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# Bentley Visits Tuscaloosa Mental Health Clinics, Blue Cross of AL Proposes Rate Hikes

By [ALEX AUBUCHON \(/PEOPLE/ALEX-AUBUCHON\)](#) • AUG 10, 2016

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*Alabama Governor Robert Bentley speaks with Indian Rivers Mental Health Clinic Director Randy Phillips.*

CREDIT ALEX AUBUCHON / APR

Alabama Governor Robert Bentley visited two Tuscaloosa mental health facilities yesterday. He wants to stress the need for Medicaid funding in the state.

The Governor visited the Arc of Tuscaloosa County and Indian Rivers Mental Health Clinic. Both facilities help individuals with mental illness and intellectual and developmental disabilities. And both organizations depend heavily on Medicaid funding in order to provide services. Bentley is advocating for an increase of at least \$85 million in Medicaid funding to stave off cuts.

“Are we where we want to be? No. We’re not. We certainly need more funding. We need more funding. We need more psychiatrists. We need more nurse practitioners. But I’m very proud of our mental health system. I think we’ve come a long way in the last five years.”

Bentley has called a special session of the state legislature to begin next Monday and is proposing a lottery to raise money for essential state services.

Blue Cross Blue Shield of Alabama is considering raising its rates for plans purchased on federal exchanges established by the Affordable Care Act.

The insurance company says it’s seeking an average rate increase of nearly 40 percent on individual health care plans offered in the federal marketplace. A company statement says the proposed rate increases are necessary due to rising health care costs and requirements under the Affordable Care Act.

The proposed increases would take effect January 1 next year, and would impact more than 160,000

people who buy health insurance through the federal exchange.

Alabama's insurance department plans to review the proposal from Blue Cross. They are the only company selling individual policies through the exchange next year.

Alabama's largest school system is gearing up for students returning to class.

The Mobile County Health Department is offering walk-in service for back-to-school immunizations throughout the day today. Department spokesman Mark Bryant says there are a number of immunizations students need before classes start back.

"Some of the required ones are DTaP, which is for pertussis, diphtheria and tetanus; MMR, which is measles, mumps, rubella; and chicken pox. Then we have other ones that are recommended, but not required."

Bryant says the Alabama Department of Public Health requires each student enrolled in day care, Head Start, and both private and public schools to have a valid certificate of immunization. There's a religious exemption form at the school they attend for those want to opt out.

The Mobile County Health Department will be accepting walk-ins until 9:30 p.m. this evening.



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