

Children's crisis shelter now licensed

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By Cherokee Tribune Staff

After months of waiting, Cherokee County's first emergency shelter for children now is licensed to house them.

The Cherokee Children's Stabilization and Assessment Center in Canton has received its license from the state Department of Human Resources Office of Regulatory Services.

The next step is to apply to the state Department of Family and Children Services to become a housing provider, said Mary Migliaro, executive director of the Cherokee Child Advocacy Council, which will operate the center.

She anticipates being able to begin providing shelter to children in crisis by May.

"The need is definitely there," she said. "We couldn't be happier that we are going to be up and running."

The 16-bed center is the first of its kind in Cherokee, which had been the only metro Atlanta county without an emergency shelter for children. The center will provide housing for children in the care of the DFCS when a foster home is unavailable.

Without such a center, caseworkers could find themselves in a position where the only solution would be to transport Cherokee's children in crisis outside the county to shelters with available beds.

Ground was broken in March of 2006 on the \$1.475 million facility on Lamar Haley Parkway in Canton, and a certificate of occupancy was issued in November of 2006.

Officials blamed staff turnover for the delay in gaining the needed licensing to begin sheltering children. During the wait, the building did not go unused, as it also houses the advocacy council's corporate offices and parenting classes which are conducted there twice a week.

The 11,000-square-foot shelter was built on land in the Canton-Cherokee Business and Industrial Park donated by Universal Alloy.

Funds for the project came from sources including the county, state and federal governments, nonprofit foundations and organizations, and donations made by residents.

