

Testimony to API Governing Body by Dorrance Collins—February 20, 2007

Madam Chair, Board members,

My name is Dorrance Collins.

In a recent 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 in patient abuse.”

I have an e-mail from one of the top managers of API stating that API management has no intention of incorporating any of the changes proposed by the committee into the new grievance procedure.

Two of the recommendations made by the API committee:

1. Patients should not have to go back to Treatment Team before being allowed to file a formal grievance.
2. Patients should not have to file an informal complaint before they are actually allowed to file a formal grievance.

Thus far, API management has refused to comply with committee recommendations.

Forcing patients to jump through hoops before being allowed to file a formal grievance is called “front-loading.” It is a way psychiatric facilities can stop psychiatric patients from filing a formal grievance. Some states have outlawed the process of front-loading a grievance procedure. Out of 256 complaints filed at API, not one was considered a formal grievance.

It’s going to take a lot of pressure to get API management to make any significant changes in the grievance procedure and the unit manuals.

According to Federal regulations and perhaps State statutes, psychiatric patients must be informed of their rights, prior to being provided services and prior to having services discontinued.

An inpatient facility has an obligation to explain patient rights in detail in their unit manuals and their grievance procedure.

In 2004, it was recommended that API management revise the unit manuals and the patient grievance procedure. API management stated they did not want to revise the unit manuals or grievance procedure until they moved into the new building.

In 2006, the unit manuals and grievance procedures were revised but API management did not include input from the general public and the API Governing Body when making the revisions. The general public and the Governing Body should have had a voice in the writing of the grievance procedure and the unit manuals.

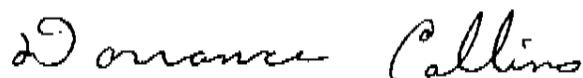
I am asking that the API Governing Body in an open meeting discuss what patient rights will be adopted from the committee recommendations and which ones will be added to the new grievance procedure and the new unit manuals.

For management to revise the unit manuals and the grievance procedure using the committee and the Governing Body's recommendations should not take more than 30 days.

In closing, we are asking that pressure be applied to API management requiring them to produce revised editions of the grievance procedure and unit manuals by the time the API Governing Body meets at their next meeting.

Thank you,

Dorrrance Collins
(907) 929-0532

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Dorrrance Collins". The signature is written in black ink and is positioned below the typed name and phone number.