



NEWS RELEASE

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McCune Residential Center to close

Judge Charles E. Atwell, the Presiding Judge of the 16th Judicial Circuit of Missouri (Jackson County) announced today that the Court will be consolidating residential treatment services at the Hilltop Residential Center and vacating the McCune Residential Center (formerly known as the McCune School for Boys) by the end of this year. Hilltop and McCune are operated by the Family Court Division, part of the 16th Judicial Circuit, and are funded primarily by Jackson County and to a lesser degree by grants and reimbursements.

“This was a very difficult decision, but we think it’s the right thing to do for the Court and the community,” said Atwell. “Many of our judges have served at Family Court and know what fine work is done at McCune and at the other programs and facilities. Unfortunately, the McCune program was no longer financially supportable given all of the other competing needs of the Court and the fact that the demand for secure care has declined significantly over the past few years as a result of alternatives to residential treatment.” Youth requiring secure care after adjudication will now have to be committed to state facilities operated by the Division of Youth Services outside of the County.

The Family Court has worked tirelessly over many years to identify and implement reforms and improvements to the entire juvenile justice system. These reforms have included the Juvenile Detention Alternatives Initiative (for which the Court was recently recognized by the Missouri Supreme Court) and evidence based practices in community settings. These innovative reforms have resulted in numerous accolades and recognitions for the Court.

One of the successes resulting from the Court’s efforts has been a significant reduction in the demand for secure residential care. The need for post adjudication secure confinement has diminished to the point where it is no longer feasible to maintain a secure facility of this size in the community. Studies have shown that less-secure residential facilities and community based programs which address the youth and the family system are more effective and have proven to reduce recidivism.

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The Court has closely considered its stewardship over limited governmental funds and has continued to identify ways to maximize the effectiveness of those funds. Because of the age of the McCune facility along with the reduced need in terms of the number of youth, the Court had taken the initiative to explore the possibility of consolidating a reduced-size secure facility with a staff secure facility by constructing a new purpose-built campus so that youth could remain in this community where their families could participate in treatment. Although such a facility would result in savings over time, given the current financial realities, the Jackson County Administration determined it could not support such an effort with current and future funding. “We certainly understand the County Executive’s position given the reduction of various State reimbursements to the County and the fiscal pressure being felt by local governments across the State,” said Atwell. “That doesn’t mean this is something we wanted to do; McCune has been a part of this community for many decades, but this step will relieve some of the financial pressure on the Court and therefore on the County.”

The Court is going to be working hard between now and the end of the year in an attempt to assist employees impacted by the closing. “We want to express our gratitude to all employees who are currently serving at McCune as well as those who served in the past. We also want to thank the Court’s many partners who have assisted in operating and providing services at McCune including current providers such as the outstanding Fort Osage School District, Comprehensive Mental Health Services, and Children’s Mercy Hospital as well as numerous volunteer groups who have served us so faithfully over the many years of McCune’s existence,” said Judge Justine Del Muro, Family Court Administrative Judge.

The McCune Residential Center is the only American Correctional Association accredited secure juvenile community residential center in the State of Missouri.

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