

Medina County Common Pleas Court

PROBATE AND JUVENILE DIVISIONS

93 PUBLIC SQUARE, ROOM 104, MEDINA, OHIO 44256

Kevin W. Dunn

Judge

MEDIA RELEASE

July 27, 2016

Medina County Juvenile Court Earns Innovation Grant for New Suspension School Program

Medina County Juvenile Court is collaborating with local school districts to provide a new program offering alternative placement for juvenile offenders suspended from school.

MEDINA – Judge Kevin W. Dunn and Programming and Grants Coordinator Tony Miller received notice that Juvenile Court’s proposal for a suspension school program was accepted by the Ohio Supreme Court for a \$75,000 Innovation Grant.

The new suspension school program will offer Juvenile Court’s Probation Officers an alternative placement for youth monitored by the Court who receive an out-of-school suspension. During the 2015-2016 school year, 58 youth monitored by the Court received out-of-school suspensions ranging from one to ten days. The suspensions were for infractions of school rules including fighting, profanity, insubordination, and leaving school grounds without permission. Of those 58 youth, 32 were detained at the detention center.

Chief Probation Officer Jodi Albertson said the typical procedure when a youth on Probation receives an out-of-school suspension, depending on the offense, is the issuance of a Probation Violation resulting in detainment or placement on electronic monitoring, among other sanctions. With the availability of this new suspension school program, Albertson said the Court’s Probation Officers will utilize this least restrictive avenue first.

“This program will still provide accountability and supervision that is always applied when youth violate their Probation, but it will also allow them to continue their education,” Albertson said.

Judge Dunn agreed with Albertson and said one of the main goals of this new program is to help prevent students from falling further behind with their school work during their suspension.

“The Court does everything possible to keep youth on Probation on the right track, and their schooling is a large part of that,” Judge Dunn said. “This will help ensure that even during their suspension, they are continuing to learn and complete school work rather than sleep until noon and play video games or scan social media without any adult supervision.”

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The suspension school program will be held at the Medina County Juvenile Court Annex Building and will accommodate up to five students per day, as needed, and be monitored by a Medina City Schools paraprofessional. Miller said that it will be at the discretion of the Probation Officers, Magistrates, and Judge whether the school infraction warrants assignment to the program or detention. Miller also said he hopes that this new program will decrease detention center placement of youth and increase academic performance.

“In a way, this program is more of a privilege to the youth because the alternative option if they don’t attend the program could mean detention,” Miller said. “But we will use our common sense in determining the population for this new program. Obviously, if a youth poses a risk of harm to themselves or others, he or she will be placed at the detention center.”

Miller and Albertson will meet with school principals in August to work on details once a paraprofessional is chosen. It will also be up to each school to decide if youth who participate in the program will be permitted to receive credit for school work completed during their suspension.

Miller said another detail that needs finalization is transportation subcontracted with a local company, which has been included in the grant budget.

“Most parents won’t be able to alter their schedule to drop off and pick up their child from the program at the Annex Building, so we need to offer an option for transportation to those youth,” he said.

Miller said while the program’s tentative schedule calls for an 8:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m. day, he recognizes there has to be some flexibility for transportation.

“The budget will allow for one transportation vehicle per day, as needed, but that vehicle may have to pick up one youth in Brunswick before going to pick up another student in Wadsworth,” Miller said. “We understand that the program may not begin at 8:00 a.m. on days like that, and that extra time will be needed to return the students to their homes.”

Judge Dunn said he’s eager to begin the new suspension school program and is grateful that the Supreme Court saw the benefit and vision by accepting the grant proposal. He also said he is appreciative of the constant, positive collaboration efforts with the local school districts.

“This program wouldn’t be possible without assistance from the schools and I anticipate that as a result of this effort, we will be able to return students who can acclimate back into the classroom effortlessly following their suspension.”

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