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### State's boarding ban is delayed until justices can rule

The state Supreme Court's ban on the controversial practice known as psychiatric boarding will not go into effect until the court rules on a motion asking for a delay. The ban was originally scheduled to take effect Wednesday.

By Paige Cornwell

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The state's ban on psychiatric boarding will not go into effect until the state Supreme Court rules on a request for a 120-day delay.

The mandate was set to take effect Wednesday, but the state Attorney General's Office on Friday asked for extra time to adapt.

On Monday, the court agreed to take up the request, the Attorney General's Office said.

Psychiatric boarding refers to the practice of warehousing psychiatric patients in hospital emergency rooms and other nonmental-health facilities while they wait for long-term beds. It has become more prevalent in recent years as hospitals struggle with a shortage of resources. The practice quintupled from 2009 to 2012 in King County, according to hospital data.

The state's ban earlier this month arose from a 2013 Pierce County case. The Aug. 7 ruling was praised by mental-health professionals, but raised questions about how hospitals would comply and whether patients would be released without treatment.

On Friday, Gov. Jay Inslee approved \$30 million to help solve the problem. That same day, the state Attorney General's Office filed a motion asking the court to suspend its boarding ban for 120 days, and said it could make an additional 145 certified evaluation and treatment beds available by then, according to the Attorney General's Office.

About 200 people are being boarded in Washington, according to the state. Patients are boarded for an average of three days, and, in extreme cases, patients were strapped to gurneys to prevent injury.

There is no deadline for the court's ultimate response to the state's Friday motion, according to the Attorney General's Office.

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