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## Officials prepare for Searcy closure

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It's official. Searcy Hospital will close Oct. 31, officials said Tuesday.

Alabama Department of Mental Health officials said that admissions to the hospital will cease Sept. 17.

Locally, South Central Alabama Mental Health Executive Director Diane Baugher said her office has been busy putting resources in place.

"We have been doing that for several years now, preparing for this move," she said. "We should have most of our resources in place by Sept. 30. We are going to send patients to Crenshaw Community Hospital for inpatient care and use our secure unit here."

Searcy has traditionally served Alabamians from 16 counties in the southern part of the state.

Its closure is the continuation of a nationwide trend of moving consumers from institutions to community-based care where they can be treated in the least restrictive setting and experience a life in their communities.

Probate Judge Ben Bowden couldn't be reached for comment on Tuesday but has previously said that his office has about 75 to 100 commitments per year.

"I would estimate that about 25 percent of those have to go to Searcy," he said previously.

-Kendra Bolling

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