

Mid-Valley Special Education Cooperative

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MEMO

TO: Executive Board

FROM: Matt McDonald, Director of Human Resources & Business/CSBO

DATE: October 1, 2025

RE: Transition Program Facility Needs

Summary

The Shelby facility has significant limitations in both capacity and safety. Current space restrictions, accessibility barriers, and safety concerns directly affect student learning, staff effectiveness, and family confidence in our program. Immediate exploration of alternative sites is necessary to ensure we can continue to provide safe, high-quality educational experiences for our students.

Current Limitations

Shelby

Classroom and Program Space

- Classrooms are filled to capacity, with some limited to only 5–6 students.
- Limited room for sensory regulation or movement when students are struggling emotionally or behaviorally.
- Lack of designated space for related services (speech, OT, PT), sensory breaks, or building-based job skills training.
- Inability to combine classrooms for electives, guest speakers, or group learning opportunities.
- One class is splitting time across multiple locations; when vocational sites or ECC are unavailable, students lack usable space.

Accessibility

- The building relies on a wheelchair lift for access, leaving students and staff vulnerable when it is inoperable.
- The kitchen is not wheelchair accessible, preventing students with mobility needs from fully engaging in cooking tasks.

Safety Concerns

- Students share a building with a drug rehabilitation center, raising supervision and safety concerns.
- The south entrance is constructed of glass, easily breakable and fully transparent, exposing interior areas to outside visibility and potential threats.
- Parents have expressed repeated concerns regarding the safety and accessibility of the building.

Nursing, Storage, and Restrooms

- No secure, dedicated nursing office for care, supplies, or medication.

- Storage currently occurs in an egress corridor, a practice flagged by both the ROE and Fire Department.
- Only two restrooms are available; one doubles as the accessible option, creating additional strain on facilities.

Fox Valley Christian Church

- Rent and utility costs are currently very low, but will be increasing
- Building safety concerns mirror Shelby, with non-safety glass at entrances.
- Staff currently lack dedicated office space and conference/meeting rooms.

Potential Options

1) Cedar Avenue Building

Opportunities:

- Adequate space to support SEA, SAIL, Hearing Itinerants, and administrative offices.
- Ability to wall off our section from other tenants.
- Can be made wheelchair accessible with remodeling.
- BEI is committed to exploring this as a long-term solution.

Challenges:

- Requires construction of an accessible entrance.
- Restroom facilities must be remodeled.
- ROE and Fire Department compliance needs must be addressed.
- Would require a long-term lease agreement.

2) Remain at Shelby and add additional space

Opportunities:

- Ability to end lease at Shelby in 2029 and re-evaluate needs then
- Identify a smaller space to accommodate needed, accessible classrooms

Challenges:

- New space would likely still need remodeling to accommodate educational programming
- Further divide related services, administrative and transportation supports

Next Steps

- Board approval to continue the exploratory process.
- Initiate an architectural review of the Cedar Avenue site to confirm feasibility.
- Request baseline pricing and lease terms from BEI.
- Coordinate with architects, ROE, and the Fire Department to assess compliance requirements.
- Identify immediate and long-term remodeling needs, projected costs, and responsibilities for funding.

Conclusion and Recommendation

The Shelby site is no longer sufficient to meet the needs of our students, staff, or families. Issues of space, accessibility, and safety present daily challenges and increase liability for the cooperative. Given these limitations, it is recommended that the Board authorize continued exploration of the **Cedar Avenue Building** as a potential long-term solution, while also evaluating short-term strategies to relieve immediate space pressures.