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Deadline removed for state mental health facility closings

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MONTGOMERY-AL - A September deadline to close most of the state's mental health facilities has been removed, according to state mental health officials. The decision was made in an Alabama Department of Mental Health Board meeting Wednesday.

Despite the deadline removal, the plan is moving forward.



"The national trend is to move patients from large, institutional settings into a more community-based treatment option," said ADMH Spokesman Tony Thompson. "Those treatment options in the community are much more effective when somebody is being treated in their own community."

Under the plan, 950 employees would lose their jobs. A new hospital to replace Tuscaloosa's Bryce Hospital and a geriatric center will be the only facilities remaining. Taylor Hardin, a center to secure and treat seriously unstable mental health patients, would close, and patients would be turned over to the state Department of Corrections.

Friday, construction on the new hospital to replace Bryce was halted. Mental health officials said the decision was based on reassessing needs.

"It may be that we continue the project. We just don't know, yet," said Thompson. "It's a little bit early for us to talk about patient placement if the hospital project doesn't continue."

State officials are holding job fairs for the workers slated to lose jobs due to the facility closings.



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