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**ALABAMA DEPARTMENT OF MENTAL HEALTH ANNOUNCES FOCUS ON
PATIENTS DURING SYSTEM TRANSFORMATION**

MONTGOMERY – The Alabama Department of Mental Health wants to assure members of the public that comprehensive steps are being taken to ensure, and even improve, the quality of patient care as mental health services are updated to a more modern, comprehensive structure.

"We are in the process of building a solid, community-based program," said Zelia Baugh, Commissioner of the Department of Mental Health. "This modernization of mental health care builds on the successful placement of Partlow residents into the community and continues Alabama's status as a national leader in providing high-quality mental health services in the most appropriate settings."

"As more patients are moved from large mental health facilities to more customized community-based programs, we will find ways to maintain and improve the quality of care for each individual," Baugh added. "Every patient will be assessed for individual needs, and we want to assure patients' families - and the public -that all proper steps will be followed to provide the highest-quality care and to protect the public's safety."

While these changes will mean fewer public-sector jobs, they will lead to more jobs being created in the private sector as the state builds the support structure needed to provide quality care for patients.

The Department of Mental Health is reviewing previous successes in the modernization of mental health care, and the best practices observed will be implemented in the coming months. There is no certain timeline for these updates. The primary focus is on patient care, and all decisions will be made with that care as the top priority.

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