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## **Consumer Federation of the Southeast Calls for Immediate Intervention, Investigation Into Abuse/ Neglect at FINR**

**TALLAHASSEE** -- One of the nation's leading consumer protection organizations today called on federal and state authorities to take immediate action to protect patients at the Florida Institute for Neurologic Rehabilitation (FINR) in Hardee County. The urgent call comes on the heels of a shocking and disturbing [report](#) by Bloomberg News detailing a dangerous alleged pattern of abuse and neglect of residents at the facility.

Walter Dartland, executive director of the Consumer Federation of the Southeast, today issued an emergency call for state and federal authorities to immediately send a protective services team to FINR to ensure the safety and well-being of each resident. He also advocated for a state or multi-state and/or federal forensic audit of the facility to investigate its possible misuse of any federal and state tax dollars, while also urging insurance investigators to thoroughly examine possible fraudulent activity that would "milk or bilk" patients' premiums.

"One of the nation's most trustworthy media organizations has documented what it asserts is a horrific, outrageous and heartbreaking series of heinous acts at a facility that is supposed to be providing care to some of the country's most vulnerable patients," said Dartland. "The desperate cries for help from behind FINR's closed doors are an urgent alarm that should resonate at the highest levels of federal and state government and law enforcement. Families rightfully are deeply concerned and deserve to know their loved ones are in a safe and secure environment."

Dartland added that protecting public safety “is the top priority and responsibility of government. If authorities need to take over control of the facility to ensure the patients are safe, then that’s what needs to happen – now.”

Bloomberg News based its deeply documented report on sources, more than 2,000 pages of court and medical records, police reports, state investigations and autopsy reports. The story provides many powerful examples of the alleged abuse and neglect including instances where patients have died, or have reportedly swallowed fishhooks and batteries to escape the institution as well as testimonials from former patients including [videotaped evidence](#) of apparent beatings by caretakers.

The report further outlines that Florida’s Department of Children and Families has received 477 allegations of abuse or neglect at FINR since 2005, including 36 that were “verified” by its investigations. According to the state agency, 36 verified claims and others were referred to law enforcement.

"If state action now can prevent any further abuse of a single patient, then action is justified today," said Dartland.

As part of an effort to increase public awareness of the story, Dartland invited concerned individuals to get involved in the effort by joining the Protect People with Brain Injuries Facebook group set up on the site at: <https://www.facebook.com/ProtectPeopleWithBrainInjuries>

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