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News Release

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MetroHealth Receives Grant from the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation to Expand Innovative Medical-Legal Partnership

Cleveland, Ohio: An autistic child can't get necessary preschool screening. A child with chronic hydrocephalus is denied Social Security benefits. A homeless teenage parent who wants to finish high school has no health benefits. A child with chronic asthma needs more than medicine because his apartment has a lead problem and poor ventilation that aggravate his condition. These kinds of cases require legal attention beyond a medical professional's expertise, so **an innovative program at MetroHealth pairs physicians with attorneys from The Legal Aid Society of Cleveland** in a comprehensive approach to serving patients. Now MetroHealth has received national recognition and support for expansion of this successful program from the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation (RWJF).

RWJF, the nation's largest philanthropy devoted exclusively to improving health and health care for all Americans, has awarded MetroHealth a four-year, \$500,000 grant through its Local Initiative Funding Partners (LIFP) national initiative to expand this collaborative program to serve adults. Local corporations and foundations have agreed to match the \$500,000 grant amount, and with additional in-kind support from MetroHealth and The Legal Aid Society of Cleveland, a total of \$1.27 million will be used to fund the **Community Advocacy Program (CAP)**. Local funding partners for CAP include Benesch, Friedlander, Coplan & Aronoff LLP; Eva L. and Joseph M. Bruening Foundation; Calfee, Halter & Griswold LLP; The Callahan Foundation; The George Gund Foundation; Saint Luke's Foundation of Cleveland, Ohio; Thompson Hine LLP; and United Black Fund of Greater Cleveland, Inc.

CAP is the expansion of the highly successful Family Advocacy Program (FAP), a pediatric-based advocacy program started in 2003 with a grant from the Skadden Fellowship Foundation, and additional support from The George Gund Foundation and The Legal Aid Society of Cleveland. The first of its kind in Ohio, FAP paired Legal Aid attorney Mallory Curran with MetroHealth pediatricians, child psychologists, and social workers to **advocate for children and their families to ensure that their nutrition, housing, safety, and health insurance needs are met during and beyond the child's hospital stay or office visit.**

Funding from the RWJF grant and matching support will allow MetroHealth to expand the medical-legal collaborative beyond the pediatrics department at the main campus of MetroHealth Medical Center to outpatient community health sites in an effort to meet increasing patient needs. The addition of three attorneys, a paralegal, and a project coordinator will allow the program to be implemented at MetroHealth's Broadway, Buckeye, and McCafferty Health Centers. Specifically, the new grants will fund services for elderly patients, for Spanish-speaking immigrants, and for individuals who have returned to the community from prison.

"We pride ourselves in providing the absolute best medical care to our patients, but some of their medical problems have social roots," said Robert Cohn, M.D., chair, MetroHealth Department of Pediatrics. "Teaming up with attorneys from Legal Aid helps us to identify whether the individuals and families we're working with have economic, environmental, or social problems that may be having a negative impact on their health and helps us to resolve those issues so that patients will have a better chance at recovery."

"What we learned from the pilot program is that there is tremendous demand for this type of service. For every pediatric patient we serve, there are undoubtedly several more in need," said Legal Aid attorney Mallory Curran. "The financial support from RWJF and our local partners allows us to add resources to serve more people, including adults."

"When patients come to us for help, we give them great medical treatment. But if they go home to an unhealthy environment, odds are they'll be back even sicker than before," said E. Harry Walker, M.D., director, MetroHealth Center for Community Health. "CAP offers the potential to stop this vicious cycle and give our most vulnerable patients the quality of life they deserve."

Of the 219 organizations applying for a 2006 Local Initiative Funding Partners grant, only 12 received funding. The LIFP program is an 18-year-old national program of RWJF that provides matching grants to support innovative community-based projects aimed at improving the health and health care of underserved and vulnerable populations. In order to be considered for an LIFP grant, MetroHealth and The Legal Aid Society of Cleveland first had to be nominated by a local grantmaker such as a corporation or foundation. **Thompson Hine LLP served as the nominating funding partner.**

"Through our *pro bono* program, we've handled a great number of litigation cases involving children and indigent appeals," said Mike Hardy, partner-in-charge of Thompson Hine's Cleveland office. "So we knew that there was an unmet legal need in the community. This collaboration brings about a more holistic approach - both legal and medical, at the same time. It provides a wonderful opportunity for us to bridge those two disciplines."

The MetroHealth Foundation

The MetroHealth Foundation is instrumental in supporting The MetroHealth System's mission of providing high quality health care regardless of ability to pay and its vision of being a national leader in preserving and promoting community health. The Foundation collaborates with The MetroHealth System in determining strategic objectives for growth and proactively pursues philanthropic support opportunities to secure the mission and vision. The MetroHealth Foundation funds programs and projects in patient care, scientific and clinical research, and medical education. Donations to the CAP program may be made through the Foundation.

The Legal Aid Society of Cleveland

The Legal Aid Society of Cleveland is the world's fifth oldest legal aid society. Since 1905, Legal Aid has provided high-quality free legal assistance to low-income clients in Northeast Ohio. It is a civil law firm with practice areas focused on health, housing, education, public benefits, consumer, family law and immigration. Legal Aid is one of 160 organizations of its kind nationwide funded by the Legal Services Corporation, and one of six in Ohio funded by the Ohio Legal Assistance Foundation. As a nonprofit, Legal Aid enjoys support from donors, foundations, law firms and corporations.

Thompson Hine

Established in 1911, Thompson Hine today is among the largest business law firms in the United States. For the last several years, the firm has been named as one of the Best Corporate Law Firms in America (in an annual survey of corporate directors conducted by *Corporate Board Member* magazine). With more than 370 lawyers, Thompson Hine serves premier businesses worldwide. For more information, visit www.ThompsonHine.com.