



THE STATE
of ALASKA
GOVERNOR MICHAEL J. DUNLEAVY

Department of Health and Social Services

ALASKA PSYCHIATRIC INSTITUTE

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June 9, 2020

Tom Chard
Chief Executive Officer
Alaska Behavioral Health Association
P.O. Box 32917
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Mr Chard:

I appreciate your letter of support and concern about the API decision to require a patient to have a negative Covid test prior to their acceptance for admission. It is certainly not API's intention to be a barrier to psychiatric treatment although there are variables that must also be considered beyond what's in your letter.

1. All DHSS operated facilities are requiring a negative Covid test prior to admission. This is not a decision specific to API.
2. We must take a look at the acuity of current patients and the high amount of staff it takes to manage their care.
3. Even one Covid positive patient will require us to open our Denali unit as an isolation unit. We will need to combine a couple of our other units to properly staff for even one patient on Denali. We will then decrease our bed capacity from 50 to 41. Depending on the number of Covid patients in the facility, our total capacity will drop accordingly.
4. We know based on a recent outbreak here in Anchorage that the virus can spread fast having a negative impact on staffing and current patients. We do not have a negative pressure room at API. If our staff should get sick, closing more of our beds will be imminent.

We will be reaching out to other DETs to learn how they may be able to assist, as their facilities have a better means of care for these patients. To your point, an alternative site for these patients may be an option. With the help of community partners, API may be able establish a small unit for Covid positive patients. If you are aware of potential space for this purpose, please share the address and contact information.

As we know you are looking out for the best interest of the community, I want you to know that this leadership team is doing the same by keeping as many psychiatric beds open as possible through healthy staff and healthy current patient population.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Scott York', written in a cursive style.

Scott York
Chief Executive Officer

cc. Commissioner Adam Crum
Deputy Commissioner Clinton Lasley
Deputy Commissioner Al Wall
Gennifer Moreau-Johnson, Dept Behavioral Health
Beverly Schoonover, AMHB/ABADA
Mike Abbott, AMHTA