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County drops sex charge against nurse's aide

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Middlesex County authorities have dropped a charge filed against a nurse's aide who was accused of fondling a 74-year-old female patient at an Edison nursing home last year.

Attorneys offered conflicting reasons yesterday on why the charge against Sat Van Pham, 59, of Woodbridge was dismissed Nov. 9 in New Brunswick by Superior Court Judge Robert A. Longhi.

Pham's attorney, [Vincent Sanzone](#) Jr. of Elizabeth, said the charge was dropped after prosecutors realized they had no evidence against the defendant, who has insisted he never touched the woman, a patient at Roosevelt Care Center.

Barbara Clark Stolte, an assistant Middlesex County prosecutor, said the woman claims she was improperly touched Dec. 24, but decided to drop the matter.

"She's a 74-year-old woman, and, quite frankly, going to grand jury and testifying at trial would be very physically and mentally taxing on her," the assistant prosecutor said.

Stolte said she sought dismissal of the charge after meeting with the woman and the woman's relative.

Stolte said the woman made the decision after learning that Pham's license to work as a nurse's aide had been revoked last summer by the state Department of Health after a hearing on the charge.

[Sanzone](#) said Pham is hoping to have his license restored, since the charge was dropped. The lawyer also said his client feels vindicated by the dismissal.

Pham, who is married and the father of five, served as a lieutenant in the South Vietnamese army before the fall of Saigon and spent 10 years in a prison camp before he was released and reunited with his family in 1985.

Since Pham was charged, he lost his job and remains unemployed, his lawyer said.

Pham had been offered a probationary term in exchange for a guilty plea, "but based on his Buddhist beliefs and his military training, he would never have pleaded to a crime he did not commit," the defense lawyer said.

Several days after the alleged incident, the women told administrators, who notified police, authorities said, adding the defendant was arrested and charged at the nursing home in April.

The nursing home was formerly operated by Middlesex County and now is run by a private company, the Solomon Health Group of Denver.