

Worker's killer returning to state hospital

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

A man charged with killing a mental health worker in May pleaded guilty except for insanity Tuesday and is expected to be sent to the Oregon State Hospital.

Brent Redd, 31, stabbed Jennifer Warren to death when she delivered medicine to his apartment in St. Helens on May 20, 2012.

Redd pleaded guilty except for insanity in 2007 after he was accused of trying to kill his mother in 2005.

He was sent to the Oregon State Hospital for three years, until the Psychiatric Security Review Board deemed him eligible for release and sent him to Columbia Community Mental Health in 2010, a community mental health program in St. Helens. He was transferred from restrictive 24-hour supervision to his own duplex in 2011.

Redd appeared in court Tuesday with a shaved head and long beard. He cried throughout the 20-minute hearing. Warren's mother, Theresa Armstrong, wept and



DON PYAN/THE ASSOCIATED PRESS
Theresa Armstrong pauses as she speaks about her daughter, Jennifer Warren, during the sentencing hearing for Brent Redd in St. Helens.

then addressed Redd. "There is a hole in my heart," she said, and added, "May God have mercy on your soul." Redd's attorney, Patrick



Read more about Brent Redd (right) at [ORnews/brent-redd](#)



Sweeney, responded, "Mr. Redd conveys his sympathy and remorse."

Redd suffers from psychosis as a result of schizophrenia. He has been evaluated four times by state psychiatrists, most recently in January. They found that Redd either couldn't understand that his behavior was criminal or was unable to control his actions.

Under the terms of the sentence imposed Tuesday by Judge Steven Reed, the state Psychiatric Security Review Board can keep Redd in the hospital for the rest of his life.

Under the terms of Redd's original 2007 conviction for attempted murder of his mother, he was sentenced to up to 20 years under the supervision of the Psychiatric Security Review Board.

MEASURE: SB 417 (2013)
EXHIBIT: 2
2013 SESSION SEN JUDICIARY
DATE: 6-6-13 PAGES: 9
SUBMITTED BY: Mike Sahagian

Not all the story updates are upbeat

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In the two years that retired Army Col. Joe Williams led a lonely campaign for that welcome lounge — a fixture at 41 other U.S. airports — he was told time and again that



STEVE DUIN

COMMENTARY

the Port couldn't find room in the "limited" space available at PDX.

Williams sought reinforcements — "Being a committee of one was a poor decision on my part," he concedes — and mounted a new offensive.

He enlisted retired Navy Cmdr. Donald Leingang, executive director of USO Northwest. He reached out to the Oregon Department of Veterans' Affairs and the governor's office.

And, lo and behold, the Port

stumbled upon an old conference room that was being used for storage on the airport mezzanine.

Williams is thrilled. Negotiations are continuing. Williams estimates he may need to raise \$250,000 to renovate and furnish the room, but he is optimistic that the PDX welcome center will open by early summer.

"Maybe July 4," Williams says. "Wouldn't that be something?"

The bad news: Last May, Jennifer Warren, who worked for Columbia County Mental Health, dropped by the St. Helens duplex of Brent K.

Redd Jr. to deliver anti-psychotic meds.

Originally committed to Oregon State Hospital when he tried to kill his mother in 2007, Redd was granted conditional release by the Psychiatric Security Review Board in 2010. He lived with minimal supervision and a curfew, but his therapy seemed to be going well.

Until that Sunday morning, when Redd stabbed Warren to death.

On Feb. 12, Redd pleaded guilty except for insanity to the murder. He was placed, once again, under the review board's care.

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And that board is immune from a wrongful death claim by Warren's 22-year-old daughter, Jessica, because her mother was covered by workers' comp.

"It blows me away," said Michael Sahagian, attorney for Jennifer Warren's estate, "when there's no recourse against these government bodies."

Workers' comp, of course, is a compromise, one in which workers generally accept no-fault insurance for work-related injuries while giving up the right to sue for extensive damages.

In negotiating that trade-off, the Legislature apparently decided that public agencies deserved a piece of the immunity deal.

The statute is clear: "Every public body and its officers ... are immune from liability for any claim for injury to, or death of, any person covered by workers' compensation law."

Look at it this way:

If Redd had turned the kitchen knife on two people last May, Warren and the guy mowing the duplex lawn, only the family of the guy on the John Deere could file suit against the board that decided Redd was no threat to the public.

"If PSRB or any government body makes a decision that can be shown is negligent, they're on the hook," Sahagian argues. "When people are released to their custody, they have an obligation to protect the public. They have to decide when it's safe to let them out.

"That may come down to a jury question. But because of that immunity, we can't even get to a jury."

In Warren's case, Sahagian said, workers' comp paid the estate \$16,000, much of which disappeared into funeral expenses.

Her daughter has no further recourse. Whatever remorse the Psychiatric Security Review Board is dealing with, it doesn't have to worry about financial liability.

And only the Legislature can decide if this brand of shoehorned immunity is truly warranted in wrongful-death cases.

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Steve Duin: Not all the updates to recent columns are upbeat



By Steve Duin, The Oregonian

on February 18, 2013 at 4:40 PM, updated February 19, 2013 at 8:01 AM

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