

# STATE OF ALASKA

DEPT. OF HEALTH AND SOCIAL SERVICES  
OFFICE OF THE COMMISSIONER

SARAH PALIN, GOVERNOR

P.O. BOX 110601  
JUNEAU, ALASKA 99811-0601  
PHONE: (907) 465-3030  
FAX: (907) 465-3068

March 4, 2008

**RECEIVED**

**MAR 06 2008**

James B. (Jim) Gottstein, Esq.  
PsychRights  
406 G Street, Suite 206  
Anchorage, AK 99501

Dear Mr. Gottstein:

Thank you for my courtesy copy of the letter and attachments you addressed to Governor Palin regarding unwarranted psychiatric drugging and the potential over-diagnosis of bipolar disorder of children in the custody of Alaska's Department of Health and Social Services.

The Office of Children's Services (OCS) policy 6.3.1 clearly states that administration of psychotropic medication, or any drugs prescribed for mental illness of behavioral problems, falls under the definition of major medical care. This reflects the fact that administration of these medications is viewed in a serious manner. The OCS policy further states, "Parental permission or a court order is also required for administration of psychotropic medication. If parental rights have been terminated, the assigned worker may approve administration of psychotropic medication following consultation with the supervisor, OCS regional psychiatric nurse and GAL. The consultation and resulting decision should be documented in the case file."

The policy does allow a physician or nurse to immediately administer medication if this is necessary to preserve the life of the child or prevent significant physical harm to the child or another person. Crisis administration of medications should be for a very brief duration of time and the assigned worker should be immediately informed. The worker should notify the parent of any medication administered on a crisis basis and the regional psychiatric nurse should review the circumstances regarding the administration to ensure adherence to policy.

Regarding the increase in the diagnosis of pediatric bipolar disorder, I appreciate you raising this concern. Your attached article is being forwarded to the regional psychiatric nurses within the OCS for their review and consideration.


James B. (Jim) Gottstein  
PsychRights  
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The OCS is currently reviewing all policies and procedures. Please be encouraged to submit any future recommendations you might have regarding administration of psychotropic medications to:

Kristie Swanson  
Office of Children's Services  
PO Box 110630  
Juneau, AK 99811

Thank you for advocating for the rights of Alaska's children.

Sincerely,



Karleen K. Jackson, Ph.D.  
Commissioner

cc: Governor Sarah Palin  
Talis Colberg, Attorney General  
Anna Kim, Special Staff Assistant, Office of the Governor  
William Hogan, Deputy Commissioner  
Tammy Sandoval, Director, Office of Children's Services  
Melissa Stone, Director, Division of Behavioral Health