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# **The Atmore Advance**

By [Blake Bell](#)

## **Searcy closing date set**

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The Alabama Department of Mental Health now has a closure date set for Searcy Hospital, the mental facility which served Escambia and 15 other counties in south Alabama.

Searcy will close Oct. 31 as part of a plan to treat more people in community-based programs. The closure had been previously announced, but the date was made official Tuesday by ADMH Commissioner Jim Reddoch in a meeting with Searcy employees. Admissions to Searcy will cease Sept. 17.

In Escambia County, where Sheriff Grover Smith was shot last week during a standoff that resulted after officers attempted to serve commitment papers, the effect Searcy's closing will have is not yet known.

Officials with the ADMH said the department does recognize that a small number of consumers have needs that may not be best met in community-based care, and those individuals will receive services in other state hospitals.

According to the ADMH, along with providing enhanced community life for consumers, the facility's closure will free up funds to be transferred to community-based care. AltaPointe Health Systems, Baldwin County Mental Health Center, South Central Alabama Mental Health Board, Southwest Alabama Mental Health Center and SpectraCare Health Systems will receive funding from ADMH to expand services and resources.

ADMH officials said they department will help staff find alternative employment.

Voluntary transfers have been offered and will continue to be offered to ADMH hospitals in the Tuscaloosa and Decatur areas, as well as other positions statewide through the community mental health and state personnel systems.

In addition, several job fairs have been held, and ADECA's Rapid Response team will be on-site soon to provide information about unemployment compensation, pension benefits, job training, employment services, health insurance, credit counseling and other services