



## FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Who: RI Department of Children Youth and Families (DCYF) and Gateway Healthcare  
What: PRESS CONFERENCE: Kid's Link RI - A New Centralized Hotline for Children in Crisis  
When: Tuesday, January 9, 2007 at 11:00 am  
Where: 101-103 Bacon Street, Pawtucket, RI 02860

*Pawtucket* – RI's Department of Children, Youth and Families (DCYF) and Gateway Healthcare today launched Kid's Link RI - the state's first centralized emergency hotline for children in emotional crisis and suffering from behavioral problems or mental health issues. The hotline: 1-866-429-3979, connects parents and caregivers to all the children's services in the state, and helps parents determine the best place to go for treatment.

"Today we are launching Kid's Link RI, which is the state's first centralized emergency services 24-hour hotline for children's behavioral health," Governor Donald L. Carcieri said. "With this confidential hotline, parents and caregivers can dial a toll-free number, speak to emergency service clinicians and determine where they should go for treatment or counseling, 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. When children and families are in emotional crisis, they need a place to turn to for immediate help -- no matter if it's on a weekend or if it's in the middle of the night. This hotline will give them that resource."

"Many times the people who need us most, those without insurance or means, have nowhere to go for help," said Richard Leclerc, President of Gateway Healthcare. "It's important to get the right help in a timely manner because when a child is in crisis the entire family hurts. This centralized hotline will make that possible."

"When a child is acting out, experiencing excessive anger, or hurting himself, parents may not know where to turn for help," says Patricia Martinez, Director of DCYF. "Families often turn to the hospital emergency room, which may not always be the best place for their particular problem. This hotline will be extremely valuable, as the emergency service clinicians who answer the phone know all

the available resources in the state, are trained to help sort out the child's symptoms, and can point families in the right direction for the best care."

DCYF estimates that each month, approximately 250 publicly funded children will benefit from Kid's Link RI. Parents should be assured that they will receive a callback within 15 minutes, and if a face-to-face assessment is needed, a qualified clinician will see them within two hours.

The hotline is open 24 hours a day, seven days a week and is completely confidential and free to families. This initiative is funded by DCYF and managed by Gateway Healthcare with collaborations with East Bay Mental Health Center, The Kent Center, Newport County Community Mental Health Center, NRI Community Services, The Providence Center and South Shore Mental Health Center to deliver care.

To inform Rhode Island families of the new service, Gateway and DCYF are launching a statewide and comprehensive bi-lingual communications campaign including outdoor bus shelter advertising, radio public service announcements and community outreach.

### *Launching Kid's Link*

In the past, Rhode Island had no protocol to assess children for emergency services, or standards regarding who would evaluate or treat them. Children covered by public funding and in need of behavioral health care might not have seen a clinician certified to assess children, or might have seen a provider who didn't know all the mental health services available to them. As a result, they would default to hospitalization when that might not have been the best course of treatment.

In the summer of 2004, DCYF began to interview community providers and families to determine the best course of action. They worked to create legislation establishing standards for uninsured children and regulations for certifying care providers who understand children's behavioral health issues. As a result, Kid's Link was established to create a central clearinghouse for all children's behavioral health care resources in the state.

Gateway Healthcare is one of Rhode Island's largest nonprofit providers of behavioral healthcare as well as substance abuse treatment and prevention through residential, outpatient and community-based programs. They offer comprehensive services and referrals at locations throughout Rhode Island. Gateway's staff of 725 psychiatrists, psychologists, clinical specialists and other professionals reach over 14,000 Rhode Islanders each year.

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