Deschutes County Mental Health Dept. cuts hours

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In order to preserve quality mental health services to Deschutes County residents, the Department of Health Services will reduce hours of operation on Fridays, beginning March 6. The reduction in hours will prevent staff layoffs and help the County prepare for expected cuts in State mental health funding. Starting today, the Department's Mental Health and Developmental Disabled services will be open to the public from 8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. Monday through Thursday, but will only operate from 8:00 a.m. to 12:00 p.m. on Fridays. The Mental Health Crisis Hotline and Mobile Crisis Team will continue to operate 24-hours a day, seven days a week.

"Our goal is to prevent unnecessary layoffs while keeping the quality of care and access for the uninsured as high as possible," according to Scott Johnson, Department Director. "As we've told our State Legislators and Commissioners, State and County funds are a lifeline for uninsured people in Deschutes County who need mental health care and alcohol and drug treatment." The 36-hour workweek for mental health and developmental disabilities, will save the Department approximately $180,000 this year and as much as $650,000 in 2009-2010. During the workweek, residents may still access Deschutes County Public Health, housed in the same building as Mental Health at 2577 NE Courtney Drive in Bend. Public Health services and hours have not been reduced as part of this change. In December, economists reported the State's 2009-11 revenue picture was overstated by $1.3 billion. Governor Kulongoski's December budget proposal included a 17% cut in mental health funding and an 82% cut in alcohol and drug treatment. Both cuts affect uninsured Oregonians. For local officials, State cuts in behavioral health care were particularly troubling. The projected State revenue shortfall was updated in February and now totals $3 billion. Deschutes County Health Services provides or contracts for mental health, alcohol and drug, and gambling treatment services for residents of Deschutes County as well as a wide range of public health services. The Department also provides services for people with developmental disabilities in the local area.

For more information about these services, please visit www.deschutes.org or call 322-7500 (Mental Health) or call 322-7400 (Public Health).