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## Family Of Beaten Inmate Says Lawsuit Is To Create Change

By Cliff Judy (WICHITA, Kan.)

They say their brother has never been the same, and witnesses in a lawsuit against the Sedgwick County Sheriff say they were afraid a detention deputy would punch Edgar Richard's face off.

A lawsuit filed late Friday afternoon by Richard's son is asking for more than \$75,000 from both former Sedgwick County Sheriff Gary Steed and current Sheriff Robert "Bob" Hinshaw. However, Richard's family members and attorneys say the case is about getting the jail to treat patients with mental illnesses better, not about money.

"A tragic thing happened," says Donnie Richard, Edgar Richard's brother, "but it would be even more tragic for it to happen to anyone else. That's my main focus is to see that it doesn't happen again."

Richard, who suffers from mental illness, was an inmate at the Sedgwick County Jail in February 2008 when a beating from detention deputy Manuel Diaz put him in a coma with skull fractures and a broken jaw. The sheriff said Richard had refused his medication on February 15, 2008, and tried to choke Diaz before the beating.

"I feel like they killed by brother spiritually, mentally, and almost physically," says Clarene Sutton, Richard's sister. Richard is now staying in a nursing home for the mentally ill and still suffers from severe brain damage.

Sutton says she can barely look at the pictures included in the lawsuit, which show Richard unconscious and shackled to a hospital bed. Pictures of Richard's cell show blood splattered over much of his bed and the cell floor.

Witnesses to Richard's beating, including another detention deputy, say Diaz punched the inmate as many as 25 times. The fellow deputy told investigators she was afraid Diaz would "rip (Richard's) face off" and a medication aid cried as she told investigators she could hear the "bone crushing punches to his face."

Larry Wall, one of Richard's attorneys, says the witness testimony and other evidence of abuse come from internal reports from the sheriff's department he obtained through sources. He and Richard's family members say the main goal of the lawsuit is to cause change at the jail.

"That would be the greatest thing for Edgar Richard to know that his beating caused the county to change how they treat the mentally ill," says Wall.

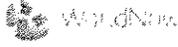
Eyewitness News called both Hinshaw and Steed on Sunday afternoon. Neither have released a statement. Sheriff Hinshaw said he hadn't seen the lawsuit yet, but he wouldn't be allowed to comment even if he had. Sheriff Hinshaw said he would defer to county attorneys.

Diaz was fired by the sheriff's department months after Richard was injured, and a judge sentenced him earlier this year to probation on a charge of aggravated battery.

Richard's attorneys say his medical bills alone total more than \$700,000.



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