

Alternative school may share facilities at group home

Move could save money

By [Teresa Moore](#) | The Tribune (IrontonTribune.com)

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They are two separate entities with similar missions. Might the Lawrence County Alternative School and the Dennis J. Boll Group and Shelter Home share the same roof in the future?

Dr. James Payne, superintendent of the Lawrence County Educational Service Center, asked the Lawrence County Commission Thursday for its blessing on plans to move the alternative school from Andis to unused space at the former Mended Reeds building that now houses the group home.

Payne said the move is a cost-savings measure. His office operates the alternative school and his budget has been cut by 30 percent. Sharing expenses with the group home may save money.

Because a large percentage of the students at the group home attend the alternative school, the move would make logistical sense as well.

“This provides an opportunity for the kids as well as living within our budget and reducing expenses,” Payne said.

Group home Director Brett Looney said out-of-county agencies that place students at the group home often express satisfaction at the education their youths receive while they are in Lawrence County.

“The probation officers love the format, see the results when their kids come back,” Looney said. “The kids do well, it’s a disciplined environment. Having these at the same location is a dream come true.”

Looney said delinquent students, those at the group home who have been placed there because they committed a crime, are already kept separate from those kids who are attending the group home because of school-related issues, such as truancy, tobacco use and fighting, thus eliminating any concerns about kids with criminal records being educated together with kids who have only violated school rules.

The group home moved to the old Mended Reeds building on State Route 93 in Elizabeth Township earlier this year. But it occupies only part of the more than 50,000-square-foot structure.

Mended Reeds, an agency that serves at-risk children, sold the building to the county and cut its services in the wake of funding cuts