

07/30/2008

County considers sending Shuman youth to Auberle

By PATRICK CLOONAN , Daily News Staff Writer

Some troubled but nonviolent youth who wind up at Auberle after a day in juvenile court could be sent to the McKeesport facility before that day in court.

That's the idea Auberle and Allegheny County officials are discussing, to alleviate overcrowding at Shuman Juvenile Detention Center in Pittsburgh's Highland Park section.

"We are exploring options that include placing kids in other secured facilities," county Manager James M. Flynn Jr. said Tuesday.

Shuman has a capacity of 130, but the number can fluctuate, both above and below 130.

"During summer it is less than 130," Flynn said. "It drops down around the holidays, too."

Auberle officials said the space is available for youngsters who do not have a history of violence.

"About 35 percent of our population presently are juvenile court referrals," Auberle CEO John Lydon said Tuesday, "so what seems to be some significant change really isn't in terms of who our kids are."

Lydon and county officials were in Erie Tuesday to discuss a Mercyhurst College study of a diversion program in existence for the past decade in Erie County.

As an Erie magisterial district judge described it in her re-election campaign last year, it is an alternative for first-time juvenile offenders that holds the student accountable and diverts them from the system.

Lydon said the Mercyhurst study found it to be 98 percent effective.