

**LOCAL** OCTOBER 26, 2015

# Tacoma widow sues mental-health provider in husband's death by their son

## HIGHLIGHTS

Mentally ill son killed father with hatchet

Plaintiff contends warning signs ignored

DSHS targeted in earlier, ongoing lawsuit



Kim Meline contends mental-health professionals under Optum's employ failed to adequately evaluate her son Jonathan before he was released from Western State Hospital as a cost-cutting measure. **PETER HALEY** - Staff file, 2013

BY ADAM LYNN  
*Staff writer*

The widow of a Tacoma man killed by their mentally ill son has sued the company contracted to manage and coordinate Pierce County's crisis and psychiatric services.

Kim Meline's lawsuit contends Optumhealth Care Solutions did not do enough to help her son, Jonathan Meline, avoid falling into a homicidal psychosis.

Attorneys Jack Connelly and Nathan Roberts filed the suit on her behalf last week in Pierce County Superior Court. It seeks unspecified monetary damages from the Minnesota-based corporation, which has provided mental-health oversight in Pierce County since 2009.

"We feel for the Meline family as they cope with their tragic loss, and it is premature for us to comment on this lawsuit," Optum said in a statement released Monday.

Kim Meline contends mental-health professionals under Optum's employ failed to adequately evaluate her son before he was released from Western State Hospital as a cost-cutting measure.

The company later ignored repeated warnings that he was not taking his medication and becoming increasingly erratic once he moved back into his parents' home, the lawsuit alleges.

Jonathan Meline, 32, previously had been diagnosed with serious mental illness, and state doctors had warned "that Jonathan was likely to engage in acts of violence by virtue of his psychiatric disorder ..." the lawsuit states.

On Oct. 25, 2012, he attacked his sleeping father, 56-year-old Robert Meline, with a hatchet and killed him. Jonathan Meline later was found not guilty by reason of insanity and was involuntarily committed to Western State.

"Defendant Optum's policies saved some money but made it virtually inevitable that something extremely tragic would happen," the lawsuit states.

"Despite being the only ones with authority to act, Optum's (agents) did nothing in response, failed to evaluate Jonathan Meline and failed to take the steps necessary to recommit him," according to the lawsuit.

Kim Meline previously sued the state Department of Health and Social Services and an agency called Comprehensive Life Resources, saying they, too, failed to meet their duty of care in her son's case or to warn her husband and her of his dangerousness.

That lawsuit continues to wend its way through the system, and Meline's lawyers said they plan to consolidate it with the newly filed Optum case.

In formal answers to the earlier lawsuit, lawyers for DSHS and Comprehensive Life Resources said their clients were not at fault for Jonathan Meline's actions and were operating under good faith in managing his case.

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