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# Department of Mental Health holds town hall meeting in Montgomery

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By Hannah Lane, Reporter / Anchor CONNECT

MONTGOMERY, AL (WSFA) - The Alabama Department of Mental Health is reaching out to residents around the state in hopes of making improvements.

Commissioner Jim Perdue held a town hall meeting in Montgomery on Wednesday.

Perdue is holding these meetings in each senate district, believing it is one way to share his goals for the department and also hear from residents on what is needed.

He admits things are not perfect when it comes to his department and the state of mental health in Alabama. He says money is tight, but he believes there are ways to improve it without even asking for a dollar more in the budget.

The first step is holding these town hall meetings throughout the state.

Perdue also wants to consolidate management, moving the department to Tuscaloosa where the three health facilities are located. He says currently, rent alone for his offices in the capital city is more than \$1 million every year.

Expanding Taylor Hardin, the secure medical facility for the criminally committed, is also on his list.

Perdue says the expansion would be possible by working with other agencies, including the University of Alabama, City of Tuscaloosa, and Tuscaloosa County. It would also double the current size, adding at least 100 more beds.

Perdue also believes working with the Alabama Department of Corrections can save money and lives. He wants to make changes to rehabilitation and medical treatment of those in the prison system.

Finally, the commissioner wants to address autism and helping people diagnosed with the disorder. Perdue says once people with autism become adults, they fall under his department. He says the state can invest early into them as children with treatment, such as applied behavioral analysis, or wait until later and incur even more debt without really helping the person.

Perdue says, currently, we are waiting and paying for it down the road.

Perdue goes on to say these ideas are just in the beginning stages, but his department must start somewhere. He says he will need help from the legislature, the governor and other state departments, but says so far has received positive feedback across the board.

The next town hall meeting will be on Thursday in Anniston at 9 a.m. You can find out more about the meetings and the schedule of the town halls by clicking [here](#).

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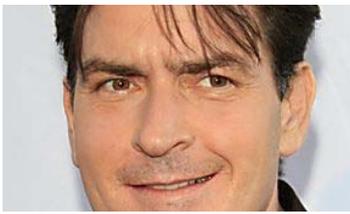


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