

Mental Health Advocacy Program (MHAP) for Kids to Expand Services to New Bedford

Health Law Advocates (HLA) will expand its Mental Health Advocacy Program (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 & Development Center, operated by 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.

MHAP for Kids will work in partnership 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 United Way.”

“We are excited to be expanding services at the Family Resource & Development Center in the New Year,” said Darlene Spencer, Director of Family Support Initiatives at United Way. “By having an HLA attorney on site, we’ll be able to provide high risk children and their families the access to the appropriate services and supports to ensure that their

multiple needs are met. This support will prevent them from falling through the cracks and provide positive outcomes for the entire community.”

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 divert and invest in youth whose difficulties stem from unmet health and social service needs from the juvenile court to treatment. MHAP for Kids helps the FRC achieve this vital and intended purpose by addressing problems that prevent children from access treatment.

Families in need of support are encouraged to visit the New Bedford Family Resource & Development Center located at 128 Union St. Suite 105, New Bedford Monday through Friday 8:30 am to 5 pm. They also have Saturday hours twice a month. To learn more visit unitedwayofgnb.org.