

## RUNNELLS SPECIALIZED HOSPITAL PRIVATIZES THREE DEPARTMENTS, CUTS ALL JOBS



The odds are good that unless you happen live in Union County, New Jersey, that you have never heard of the Runnells Specialized Hospital. The specialized medical facility, which is found in central New Jersey, [describes itself](#) in the following terms, "Since 1912, RUNNELLS Specialized Hospital of Union County as had a proud history of providing for the changing health care needs of our community. What makes RUNNELLS so special is its incomparable spirit." In the same description the hospital brags about its incomparable staffing, "One of the most important distinctions as a nursing care facility is the fact that RUNNELLS is staffed daily by physicians and a full complement of professional nurses. The medical team also includes geriatric nurse practitioners, psychiatrists, psychologists and professional social workers who are on staff and attend daily to residents' needs." Well the facility may have to make some changes to its website, because they are getting ready to get rid of a significant amount of their staff, and that that "full complement" is going to be a lot less than that. The facility is getting ready to make some very real cuts. Before the next 30 days have passed the hospital is going to be getting rid of all of the staff that they employ in their housekeeping, laundry and dietary departments. This may lead you to wonder exactly what is going to happen to the facility. Will it be left to get dirty? Will the linens go unchanged? Will patient's dietary needs, which are often an important part of the clinical picture, go unfulfilled? Not exactly. The county, which owns and runs the facility, is cutting back on all of these jobs in order to privatize these departments, outsourcing the work to private companies in a move that they hope will save them money. Since the county has not, for the time being, released any statements about how much they were spending on these workers currently, and the costs claimed by the winners of these bids to take over the positions there is no real way to know if there will be any cost savings, either immediately or in the long run. For now county officials are staying mum. This may have something to do with the fact that the county has issues layoff notices without choosing new providers for the services. The county is still in talks with several bidders. These cuts are part of a larger round of layoffs perpetrated by Union County officials. Of the 280 jobs that are being cut from the county payrolls in this round of job cuts, the cut from this move to privatize this facility will make up the bulk of the cuts. It is currently estimated that more than half of the cuts will come from wiping out these departments. The job cuts are part of the county's plan to close up a \$36 million hole in the budget for the county for the coming fiscal year. The budget gap comes from a decrease in the amount of money counties are getting from the state of New Jersey and a decline in tax revenues.