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Proposal would cut Ala. mental health facilities

The Associated Press

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The Alabama Department of Mental Health has proposed a plan that would close all but two mental health facilities in the state.

The Tuscaloosa News reports (<http://bit.ly/xiOAQT>) that department Commissioner Zelia Baugh on Wednesday announced a plan that would close all but the Mary Starke Harper Geriatric Center and Bryce Hospital, both in Tuscaloosa, by Sept. 30.

That means about 948 department employees would be fired statewide. And at least 473 hospital residents will be shifted into community-based care.

Baugh says state budget cuts and the possibility of losing federal funds makes the plan necessary. A spokeswoman says Gov. Robert Bentley supports the plan.

James Tucker, associate director for the Alabama Disabilities Advocacy Program, says Baugh is in a tough spot but is making the right decision. But he said the appropriate supports must be in place in the community.

Information from: The Tuscaloosa News, <http://www.tuscaloosaneews.com>

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