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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Lawyers and Doctors Join Forces to Help Children and Adolescents with Mental Illness

MFY Legal Services and Bellevue Launch New Medical-Legal Partnership

NEW YORK, NY, June 20, 2014—Children and adolescents receiving treatment at Bellevue Hospital’s Department of Child & Adolescent Psychiatry will receive free legal assistance to resolve public benefits and education problems through a new medical-legal partnership between Bellevue and MFY Legal Services.

MFY’s Board of Directors created a 50th Anniversary Fellowship last year to mark the organization’s half-century of service to low-income New Yorkers, and designated Aleah Gathings as the Fellow. Ms. Gathings, who holds a Masters in Public Health and is a former special education teacher, is a 2013 graduate of Loyola University Chicago School of Law.

“Parents need to be able to focus on supporting their children’s recovery. By helping families get the benefits they need and by advocating for appropriate educational services for children, we can lessen stress for parents and promote positive outcomes for children,” said Jeanette Zelhof, MFY’s Executive Director.

Since a child’s mental health may be a contributing factor to other problems, MFY will also address medical debt, employment problems that may occur when a parent needs to stop work to care for a child, and family law issues.

MFY is a leader in providing legal assistance to people with mental illness and has operated successful medical-legal partnerships in the adult behavioral health units of all 11 city hospitals for the past 30 years.

Bellevue Hospital has been a pioneer in the field of child mental health for 90 years, opening the first children’s psychiatric inpatient service in 1923 and the world’s first adolescent psychiatric inpatient unit in 1937. In response to the growing need for services, Bellevue recently expanded its inpatient capacity while continuing its large day treatment program, which includes a public school for children who are not ready to function in a traditional school environment. Bellevue serves more than 600 children each year in its inpatient program and many more in its outpatient clinic.