

New River Behavioral Health: Closing

Written by Steve Frank

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We know now that New River Behavioral Health Care is closing. We have some idea as to why, but not when, at this point, nor is there a grasp of just what ramifications will come from the cessation of services to their final five counties of service. What is new today is that it is clear that North Carolina's Medicaid agency has suspended Medicaid payments to New River Behavior HealthCare, and Carolina Public Press is quoting N.C. Department of Health and Human Services' spokesman Brad Deen in saying "We cannot divulge very much at all about this other than an allegation has been made, and the N.C. Division of Medical Assistance is investigating." He went on to say, "By federal law, we are required to suspend Medicaid payments to this provider. By law, I cannot divulge the nature of the allegation." Deen said that the N.C. Department of Health and Human Services notified New River Behavioral HealthCare of the investigation by letter on Sept. 22, but could not comment on how long the investigation will continue nor what might be the potential results. A statement was released by Brian Ingraham, CEO of Smoky Mountain Center, late last week, saying:

Smoky Mountain Center learned today that New River Behavioral Healthcare, a major service provider in Alleghany, Ashe, Avery, Watauga and Wilkes Counties, has decided to cease operations." "Smoky Mountain Center is committed to an orderly transition of services from New River to other providers," and that, as the LME, they "will actively manage the transition of consumers and their services to other service provider organizations, and begin working closely with New River Behavioral HealthCare, county government, and communities to promote close communication around the transition of care for these vital behavioral health services." They also said they would "facilitate employment opportunities for New River staff with other provider organizations," and that "We will keep you informed as plans for the transition are developed." The specifics of the allegations have not been released, nor who might be culpable in the matter. New River's clients should be receiving official notification with a 30-day window before the shut-down of all services. New River ceased operations in three of its counties not quite a month ago, turning Caldwell, McDowell, and Alexander to another agency, RHA.