



## Helping Young People Go Places

December 2018, Edition III

Dear Friend,

Happy Holidays! Thank you for reading up on MHAP for Kids at such a busy time of year.

In 2018, the size of MHAP for Kids has doubled to four program sites. In this, our 3rd edition of *Helping Young People Go Places*, we announce our program's exciting expansion to Bristol County. There, the New Bedford Family Resource Center (FRC), operated by The United Way of Greater New Bedford, will become the fourth MHAP for Kids site. This will allow us to serve more vulnerable children than ever.

The FRCs are a statewide network of community-based service providers supported through funding from the Executive Office of Health and Human Services and the Department of Children and Families (DCF). DCF is among numerous supporters of MHAP for Kids (see below) and we are grateful for their collaboration.

Because this time of year can be even more challenging for the children that we serve, we are especially grateful for your support of MHAP for Kids as 2018 winds down.

Cheers,

Marisol Garcia, Esq.  
Director/ Managing Attorney

*MHAP for Kids  
to Expand*

*MHAP for Kids to  
Begin Collaboration  
Further Demonstrating*

# *Services to New Bedford*

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*HLA to Team Up with The United Way of Greater New Bedford & Boston Medical Center Health System, Inc. to Improve Children's Access to Mental Health Care*

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The New Bedford Family Resource Center, at 128 Union Street, will soon be the newest MHAP for Kids site.

HLA will expand MHAP for Kids to Bristol County in January 2019. This exciting expansion to the South Coast will bring MHAP for Kids to the New Bedford Family Resource Center, operated by The United Way of Greater New Bedford. Family Resource Centers in Boston, Lowell and Lynn currently offer the full-time services of a MHAP for Kids attorney for children in Suffolk, Middlesex and Essex counties respectively.

The Family Resource Centers (FRCs) are a statewide network of community-based service providers supported through funding from the Executive Office of Health and Human Services and the Department of Children and Families. They were created through a recent state law designed to help youth whose difficulties stemming from unmet health and social service needs cause them to become involved in juvenile court. The FRCs are charged with

# *its Value to Families and the Health Care System*

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*HLA, Community Care Cooperative and The Brookline Center for Community Mental Health to Jointly Serve Highly Vulnerable Youth*

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In early 2019, MHAP for Kids will begin a partnership with Community Care Cooperative (C3), a MassHealth accountable care organization, and The Brookline Center for Community Mental Health that will further demonstrate that MHAP for Kids significantly improves children's lives and reduces avoidable health care expenses.

In this innovative three-way partnership, MHAP for Kids' role is to assist at-risk children enrolled in C3 who have a high number of emergency department visits and/or inpatient admissions despite participating in (or failing to participate in) C3's care management system.

MHAP for Kids' attorneys will aim to reduce the necessity of these emergency department visits and inpatient stays by providing the legal assistance that is often necessary to solve problems that prevent children from receiving the mental health services they need in a timely way.

A 2015-2017 study of MHAP for Kids by the Boston University School of Public Health found that children served by our program needed far less hospital-level care and experienced improved mental health, school attendance, housing stability and family functioning.

The collaboration between C3, The Brookline Center and MHAP for Kids is supported by a grant from Health

helping children live at home whenever possible, attend school, have strong family relationships and receive services that keep them healthy. MHAP for Kids effectively help the FRCs achieve these goals by addressing problems that prevent children from achieving treatment.

MHAP for Kids will work in partnership in with the Boston Medical Center Health System (BMCHS) to improve access to mental health services for youth in New Bedford and the rest of Bristol County. BMCHS will collaborate with HLA to identify children who are enrolled in its MassHealth accountable care organization programs who would benefit from MHAP for Kids services.

Marisol Garcia, Director of MHAP for Kids, said she is "thrilled at the opportunity to expand MHAP for Kids to New Bedford and to work with new partners, BMC Health System and The United Way."

Darlene Spencer, Director of the New Bedford FRC, also has expressed the strong need for this partnership as evidenced by the type of steep challenges experienced by families currently served by the FRC.

Jenny Duval, Director of FRCs within the Department of Children and Families, calls the collaboration between MHAP for Kids and the FRCs "a perfect partnership."

Policy Commission.



**the brookline center**  
for COMMUNITY MENTAL HEALTH

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## *Beveridge Foundation awards grant towards a MHAP for Kids Holyoke Site to Serve Hampden County Youth*

In November, the Beveridge Family Foundation awarded a grant toward helping HLA expand MHAP for Kids to Holyoke. Please stay tuned for updates on our efforts to place a MHAP for Kids attorney at the Holyoke Family Resource operated by our friends at Enlace de Familias which for the past year has been at the forefront serving families evacuated from Puerto Rico amid Hurricane Maria.

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## MHAP for Kids Intake Line

To seek assistance from MHAP for Kids for a youth having difficulty accessing mental health services call the program's intake line at **617-275-2919**. Our current service areas are Essex, Middlesex and Suffolk counties. We will serve Bristol County beginning in early 2019.

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**Join the**

We're looking for a dynamic and talented attorney to join the MHAP for Kids in New Bedford!

## *Client Spotlight*

### *17-year-old Miguel*



Miguel is a 17-year-old who loves doing puzzles with his tight knit family including his mom and sister. He's a well-liked young man who enjoys music and dancing with his friends. Miguel is also diagnosed with PTSD, autism spectrum disorder and developmental delay disorder and he has significant behavior problems at home and school. He went so far as to assault his mother when she enforced limits and pushed him to get ready for school. After Miguel became involved with the justice system due his assaultive actions, his mom contacted MHAP For Kids. Vineesha Sow, MHAP for Kids' staff attorney at the Boston/Suffolk Family Resource Center operated by The Home for Little Wanderers, represented the family.

Vineesha reviewed Miguel's medical records and found that several letters and assessments from psychiatrists and psychologists recommended daily in-home behavioral services, a qualified specialist and consultative services to support his mom. Although Miguel's school district was informed of his challenges in the home and provided the assessments, the school was unresponsive. Meanwhile, when Miguel's continual behavior problems put him and others at greater and greater risk, his mother resorted to emergency services which led to Miguel's hospitalization.

Vineesha reached out to the school district's attorney to discuss the matter and request services. After many attempts and no response from counsel, Vineesha filed a request for an expedited hearing with the Bureau of Special Education Appeals contending that the matter required immediate attention given the high risk of harm to Miguel and others. When the Bureau's hearing officer started expedited consideration of Miguel's case, the school district reached out to settle the matter. Vineesha successfully advocated for early morning behavioral services with a qualified specialist throughout the

school week and afternoon services three times per week. Miguel's mother was also provided with consultative services twice per month and compensatory hours for missed consults. The district also agreed to ensure a Spanish interpreter is present at all sessions because Miguel's mother's primary language is Spanish.

Miguel is currently receiving the services and the district reports that he has made documented progress with increased adaptive behaviors and development of independence in activities of daily living skills. Vineesha continues to monitor the case to determine if further advocacy is needed. The charges for assaultive behavior were also dismissed by a clerk magistrate in light of Miguel's receiving services and progress.

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## MHAP for Kids Gets National Exposure

### *American Bar Association Publication Features Column on MHAP for Kids*

An article authored by MHAP for Kids' Director Marisol Garcia entitled *Disrupting the School to Prison Pipeline* appeared in a September publication of the American Bar Association's Children's Rights Litigation Committee.

The article traces MHAP for Kids' development from a small pilot project based in a Central Mass. juvenile court to an evidence-based program serving four of the state's six most populated counties and with demonstrated success significantly improving children's mental health while reducing hospital-level treatment.

The ABA piece also details how MHAP for Kids' involvement of mental health and juvenile justice system stakeholders (including several state officials) in its planning process led to the program's strategic alignment with the state's Family Resource Centers which share MHAP for Kids' mission of diversion from the courts to health and social services.

You can read Attorney Garcia's article [here](#).

### *BU Professor Shares Impact of MHAP for Kids at Largest Gathering of Public Health Professionals in the U.S.*

Dr. Trish Elliott, Clinical Assistant Professor at the BU School of Public Health presented a talk centered on MHAP for Kids entitled *Moving Upstream- Transitioning a Youth Mental Health Advocacy Program from the Courts into the Community* at the American Public Health Association Annual Meeting in San Diego in November.

Dr. Elliott co-led a two-year evaluation of MHAP for Kids which found that children served by the program experience significantly improved mental health (as do their parents) while their school absences dramatically fall, need for hospital-level treatment substantially lessens and family functioning significantly improves.

Dr. Elliott's talk was part of a session entitled "Novel Approaches to Addressing Mental Health and Criminal Justice Involvement." Dr. Elliott's talk focused on the program's trajectory to expansion and sustainability and emphasized its increasing capacity to reach more youth of color and youth at younger ages.

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# Thank You

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