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## Mental health commissioner outlines priorities addressing autism, overcrowded prisons

*Al.com*

Reducing the number of mentally ill inmates in Alabama's crowded prisons, expanding services for people with autism, and reopening Searcy Hospital were among the priorities Alabama's mental health commissioner laid out.

Jim Perdue, during a town hall discussion in Spanish Fort, outlined a five-point plan that he believes will require neither a significant general fund commitment nor a tax increase. He said the plan is more managerial, but will need lawmakers' support in Montgomery.

"We need more money," said Perdue, commissioner of mental health for the past 14 months and a former probate judge of Crenshaw County. "But in my experience with this Legislature and with the state of Alabama, there is no appetite to raise taxes or raise additional fees or anything else."

Perdue's stop in Spanish Fort was one of 19 similar events he's held statewide in Alabama this summer. His comments come as *AL.com* is undertaking an investigation into wide-ranging mental health woes in Alabama. A months-long

analysis has found frustrated local law enforcement leaders dealing with a tide of mentally ill inmates as the state had scaled back services. [Read more: *As Alabama shuts down psychiatric hospitals, one jail is expanding to house mentally ill*. Read more: *As Alabama cuts mental health care, sheriffs say jails overwhelmed*.]

### Prison reform

Perdue said he believes that the state's crowded prisons and jails are dealing with approximately 10,000 inmates who have substance abuse problems and/or mental health issues. That's close to a quarter of the overall population behind bars, according to federal incarceration data.

Perdue is advocating for more community behavioral health centers to treat people who otherwise will land in the hands of jailers and wardens.

"When you are in prison, it's 100 percent ... paid for by the state," Perdue said. If 10,000 inmates were redirected into mental health centers or abuse-treatment centers, the state could scale back the big-box prison construction campaign being urged by Gov. Robert Bentley.

## AltaPointe merges with Cheaha Regional

### Behavioral Healthcare

AltaPointe Health Systems in Mobile has merged with Cheaha Regional Mental Health Center in Sylacauga and will operate under the AltaPointe name. Leaders of the two Alabama community mental health centers decided on the merger because of ongoing funding concerns for behavioral healthcare services.

The combined organization will employ 1,450 and provide treatment to more than 30,000 individuals annually. Company officials say the deal did not result in any layoffs, and they expect to launch expanded services in the future.

The merger makes AltaPointe the largest and most comprehensive behavioral health care provider in Alabama. This is the second such merger for AltaPointe, which in 2014 combined with Baldwin County Mental Health Center.

Cheaha's offerings include mental health, substance use disorder and developmental disabilities services, including outpatient and residential. AltaPointe Health Systems owns and operates two free-standing psychiatric hospitals and more than a dozen outpatient centers in southwest Alabama. 

*continued on page 3*

## WELCOME

The leadership of APPA is pleased to welcome and introduce the following new members for 2016:

Adam Ali, MD, Mobile  
 Mike Anderson, MD, Mobile  
 Tyler Byrd, DO, Birmingham  
 Timothy Carpenter, DO, Florence  
 Lauren Chastain, Mobile  
 Robin Conley, Tusculumbia  
 Karen Fitzpatrick, MD, Birmingham  
 Brian Gawronski, Birmingham  
 Shanti Gatla, MD, Mobile  
 Griffin Gibson, MD, Daphne  
 Sarah Gonzales, MD, Homewood  
 Michael Gray, Dothan  
 Jennifer Hadley, MD, PhD,  
 Birmingham  
 Ehtsham Haq, MD, Birmingham  
 Bennett Harris, DO, Birmingham  
 Asma Hashmi, MD, Birmingham  
 Robert Hunter Jr., MD, Helena  
 Tina Jackson, MD, Mobile  
 Miller Jennings, DO, Hoover  
 Victoria Johnson, MD, Birmingham  
 Fatima Kasiah, MD, Birmingham  
 Katherine Landry, DO, Hoover  
 Jun Liu, MD, Mobile  
 Austin Luker, MD, Irondale  
 Bridgette Martinak, MD,  
 Birmingham  
 Despina Moise, MD, Mountain  
 Brook  
 Serena Nimityongskul, MD, Mobile  
 Neel Patel, MD, Birmingham  
 James Pelham, Birmingham  
 Roland Pixley, MD, Birmingham  
 Ruth Rayikanti, MD, Birmingham  
 Stephen Richardson, DO, Hoover  
 Komal Singh, MD, Hoover  
 Nicholas Skefos, DO, Vestavia  
 Jennifer Smith, MD, Auburn  
 Seth Strauss, MD, Mobile  
 Peyman Tashkandi, DO, Daphne  
 Stuart Tieszen, MD, Birmingham  
 Hanh Vu, MD, Vestavia  
 Amanda Williams, MD,  
 Montgomery  
 Anupama Yedla, MD, Huntsville

## APA president-elect named SAMHSA chief medical officer

ARLINGTON, Va., Aug. 10, 2016 – President-elect of the American Psychiatric Association (APA) Anita Everett, MD, has been named the chief medical officer at the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA). In her role at SAMHSA, Dr. Everett will lead a newly created Office of the Chief Medical Officer with five dedicated staff, including an additional physician. She begins her duties at SAMHSA on Sept. 5.

“SAMHSA has selected a great physician whose experience and expertise as a psychiatrist will add value to SAMHSA through its newly created medical office,” said APA President Maria A. Oquendo, MD. “Her experience will also benefit providers of prevention, treatment and recovery services for those with mental illness. We look forward to working with Dr. Everett in her new role and with SAMHSA and HHS.”

Dr. Everett and her office at SAMHSA will provide input into strategic initiatives, policy directions, and legislative issues to ensure effective, evidence-based approaches to behavioral health services are incorporated in SAMHSA programs and activities. Her extensive behavioral health expertise and clinical experience

will help the agency address pressing health care issues, such as integration of behavioral health services with primary care.

Dr. Everett is currently division director of Johns Hopkins Community and General Psychiatry, Bayview Campus, and associate professor in the Department of Psychiatry and Behavioral Sciences at Johns Hopkins School of Medicine in Baltimore.

She was elected president-elect of APA in February 2016 and will take the office of president at the conclusion of the APA Annual Meeting in San Diego in May 2017. She has held numerous leadership roles at APA, including trustee-at-large on the APA Board of Trustees. She has also served as president of the Maryland Psychiatric Society and president of the American Association of Community Psychiatrists. 



## Medicare payment to increase for inpatient psychiatric facilities

On July 28, the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) issued a *notice* updating Medicare payment policies and rates for Fiscal Year (FY) 2017 for the Inpatient Psychiatric Facilities (IPFs) Prospective Payment System. CMS estimates the IPF payments will increase by 2.2 percent – or \$100 million – in FY2017. This amount reflects a 2.3 percent increase in the net “market basket update” reflecting relative costs, and a 0.1 percentage point reduction related to the “fixed-dollar loss threshold” for outliers. CMS is also updating the IPF wage index for FY 2017 to fully adopt area delineations initiated by the Office of Management and Budget in the FY 2016 final rule. More information is available in the *CMS Fact Sheet*. 

## Help get Mental Health Reform passed

The House of Representatives passed the Helping Families in Mental Health Crisis Act of 2016 (HR 2646) by an overwhelming majority of 422-2 earlier this month. There is now promising momentum to see this legislation passed into law this year, but your help is needed. As Congress is on its month-long August recess, APA urges you to contact your senators (junior senator and senior senator) to encourage them to bring the **Mental Health Reform Act of 2016** to the floor immediately and vote “yes” on S 2680.

[Read more.](#) 

Registration is open for  
 APPA's FALL Conference  
 October 8, 2016  
 see pages 5 & 6



# Center works to help children with mental health issues

## Daily Mountain Eagle

The Adam Bishop Center (ABC) in Jasper is a comprehensive mental health treatment facility for children. Johnny Sudberry is the outpatient coordinator for children's services in Walker County for the Northwest Alabama Mental Health Center, and addressed the East Walker County Chamber of Commerce at the chamber's August meeting.

ABC serves all of Walker County, parts of Winston and Marion counties as well as some of Jefferson County. Sudberry said the facility has grown from approximately 20 initial clients in the early days of the center to 414 open cases of children and adolescents as of July 26, 2016.

ABC offers a variety of services – outpatient, day treatment, case management and psychiatric services. The center employs a full-time psychiatrist and a nurse practitioner as well as a part-time psychiatrist.



“Our office is one of the busiest in the state. It’s probably second to JBS [Mental Health Authority] in Birmingham, as far as services are concerned,” Sudberry said.

The center’s preschool day treatment program helps children who are not prepared to go to kindergarten due to emotional behavior problems.

“They’ve tried other preschool programs and they just couldn’t make it [due to] emotional problems, behavior problems,” Sudberry said. “Our day treatment program will see those kids and they will spend several hours a day ... [learning] behavior skills.

It’s a behavior management program, working with their needs, to try to help prepare them for kindergarten and school.”

Children spend a varying number of hours in the day treatment program, which starts at 7 a.m. and runs until 4 p.m.

After-school treatment is also offered for children who have problems at home or at school.

“They come to us after school and do the same type of things we do with the preschoolers on a more graduated level to help them deal with family, emotional or behavior problems to help them be successful in their life,” Sudberry explained.

He added that the center tries to be involved in as many aspects of the child’s life as possible.

Sudberry said that the rise in children who utilize ABC’s services is in part due to increased awareness of mental health issues as well as an increase in people seeking out help today.

According to the National Institute of Mental Health, “one in five children will have a mental disorder at some point during their lifetime.”

Sudberry added that he’s glad ABC is here to serve needs of children in Walker County and summed up the work done at ABC as “sometimes frightening, sometimes exhausting but a lot of times rewarding.”

The Adam Bishop Center is located at 1105 7th Avenue in Jasper and can be reached by phone at (205) 302-9066. 🌐

## Priorities continued

Perdue said he would like to utilize one abandoned state mental health hospital to serve terminally ill prison inmates. That’s the historic Searcy Hospital in Mt. Vernon, which closed in 2012. Some sections of the Searcy property are nearly 200 years old.

Perdue envisions the state entering into a bid with a private company that would operate Searcy, providing hospice-like care. He said the Department of Mental Health will push for legislation next spring to define how the process will work.

“It’s one of the most historic, untouched properties in the state,” said Perdue. “If I can incorporate the delivery of services of those dying in prison by moving them to one of our facilities at Searcy, we can use that money that we might lease that to help improve and restore this historic property.”

### Autism ‘hope’

Perdue also said he wants Alabama to join a majority of states in providing

insurance coverage for autism services. Alabama is one of seven states that does not mandate insurance coverage for autism treatment for all children.

Perdue said that Alabama should incorporate Applied Behavioral Analysis, or ABA, for autism therapy. The program has seen a dramatic increase in its use over the past decade, by fostering skills like looking, listening and imitating, as well as basic life skills like reading and interacting appropriately with others.

“If we can incorporate this therapy into our delivery systems in the state of Alabama as (most states) have done, we can start giving hope to autistic children and their families,” Perdue said.

The program, itself, is expensive. The highly specialized sessions can run up to \$100 or more an hour, and most doctors recommend 10-40 hours per week, depending on the severity of the disorder.

“Naturally, the insurance companies

don’t want to pick up the tab,” Perdue said. “But the hope it gives families ... these are kids that can be productive and effectively treated and not disabled by this disorder their entire life.”

He said, in the long run, autism therapy can reduce the state’s mental health costs. “If we don’t do anything, these individuals by the age of 19, they become an adult disabled person and they are one of ours,” Perdue said. “We’ll spend \$2 million to \$2.5 million per individual, but if we can treat autism ... we can save money that we won’t spend on the long run.”

Tuerk Schlesinger, CEO of AltaPointe Health Systems in Mobile, said there are intellectual disabilities that can be treated with the proper attention. “A lot of states have already adopted this and autism is a primary goal to them. They do a fantastic job of taking care of the autistic people in their state and we do not in our state,” he said. 🌐

SAVE *the* DATE

## Coming Attractions

### 2016 APPA Fall Conference

October 8 | Embassy Suites Hotel | Tuscaloosa  
Reserve your room by calling (800) 362-2779

### 2017 APPA Spring Conference

April 21-22 | Montgomery Renaissance Hotel and Spa

### 2017 APPA Fall Conference (Tentative)

October 14 | Ross Bridge Resort, Birmingham

### 2018 APPA Spring Conference

April 20-21 | Embassy Suites, Montgomery

## News Briefs

### APA to develop a Mental Health Clinical Data Registry

The APA Board of Trustees in early 2016 approved the development of a mental health clinical data registry. APA's registry is in the initial stages of development. Once implemented, the registry will help psychiatrists meet new Medicare quality reporting requirements and maintain professional recertification. The registry will:

- Help psychiatrists avoid payment penalties and instead achieve bonuses for meeting CMS quality reporting requirements
- Reduce the burden of submitting Performance-in-Practice data and obtaining ABPN MOC Part IV credit to maintain board certification and hospital credentialing

APA is seeking member volunteers for a pilot project. [Volunteer](#) for the pilot. [Learn more.](#)

### Mental Health & HIV in the South

The APA Office of HIV Psychiatry and SAMHSA HIV/AIDS and the Mental Health Training Resource Center invite you to participate in a free webinar: [“Innovative Approaches to Rural Mental Health Treatment and HIV,”](#) which will demo live use of telepsychiatry, on August 30. CME credit is available.

### Explore New Telepsychiatry Toolkit

The use of video-based telepsychiatry helps meet patients' needs for convenient, affordable and readily-accessible mental health services. APA is helping psychiatrists learn about and adopt telepsychiatry through its Committee on Telepsychiatry, and the Telepsychiatry Toolkit. The Toolkit features leading psychiatrists covering history, training, practice/clinical, reimbursement and legal issues. [Explore the Toolkit.](#)

### Applying the Integrated Care Approach

Collaborative care has emerged as the strongest evidence-based approach to providing effective mental health care in primary care settings. Take the [online trainings](#) to learn how you can incorporate this model into your practice, free through September 2019. 

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### Alabama Psychiatric Physicians Association

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Physicians Association.  
Comments and letters to the  
editor are welcome.

# Tides of Change in Mental Health Care

October 8 • Tuscaloosa Embassy Suites

## APPA 2016 Fall Conference Agenda – Saturday, Oct. 8

7:00 a.m. – 7:50 a.m.

Registration and Breakfast with Exhibitors

7:50 a.m. – 8:00 a.m.

Welcome

8:00 a.m. – 12:30 p.m.

**Practice Managers Mini-Conference**

Location: Psychiatry South, Tuscaloosa

8:00 a.m. – 9:30 a.m.

**Changing the Culture in Public Schools**

Edgar W. Finn, MD, Assistant Professor of Psychiatry; Program Director, Child and Adolescent Psychiatry Fellowship, University of South Alabama College of Medicine

Sandra Parker, MD, Associate Professor of Psychiatry; Vice Chair, Department of Psychiatry, University of South Alabama College of Medicine

9:30 a.m. – 9:50 a.m.

Morning Break with exhibitors

9:50 a.m. – 11:05 a.m.

**From Monotherapy to Polypharmacy: An Update**

Godehard Oepen, MD, PhD, DFAPA, Grayson & Associates

11:05 a.m. – 12:05 p.m.

**Catching Chameleons: Diagnosing and Managing Mood Disorders During and After Pregnancy**

Christina Talerico, MD, Child and Adolescent Psychiatry Fellow, University of South Alabama College of Medicine

12:05 a.m. – 12:25 p.m.

Lunch with exhibitors, Poster Awards and Presentations

12:25 p.m. – 1:40 p.m.

**Adverse Childhood Events: Who Pays for It?**

Tarak Vasavada, MD, Professor of Psychiatry, University of Alabama at Birmingham

1:40 p.m. – 2:40 p.m.

**Agitation in the Patient with Dementia**

W. Bogan Brooks III, MD, Assistant Professor of Psychiatry;

Director, Medical Student Psychiatry Clerkship, University of South Alabama College of Medicine

2:40 p.m. – 3:00 p.m.

Afternoon Break with exhibitors

3:00 p.m. – 5:00 p.m.

**Risk Management when Prescribing Controlled Substances**

Charles D. Cash, JD, LLM, Assistant Vice President, Professional Risk Management Services

5:00 p.m.

**Evaluation/Adjourn**

### Objectives

- Acquire the knowledge and skills to implement principles of rational polypharmacy.
- Recognize how adverse events in childhood can affect adult patients and their risk for psychopathology.
- Summarize federal and state laws regarding controlled substances, societal pressures, and the changing practice of medicine in order to reduce potential liability.
- Compare various treatment options for patients with mood disorders during pregnancy and the post-partum period.
- Review effective treatment options for patients with agitation in the context of dementia.
- Develop effective models for integrated mental healthcare settings, utilizing the specific example of school-based mental health assessment and treatment.

### Accreditation Statement

This activity has been planned and implemented in accordance with the accreditation requirements and policies of the Medical Association of the State of Alabama through the joint providership of the Medical Foundation of Alabama and the Alabama Psychiatric Physicians Association. The Medical Foundation of Alabama is accredited by the Medical Association of the State of Alabama to provide continuing medical education for physicians.

### Designation Statement

The Medical Foundation of Alabama designates this live activity for a maximum of 8 *AMA PRA Category 1 Credits*<sup>™</sup>. Physicians should claim only the credit commensurate with the extent of their participation in the activity.

### REGISTRATION

Register online at [www.tinyurl.com/APPA2016FallConference](http://www.tinyurl.com/APPA2016FallConference) or print a registration form at [www.alabamapsych.org/physicians](http://www.alabamapsych.org/physicians) and mail to APPA Fall Conference, Attn. Jennifer Hayes, PO Box 1900, Montgomery, AL 36102-1900.

### ACCOMMODATIONS

The room rate at the Embassy Suites Tuscaloosa for Friday, Oct. 7, is \$159. Call (800) 362-2779 with room code ALP or use the link from the APPA website: [www.alabamapsych.org/physicians](http://www.alabamapsych.org/physicians). Note: The APPA Room block closes Sept. 9. We urge you to book your room early.

