

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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When Will Walker Take Responsibility for Mental Health Center Mismanagement?

Spending Hundreds of Thousands of Dollars on Outside Law Firm, Public Relations Staff, But No Accountability by Walker

Madison – A public interest advocacy group is calling on Milwaukee County Executive Scott Walker Monday to take responsibility for his “tragic mismanagement of the county’s Mental Health Complex,” saying Walker has chosen to defend himself by hiring an outside law firm and a public relations specialist, both at taxpayer expense, instead of fixing the problem.

One Wisconsin Now, a statewide liberal advocacy group, is demanding Walker provide immediate additional resources and management overhaul to ensure patients and staff at the Milwaukee County Mental Health Complex are not subject to further harm.

“Scott Walker fails Milwaukee County it is patients and taxpayers left to suffer,” said Scot Ross, One Wisconsin Now Executive Director. “From top to bottom, this whole tragic story is due to Scott Walker’s mismanagement and instead of an apology, taxpayers get more excuses and another quarter-of-a-million dollar legal defense and public relations bill from him.”

The results of an investigation by the *Milwaukee Journal Sentinel* have shown a pattern of neglect and mismanagement which have been devastating to patients and dangerous for workers at the county’s Mental Health Complex. Walker’s response has been to blame others, and according to the story, “...a private lawyer has been paid \$395 an hour to represent the county and a public relations staffer has been hired at \$49,200 a year to protect the complex’s image.”

Walker’s Mental Health Complex has been plagued with problems throughout his tenure as County Executive, most notably unsafe conditions for both patients and staff. The conditions were so bad under Walker’s watch that the federal government threatened to terminate funding for the center. Patient deaths and sexual assaults have been among the most high-profile incidents at the center.

Responding previously to the unsafe conditions caused by the housing of male and female patients on the same ward, a top Walker administrator, John Chianelli, was quoted as saying in a closed-door meeting with county supervisors that such arrangements were “a trade off.” The recent investigative newspaper reports noted, “The operation has been led by a revolving door of administrators, many of whom lacked significant mental health credentials. ... and a budget that has lagged rising costs.”

“Scott Walker poses for holy pictures claiming he holds the line on taxes, but both patients and the taxpayers are the ones who ultimately pay the price for his mismanagement,” said Ross. “If Scott Walker spent his time providing proper oversight and reasonable resources to the mental health center instead of making his decisions by listening to right wing talk radio, this terrible situation might well have been avoided.”

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OWN Release – Page 2

For more information about Scott Walker's records of mismanagement on the Mental Health Center can be found at: <http://www.scottwalkerfailurefiles.com/pdf/SWFF-MismanagementMentalHealth.pdf>.

Additional information about Walker's record of failings as Milwaukee County Executive is available at: <http://www.ScottWalkerFailureFiles.com>.

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One Wisconsin Now is a statewide communications network specializing in effective earned media and online organizing to advance progressive leadership and values.