



Alabama mental health agency says care won't suffer because of layoffs, closures

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By **The Birmingham News**



The Alabama Department of
Mental Health

MONTGOMERY, Alabama --- The Alabama Department of Mental Health issued a news release today saying that it is working to improve patient care as it prepares to close state hospitals and moves patients to community-based services.

On Wednesday, **the department announced plans to lay off 948 employees** and close all its psychiatric hospitals except one to treat criminal cases and one for geriatric patients by May 2013.

"As more patients are moved from large mental health facilities to more customized community-based programs, we will find ways to maintain and improve the quality of care for each individual," Mental Health Commissioner Zelia Baugh said in the news release. "Every patient will be assessed for individual needs, and we want to assure patients' families -- and the public -- that all proper steps will be followed to provide the highest quality-care and to protect the public's safety."

In the new release, the department also said there should be an increase in private sector jobs involved with mental health care.

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