

William J. Streur,
Commissioner The Department of Health and Social Services,

July 1, 2013

We are asking for answers to our questions from the Department of Health and Social Services and the Division of Behavioral Health? (DHSS-DBH)

We have been given the opportunity to proof-read "Your Mental Health Rights in Alaska" prior to publication.

According to DHSS-DBH approximately 30,000 individuals receive psychiatric treatment in Alaska each year.

In our opinion, a high number of patients are classified by the state as disabled because they receive a disability check, are brought to a psychiatric emergency room, are court-ordered to receive treatment, all of which could be considered indicators of disability even if temporary.

These are the questions we would like answers to:

One. Do disabled psychiatric patients have a legal right by state law or regulations to assistance in the protection of their rights?

Two. Do psychiatric patients have a legal right by state law or regulations to file an appeal concerning their complaints within a psychiatric facility or unit and to a state agency?

Three. Is DHSS-DBH required by state law or state regulations to investigate disabled psychiatric patient complaints?

Four. Is DHSS-DBH required by state law or state regulations to keep statistics of psychiatric patient complaints in psychiatric facilities, unit, clinics?
(Number, resolution, etc.)

Five. Is DHSS-DBH required by state law or state regulations to advocate for the advancement of better rights for psychiatric patients?

Six. Is DHSS-DBH required by state law or state regulations to make reports to the Alaska legislature and the general public concerning the number and type of complaints from psychiatric patients while receiving treatment and what needs to be done to improve the rights for psychiatric patients?

Seven. Is DHSS-DBH required by state law or state regulations to inform disabled psychiatric patients of their rights?

Eight. Are psychiatric facilities, units, clinics required by state law or regulations to post the phone number of the state agencies that will assist psychiatric patients with their complaints?

Disabled psychiatric patients in Alaska deserve to know what their rights are. It can only happen if DHSS-DBH send the requested information as soon as possible.

Thank you for your help.

**Mental Health Advocates
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**Cc: Sen. Johnny Ellis
Rep. Geran Tarr
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Open Letter**