

# River Oaks Counseling Center

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1925-1994

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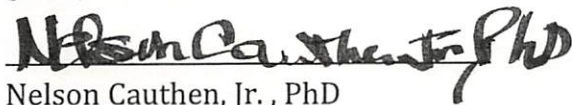
As of this date, I am resigning from my position as Madison County's Commissioner to Region 8 Mental Health for the following reasons:

Initially, I thought my experience as a Clinical Psychologist would aide in making Board decisions. For the better part of my first year as Commissioner, the Head of Region 8 and the other four Commissioners claimed I had a conflict of interest as a practicing Clinical Psychologist. Lawyers had to be involved. Eventually the Board of Region 8 allowed me to sit at the table and vote. Beginning with my attendance at the meetings, the printed information about the monthly operations of Region 8, distributed at the beginning of each monthly meeting, was collected so that it would not leave the building. Clearly there is information that would be dangerous if examined in detail. At the last Board meeting during an executive session, I was personally cursed by all three male Board members for inquiring about Region 8 operations.

It quickly became clear, the head of Region 8, Dave Van, was in full charge and the Board was there to ritually agree. In one example, Dave Van has gotten his salary increased to \$440,000. This is higher than any state employee as well as any Federal employee. (I regret in foolishly participating in his latest raise.) Dave Van runs Region 8 as if it were his personal business. He employs friends and relatives, gives free services to gain benefits, and make decisions and contracts without getting formal approval of the Board.

Prior to my being appointed to the Board, Region 8 was charged with billing for services in the schools of Simpson County that were already being paid by federal funds. In a phrase, it was "double billing." The Federal prosecutors agreed to Region 8 giving back roughly half of the amount, seven million dollars, and the prosecution was dropped. The board had accumulated twice that amount to appease the federal prosecutors. Dave Van now feels he is invulnerable to any prosecution.

As there is nothing I will be allowed to contribute to the operation of Region 8, and after serving over two years on the Region 8 Board, continuing to sit in the monthly Board meetings surrounded by actions described above, and many more, would be implicitly giving my approval.

  
Nelson Cauthen, Jr., PhD