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Budget cuts could leave mentally disabled homeless

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HUNTSVILLE, AL (WAFF) - Possible funding cuts by the state could have a huge impact on thousands of mentally challenged adults and their families across Alabama.

If the state decides to cut funding to the group homes where they live, some of them could be put on the streets.

"If my brother doesn't have a place to live what will become of him?"

That is a big concern that Monica Geis has had ever since she heard about the cuts that could be facing facilities that. Her brother Kim has been living at Village Home Care in Huntsville for two years. The business gives Kim and his house mates a place to live, work and socialize.

"Until you walk a mile in a person's shoes that has cared for an intellectually or even a physically disabled person you just really have no idea the involvement, the paperwork, the bureaucracy," Geis said. "If I have to stay home to take care of him then I am not going to be able to work and contribute to the tax base which contributes to these programs."

Unless the state has its funding restored, the Department of Mental Health's budget could lose 10 percent of its money this year and 25 percent of its money next year. Assistant director of Village Home Care Kathryn Ruebush said those cuts would be detrimental to the business and those who live there.



"Village Home Care will not survive that type of cut. You're cutting the hands that feed the people if you cut these services or cut the programs that take care of these individuals then there won't be any programs for them," said Ruebush.

While waiting for a decision from the state, Geis is weighing her options, hoping her nightmare doesn't become a reality.

"I think that if I were their child or their family member that was totally dependent on these decisions, I think their decisions would be made differently," Ruebush said.

A coalition of mental health, disability and substance abuse organizations are planning a legislative day on February 22nd at 10:30 a.m. It will take place on the front steps of the Alabama State House in Montgomery. Officials are asking all supporters who show up to wear red.

For more information contact Tom Holmes, Executive Director, The Arc of Alabama, Inc. at (334) 262-7688.

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