



Woman With HIV Sues Rehab Center

She alleges the facility disclosed her status and then evicted her.

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A woman living with HIV sued an assisted living and treatment center in Arizona, alleging that the center disclosed her HIV-positive status to other residents and told them they would not be safe around her. Then she was removed from the center, according to the lawsuit.

In October 2023, Hailei Joe filed a federal lawsuit against Olive Branch Assisted Living, a residential addiction treatment facility in Casa Grande, Arizona. The complaint alleges that the facility violated the federal Fair Housing Act, the Arizona Fair Housing Act and the Americans with Disabilities Act.

“I’m Native American,” Joe told the Phoenix New Times. “My grandmother refers to us as the grassroots people because we are at the bottom of society, but I never thought in a million years that this would happen to me.”

Joe alleges that when she moved into the assisted living center in October 2022, she told a staff member that she thought she might be HIV positive. In November 2022, test results confirmed she had the virus. Olive Branch owner Russell Appleton subsequently banned Joe from a field trip and activities that involved other residents, according to the court documents.

The lawsuit states that Appleton then called a group meeting during which he informed all treatment center residents that they had the right to know that someone living at the facility was HIV positive and that the facility was no longer safe for them. Although he did not mention Joe by name, she began crying, and other residents attempted to comfort her.

After Appleton disclosed her status without her permission, Joe alleges that she was forced to leave the facility, cutting off her access to its addiction treatment services.

Joe filed the lawsuit because she says the eviction caused her to experience unstable housing and emotional distress. She also claims the facility violated her privacy by disclosing her HIV status to others. She is seeking a jury trial as well as punitive damages.