



Meriter agrees to \$82 million settlement in pension case



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Meriter Health Services has agreed to pay \$82 million in a class action lawsuit alleging that Meriter's pension plan miscalculated benefits.

Details of the settlement, reached July 23, are expected to be filed in U.S. District Court in Madison by Monday.

The lawsuit, filed in 2010, alleges that more than 4,000 Meriter employees received lump-sum pension payments not properly calculated according to federal law.

In a July 3 opinion, U.S. District Judge William Conley ruled partly in favor of Meriter, saying some of the claims accrued before 2003, beyond a six-year statute of limitations.

But Conley didn't rule on a claim that Meriter concealed potential violations of the tax code from 1987 to 2002 when calculating lump-sum payments.

A trial had been scheduled for July 28.

Meriter Health Services became part of Iowa-based UnityPoint Health in January.

Last year, Meriter Hospital had \$454.3 million in revenue and \$428.5 million in expenses, for an operating margin of about \$25.8 million, or 5.7 percent, according to the Wisconsin Hospital Association.

Meriter-UnityPoint Health spokeswoman Leah Huibregtse said Meriter has been preparing to pay the settlement, and it won't affect patient care.

Attorneys for Meriter and the plaintiffs didn't immediately respond to requests for comment Thursday.

The case was initially filed under the name of plaintiff Tammy Boyd, who worked at Meriter from 1985 to 2006 in a lab and call center. She received a lump sum of \$65,508 but should have received \$131,154, the suit said.

The case was later named for Phyllis Johnson, who worked at Meriter from 1972 to 1995 as a diet clerk and office supervisor.