

IOWA TO LAYOFF OVER 136 MENTAL HEALTH WORKERS



Over 136 mental health employees face layoffs as the state of Iowa cuts the budget across all mental health institutions this year. The state lawmakers slashed the budget for all mental health agencies by \$84 million, which prompted the job cuts and other cost-cutting measures.

Charlie Krogmeie, Iowa Department of Human Services Director, said that the department has drafted two options to work out the new budget cut. Krogmeie noted that the first option is to remove 129 beds and axe 136 staff at three of the four mental health facilities funded by the state. Meanwhile, the second option entails shutting down some treatment programs in addition to the proposed layoffs. Krogmeie added that the second option includes removing staff and closing the substance abuse treatment program at the Mount Pleasant Mental Health Institute, closing the adult psychiatric program at Clarinda, and moving money from two facilities other facilities. "Either way, a decision must be made in the next few days," Krogmeie said.

Krogmeie explained that the budget cut is huge and that it will have a big impact on the services provided by all mental health institutions in the state. "I have been anticipating a reduction, so the agency has been trying to limit spending, mainly by leaving positions vacant. But this new cut is bigger than expected." However, he clarified that the slated layoffs will not likely affect other positions in other units such as field offices, child support, central office or most program operations. Krogmeie added that if the state implements a new round of budget cuts, this will again trigger another round of job cuts as well. "However, as these reductions also continue into fiscal year 2012, we will be carefully considering options for next year. As we have learned from past budget crises, this may not be the final resolution of all of these impacts. This is what I know at this time."

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