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## Mental Health Facilities in Shoals Prepares For Budget Cuts

WHNT News 19 Staff

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With a shortfall of nearly \$400 million dollars in Alabama's general fund, budget cuts for 2013 will most likely be across the board.

And it's hitting one organization in the Shoals, hard.

In a previously condemned elementary school building in Tuscumbia, the Hope Haven Training Facility now provides hope to dozens of clients who come here. It's a place for adults born with intellectual disabilities.

"When people with special needs, intellectual and developmental disabilities exit the school system this is the place they can come to learn further skills, trade, personal hygiene and learn to become more independent," said Murray Townsend with The Arc of Shoals.

Townsend says the projected cuts by the state will hurt the progress they are making with individuals, born with disabilities. Townsend and other mental health providers learned of the cuts in a meeting with the director of mental health.

"Many of the providers there immediately said they would close their doors," said Townsend.

For Arc of the Shoals, cutting 25 percent of their annual budget would mean nearly \$750,000 would be gone.

Townsend says cutting programs will have to be a consideration.

"I just can't imagine that you would try and balance the state budget on the backs of Alabama's most fragile population," said Townsend.

Townsend says that the Arc is already operating on a bare bones budget, so more state funding cuts could be detrimental to their clients, who will feel it the most.

Mental health providers are hoping to get more information on the proposed budget cuts this week.

Right now, 3,000 state residents born with special needs are on a waiting list to participate in funded programs like Arc of the Shoals.

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