



County Administrator

Robert W. Wilson
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M E M O

TO: County Commissions
FROM: Robert W. Wilson
DATE: May 31, 2022
SUBJECT: Leased Office Space Consideration

The Agassiz Valley Human Service Zone (AVHSZ) has reached out to Cass County inquiring about leasing office space in the Courthouse/Annex Building complex for a AVHSZ program that primarily services clients in the Fargo area.

AVHSZ currently operates the Unaccompanied Minor Refugee (UMR) Program utilizing nine Trail County employees. I have attached an email from AVHSZ Director Kim Jacobson that provides a detailed description of the program and why Director Jacobson is attempting to secure Fargo-area office space.

On Tuesday, May 24th Director Jacobson, myself, and others toured the suite of offices opposite the cafeteria on the basement level of the Courthouse. This space is currently not utilized by Cass County (other than as a storage area) and there are no immediate plans for a Cass County office to occupy the space. Based on our walkthrough it appears this site would work well for the UMP program needs.

I am scheduling a discussion of potentially leasing office space in the basement of the Courthouse to the Agassiz Valley Human Service Zone on Tuesday, June 6th. Director Jacobson will attend and be available to answer questions. This is a discussion-only item.

Please reach out to me if you have questions or concerns.

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211 Ninth Street South
Fargo, North Dakota 58108

www.casscountynd.gov

From: [Kim Jacobson](#)
To: [Wilson, Robert](#)
Cc: [Kim Jacobson](#)
Subject: Leased Office Space Consideration
Date: Tuesday, May 24, 2022 2:08:14 PM
Attachments: [image001.png](#)

CAUTION: EXTERNAL EMAIL

Robert,

Thank you for the time to meet today and discuss a potential space collaboration between Cass County and Agassiz Valley Human Service Zone. AVHSZ has expanded its services and has a specialty team located in Fargo. We are seeking office space to support the needs of our 9+ member team and clients.

Our newly expanded services includes the administration of the URM (unaccompanied refugee minor) program. URM is a federal program that serves eligible and approved refugee youth. There is a federal agreement between the State of North Dakota and the Office of Refugee Resettlement (ORR) to provide these services in North Dakota. AVHSZ is one of 15 programs in the nation that administers this program. The closest neighboring program is in Michigan. ND DHS partners with AVHSZ in the delivery of this program. The URM program is part of the ND DHS Refugee Coordinator Division and has close coordination with ND DHS Children and Family Services Division. As a point of reference, the URM program mirrors domestic foster care whenever possible. Culturally sensitive placement services are a high priority for the program.

The URM program has been successfully administered in North Dakota since 1981. Until January 2021, the URM program was administered by Lutheran Social Services. Upon their closure, the program moved temporary to ND DHS and at that time I was named the legal guardian of URM youth in North Dakota. This relationship continued until early 2022 when AVHSZ was named the subrecipient grantee of ND DHS to administer the URM program and began to employ dedicated URM personnel as part of the AVHSZ family. All AVHSZ URM team members are official employees of Traill County. In my official capacity as AVHSZ Director, I continue to serve as the court-appointed legal guardian of URM youth placed in North Dakota as well as serve as the legal appointing authority for the AVHSZ URM team.

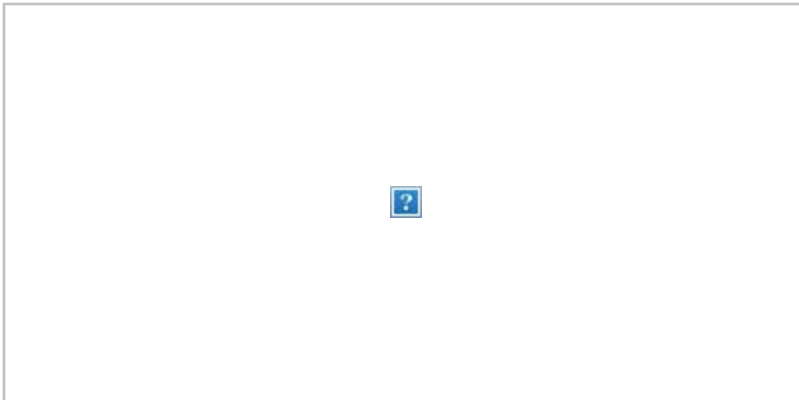
AVHSZ has a dedicated team to provide URM services. This 9-member team includes case managers, foster care licensing specialists, and a lead worker. They are located in Fargo as the majority of youth in the program are located in the Fargo area. In addition, Beth Morrow, AVHSZ CFS Supervisor and myself provide supervision and oversight over the URM program. There are currently 44 youth served by the program with some growth anticipated. URM youth placement trends follow world-wide humanitarian efforts. Our newest arrival is from Afghanistan. We will be also preparing for future arrival of Ukrainian youth. Current youth served by the program include Mid-East/South Asia, Africa, and Central American countries. AVHSZ provides foster care case management services, independent living services, family strengthening services, and foster care licensing services and partners with other agencies to ensure housing, medical, educational, social, and mental health needs are met.

For refugee youth to be considered for the URM program, they are subject to a rigorous and multi-level screening and background check process to be eligible for URM services. URM youth are typically highly engaged in their care plans, attend school and/or college, and 88% of those 16+ hold employment in the community. Graduation rate trends for URM youth equals 90%. As youth transition to adulthood, citizenship and/or asylum is sought to help ensure a pathway to gainful employment and overall future.

Please consider our request to collaborate with Cass County for leased office space. As URM legal proceedings are heard in East Central District Court and Cass County Human Service Zone provides economic assistance services to URM youth, this serves as a natural common service hub. I greatly appreciate consideration of this request.

Sincerely,

Kim Jacobson, Director
Agassiz Valley Human Service Zone



Agassiz Valley Human Service Zone – A human service collaborative of Trill and Steele Counties

“You choose your future with your actions each day” ~ James Clear

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