



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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**JUDGE BAKER CHILDREN'S CENTER HOSTS STATEWIDE POLICY FORUM
ON EARLY CHILDHOOD DEVELOPMENT**

- *Experts from Harvard Kennedy School, Boston Children's Hospital, the Executive Office of Health and Human Services, the Department of Early Education and Care, and the Massachusetts State House will discuss the importance of supporting healthy childhood development from birth to age 5.*
- *The forum will examine policy implications of a new brief entitled, "Early Childhood Development: Implications for Policy, Systems and Practice." The brief reviews the current state of support in Massachusetts and offers recommendations for improving inter-agency collaboration; implementing cohesive, evidence-informed practices; and promoting quality of care for diverse families and communities across the Commonwealth.*

BOSTON, MA (March 22, 2017) – Judge Baker Children's Center (Judge Baker), a national leader in children's mental health, is hosting a policy forum that will examine the continuum of services and support available in Massachusetts to young children and their families, and how Massachusetts has an opportunity to become a national leader in early childhood development if it's willing to expand use of evidence-informed practices that promote quality care.

Hosted by Judge Baker President Robert Franks, a public policy panel consisting of Executive Office of Health and Human Services Secretary Marylou Sudders; Department of Early Education and Care Commissioner Tom Weber; Senator Sal DiDomenico; and Representative Kay Khan will discuss the findings of a new policy brief entitled, "Early Childhood Development: Implications for Policy, Systems, and Practice." Participants will also hear remarks from Julie Boatright Wilson, PhD, of Harvard Kennedy School; Jayne Singer, PhD, of Boston Children's Hospital; William Beardslee, MD of Judge Baker, and Michael Yogman, MD, a practicing pediatrician and long-time advocate for children's mental health.

The forum is taking place on Thursday, March 30, from 8:00-10:00am at the University of Massachusetts Club, in Boston.

Massachusetts has invested in a wide range of services in support of early childhood development, the cornerstone for helping individuals lead healthier lives, perform better

academically, and become productive contributors in the workforce. The proliferation of these diverse set of services, however, has also led to a complex and often-changing network of policies and systems. As a result, child serving systems and supports are often siloed, and do not always include or focus on evidence-based identification, prevention, or intervention strategies for emotional and behavioral health concerns.

“Massachusetts has shown a strong commitment to implementing programs that support early childhood development. With that foundation in place, our opportunity to advance the quality and consistency of these programs lies in the development of an evidence-informed strategic plan that would identify priorities and benchmarks over the next ten years,” said Franks. “This forum marks the first of several conversations we hope to host to promote cross-agency cooperation and to nurture evidence-based approaches to quality care.”

The importance of reworking this network into a coordinated, efficient system of care that incorporates an evidence-based approach was underscored by a recent report by Pew-MacArthur Results First Initiative. In the analysis, Massachusetts was ranked as a “modest” user of evidence-informed policymaking (placing in a third tier out of four behind states that were considered “established” and “leading”). The assessment was based on an evaluation of engagement in six categories: defining levels of evidence; establishing an inventory of existing programs; comparing program costs and benefits; reporting outcomes in the budget; targeting funds to evidence-based programs; and requiring action through state law.

“Our goal now needs to be to bridge the gap between research and practice for the benefit of the people that our systems and programs serve,” said Franks. “At Judge Baker, we look forward to serving as a catalyst to help inspire dialogue, identify best practices, and work with stakeholders on recommendations for improvement.”

The policy forum is open to the public but seating is limited. For more information or to register, visit <http://jbcc.harvard.edu/policy-forum-march-2017>.

About Judge Baker Children’s Center

An affiliate of Harvard Medical School, Judge Baker Children’s Center is a nationally recognized children’s mental health organization dedicated to improving the quality of mental health care for children and families. Named in honor of Harvey Humphrey Baker, the first judge appointed to the Boston Juvenile Court, Judge Baker opened its doors in 1917 and has been serving the children and families of greater Boston for almost 100 years. The multi-faceted organization provides the very best in evidence-based practices for children and families struggling with a range of behavioral, emotional, educational, and mental health issues. Judge Baker is dedicated to improving the lives of children and families by bridging the gap between science and practice to improve access to the highest quality care in community-based settings.

JUDGE BAKER CHILDREN’S CENTER: Improving Care. Changing Lives.

Additional information about Judge Baker can be found at <http://jbcc.harvard.edu/>