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## Changes to mental health system put on hold

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Some mental health providers are wondering if the state will be ready to move hundreds of patients from state run hospitals into community-based homes. Governor Robert Bentley told the state mental health board plans to build a new Bryce Hospital are on hold. But plans to move residents into group homes are not.

The state mental health department is conducting an assessment of the residents needs and of what those community homes can provide.

"Assessing all the patients in our care to determine what is appropriate level of care they would need and be supported by a community based program." Tony Thompson, Executive Assistant to Mental Health Commissioner Zelia Baugh, said.

The Crisis Center in Birmingham deals mostly with sexual assaults and suicide prevention, but the center also operates two day programs in Birmingham and Bessemer for about 150 people who have mental health issues.

Executive Director Mike Falligant, who fully supports the move into community homes, has concerns about the move from the hospitals to neighborhood homes.

"Housing. To make sure there are adequate housing for people coming out of institutional settings," Falligant said.

Falligant said further state cuts can also impact the quality of care for those community-based operations.



Plans to build a new Bryce Hospital have been temporarily halted.

"Certainly that is a concern. There is a shortage of dollars affect supportive services. Such as the ones we provide here. We are all worried about that," Falligant said.

Everyone wants to be sure the patients are provided for in this transition.

"The national trend now is to move people into community based programs and treatment, recovery happens quicker in those settings than a large institution," Thompson said.

A report on the assessment will be ready at the end of March.

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