



## Alabama mental health commissioner resigns

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By **Robin DeMonia -- The Birmingham News**



Zelia Baugh ends her term as Alabama Mental Health commissioner on Saturday, June 30, 2012. (Special)

MONTGOMERY, Alabama Alabama will have new leadership over the state mental health agency, starting Saturday.

**Zelia Baugh**, the current commissioner at the Alabama Department of Mental Health, announced today she will step down Saturday. Gov. Robert Bentley named Jim Reddoch, a former official at the state mental health agency, to take Baugh's place.

"I believe Jim's wealth of experience will serve the state well, most importantly the patients of the Alabama Department of Mental Health," Bentley said in a statement. "We have made tremendous progress in moving patients into a more modern, community-based care network. We are also making sure our traditional mental health facilities best meet the needs of the patients they

serve. Jim Reddoch's background and expertise will help us accomplish our mission."

Reddoch is currently executive director of Indian Rivers Mental Health Center in Tuscaloosa. Previously, he had served as director of the Taylor Hardin Secure Medical Facility, director of Bryce Hospital and a deputy commissioner for the Department of Mental Health.

Baugh has been involved in controversial **decisions to close some mental health facilities**. Her abrupt resignation was attributed to "family priorities."

"It has been an honor and a privilege to serve the people of this state. However, it has become increasingly apparent to me that my family priorities require most of my attention at this time," Baugh said in a statement. "I believe the department is well-positioned to continue to make progress toward providing the highest caliber services to Alabamians with intellectual disabilities, mental illnesses or substance addictions."

The governor's office said Reddoch will continue the work of "integrating mental health patients into more modern, community-based care."

"I am committed to building on the department's progress of developing the highest-quality services possible for all of the patients we serve," Reddoch said. "From community-based care networks to services within our traditional mental health facilities, we will strive to meet the needs of everyone we serve."

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