
Testimony to the Trust Board 8 22 2025

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To public.comment@mhtrust.org <public.comment@mhtrust.org>

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Request to the Trust Board—8/22/25:

I am requesting the Trust Board to require Trust management to undertake or bring about research on institutional trauma experienced by Trust beneficiaries in locked psychiatric facilities.

Numerous states have done the research; as an example, South Carolina and Maine. Alaska should do the same. The research should also include ways to reduce institutional trauma.

Also, the Trust Board should bring about keeping the following statistics: The number of Trust beneficiaries that rotate in and out of locked psychiatric facilities or units each year
For a forced evaluation or treatment. The number and type of patient complaints, injuries, and traumatic events also.

Without those statistics, it is impossible to make good decisions on funding programs.

Please provide attention to my request.

Thank you,

Faith Myers, 907-929-0532,
Author of the book, "Going Crazy in Alaska."

Patients, Trust beneficiaries, in locked psychiatric facilities or units in Alaska have no rights

The federal government and the courts have ruled that a person in a locked psychiatric facility, their rights are to remain intact to the greatest extent possible. Alaska never got the memo.

Alaska does not enforce the psychiatric patient protection laws. In reality, psychiatric patients have no rights, patients only have the rights that the owners of psychiatric facilities feel like providing—which in some cases is zero.

State law AS47.30.847 states that psychiatric patients have a right to bring their grievance to an impartial body, but the Alaska Psychiatric Institute records show that year after year, no patient at API was able to bring a grievance to an impartial body in a fair way.

By the same law, in 1992, psychiatric patients were given the right to file a grievance. But API records over the last 33 years show that patients were often never able to file a formal grievance, they could only complain informally.

Adults in locked psychiatric facilities have a right to gender choice of staff for intimate care by state law AS18.20.095. But state agencies admitted that of 12 hospitals visited, only one had written a policy to follow the law.

In 2003, Karen J. Cusack and others in South Carolina researched the amount of trauma that patients in locked psychiatric facilities experienced. Alaska, as of now, does not recognize “institutional trauma” in locked psychiatric facilities and facilities have no policies to provide treatment. State agencies have not done any research on trauma in psychiatric facilities and how to reduce it.

State agencies, like the Department of Health, the Alaska Mental Health Trust Authority, and the Alaska Mental Health Board have put forward no suggestions on how to provide enforcement so that people with disabilities in locked psychiatric facilities get the rights they deserve.

Denying psychiatric patients their rights is not without consequences. Patients experience higher PTSD, recidivism and suicide.

What I hear from state agencies is that psychiatric patient rights are improving, but they are confusing creating new patient treatment programs with patient rights—they are not the same.

To actually protect people in locked psychiatric facilities, state agencies, including the Trust, must petition the legislature to pass a patient right protection law which would provide enforcement—without doing that, patients have no rights.

Faith J. Myers and Dorrance Collins, 907-929-0532

Request:

8/1/25

For the Alaska Mental Health Trust Authority

Board members and management

I am asking that the Trust publicly acknowledge the mistreatment of psychiatric patients that were locked in Morningside Psychiatric Hospital in Portland, Oregon. Many patients were required to work 12 hours a day, 6 days a week. Some patients had to work as house servants in the homes of hospital staff. It is my belief they were sexually assaulted. There are no records of sexual assault, but then it was not a big deal back in those times.

In 1964, there were 157 psychiatric patients at the Alaska Psychiatric Institute and 137 patients in Morningside. Corporal Punishment would not be outlawed in Alaska law until 1984.

Thirty-five years ago, the Americans with Disabilities Act was passed. A patient in a locked facility or unit, their rights must remain intact to the greatest extent possible—it is not happening in Alaska.

The Trust should also acknowledge that Trust beneficiaries are being mistreated in locked facilities and units in Alaska today.

The patient grievance and appeal process is written by the owners of locked psychiatric facilities and units (AS47.30.847). Just like 70 years ago in Morningside.

A patient that is injured in a locked psychiatric facility today, even sexually assaulted, it is not likely they will receive any justice. There is no enforcement of patient protection laws.

The Trust and other entities cannot make good decisions concerning psychiatric patient care and rights because they lack basic statistics: Number of patients injured during treatment or transportation annually; number of traumatic events; and number and type of patient complaints annually.

I am asking the Trust to acknowledge the true extent of psychiatric patient mistreatment past and present, and that will lead the way to a better future.

Faith J. Myers, 907-929-0532,

Author of the book, "Going Crazy in Alaska."