

Attorney general finds no requirement to pay for inmate gender surgeries

FRANKFORT (AP) Kentucky is under no legal requirement to use taxpayer money to cover the costs of gender-affirming surgeries for people incarcerated in state prisons, Attorney General Russell Coleman said Thursday.

The state's corrections department requested the opinion from the state's Republican attorney general as the agency amends its administrative regulations regarding medical care for people in prison.

Coleman was asked whether the constitutional prohibition against cruel and unusual punishment means the department is required to pay for gender-affirming surgeries for transgender people in prison when the procedure is deemed "medical necessary" by medical professionals.

"Common sense dictates that it is not 'cruel and unusual' for the department to decline to spend taxpayer dollars on such controversial medical procedures," Coleman's opinion said. "Fortunately, there is no controlling legal authority that compels the department to abandon common sense."

Coleman said the opinion should settle the question "once and for all."

"The idea that Kentucky taxpayers should be forced to pay for



Kentucky Attorney General Russell Coleman speaks in Frankfort on Jan. 2.

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

gender surgeries for convicted criminals was simply absurd," he said.

The issue surfaced at a recent legislative committee meeting as the corrections department attempts to update rules to broaden accommodations for transgender people in prison to comply with federal standards. The department's efforts drew a backlash from some Republicans in the GOP-supermajority Legislature.

The department's proposed new rules would expand protections for transgender people in prison by ensuring they have access to appropriate medical and mental

health services and are housed in facilities that align with their gender identity, the *Lexington Herald-Leader* reported. If gender-affirming care is requested, the changes set out a protocol that includes extensive mental health evaluations and, potentially, medical interventions.

Kentucky Gov. Andy Beshear said Thursday that he appreciated the attorney general's response and said the proposed regulation would be redrafted to reflect the opinion from Coleman's office.

SEE **INMATES** | A4

NEWS IN BRIEF

Winter Wonderland among nation's top displays

ASHLAND

Ashland's Winter Wonderland of Lights, based on a poll of 3,000 families, was voted among the top 20 Christmas light displays in the United States.

Mixbook conducted a survey of 3,000 families to determine the 150 "most enchanting Christmas light displays across the country," according to a news release.

Winter Wonderland was the top-ranked Kentucky location for Christmas lights, according to the poll.

Other Kentucky destinations include Southern Lights in Lexington (No. 36) and Lights Under Louisville (No. 109).

The Columbus Zoo and Aquarium Wildlights ranked 17th.

The top-ranked display in the country is Peace, Love & Lights Holiday Light Show in Catskills, New York.

Foundation announces grants

ASHLAND

The Foundation for the Tri-State Community has announced its newly named and revised 2024 Community Grants (formerly 21st Century Grants) totaling \$73,713.28 to 12 organizations, the largest community grant award total in the organization's history.

Awards were given to the following organizations for capacity building projects, new equipment and pilot programs: Jack and the Bean, Ebenezer Medical Outreach, Boyd County Sheriff Department, Developmental Therapy Center, Safe Harbor of Northeast Kentucky, Huntington's Kitchen, Our Lady of Fatima Parish School, Heritage Farm Foundation, Boyd County 4H Youth Development, Argillite Community Service Center, Tri-State Family Connection and Alchemy Theatre Troupe.

"Our investment in these projects aligns with our long-term vision to improve the quality of life for all people living in the Tri-State," Kathryn Lamp, CEO of the Foundation for the Tri-State, said.

The Foundation's Community Grants are available for projects of 501(c)(3) tax-exempt charities and organizations serving Boyd and Greenup Counties in Kentucky, Cabell and Wayne counties in West Virginia, and Lawrence County, Ohio. The next deadline to submit a grant application is Feb. 28. To find out more about how to apply, contact the foundation's office at (606) 324-3888 or (304) 942-0046.

SEE **BRIEF** | A3

Indictment: Parents starved infant

BY **AARON SNYDER**
THE DAILY INDEPENDENT

GREENUP A Greenup County grand jury has indicted a Wurtland

couple on charges of murder and first-degree criminal abuse.

Raceland and Flatwoods Police arrested Carrieann Hall, 25, and Kentucky State Police

arrested Jacob Michael Hall, 26, last week on the charges.

According to court records, a grand jury determined the Halls deprived their child — six-week-old Heartly Hall — of food, water and necessary care, leading to Heartly's death.

The charges stem

from a period of time spanning Oct. 17, 2023, through Nov. 29, 2023.

They are each in jail on a \$200,000 bond.

An indictment does not necessarily indicate guilt. Those indicted on felony charges are innocent until proven guilty.

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PUBLIC NOTICES

PUBLIC NOTICE NOTICE OF INTENT TO REQUEST RELEASE OF FUNDS

December 20, 2024

City of Ashland
PO Box 1839
Ashland, KY 41105
(606) 385-3324

On or about December 28, 2024, the City of Ashland will submit a request to the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) for the release of Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) funds under Title I of the Housing and Community Development Act of 1974 (PL 93-383), as amended, to undertake a project known as the M&J Café Women-Owned and Ethnic-Minority Business Loan for the purpose of providing a five-year forgivable loan to install a hood and fire suppression system and to purchase non-fixture, operating equipment, including (but not limited to) refrigerators, freezers, ice machines, prep tables, fryers, ovens, toasters, heat lamps, etc. M&J Café will be required to hire one full-time equivalent, low-and-moderate-income employee per \$25,000 received. M&J Café is located at 1212 Bath Avenue, Ashland, KY 41101. The total estimated cost of the project is \$50,000 with \$50,000 from CDBG funds.

The activities proposed are categorically excluded under HUD regulations at 24 CFR Part 58 from National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) requirements. An Environmental Review Record (ERR) that documents the environmental determinations for this project is on file at the Ashland City Building, 1700 Greenup Avenue, Room 208, Ashland, KY 41101 and may be examined or copied on weekdays from 8:30 a.m. to 5:00 p.m.

PUBLIC COMMENTS

Any individual, group, or agency may submit written comments on the ERR to the City of Ashland Department of Community and Economic Development, PO Box 1839, Ashland, KY 41105 or by email to Jacob Risner at risner@ashlandky.gov. All comments received by December 27, 2024 will be considered by the City of Ashland prior to authorizing submission of a request for release of funds.

ENVIRONMENTAL CERTIFICATION

The City of Ashland certifies to the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development that Michelle Veach, in her capacity as Certifying Officer, consents to accept the jurisdiction of the Federal Courts if an action is brought to enforce responsibilities in relation to the environmental review process and that these responsibilities have been satisfied. HUD's approval of the certification satisfies its responsibilities under NEPA and related laws and authorities and allows the City of Ashland to use program funds.

OBJECTIONS TO RELEASE OF FUNDS

HUD will accept objections to its release of funds and the City of Ashland's certification for a period of fifteen days following the anticipated submission date or its actual receipt of the request (whichever is later) only if they are on one of the following bases: (a) the certification was not executed by the Certifying Officer of Ashland; (b) the City of Ashland has omitted a step or failed to make a decision or finding required by HUD regulations at 24 CFR part 58; (c) the grant recipient or other participants in the development process have committed funds, incurred costs, or undertaken activities not authorized by 24 CFR Part 58 before approval of a release of funds by HUD; or (d) another Federal agency acting pursuant to 40 CFR Part 1504 has submitted a written finding that the project is unsatisfactory from the standpoint of environmental quality. Objections must be prepared and submitted in accordance with the required procedures (24 CFR Part 58, Sec. 58.76) and should be sent to the Louisville Field Office of CPD at LouisvilleRROF@hud.gov. Potential objectors should contact HUD to verify the actual last day of the objection period.

Michelle Veach, Assistant Finance Director
Published: December 20, 2024

What is Medicare's general enrollment period?

Toni: I turned 65 in June two years ago and did not enroll in Medicare because I do not have any health issues. A friend advised me to enroll in Medicare during Medicare's Annual Enrollment Period.

I received a letter stating that because I did not enroll in Medicare when I turned 65 that I have been denied

Medicare.

The letter also stated that I need to enroll in Medicare online during Medicare's General Enrollment Period which is Jan.1-March 31. I am confused about how I need to do to enroll in Medicare online and what website to use. Can you please explain what I need to do in simple terms and what kind of penalty I can expect? Thanks, Toni.

Don from Dallas

Hi Don:

The letter stated you will have to enroll

during Medicare's General Enrollment Period (GEP), from Jan.1-Mar. 31 each year. This enrollment period is for those who never enrolled in Medicare Parts A and B, but not for those who failed to enroll in a Medicare Part D prescription drug plan. That is what Medicare's Annual Enrollment Period (AEP), which recently ended Dec. 7, is for; and you will have to wait until 2025's AEP, which begins on Oct.15 and runs through Dec.7, to enroll in Part D.

Beginning Jan. 1, 2023, Medicare's GEP rules changed, helping Americans who had not enrolled in Medicare when turning 65. Page 18 of the Medicare and You Handbook under "General Enrollment Period" explains that now when you enroll in January, February, or March, your Medicare Part B will begin the first day of the following month. If you wait past March 31 to enroll, your Medicare enrollment will be delayed until Jan.1 of the next year, and you'll

receive a higher Part B penalty. This penalty goes all the way back to the month you turned 65.

Don, if we were to have a Toni Says Medicare consultation, whether in person or online, I would advise you to enroll in Medicare Parts A and B during 2025's Medicare's GEP which begins Jan. 1, and do not delay enrolling in Medicare.

Yes, Don, you will receive the Part B penalty which is a 10% penalty for each 12-month period (year) that you failed to enroll. Your penalty will be 20% or 30% depending on the number of years you could have had Part B but failed to enroll. The penalty remains in effect for the life of the Medicare beneficiary's Medicare coverage.

Enrolling in Medicare Parts A and B requires you to have an ssa.gov account. You can sign up for Medicare online at <https://www.ssa.gov/medicare/sign-up>. Don, when you enroll during Medicare's GEP from

Jan. 1-Mar.31, your Medicare will begin the first day of the month following enrollment. This information is what your letter from Social Security stated.

Currently, there are more than 7 million Americans on Medicare receiving a Medicare Part B penalty costing, on average, \$5,000 in lifetime penalties because they did not enroll in Medicare at the right time.

Don, you will also be receiving a Part D penalty and should enroll in the next enrollment time for Medicare Part D, which is the 2025 Medicare AEP. Whichever prescription drug plan you pick will start Jan. 1 (2026) with a specific Part D penalty. The penalty is 1% for each month you failed to enroll in Medicare Part D starting at age 65. This penalty, based upon the national Part D average premium, changes as the national Part D average premium changes.

Readers, when turning 65 and covered by an individual policy or no health insurance, please do not delay enrollment in Medicare, like Don did — because with Medicare, what you don't know WILL hurt you.

TONI KING is an author and columnist on Medicare and health insurance issues. She has spent nearly 30 years as a top sales leader in the field. For a Medicare checkup, call the Toni Says call center at (832) 519-8664 or email info@tonisays.com regarding your Medicare plans and options. Toni Says Medicare Survival Guide Advanced edition is available at www.tonisays.com

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