

Attn: Medical Reporter / City/State Reporter

For Immediate Release
April 3, 2007

Pre-Release

Date and time: Tuesday, April 3, 2007, 3:00pm.

Location: City Hall, 301 West Second Street, City Council Chambers, Room 1001, Austin, TX

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**City Council Hears Testimony on Psychiatric Electroshock (ECT) in Austin:
Activist Coalition wants Electroshock-Free Zone in Austin**

The Public Health and Human Services Subcommittee of the Austin City Council will hear testimony from the Coalition for the Abolition of Electroshock in Texas (CAEST). This group of activists, including a number of electroshock survivors, wants to make Austin, Texas an electroshock-free zone, calling for the two local hospitals that still do electroshock, Seton Shoal Creek and St. David's, to stop. CAEST has been in dialogue with the principal electroshock facility, Seton Shoal Creek, for well over a year, and has staged three protests at that hospital.

On Tuesday, April 3, members of the electroshock abolitionist group will present a petition to the City Council, calling for: 1) a **City Ordinance** declaring any facility or individual who practices psychiatric electroshock to be ineligible for any contractual or other referral or funding arrangement with the City of Austin; and 2) a **Resolution Statement** describing the procedure of psychiatric electroshock, outlining the safety and efficacy information on electroshock, recommending a moratorium on the use of electroshock in Austin, and encouraging city hospitals to develop medical wellness programs in lieu of electroshock.

CAEST spokesperson John Breeding, PhD, states that, "Electroshock is a severe public health danger, causing brain damage and disability in Austin citizens who receive it. We want Austin to be an electroshock-free zone, a safe place to get authentic help when you are having a hard time." Another Coalition member, Lee Spiller, director of the Citizens Commission on Human Rights, states, "We are not against Seton Shoal Creek. What we really want is for them to be one of the first psychiatric hospitals in the country to offer a comprehensive medical wellness program."

CAEST medical adviser, Dr. Moira Dolan, director of the Medical Accountability Network, has reviewed the ECT literature and provided Seton with documents summarizing the clear harm done by electroshock, and the lack of efficacy. Dr. Dolan states, "The scientific literature documents that ECT causes brain damage and a host of other ill effects, and that it doesn't effect cures. ECT practice is a clear violation of medical ethics."

Two recent survivors of electroshock at Seton Shoal Creek will testify at the hearing. Don Erickson received 10 electroshock "treatments" in a 4 week period in the summer of 2005, at the end of which he was severely suicidal, disorganized and confused. Erickson states, "The psychiatric drugs weren't working and I believed that ECT was the only hope. Now I know it was a lie and a big scam." Evelyn Scogin received at least 31 electroshocks at Seton in five months during the winter and spring of 2005. She states, "I lost a lot of memory, I could not recall how many shocks I had. I have a hard time now with learning and short-term memory. Before I was a teacher at the Texas School for the Deaf. Now I am unable to work."