

26th JUDICIAL CIRCUIT COURT
Juvenile Division

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Memorandum

TO: Alpena County Facilities, Capital & Strategic Planning Committee
From: Janelle Mott, Juvenile Officer
Date: March 17, 2022
RE: Request for Use of Facilities

The Juvenile Division is requesting Bridges of Northern Michigan be permitted to use the basement in the County Annex Building every Wednesday, from 8:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. to provide counseling services for youth and their families in the community. Dennis Chitwood, our current provider of counseling through Bridges of Northern Michigan, and owner of Bridges, approached the Juvenile Officer a month ago, with a request to expand services in the Alpena area.

As a refresher, The Juvenile Division first began contracting with Bridges in March, 2019, to provide counseling services for youth on probation and their families. Dennis and his business partner Steve approached the Juvenile Officer about the relationship after having provided a number of psychological evaluations (and recommendations for treatment) for both Alpena and Montmorency County youth. The evaluations were excellent, but the recommendations were not reasonable for this area. There were simply no providers around to provide the services that our youth need. The Juvenile Officer called Dennis, relatively frustrated, requesting recommendations suited to the area and the services available in the area. So, Dennis and Steve approached Juvenile Officer about contracting with the Juvenile Court to provide the counseling services in the area. They had a similar arrangement with Roscommon County, and thought it would be something beneficial for Alpena and Montmorency Counties as well.

Dennis walked the Juvenile Officer through Bridges' relationship with Roscommon County and the subsequent establishment of a satellite office in Roscommon, where clients are seen every day, there is a full-time receptionist, and Dennis and Steve both still see clients there and conduct evaluations there. Dennis is proposing a similar set-up in Alpena County.

Dennis is proposing keeping our court contract the same (they provide services every other week to our clients), but they come every week, and on the "off weeks" they see other clients - maybe DHHS referrals, maybe youth and families from other counties, etc. They would not bill the court for further services, but would be billing these "other clients." They want to then use that money generated to invest in a permanent physical location in Alpena County.

The Juvenile Division is requesting the County allow Bridges of Northern Michigan to utilize the space in the basement every other week, at no charge. This would allow for Bridges to build their client base and capital to invest and make profitable a new satellite office here in Alpena.

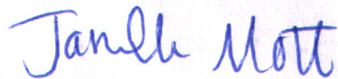
For the past three years, Bridges has provided the Juvenile Division with consistent, regular counseling, with the same counselors. This is something this department has not had in the past. The lack of consistency in counselors previously in the area, as well as the ability to treat the most high risk youth, is something this office has not had in the past. This required the Court to place these youth in expensive, long-term residential treatment facilities in an effort to protect the community and help the youth.

This partnership, and commitment to improving treatment options in this community, makes sense for the County, the Court, and the community. Bridges has a wide range of counselors, with a variety of specialties, who are able and willing to travel here to provide comprehensive treatment. The need in this community for a service such as this, is very high.

The Juvenile Officer has been in contact with a variety of agencies in Alpena and Montmorency counties, as well as our neighboring counties. When asked if they would utilize Bridges services in Alpena County, the overwhelming answer has been "YES! When can we start?"

The Juvenile Officer is requesting Alpena County authorize the County Administrator to work with the Juvenile Officer is creating a Use Agreement allowing Bridges to utilize the space in the basement to provide counseling services outside the current contract Bridges has with the Court.

Respectfully submitted,



Janelle Mott