

# SOUTH ALABAMIAN

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## ADMH Meet and Greet tonight in Jackson

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A Meet and Greet town hall-style meeting with Alabama Department of Mental Health (ADMH) Commissioner Zelia Baugh will be conducted at 6:30 p.m., tonight (Thursday) at the James E. Arrington City Hall Complex in Jackson.

A series of such meetings have been taking place across the state since October. Hosted by area advocates and stakeholders, these meetings are being conducted to discuss key issues facing the mental health system in Alabama.

The meetings provide consumers, family members, area elected officials, department officials and mental health service providers the opportunity to discuss issues such as waiting lists, underserved populations and funding from the state and federal levels. At these events, attendees are given the opportunity to share their stories, present their ideas and express their concerns. Public officials will also be able to ask questions and listen to their constituents in an informal setting.

Additionally, Commissioner Baugh will make comments on challenges and opportunities facing the public mental health system.

Cumulatively, in its six psychiatric hospitals, the Department of Mental Health serves approximately 4,000 people per year. Community providers support approximately 110,000 people per year with mental illness services. Thousands of additional consumers receive intellectual disability services or substance addiction treatment services through community providers.

People served by community programs have few alternatives if those programs are cut. Given the current economic climate, it is imperative that legislators, public officials, those providing services and those served by the system hear each other's voices and understand the issues.