

Adam Crum
Commissioner

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**Department of Health
and Social Services**

Anchorage, Alaska

STATE OF ALASKA

PRESS RELEASE

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**Commissioner assumes management of Alaska Psychiatric Institute;
changes will improve patient and staff safety**

February 8, 2019 ANCHORAGE — Alaska Department of Health and Social Services Commissioner Adam Crum has invoked his authority under state law to immediately assume management of Alaska Psychiatric Institute (API).

The decision was made in response to the considerable problems that continue to put patients and staff in jeopardy at API and in light of recent and ongoing investigations from the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) and other state and federal regulatory agencies.

As part of assuming authority over API, Commissioner Crum has chosen to contract with Wellpath Recovery Solutions, a nationally recognized health care company with a proven record of success, to provide administrative leadership of the facility with continued oversight from the state.

“During the course of recent investigations at API, we determined immediate steps were needed to protect patients and staff and ensure complete compliance with federal regulations, which also allows the facility to continue to receive federal funds,” said Commissioner Crum.

Serious efforts have been made towards addressing the deficiencies identified by federal and state authorities, but progress is not being made quickly enough. While additional security measures have recently been implemented at API to better ensure patient and staff safety, contracting with Wellpath was deemed necessary to further address safety and patient rights issues and bring the facility rapidly into complete compliance with federal and state standards.

Alaska state law ([AS 47.32.140](#)) allows for the commissioner to assume either temporary or permanent management of a licensed health care entity when there is reasonable cause to believe there is a danger to the health, safety or welfare of individuals receiving care from that entity.

The contract with Wellpath provides for administrative oversight with the intent of correcting problems of patient and staff safety and patient rights, bringing the hospital into rapid compliance with its regulatory bodies, improving the therapeutic environment, and preparing the hospital to return to its full capacity by June 30, 2019.

During the initial phase of the contract, Wellpath will bring in a team of experts to fill key leadership positions at API to support the successful completion of their mission. All API staff will remain in their positions as State of Alaska employees. Gavin Carmichael will continue as API's acting chief executive officer. If Wellpath is successful in the first phase, the company will assume full responsibility of API after July 1, 2019.

"I recognize this decision may take Alaskans by surprise, but it was not made lightly. Changes have been needed at API for a very long time," said Commissioner Crum. "This decision will help us solve these long-standing problems at API, and then allow us to more effectively broaden our focus to address the entire continuum of behavioral health care across Alaska."

Wellpath, which is a recent merger of Correct Care Solutions and Correctional Medical Group Companies, has had success bringing facilities similar to API back into compliance with CMS and Joint Commission standards. In Massachusetts, Wellpath substantially improved conditions at the Bridgewater State Hospital after assuming operations in 2017. All hospitals managed by Wellpath are fully accredited by the Joint Commission.

Representatives from the Alaska Mental Health Trust, the Alaska Behavioral Health Association, North Star Behavioral Health, Alaska Regional Hospital and Fairbanks Memorial Hospital will be joining the Alaska Department of Health and Social Services as we announce this decision today and are in support of this course of action.

"By taking this step with the support of the health care community, the State of Alaska and our health care partners can begin to seriously address API's longstanding problems and Alaska's behavioral health crisis," said Commissioner Crum.

Questions and comments regarding these changes may be emailed to the api.info@alaska.gov address.

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