

## RECESSION IMPACTS MISSISSIPPI'S MENTALLY ILL



The Mississippi state budget cuts are making it more and more likely that staff layoffs will occur in at least one agency. Department of Mental Health Director Ed Legrand said that 30 employees at facilities around the state will be laid off as a result of the \$13 million in budget cuts. Legrand also expects to reduce the number of day treatment programs and work activity centers. The department may even have to close a mental health facility in south Mississippi. Out of 9,000 employees, 30 being laid off is a relatively low percentage, however, leaders at agency expect another series of budget cuts before the recession starts to turn around. Legrand hopes to “affect the fewest number of people.” He added, “it’s not going to be fun or pretty.” Mississippi House legislators have just altered a law that will give Legrand more leeway in his budget, which should effectively delay the pending layoffs. However, that measure must go through the Senate for consideration. The Mental Health department most recently closed an early intervention program which was helping hundreds of Gulf Coast families and children with disabilities. After Gov. Haley Barbour cut \$158 million from the state’s budget last week, other agencies are considering what more they can do to trim it. Cumbersome revenues are forcing most departments make cuts of at least 5%.