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## NEWS

January 23, 2009 - 12:20am

# N.J. company faces lawsuit, criminal charges in death of teen

By **EDITOR**

The mother of a Utah teenager who died after a month in a wilderness boot camp is suing the West Caldwell-based Community Education Centers, Inc., (CEC) alleging that the staff at their facility in Colorado ignored signs of what turned out to be a staph infection. The company is also facing a criminal trial in March.

CEC operates treatment facilities for criminal defendants in twenty states and manages a prison in Delaware, according to the Associated Press. The Executive Vice President and General Counsel for Public Affairs for the company is William Palatucci, who is also a top advisor to Republican gubernatorial candidate Christopher Christie. Dughi, Hewit & Palatucci, the law firm where Palatucci and Christie were partners, represented CEC for fifteen years before Palatucci joined the firm full time.

The 15-year-old, Caleb Jensen, had been sentenced to sixty days at a "rigorous boot camp," [according to an Associated Press Report](#). He was "forced to take long hikes in the Colorado backcountry without water. He was dragged by arm and wrist restraints when he stumbled in pain by counselors who believed he was faking an illness."

The lawsuit claims that Jensen "bound tightly in a tarp to prevent his escape" at night, and that "he was given a diaper when he soiled his sleeping bag. Eventually, he couldn't summon the strength to crawl out of the bag."

"It was a horrible tragedy but there was no wrongdoing by our company or staff," Pallatucci, the told The Associated Press. He did not respond to specific allegations made in the Jensen complaint, "except to say in this matter we were always in full compliance with government regulations governing the program."

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