State not waiting for details on Aequitas layoffs, schedules workshop for affected workers

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Aequitas Capital Management has yet to provide the state details of what's expected to be a mass layoff, but the state isn't waiting for more information.

It's scheduled an information session for Feb. 8 to provide information about benefits that may be available to affected workers. The session will be held from 10 a.m. to 11:30 a.m. at Clackamas Community College in the Family Resource Center Room, F113.

The firm has yet to file a WARN notice, which is required under federal law when a mass layoff occurs. It also has not provided the state much information.

On Jan. 22, a state official visited Aequitas unannounced after hearing of possible layoffs.

"At the time, they did not give us any information," said Linda Wood, a rapid response coordinator for Workforce Development Services, the arm of the state that responds to mass layoffs. “They said nothing was going on.”

Later that day, in response to an email from the Business Journal, Aequitas
provided a statement that said it was “undergoing a firm reorganization which includes adjustments to the size of the workforce.” It attributed the layoffs to a “shift in business model and strategy,” but declined to provide specifics.

A week later, The Oregonian reported a second round of layoffs that would result in a "skeleton crew" being retained when the layoffs take affect March 29.

In an email Wednesday, Aequitas provided some additional information. It said 30 employees were laid off Jan. 22 and every employee of the firm has received notice that his or her job could be eliminated. But the firm said it hasn't decided how layoffs will happen.

Aequitas was once one of Oregon's fastest-growing financial services firms. As recently as last summer, it reported $1.67 billion in assets under management, up from $250 million in 2011. It once employed 200.

The firm raises money from wealthy families and institutional investors and steers it to a variety of alternative investments. It's unclear why the firm seems in such a dire financial position.

The Oregonian has reported on problems with $561 million in student loans that the firm purchased from now-bankrupt for-profit Corinthian Colleges.

The firm declined to comment on the nature of its problems. Read Friday's print edition of the Business Journal for more about the firm's struggles.

Workers who attend the workshop on Feb. 8 will get information about unemployment benefits, health insurance options and job search resources. Reservations can be made by emailing Linda Wood at lwood@clackamas.edu or calling 503-594-3114.

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