. 15, 2008, sheriff's Deputy Manuel Diaz came to Richard's cell and punched the 59-year-old in the face an estimated 15 to 20 times, fracturing Richard's jaw and leaving some of his teeth floating in a pool of his blood, according to the judge's 83-page court document summarizing the case. Diaz pleaded no-contest to reckless aggravated battery, a felony.

The defendants are Diaz, Deputy Saquisha Nelson, the office of the sheriff, and Paul Murphy, who was the psychiatrist in charge of treating Richard when he was in jail.

The lawsuit has alleged wider abuse of the mentally ill, who comprise a large portion of the jail population. Concerns over treatment of inmates became an issue in the 2012 sheriff's election in which police Capt. Jeff Easter defeated Sheriff Robert Hinshaw.

On Feb. 17, the jail opened the first section of a pod focused on dealing with mentally ill inmates.

In May, Easter told county commissioners that having a special area to manage mentally ill inmates could limit the risk of lawsuits.

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