

Testimony to the Trust Authority Board –February 4th, '08

Mr. Chair, Board members,

My name is Faith Myers. We are asking for the direct help of the Trust Authority Board to bring about the following by using the Trust Authority's influence.

1. We want the state DHSS/ Behavioral Health to be required to maintain timely statistics (at minimum, quarterly) of the number and type of patient / client grievances filed at all Behavioral Health / grantee facilities and psychiatric hospitals and units. We want grievance statistics broken out into two sections—grievances concerning individuals with a psychiatric disorder and grievances concerning individuals with a developmental disability.
2. Some exceptions (in addition to the quarterly statistics) are sexual abuse allegations, denial of service, denial of rights granted by statute, physical abuse— all of the above should be reported within 24 hours to a state office for assistance and oversight to protect the patient. (Those statistics should also be maintained.)
3. We want the state DHSS, in a more positive and active way, to maintain an office to assist psychiatric patients and those with a developmental disability with the grievance process. Behavioral Health presently has such an office but they don't presently give their phone number to patients and don't require their 82 grantee facilities to post the phone number to the Behavioral Health office. States with best practices have such a single office.
4. We want the support and help of the Trust Authority Board in testifying for and supporting the passage of Senate Bill 8. Senate Bill 8 only asks that institutions make a good faith effort at providing psychiatric patients with their choice of gender of staff providing their intimate care services. The passage of Senate Bill 8 will reduce trauma to patients in psychiatric facilities.

In closing, we are asking for the direct help of the Trust Authority Board on the 4 issues we raised and we also ask that you inform us if the Board will provide assistance.

Thank You,

Faith Myers

Mental Health Advocates
Faith Myers / Dorrance Collins
3240 Penland Pkwy, Sp. 35
Anchorage, AK. 99508
(907) 929-0532

Cc : Open letter

*Psych / Rights
Disability Law*

NAMI

Testimony to the Trust Authority Board by Dorrance Collins—February 4, 08

Mr. Chair, Board members,

My name is Dorrance Collins. To be fair and offer justice to psychiatric patients filing a grievance there must be changes in the state and Behavioral Health's grantee grievance procedure requirements and the administrative codes.

We are asking the Trust Authority to use its influence and assist us and other advocates to bring about the necessary changes.

It is not always first nature for states and state agencies to automatically do the right thing. And it's going to take a lot of pressure to produce fair rules for psychiatric patients in Alaska. DHSS/Behavioral Health does not have the capacity as the primary author to produce fair rules for psychiatric patients.

Behavioral Health's 4 pages of grantee grievance procedure requirements are terrible. The requirements are not close to being fair to patients. There is no specific time in their requirements in which a grievance must be resolved. Facilities can ask for open-ended extensions. There is no urgent grievance procedure for sexual abuse allegations, physical abuse, denial of service or denial of patient rights granted by statute. There is no mention that there must be a staff person to act as an advocate to assist the patient as required in AS47.30.847. Behavioral Health allows facilities to require patients to go through an informal complaint process before the patient is able to file a formal grievance, etc.

API's Board put together a committee that met for a year to produce a fair grievance procedure. The committee produced an 8 page report and a 2 page supplementary report and forms to be used by patients. The findings and recommendations were endorsed by AMHB.

The API committee findings should be used in any future grievance procedure rules and AAC rules.

In closing, we are asking the Trust Authority Board to assist us to bring about changes and we recommend using the API Committee and Board's recommendations which were also recommended by AMHB.

Please let us know if you can help us. Thank you,

Dorrance Collins

Dorrance Collins
3240 Penland Pkwy, SP. 35
Anchorage, AK. 99508
(907) 929-0532

Cc: Open letter

*Psych/Rights
Disability Law*

NAMI