

# Nev. patient dumping suit to be settled

By Michelle Rindels, AP

CARSON CITY – Nevada has tentatively agreed to pay \$400,000 to the city and county of San Francisco to settle allegations that the state wrongfully and intentionally bused psychiatric patients to the city and declined to pay the costs connected with their care.

The deal, if approved by the Nevada Board of Examiners and a similar board in San Francisco, is expected to end an expensive legal battle that has lasted more than two years. Nevada officials budgeted more than \$1.9 million to fight the lawsuit through the summer; a final tally of the costs wasn't immediately available.

"The settlement will bring an amicable resolution to this matter," Republican Gov. Brian Sandoval said in a statement. "The settlement will also validate the patient management best practices and procedures which Nevada has had in place for two years."

Officials from the San Francisco City Attorney's Office declined to comment on the agreement, which would cover the city's attorney's fees.

San Francisco sued Nevada in September 2013, after the *Sacramento Bee* published accounts of patients who were apparently discharged from Rawson-Neal Psychiatric Hospital in Las Vegas, given bus tickets to cities in California and directed to seek further care there.

San Francisco City Attorney Dennis Herrera sued, saying that 24 people with no prior connection to his city had been bused there over a five-year period, and 20 needed medical care

shortly after they arrived.

“What the defendants have been doing for years is horribly wrong on two levels,” Herrera said in a statement when he filed suit. “It cruelly victimizes a defenseless population, and punishes jurisdictions for providing health and human services that others won’t provide.”

In the months immediately after the newspaper’s investigation, Nevada health officials said policies were strengthened to ensure a patient has support at their destination, several employees were fired, and more than \$30 million was added to the budget to fund mental health services.

Sandoval said he expects Nevada and San Francisco to agree on new procedures for transferring psychiatric patients.

“We look forward to working with California to ensure all patient transfers to and from both states are managed using these best practices and adhering to conditions detailed in the agreement,” the governor said.

The settlement is expected to come up for a vote at a Nevada Board of Examiners meeting on Oct. 13.