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**LEGAL ASSISTANCE CENTER OPENS AT
BUFFALO GENERAL MEDICAL CENTER/GATES VASCULAR INSTITUTE**

Free Legal Services Now Provided for Patients

BUFFALO, NY – (Friday, February 22, 2019) Kaleida Health, the Kaleida Health Foundation and The Center for Elder Law & Justice (CELJ) announced the opening of a medical-legal partnership at Buffalo General Medical Center/Gates Vascular Institute. The medical-legal partnership offers free legal assistance to Kaleida Health patients who qualify.

A medical-legal partnership (MLP) unites the healthcare community with a civil legal services agency under a common mission – to address and prevent health-harming social conditions for vulnerable patients and communities. MLPs link lawyers with doctors, nurses, social workers and other clinical staff to help patients address underlying legal problems that harm their health.

Social determinants of health can often have a greater effect on individuals because of socioeconomic circumstances. Many times this can contribute to legal problems that become a source of stress for patients and can become a barrier to receiving medical treatment. The MedLaw Partnership addresses a patient's legal needs that are beyond a healthcare professional's ability and scope.

By adding these attorneys from CELJ on-site at Buffalo General Medical Center/Gates Vascular Institute, they will be able to work collaboratively with the Kaleida Health care team. Patients from the hospital will be referred to the program directly by healthcare providers who are trained to identify common legal problems impacting their patients.

Kaleida Health's medical-legal partnership follows fellow Great Lakes Health organization, Erie County Medical Center (ECMC) Corporation, who opened their medical-legal partnership in 2017. CELJ has worked on more than 600 legal matters for ECMC since its opening.

MedLaw provides community education and offers a range of advice and counsel in matters such as access to state and federal public benefits, health insurance, housing, employment, legal status, end of life planning and other personal/family concerns.

Training sessions have already taken place and will continue to educate hospital staff on how to best utilize this partnership to benefit patients in need.

Chris Lane, President of Buffalo General Medical Center/Gates Vascular Institute said, "our patients' overall health is our first priority. By integrating attorneys and legal resources into the hospital and patient care teams, we will undoubtedly be better positioned to advocate for our patients, their needs and overall population health."

Nicole Komin, Esq., Project Director of MedLaw Kaleida Health Division said, "This medical-legal partnership is a holistic collaboration between a proven legal services agency and the area's largest hospital network to improve health outcomes and access to justice in the local community. Through boots on the ground advocacy, the CELJ legal team will not only address a patient's legal concerns, but also reduce health disparities and social barriers to increase a patient's quality of life."



Karen Nicolson, Esq., CEO of CELJ said, “I am happy to announce this collaboration between Kaleida Health and CELJ. This partnership will expand eligibility and access to free legal services for the community through a unique multidisciplinary approach that will allow patients to focus on their treatment and recovery, while dedicated on-site legal staff will provide specialized legal services. We anticipate this partnership will provide an opportunity to equip patients with the knowledge and resources they need, while ultimately improving population health.”

About Kaleida Health

Kaleida Health is the largest health care provider and largest private employer (10,000 employees) in Western New York.

More than one million patient visits are recorded annually at the Buffalo General Medical Center, DeGraff Memorial Hospital, Gates Vascular Institute, Millard Fillmore Suburban Hospital, Oishei Children’s Hospital, plus health system’s 80+ clinics and health care centers. Kaleida Health operates HighPointe on Michigan and the DeGraff Memorial Hospital skilled nursing facility, plus the nation’s oldest – and original - Visiting Nursing Association. Kaleida Health also operates a major laboratory division as well as the Millard Fillmore Ambulatory Surgery Center.

The organization is also affiliated with Great Lakes Health, the entity integrating Kaleida Health, Erie County Medical Center (ECMC) Corporation and the University at Buffalo. Kaleida Health’s economic impact on Western New York exceeds \$2.7 billion annually.

About The Center for Elder Law & Justice (CELJ)

CELJ is civil legal services agency in Buffalo, New York, serving eleven Western New York counties. CELJ has over 50 employees and has three offices located throughout Western New York, including Buffalo, Dunkirk and Lockport. Since 1978, CELJ has provided comprehensive free legal services to the Western New York community. It is CELJ’s mission to improve the quality of life for elderly, disabled and low-income persons through the provision of free civil legal services. The agency’s services help people maintain the essentials of life, including but not limited to, access to health care, securing safe and affordable housing, protective services to remain free from violence, and access to sufficient income to improve their overall quality of life. CELJ’s primary goal is to use the legal system to assure that its clients may live independently and with dignity.