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## Mental Health Center seeks \$80K for indigent cases

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— The Mental Health Center of North Central Alabama is asking for a nearly \$25,000 increase in funding from the County Commission for services processed through its local office at the Athens-Limestone Counselor Center.

Bill Giguere, development officer for the Foundation for Mental Health, spoke during Monday's commission meeting on behalf of MHC Director Marie Hood to request \$80,000 for "critical psychiatric and mental health treatment for indigent adults of Limestone County."

The Decatur-based Mental Health Center and the ALCC treated 394 Limestone residents, including 106 children and 288 adults, with a \$55,500 appropriation from the county for fiscal 2011-12.

Giguere, who noted in his report that treatment numbers only reflected county residents, said he hoped for "at least level funding," but he asked for a higher allocation because the MHC "is anticipating a 7 to 8 percent increase in indigent needs" for county residents.

He defined indigent as those that rely solely on a disability income of \$6,000 or less annually. He said MHC spent \$84,468 in treating 61 indigent adults from Limestone during the last full budget year ending Sept. 30, 2012.

Giguere also requested \$60,000 in level funding from the county to pay the contract position of a court liaison that works with the district and juvenile courts to provide therapeutic services.

He added the MHC is planning to build a nine-bedroom, nine-bathroom facility in Limestone, which would fill a void left by the closure of two of the state's four psychiatric hospitals.

"The state of Alabama has two hospitals with less than 500 beds available," Giguere said.

He said in addition to the ALCC at 1307 E. Elm St., the MHC operates a 12-bedroom group home, and two-bedroom trailers for more than 30 residents in Limestone.