

YOUR VIEW: Who will care for the clients when mental health hospitals close?

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Letters from our readers

By

I am a very proud employee working for the Alabama Department of Mental Health at Searcy Hospital in Mount Vernon.

You are probably wondering where our voices have been. For the past week, the headlines have read, "State mental hospitals are closing." We've been a little quiet.

Well, to tell you the truth, we are really exhausted. I think I can speak for myself and other employees at Searcy Hospital. We have spent the past few years working hard to be the best mental health facility in Alabama. It has been a rough time for us. We have been cajoled, challenged and our numbers have dwindled down to a select few under the direction of a facility director whose words to us every day are, "Do the right thing."

The employees who remain are a talented and compassionate group of people I am proud to call my friends and co-workers.

In my opinion, our professional staff, the psychiatrists, medical doctors, RNs, LPNs and especially our mental health workers, are the best in the state who have learned to take care of and treat a population which can be very challenging. And we were led by an administration that is relentless in its pursuit of perfection.

I'm worried about my clients and where they are going to live. Are they going to be taken care of on a daily basis as well as we take care of them at Searcy Hospital? Who is going to follow them around and chastise them about brushing their teeth? Who is going to ensure they take their medications, or they take care of their hygiene? Who is going to protect them from others who might take advantage of them? And, most of all, who is going to keep them safe?

So far, the state of Alabama has no plan for the care of our clients once the hospitals have been closed. The Legislature meets this week to discuss the budget. Please contact your local legislative members if you are as worried as I am about the future care of our clients.

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