Lawsuit: Mental health facility in Mississippi negligent

By Holbrook Mohr Associated Press

JACKSON, Miss. — A woman has filed a federal lawsuit claiming a central Mississippi mental health facility failed to protect her 11-year-old son from being sexually abused by a nurse while he was a patient.

The lawsuit says Brentwood Behavioral Healthcare of Mississippi, located in Flowood, was negligent for not preventing the nurse, Clifford Hough, from abusing the boy "on a number of occasions" from December 2012 to January 2013. The suit was filed Friday in U.S. District Court in Jackson.

Hough, now 49, pleaded guilty earlier this year in Rankin County Circuit Court to gratification of lust and was sentenced to 15 years, with five years suspended and 10 to serve.

When asked for comment, a Brentwood official said Monday morning that the facility would send a statement to The Associated Press, but it had not been received as of late Monday.

The boy is identified in the lawsuit as John Doe. The AP does not generally name victims of alleged sexual abuse, and is not identifying the mother to protect the boy's identity.

Among other things, the lawsuit says the boy reported the abuse to another nurse, who did not believe him and failed to investigate. It also says an employee knew Hough was going into the boy's room at night and closing the door, a violation of the facility's policy, but did not investigate or report the matter to a supervisor.

"Brentwood and its employees failed to take any steps to intervene and prevent these brutal attacks," the lawsuit says.

The woman's attorney, Chuck Mullins, declined to comment Monday because the lawsuit is pending.

The lawsuit also said that surveillance cameras caught Hough taking the boy into a shower and closing the door and that an employee saw other children sitting on Hough's lap, but did not report the violation of policy to anyone.

The lawsuit seeks compensatory and punitive damages in an amount to be determined by a jury.