



## Families worried mental health care crisis looms in Alabama

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HUNTSVILLE, AL (WAFF) - [Alabama Department of Mental Health](#) officials held a public meeting in Huntsville Friday to discuss the future of mental health care in the state.

Governor Robert Bentley's announcement that Alabama will face another round of proration means another major cut to an already Mental Health Department. Officials said they expect \$29 billion in cuts for 2013.



The ADMH plans to close at least four major state mental hospitals. They said that will open up some funding for community-based mental care facilities. They added that no hospitals will close until those facilities are ready to take in more patients.

But families with loved ones who battle mental illness are skeptical in light of the overall funding issues. Several of them held a public protest of the budget cuts before the meeting.

Pippa Abston's son has schizophrenia. She is also with the Huntsville chapter of the National Alliance on Mental Illness. She said she and others are concerned the hospital will close without enough space in community facilities to care for displaced patients.

"Where is the funding for these community facilities going to come from? Where's the money to run outpatient services going to come from? Mental health patients are very fragile. A day or two without adequate services can mean death," Abston said. "We want our legislators to understand that lives are at stake and to come up with the money. I feel like that's their job. That's what we elected them to do. And we expect to see it."

Nick Snead battles severe depression. He said without proper care, he might not be alive.

"I've had to use the services of Huntsville Hospital myself, the psychiatric services. And it was lifesaving," Snead said. "There's been times when I've been close to wanting to commit suicide and I needed someone to be around."

Governor Bentley's office first suspended the closing date for the hospitals, which had been September 30th. There is no new date set yet. ADMH officials said at the meeting the Governor's office is expected to make an announcement concerning the issue next week.

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