U.S. Department of Justice

Civil Rights Division

Special Litigation Section - PHB
950 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20530

OCT 2 3 2007

James B. Gottstein Esq.
President/CEO
PsychRights Law Project for
   Psychiatric Rights, Inc.
406 G Street, Suite 206
Anchorage, AK 99501

Dear Mr. Gottstein:

This is in response to your letter dated September 18, 2007. In your letter, you express concern regarding your client's right to decline or refuse psychiatric medication(s) at the Alaska Psychiatric Institute.

Under the Civil Rights of Institutionalized Persons Act, (CRIPA) 42 U.S.C. § 1997 et seq., the United States Department of Justice has authority to investigate complaints concerning conditions in public institutions. These institutions include prisons, jails, juvenile facilities, mental health and retardation facilities, and publicly operated nursing homes.
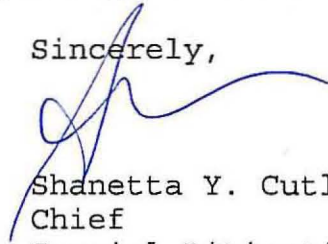
When a pattern or practice of the deprivation of constitutional rights is determined to exist, we have the authority to initiate civil actions against state or local officials to remedy unconstitutional conditions. The Section's authority, however, does not extend to investigating the personal grievances of a single individual. Moreover, the Section is also not authorized to represent individual citizens in legal matters or to give them legal advice.

If you provide more detailed information concerning the circumstances involved in your complaint, such as date(s), times, specific person(s) involved, and a description of the alleged events, we will consider the matter carefully. If you have additional details that you believe may be relevant to our review, we would appreciate it if you would forward that information to Sarah Stella Lopez, Investigator in the Section at the address listed above or call her via our toll free telephone number, 1-877-218-5228, or directly at (202) 305-0372.

Thank you for your letter regarding this matter.

Sincerely,

Shanetta Y. Cutlar
Chief
Special Litigation Section