

# Chicago Tribune

## Critics blast Quinn's 'rebalancing' plan for state facilities

### Two institutions for mentally ill and developmentally disabled may be targeted for closure

By Monique Garcia, Chicago Tribune reporter  
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Gov. **Pat Quinn's** administration is close to picking which state facilities for the mentally ill and developmentally disabled will be shuttered, and a lawmaker involved in the private discussions says he thinks centers in **Tinley Park** and Jacksonville in central Illinois will make the list.

The situation is drawing sharp rebuke from the state's largest employee union, which argues Quinn's office is making decisions about closings "in secret with no public input or scrutiny."

The list is being drawn up after Quinn proposed shutting down seven facilities and laying off 1,900 workers last year, arguing lawmakers did not set aside enough money. The governor reached a deal with legislators to shift around money to stop immediate closings and rescind pink slips in favor of a proposal that would slowly shutter some facilities over the next several years.

Dubbed "rebalancing," the idea is to transition hundreds of residents out of state-run institutions into community-care settings, which proponents argue are cheaper and can provide a better quality of life. As part of that plan, Quinn's office wants to close up to two homes for the developmentally disabled and one **mental health** center in the budget year that begins July 1.

Several top advisers have held private meetings with a small group of lawmakers to develop criteria the office will use to determine which facilities will close first. A Quinn spokeswoman said Monday that no final decisions have been made, though an announcement is expected "soon."

"We are taking the recommendations from all involved into consideration as we make final determinations," the administration said in a statement.

Rep. Jim Watson, a Jacksonville Republican who was involved in the meetings, said it was "pretty apparent" the administration is targeting the Tinley Park Mental Health Center and the Jacksonville Developmental Center.

Watson questioned the criteria used to decide which facilities should close, saying it seemed Quinn's office focused primarily on the cost of running facilities but not the economic impact that closing a center would have on the surrounding community. Conceding it was hard to be "totally objective," Watson said closing the Jacksonville center would "devastate" the community.

Henry Bayer, executive director of the American Federation of State, County and Municipal Workers Council 31, said in a statement that "the closure push appears based on politics and budget considerations, not what's best for individuals, families and communities."

Another lawmaker at the meetings said the governor's office was open to input and noted it's expected the union would oppose plans that might cut the state workforce.

"Change is difficult," said Rep. **Sara Feigenholtz**, D-Chicago. "But we need to start rethinking how we do things with our budget, and we can no longer afford these settings."

The proposals must go through public hearings before being voted on by a legislative panel, said Sen. Jeff Schoenberg, D-Evanston.  
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