

Testimony to API Board by Dorrance Collins—January 24th, '08

Madam Chair, Board members.

My name is Dorrance Collins. In a 2006 Alaska Supreme Court decision, the justices stated “there is a clear, unavoidable tension between psychiatric hospitals seeking convenience / economics and patient rights which can manifest itself into patient abuse.”

The justices saw it as a given that psychiatric facilities, without regulations and oversight, will take shortcuts and deny patient rights.

Patients have a right by law to be informed of their rights prior to services being delivered or discontinued.

1. We want API to continue to produce and provide patients with unit manuals and the manuals should incorporate the recommendations of the API committee and Alaska Mental Health Board.
2. We want the API policies revised to reflect that patients in a convenient way will receive unopened mail, which is required by statute AS47.30.840.
3. We want a 1 hour standard during which a patient would have the right to go outdoors or in the fenced-in courtyard every day. (AS47.30.840 gives a professional the right to overrule patient rights if deemed in the best interest of the patient)
4. We want the state API to provide jackets for those patients who do not have them, as in some of the state-run prisons and jails, so patients can go outside or in the fenced-in courtyard year-round.
5. We want API to maintain statistics of all grievances filed, type of grievances filed, length of time to resolution, and how many patients were satisfied with the resolution of their grievance.
6. As advocates, we want assurance that the gym and exercise rooms are not being used by staff during the times when patients want to use the gym or equipment.

In closing, it is the responsibility of the API Board, Alaska Mental Health Board, Trust Authority Board, Disability Law Center, NAMI Anchorage / Alaska Board, and patient advocates to insure patient rights and reasonable treatment. It is not the job of hospital management. As stated by the Alaska Supreme Court, they felt rights and fair treatment were often hindered by institutional goals. I'm asking the API Board to address the issues we raised.

Thank you,

Dorrance Collins—929-0532

Cc: Open letter

Dorrance Collins

Testimony to API Board by Faith Myers—January 24th, 2008

Madam Chair, Board members,

My name is Faith Myers. We are asking the API Board to support, in principle, the necessity of revising Alaska statute 47.30.847 psychiatric patients' grievance procedure statute. In addition we are asking for a support letter from the Board supporting the passage of Senate Bill 8—a bill that asks psychiatric institutions to make a good faith effort to give psychiatric patients a choice of the gender of staff who do their intimate care services.

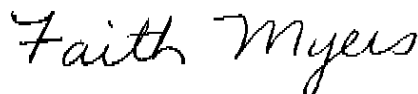
The present grievance procedure statute lacks the detail necessary to protect patients. The following Boards have agreed, in principle, that the statute needs to be revised and have written support letters—the Mental Health Trust Authority Board, Alaska Mental Health Board, Disability Law Center, Psych/Rights, Nami—Anchorage Board.

Disability Law has testified in person for the passage of Senate Bill 8 along with Psych/Rights and Alaska Mental Health Board.

In closing, we are asking for a support letter supporting the passage of Senate Bill 8 concerning intimate care and a support letter stating that Alaska Statute 47.30.847 needs to be revised. These issues are on the front burner and we need the support letters within one or two weeks.

Thank you,

Faith Myers
929-0532



Cc: Open letter