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## Lack of basic physical and mental care results in death of Florida prison inmate

Searcy Denney has regularly engaged in cases involving issues with complex social ramifications on behalf of vulnerable and disadvantaged persons. Recently, SDSBS attorney **Jack Scarola** was recruited by the Human Rights Defense Center to represent the family and estate of Vincent Gaines, a Florida prisoner who was deprived of adequate nutrition and treatment for his physical and mental health needs. The lack of care resulted in prolonged malnutrition and his eventual death from starvation. Mr. Gaines' long history of mental illness placed him among the most vulnerable members of society. Government institutions and individuals charged with the responsibility of caring for him failed to provide the most basic care, and they ignored the serious consequences of that neglect.

Unfortunately, the inadequate treatment provided to Mr. Gaines was not an isolated event. Both the Florida Department of Corrections (FDOC) and Corizon Health, Inc., (FDOC's contractor for medical and mental health services) have a history of failing to provide adequate proper care for mentally-ill prisoners which led to the death of other inmates. Similar lawsuits were brought against Corizon in Alabama, Arizona, Oregon, and Florida, and were successfully concluded with multi-million dollar settlements.

Searcy Denney agreed to take the case recognizing the complexity of the issues as well as the considerable social justice aspect of the case. Mr. Scarola enlisted SDSBS attorney **Elise Sherr Allison** to help lead the charge to pursue justice for the Gaines family. Ms. Allison has extensive experience in federal court having clerked for the Honorable Jose E. Martinez in the Southern District of Florida. The case is currently pending in the U. S. District Court for the Middle District of Florida. Updates will be provided as the case progresses. ♦