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Disability Law Center Investigates Excessive Involuntary Psychiatric Detentions

ALASKA - The Disability Law Center (DLC) recently initiated an investigation into allegations that individuals detained for involuntary psychiatric evaluation were being held for up to six days before being transported to an appropriate evaluation facility. These excessive holds without a hearing may violate the individuals' rights to due process.

In addition to Alaska Psychiatric Institute (API), there are four facilities in the State that conduct evaluations: Providence Hospital in Anchorage, Fairbanks Memorial Hospital, Bartlett Regional Hospital in Juneau, and Ketchikan General Hospital.

Preliminary information received by DLC suggests that individuals held at jails or facilities that do not conduct the required evaluation are detained for indefinite periods of time without a hearing. Among the reasons for the alleged delays are beds not being available at API, transportation not being available from rural communities, and weather delays. DLC continues to look into this issue to ensure that individuals are evaluated and get a hearing on an expedited basis and are not held involuntarily without a court hearing any longer than is allowed by the law.

If you or someone you know has been held in jail or a hospital awaiting transport for a mental health evaluation, please contact us or have them contact us. You may contact the Disability Law Center via email through akpa@dlcak.org or by calling 1-800-478-1234, toll free throughout Alaska.