

## Astor to Close Special Needs Program in Poughkeepsie

Astor Services for Children & Families will shutter a school-based treatment program for children who have serious emotional and behavioral disabilities, according to Chief Executive Officer James McGuirk.

Starting in the 2018-19 school year, children who attend the city of Poughkeepsie-based Astor School Age Day Treatment Program, located in the former Mount Carmel School, will receive educational services through other channels.

The program has not been providing children with "as normalizing an experience as we think they need," McGuirk said. "There are greater expectations that kids will be served in less restrictive settings, in more normalized settings. We are transforming the way in which we will provide the clinical support for these kids."

And financially, the program has been "a significant drain" to Astor, McGuirk added.

"We are projecting a loss of over \$400,000 this year and another \$350,000 next year if we continued the program in the same way," he said.

Astor's school-based program, which serves 46 students, provides mental health and educational services to emotionally disturbed children ages 5 to 12, according to [program literature](#). It combines clinical treatment with educational services that follow a curriculum approved by the state Education Department.

Moving forward, the child's "home school district will work with the parents to determine the optimal placement," McGuirk said. The Dutchess County Board of Cooperative Educational Services "is increasing capacity to respond to the need. We will work with individual school districts to determine ways in which Astor can provide services within the home district to support student success.

"We will make sure each child receives the support he (or) she needs to be successful," McGuirk added.

The program moved into the former [Mount Carmel school](#) in 2009. Prior to that, it operated at four other locations. Astor has been leasing the space from the Roman Catholic Archdiocese of New York.

"We have been working on this for the last two years," McGuirk said of the closure. "The board supported the decision last week."

Annual tuition for the program, which was \$45,600 this school year, is largely reimbursable by the state, according to a recent brochure.

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