



## Alabama Dept. of Mental Health Commissioner testifies to Congress

Published: Thursday, June 21, 2012, 12:18 PM Updated: Thursday, June 21, 2012, 1:42 PM



**Mary Orndorff -- Washington Bureau**  
By

WASHINGTON - Alabama's policy to transition more of its citizens with intellectual disabilities out of state institutions and into programs closer to home was applauded today by a Senate committee overseeing the country's treatment of its disabled.

When the W.D. Partlow Development Center closed in December, Alabama became the first state in the South to close all of its public institutions for people with intellectual disabilities, said Zelia Baugh, Commissioner of the Alabama Department of Mental Health. Baugh testified this morning on Capitol Hill before the Senate Committee on Health, Education, Labor and Pensions.

"Through extended-care transitions, acute-care transitions and facility closures, ADMH has demonstrated less reliance upon state psychiatric inpatient services by shifting funding and focus to less costly, but more effective community services and supports," Baugh said.

Friday is the 13<sup>th</sup> anniversary of a landmark U.S. Supreme Court case that reinforced the rights of the disabled, when possible, to live in non-institutionalized settings, and the committee was reviewing progress in the enforcement of that ruling.

U.S. Sen. Tom Harkin, D-Iowa, said Alabama was doing better than many other states in terms of how much of its Medicaid funds for long-term care services were dedicated to home- and community-based services.

"I'm hoping your governor will reach across and work in the region showing people what can be done," Harkin said.

© 2012 al.com. All rights reserved.