

STATE OF ALASKA

DEPT. OF HEALTH AND SOCIAL SERVICES
OFFICE OF THE COMMISSIONER

SARAH PALIN, GOVERNOR

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March 22, 2007

James B. (Jim) Gottstein, Esq.
Law Project for Psychiatric Rights
406 G Street, Suite 206
Anchorage, Alaska 99501

RECEIVED

MAR 27 2007

Dear Mr. Gottstein:

Thank you for your March 14, 2007 e-mail regarding the concern that children in State custody are being over medicated.

Indications for the use of psychotropic medications in children includes, but is not limited to, symptoms consistent with psychosis, bipolar disorder, severe depression, Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD), and, in certain situations, severe behavioral disturbances. Concern should be raised when multiple medications of one class are used or when doses are prescribed which are considered high for this population. Concern should also be raised when it appears that these medications are being used for behavioral control alone, or to hasten a response to inpatient treatment or, for that matter, outpatient or residential treatment.

The State of Alaska, in cooperation with First Health Corporation, has for the past 3 ½ years utilized a behavioral pharmacy management system that compares evidence-based and consensus-based practice guidelines to the prescribing practices of Alaskan clinicians. If discrepancies are identified, the company uses a combined approach of education and peer consultation to address specific concerns. Since this program started, there have been changes made in prescribing practices with the goal being improved care for Alaska's children.

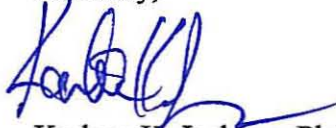
The Office of Children's Services (OCS) operates under policy which requires that caseworkers must staff medication recommendations for children on their caseloads with their Supervisor and their regional Psychiatric Nurse prior to giving consent to the treatment provider. The OCS Psychiatric Nurses have weekly contacts with the professionals treating OCS children in acute care settings, i.e., North Star, Alaska Psychiatric Institute, Providence Discovery, and in residential treatment centers. OCS caseworkers and Psychiatric Nurses also participate in monthly treatment plans for children in the residential treatment facilities.

A medication can be increased or decreased for a child in custody, but cannot be started without the OCS' knowledge and consent.

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Persons with concerns about a specific child in State custody being over medicated should contact the OCS at (907) 465-3191 to report the pertinent information. Thank you for bringing this matter to my attention.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Karleen K. Jackson', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Karleen K. Jackson, Ph.D.
Commissioner

cc: Anna Kim, Special Staff Assistant, Office of the Governor