

# MindFreedom

## Support Coalition International

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3 March 2005

Governor Brian Schweitzer  
State Capitol  
Helena, MT 59620-0801

Re: Severe problems at Montana State Hospital are related to the unbelievably insulting unprofessionalism of Gene Haire.

Dear Governor Schweitzer:

You may remember that during the transition between your election and taking office, quite a number of people alerted you about severe human rights problems at Montana State Hospital. This is a follow-up with two specific recommendations.

Governor, first, a brief introduction. This is my 29<sup>th</sup> year working for human rights people in the mental health system. I direct MindFreedom, which unites 100 grassroots groups. We're one of the few totally independent non-profit organizations in this field, with no funding from any mental health system, government, corporation, religion, etc.

Only a few times in my work in this field have I been contacted by a large group of people inside the same psychiatric facility. That's what happened starting in November with Montana State Hospital. We began getting passionate, articulate, heart-breaking letters and phone calls from people locked up inside MSH. We investigated the complaints of eight individuals. They all had similar stories: They felt locked up without good cause, and most importantly each felt they were disempowered, disrespected, forcibly drugged, and not provided the kind of quality legal advocacy they deserved.

We contacted the office of your predecessor. The governor's office at the time referred us to Gene Haire, Executive Director, of the Governor's Mental Disabilities Board of Visitors. After three months I can tell you point blank that you have a significant and unresolvable problem with Mr. Haire. I cannot recall encountering a representative of a public agency who is more unprofessional, uncommunicative, insulting and biased.

Mr. Haire's initial response was primarily legalistic, without really addressing the underlying problems of these individuals' perception of feeling disempowered.

*A non-profit uniting 100 grassroots groups to win human rights in mental health.  
Accredited by the UN as a Non-Governmental Organization with Consultative Roster Status.*

**[www.MindFreedom.org](http://www.MindFreedom.org)**

ein: 93-1144215

I replied by e-mail and with a phone call in a civil but passionate way, asking Mr. Haire for a response that addressed the real and deeper problems. In response, Mr. Haire announced that he would have zero communications with me forever more, period.

I found out that other citizens with concerns about MSH experienced the same thing from Mr. Haire: Mr. Haire would go to a policy of total stonewalling, zero communication.

When he wasn't silent, he was also insulting. For example, an advocate, Pat Gowens of Wisconsin, wrote a civil letter of inquiry to Mr. Haire about MSH. Mr. Haire wrote back to Pat a missive that included, "Unless you are just interested in ranting and pandering to the self-appointed righteousness of uninformed people like David Oaks..." Now, this is an official letter, on behalf of the State of Montana, signed by Gene Haire as Executive Director of the Mental Disabilities Board of Visitors, Governor's Office... that's now you.

Mr. Haire has also written to those inquiring about human rights violations recommending "a more rational perspective" by going to [www.psychlaws.org](http://www.psychlaws.org). This is the web site for the infamous Treatment Advocacy Center, a small extremist group funded by the millionaire Stanley Family, that is pushing a narrow agenda to massively increase the amount of forced psychiatric drugging. TAC is widely criticized throughout the mental health advocacy community. That Mr. Haire would actually promote a biased and feared special interest group in his official correspondence is a major red flag.

It's revealing that the theme of complaints we got from MSH was the perception that people felt like they were not being well-represented. Overseeing aggressive quality advocacy is the responsibility of Mr. Haire. But, incredibly, he was (a) refusing to communicate to those with civil complaints, (b) openly and unprofessionally insulting those with complaints, and (c) referring people to an extremist group opposed to the basic idea of human rights and self-determination for people with mental disabilities.

Governor, we have two recommendations at this point, one short term, one long term:

1) Terminate the employment of Gene Haire to any way represent you, immediately. After three months of talking with many people in Montana, we see no choice.

2) Deeper change: During your transition, many people phoned, wrote and e-mailed you. You told one of these individuals, "I don't want to just go after the tip of the iceberg, I want to go after the whole iceberg." We encourage you to take major action for deep changes in the Montana mental health system, starting with hearing from clients and former clients. Did you know there is no organized group representing this voice inside Montana at this time? Supporting such a voice would be a very good start.

Sincerely,

*David Oaks*

David Oaks, Director