



ROBERT BENTLEY  
GOVERNOR

STATE OF ALABAMA  
**DEPARTMENT OF MENTAL HEALTH**  
**RSA UNION BUILDING**  
100 NORTH UNION STREET  
POST OFFICE BOX 301410  
MONTGOMERY, ALABAMA 36130-1410  
WWW.MH.ALABAMA.GOV



ZELIA BAUGH  
COMMISSIONER

**PRESS RELEASE**  
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*Contact: Office of Public Information*  
334.242.3417

### **ADMH CLOSES W.D. PARTLOW DEVELOPMENTAL CENTER**

MONTGOMERY – The Alabama Department of Mental Health has closed the W.D. Partlow Developmental Center in Tuscaloosa, Alabama. The last resident was transported to their new home in the community on December 28, 2011. The initial announcement of the eminent closure of the facility was made in March 2011, and approximately 150 residents lived at the facility at that time. Since then, the staff has worked diligently with families, guardians and community providers to find placement, with appropriate supports, for each individual resident.

Alabama is one of thirteen states in the nation to reach the goal of closing all of their residential institutions for persons with intellectual disabilities. It is the only state in the southeast that has reached that milestone. Before the closure, community services had expanded to serve more than 6,000 individuals with intellectual disabilities who qualified for a Medicaid waiver slot. Community services were successfully developed this year to serve the other 150 qualified individuals who resided at Partlow.

The W.D. Partlow Developmental Center has been in operation since 1923. For many years, residential facilities were a viable alternative for individuals who could not be cared for by their families. For others who were indigent or who had no family relations, institutions were the only option. Apart from an era when institutions across the country became overcrowded, developmental centers had their place in the evolution of care for persons with intellectual disabilities. However, as community services were developed, institutions downsized and many have closed.

Advocates for people with developmental and intellectual disabilities have praised the department for its decision to close its last institution. Jeff Ridgeway, president of People First of Alabama, an advocacy organization managed by people with disabilities, said, “We have been working for years to encourage the state to close its institutions. This is a great day for people with intellectual disabilities because it makes the statement loud and clear that we are people with abilities and we want to be integrated into society rather than segregated into an institution.” George Neal, director of consumer empowerment for ADMH’s Division of Developmental Disabilities, is a past president of People First. Neal, who has visited more than half of former Partlow residents who have moved to their new homes since March, said, “My peers have been so excited to have their own room, their own TV and their own bathroom. Some can not communicate with words but I have seen their smiles when I asked them how they liked their new home.”

The department will utilize a closure team for several weeks to finalize administrative and physical plant procedures. For many years Partlow and its dedicated staff provided an invaluable service to the citizens of Alabama. It is now a new day where those services continue in homes and neighborhoods across the state.

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