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Lawsuit accuses Calif. nursing-home chain of poor care

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Horizon West HealthCare, Rocklin, Calif., is being sued for allegedly billing public and private insurers while knowingly providing substandard care in its 22 California nursing homes. The class-action lawsuit, filed in Sacramento Superior Court, claims the for-profit, elder-care chain violated several state and federal laws over the past four years, including failing to meet California's minimum nurse-staffing ratios. The lawsuit also accuses the company of fraud, unlawful business practices and numerous health- and safety-code violations. Horizon West called the allegations inaccurate and arbitrary. "We take every issue very seriously, and we will internally evaluate any allegations of noncompliance with state staffing requirements," the company said in a written statement. In 1999, the company agreed to pay the federal government \$4 million to settle claims that it submitted fraudulent Medicare cost reports. Recently, several lawsuits against providers have hinged on quality-of-care claims. Earlier this month, separate lawsuits were filed in Los Angeles Superior Court accusing seven California hospital and nursing-home chains of charging Medicare to treat injuries and illnesses they helped cause through medical errors or neglect. -- by [Laura B. Benko](#)

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