



NEWS RELEASE

Attorney General Mike Hilgers

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Nebraska Nurses Disciplined for Violations at Omaha Hospice Service

Lincoln - The Nebraska Attorney General's Office filed disciplinary charges last week against two nurses for misconduct: Melanie Costlow, R.N., owner of Endless Journey Hospice in Omaha, and Nicole Beck, L.P.N., its former executive director.

The charges alleged that narcotics belonging to deceased patients were stored in an unlocked cabinet at the hospice's Omaha office, and staff used medications from the supply for other patients without proper prescriptions. The Petition alleged that employees were instructed to document the medications of deceased patients as "destroyed" when they were actually being re-used.

Costlow had misdemeanor convictions that she failed to report to the Department of Health and Human Services and misrepresented the extent of her convictions on her license renewal applications. Costlow was also accused of transporting medications from deceased Lincoln patients to Omaha, allowing unlicensed staff to sign patient records as licensed professionals, failing to report misdemeanor convictions, and misrepresenting those convictions on license-renewal applications.

Beck is accused of keeping an unlocked cabinet of narcotics from deceased patients in her office, directing employees to return unused medications, and signing patient records as a physician, social worker, and volunteer coordinator.

The charges against the two included misappropriation of medications, improper handling and dispensing of controlled substances, falsification or inadequate maintenance of patient records, practicing beyond the authorized scope, aiding unlicensed practice, ethics violations, and violations of the Uniform Controlled Substances Act.

Under Agreed Settlements approved by the Chief Medical Officer of DHHS, both Costlow's and Beck's nursing licenses were suspended for 90 days. They were also ordered to participate in extensive ethics training, and they each were assessed a \$10,000.00 civil penalty.

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