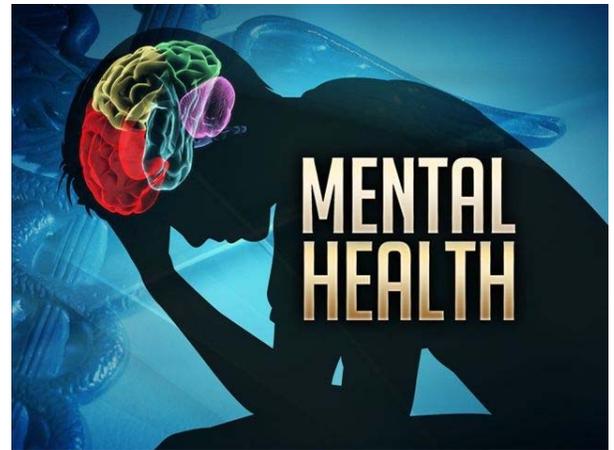


Lack of funding for mental health means more patients go without treatment

Carla Fields | Posted: Wednesday, April 8, 2015 8:12 am

HUNTSVILLE, Ala. (WAAY) The National Alliance on Mental Illness reports that nearly 200,000 Alabamians live with some type of mental illness.



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Funding for mental health is in jeopardy and as a result Alabama Psychiatric Services closed its doors state-wide due to money.

Many are concerned that with the lack of funding more people could end up behind bars or in a bad situation. Police officers are required to take four hours of training when dealing with mental health situations. They also go through training again every three years. Since every situation is different, officers must take extreme caution. "We don't know what we're going to be facing. People with mental illnesses are capable of being violent, especially if their having an episode", says Lt. Darryl Lawson with the Huntsville Police Department. The department does not have a number available of how many cases they've handled involving mental illness since they're usually filed under miscellaneous.

First Stop, a local group that provides help to the homeless says nearly 40% of their clients battle some type of mental health crisis. Leaders from the organization are now working alongside officers to try and prevent people with mental health issues from landing in jail. The group also adds that it's difficult at times for some since they have few options available to get treatment. "When people need help they need

it right away and to be told you've gotta wait 5, 6 weeks or 2 months that's not acceptable. One of the things we work really hard on doing is getting people help when they need it," says Clete Wetli with First Stop.