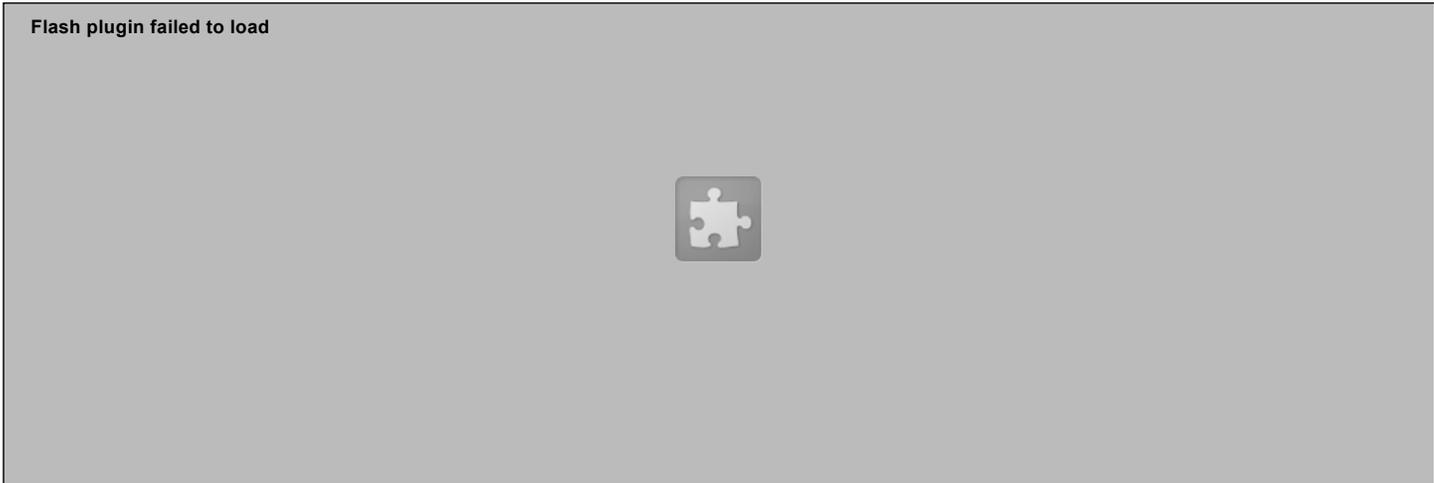


# Man who struggles with several mental illnesses says Alabama needs more resources

BY PATRICK THOMAS  
MONDAY, OCTOBER 17TH 2016



William Ruff lives with five mental illnesses on a daily basis and said the lack of psychiatric help in Alabama needs to change.

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BIRMINGHAM, Ala. — Alabama is struggling with a shortage of mental health resources.

The story is no different in Birmingham.

People seeking help, often have extreme wait times. Sometimes, it can be too late.

ABC 33/40 sat down with a man who knows the difficulty. William Ruff attributed to fewer psychiatrists and cost of services.

Ruff is a mental health peer, who believed waiting months on end to see a specialist is too long.



Ruff explained that kind of wait, can be the difference between life and death for some people. Ruff lives with mental illnesses daily with severe intractable depression, severe intractable anxiety, obsessive compulsive disorder, bipolar type two disorder, and post-traumatic stress disorder," said Ruff on Monday afternoon at the Episcopal Place in downtown Birmingham.

Ruff has been suffering from all five for years. He said finding a psychiatrist can be a problem. Ruff explained, "I waited eight weeks to be evaluated to get into the program I am in now." Wait times like Ruff's are typical. "Not only in Birmingham but in Jefferson County, all across the state of Alabama," said Ruff. "And generally all across the United States."

In recent years, funding at the state level is flat. Ruff told ABC 33/40 the National Alliance on Mental Illness connects people with clinics, but Ruff said clinics are underfunded. "The mental health budget used to be \$140 million a year, six years ago it was cut to \$100 million," Ruff explained. "And has been level funded every year since then." Ruff said there's a negative result. "More and more people are applying for these services and the end result is that services have to be cut, and fewer people can be served," exclaimed Ruff.

Because the issue is not adequately addressed on the state level, Ruff feels the biggest impact can be seen in communities with people having nowhere to go. Ruff said, "Ultimately these individuals end up being turned out on the street. Their symptoms don't get treated. They end up becoming symptomatic. and causing problems for the community."

According to NAMI, Ruff explained 90% of all suicides are due to mental illness. Although he takes daily medication and lives with different types of mental illness or disorder, he is getting treatment with the Jefferson-Blount-St. Clair Counties Mental Health Authority.

Ruff explained some who don't have the necessary resources they need, might self-medicate or end up behind bars where resources are limited.

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