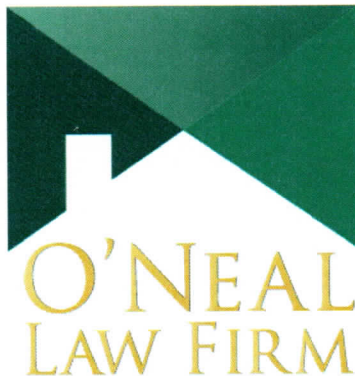


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May 31, 2016

Dear Board of Supervisors:

I have placed an item on the agenda for June 6th. The issue is one that you may not be familiar with due to the confidential nature of youth court.

The Adolescent Opportunity Program (AOP) is an alternative to incarceration for our teenagers who have come through youth court. It has been a part of youth court for many years. It aims to provide an alternative to detention for past actions and hopefully redirect clients from a path of crime.

The AOP program is basically an after school program that the youth court judge can order as a disposition (similar to sentencing in adult cases). Once ordered into AOP, the youth receives counseling, tutoring, life skills and a safe place to go after school.

This program decreases the need for detention for present cases and I believe it decreases the need for future detention because of the decrease of participants reoffending.

Several years ago when the State cut the funds for drug courts, the youth court adjusted the program by reducing the participants by 50%, trimming the staff and cutting the salaries of myself and the prosecutor from \$18,000/yr to zero. We remained committed to the program and have continued to be part of the team without the compensation once provided because we believe in the program. We did not come to the board for funding at that time.

Now the State has decided to defund AOP. This is not a budget cut where the program can trim the fat and continue. It is a complete cut. I thought you should know because of the impact this will have on our county.

Currently there are 6 program options for the youth court judge in disposition (sentencing) for misdemeanors and felonies. 1) Probation, 2) AOP, 3)AERC, 4)Detention ("jail"), 5)Drug Court (drug issues only) or 6)Training School for felonies only and used as a last resort for more serious or habitual offenders. AOP and AERC are both dependent on State funding. AOP has been cut completely and AERC is in danger of the same cuts. AERC is for older teens who are high risk and repeat offenders. It is a fairly new program.

In the past we have utilized a community service option but that is not currently available.

If the youth court loses AOP, the county's detention costs will likely increase. These kids will likely reoffend without AOP type intervention according to national statistics.

I know that our county has budget issues and I don't pretend to have the answers or know where to find funds. If the county can find \$50,000 to fund this program for 6 months, the issue can be revisited in January. Hopefully, the youth court can find alternative funding. I have attached a proposal from the AOP staff as to what they need to continue. I look forward to speaking with you on the 6th.

With kind regards, I am

Sincerely yours,



Staci O'Neal, Esq.

MADISON COUNTY ADOLESCENT OPPORTUNITY PROGRAM

May 24, 2016

OVERVIEW

Program Description

- A. To provide a community treatment program that reduces recidivism of adolescent offenders in Madison County. Attention shall be given to adjudicated youth offenders, both male and female, ages 12-17 years old, who are at a low to moderate risk of reoffending.
- B. To provide an alternative to the ever growing population of juvenile detention facilities
- C. To improve family relations and functioning by offering family support services, and providing transportation to families in need.
- D. To provide fundamental life skills training, assisting in gaining job skills, decrease adolescent drug and alcohol use, and to decrease adolescent pregnancy in Madison County.
- E. To provide support to the local school district by improving school attendance, working on positive behavior in a school setting, and attending school meeting when the parent/guardian is unavailable.
- F. To oversee mental health services by referring families to local mental health agencies, and ensuring compliance with treatment.
- G. To staff the program with personnel who shall work with the most ethical, efficient, and professional manner possible.
- H. Operation hours shall be a minimum of five days a week.
- I. Day Treatment hours are normally after school and will operate a minimum of 2 hours per day during the school year, with hours varying during summer break and holidays.

Background

The Madison County Adolescent Opportunity Program has been operating in Madison County since 2001. During that time, the Adolescent Opportunity Program has seen quite a few youth come through the program. Although there are some adolescents who do reoffend and carry on to the adult system, there are many more who have been positively impacted by the staff of the Adolescent Opportunity Program. This program provides services that include behavioral and mental health services, educational support, family support, life skills training, and crisis management, amongst many others. The Adolescent Opportunity Program has lasted so long in this community not because of the staff, but because of the clients who are able to say that they were positively impacted by the program, and pass the word. We often hear other adolescents who are not in the Youth Court System ask, "How do I get in AOP?" This shows the impact that the program has within the community. The Adolescent Opportunity Program has played a major role in reducing recidivism in Madison County over the past 15 years.

Benefits

- A. Reduces juvenile detention costs for Madison County
- B. Provides an alternative to juvenile detention
- C. Equips at risk youth to become productive, tax paying citizens
- D. Builds stronger families
- E. Builds stronger communities
- F. Provides structure to clients
- G. Provides support to the school district
- H. Ensures that adolescents are receiving proper case management services
- I. Reduces adolescent pregnancy

- J. Educates youth on the importance of maintaining a positive character
- K. Inform youth on educational needs and options
- L. Reduce drug and alcohol use amongst adolescents
- M. Provide safer communities

Budget

Currently, the Adolescent Opportunity Program operates on a grant from the MS Department of Human Services in the amount of \$185,454.00 annually. The proposed budget for maintaining the Adolescent Opportunity Program, or a similar program that provides the same services, is listed below:

Salaries

- | | |
|-----------------------|----------------------|
| A. Director Salary | \$40,000.00 annually |
| B. Assistant Director | \$35,000.00 annually |

Program Expenses

- | | |
|---|---------------------|
| A. Food for Clients
(includes snacks for clients,
program outings, & family events) | \$6,000.00 annually |
| B. Program Supplies
(includes incentives, educational
Supplies, & office supplies) | \$5,500.00 annually |
| C. Field Trips | \$3,000.00 annually |
| D. Professional Development | \$1,800.00 annually |
| E. Fuel/Vehicle Repair/Maintenance | \$5,300.00 annually |

TOTAL	\$96,600.00
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The total that is being requested to keep the program in operation is a total of \$100,000.00 annually. Although the total budget amount for the program comes out to \$96,600.00 annually, the Director is requesting an additional \$3,400.00 as a means for inflation of prices, incidentals, and possible unforeseen expenses.

Jaquisa Dawson, MA
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