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**PRESSRELEASE**

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## Hospital receives \$25,000 grant for new legal advocacy program for children in Greater New Britain

**New Britain [February 11 2008]** - With a \$25,000 grant from American Savings Foundation, The Hospital of Central Connecticut is initiating a new program, the Medical-Legal Partnership Project (MLPP), which combines legal expertise and pediatric medical care to help Greater New Britain's poor and at-risk children receive optimal medical care.

MLPP pairs the hospital with Center for Children's Advocacy (CCA), a Connecticut-based non-profit agency which provides legal services for poor children. Hospital of Central Connecticut pediatricians and the CCA's MLPP attorneys will team to help improve children's health by striving to increase healthcare access; reduce detrimental social factors like substandard housing; and advocate for improved social conditions, by educating families, for example, of the disability benefits process.

The Hospital of Central Connecticut is the fourth hospital in the state to initiate such a partnership, modeling a similar, highly successful program that CCA began in 2000 and is now at four Hartford sites. The CCA's program was only the second in the nation; the first began at Boston Medical Center.

"There should be no barriers that prevent doctors from providing the best health care to their patients," says David Davison, president and CEO of American Savings Foundation. "In this program, legal advocates and healthcare professionals will team up to resolve the overlapping health and social issues faced by families living in poverty."

The program is beginning with training for pediatric providers by MLPP staff attorneys on how to detect possible legal issues affecting children's health, to be followed this spring with legal consultative services to New Britain-affiliated pediatric providers. By September, free, on-site and hospital-based legal representation is expected to be in place for eligible patients and their families, provided the children are seen or treated by Hospital of Central Connecticut-affiliated pediatric providers. Issues may include housing, disability and other basic need benefits, Medicaid and HUSKY concerns, access to appropriate health services, and educational rights.

"We are most grateful to American Savings Foundation for their continued support of children in need in our community," says Antoinetta M. Capriglione, M.D., chief of Pediatrics. "Many of our children's difficult-to-treat health problems, such as asthma, have their roots in social issues

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such as substandard housing and poverty. In addressing those types of issues, the Medical-Legal Partnership Project will improve our ability to help these children thrive.”

Attorney Jay Sicklick, CCA deputy director, says, “It’s exciting to extend this program into the New Britain area and work with pediatric providers to improve children’s health by addressing poverty and social-legal issues which are often overwhelming for families and cannot be directly addressed by the providers themselves.”

The grant will cover project expenses through June 2009 and is targeted to help un- and underinsured, low-income children and their families who reside in Greater New Britain, including Bristol, Southington, Plainville, and Berlin. In New Britain, with over 70,000 residents, more than 25 percent of its children under 18 live below the federal poverty level, according to 2000 census information.

CCA began the Medical-Legal Partnership Project in Hartford at the Connecticut Children’s Medical Center. Other Hartford-based program sites are St. Francis Hospital and Medical Center, Charter Oak Health Center and Community Health Services, Inc. The MLPP is funded by grants and private donations.

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