

News Release—November 26, '07

From the desk of Psychiatric Patient Advocates

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Governor Sarah Palin's Office, through the chair of Alaska Psychiatric Institute's Governing Body, announced that by Executive Order the Governor's Office would establish the role and authority of the present 11 member API Governing Body.

It is claimed by DHSS that the present API Governing Body is not granted authority in present statute to operate; nor has a mission statement been defined by statute or regulation.

In the past 2 years API management has been forced by the Governing Body and Alaska Mental Health Board to write a comprehensive patient grievance procedure policy. API went for a year and maybe for years without letting psychiatric patients file a formal grievance.

AMHB and the API Governing Body forced API management to adopt a gender sensitivity policy for patient care. Also API was forced to adopt a patient gender choice of staff for intimate care policy. The number of psychiatric patients entering acute care who have been sexually and/or physically abused is between 60% to 90% respectively.

Only by pressure of the present API Governing Body has API management adopted more modern rules and regulations (best practice) in the humane treatment of psychiatric patients.

The goal of patient advocates is to reduce traumatization, recidivism and further the humane treatment of patients. Management of psychiatric facilities most often look at short term economics and convenience to guide their decisions about patient care. That statement is paraphrased from a recent Alaska Supreme Court decision.

API management and Alaska's DHSS/ Behavioral Health are now trying to change the role and authority of the API Governing Body to an Advisory Board, which will reduce API's Governing Body's ability to bring about change / best practices.

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