



## Mount Vernon mayor: losing 350 jobs to Searcy Hospital closing will be devastating

Published: Saturday, April 07, 2012, 6:03 AM



**Casandra Andrews, Press-Register**

By



Searcy Hospital in Mount Vernon, Alabama.

**MOBILE, Alabama** -- Two of Alabama 's six mental hospitals -- Searcy in Mount Vernon and Greil Memorial in Montgomery -- will eventually be shut down, according to plans announced Friday by Gov. Robert Bentley.

No firm deadline was set for the closures.

Construction also will also pick up on a new psychiatric hospital to replace Bryce Hospital in Tuscaloosa, a project put on hold while a debate on the future of the state's mental health system unfolded.

The move to close Searcy hits hard in Mobile County's rural Mount Vernon, where Mayor Jerry Lundy said losing 350 jobs will be devastating.

North Alabama Regional Hospital in Decatur will remain open, as will Taylor Hardin Secure Medical Facility, which was slated for eventual closure.

About 434 jobs will be lost under the new plan, compared to the 950 positions expected under the original plan announced in February.

AltaPointe Health Systems CEO Tuerk Schlesinger said his organization can accommodate many of Searcy's 240 patients, if adequate funding is available.

Formerly Mobile Mental Health, AltaPointe operates BayPointe, a psychiatric hospital for children, adolescents and adults in Mobile, 22 group homes and will soon open a psychiatric hospital for adults in Daphne.

Bentley said the state is still focused on transitioning from large institutions to community-based care for the mentally ill, but will move forward at a slower pace.

-----

Birmingham News Reporter Hannah Wolfson contributed to this report.

© 2012 al.com. All rights reserved.