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Houston Volunteer Lawyers is the pro bono legal aid arm of the Houston Bar Association

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New Medical-Legal Partnership Advocates for Sick Kids

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HOUSTON, Nov. 1, 2012 /PRNewswire-USNewswire/ -- Texas Children's Hospital and the Houston Bar Association's Houston Volunteer Lawyers today announced the formation of a medical-legal partnership (MLP) that will provide Texas Children's low-income patients and patient-families with critical legal assistance. This is the first partnership of its kind to be offered in the Houston area.

Through the program, a dedicated Houston Volunteer Lawyers staff attorney will provide legal advice and representation to Texas Children's patients and their families with assistance from outside pro bono lawyers. The project is being funded in part by a donation from Walmart, which created a successful MLP with Arkansas Children's Hospital last year with plans to expand the benefits of MLPs to other major pediatric hospitals nationwide.

"It has always been our mission to help low-income children with all of their medical needs and this program is just another example of how we are doing that," said Mark A. Wallace, president and CEO of Texas Children's Hospital. "We appreciate the generous gift from Walmart for this beneficial medical-legal partnership that will bring much-needed support to these children who do not have another place to turn for this type of legal assistance."

MLP is a unique health-care delivery model that brings physicians and lawyers together to tackle health issues that have legal, rather than medical solutions. This could include negotiating with a landlord to address sub-standard living conditions, such as a mold infestation triggering a child's asthma; helping a family secure Medicaid payment for a specialized wheelchair or home nursing services; or preparing legal guardianships to allow parents to continue making health care decisions for their children with special needs after they turn 18.

The Texas Children's MLP initially will provide legal aid to patients in five areas: Inpatient Rehabilitation, Fetal Center, Special Needs Primary Care Clinic, Retrovirology and Texas Children's Pediatrics-Gulfgate.

"Houston is blessed to have world class medical and legal communities," said Brent Benoit , president of the Houston Bar Association. "Yet, we have individuals who are lost between these two groups—in need of health care, but with legal problems that prevent or frustrate their health care access."

"Walmart is proud to support Texas Children's Hospital to establish this important program," said Jeff Gearhart , executive vice president and general counsel of Walmart. "We've seen firsthand through our work with Arkansas Children's Hospital that the medical-legal partnership is making a difference. Families in need are receiving free legal advice otherwise unavailable to resolve issues that go beyond a hospital's medical services. This announcement furthers our goal to help create a network of medical-legal partnerships at children's hospitals across the country."

Endorsed by organizations such as the American Bar Association and the American Medical Association, medical-legal partnerships give health care teams the ability to treat adverse social conditions facing their already-ill patients.

"Many of our patient families face challenging social conditions that further complicate their loved one's medical condition. In many cases, an attorney is able to address those issues and healthcare outcomes improve. The Texas Children's MLP attorney will work in collaboration with the healthcare team and we are confident that hundreds of our patients will benefit from this on-site legal assistance. We are grateful to Houston Volunteer Lawyers for partnering with us in the establishment of this critical program," said Sarah Maytum , director of patient and family services.

Other children's hospitals with MLPs include Children's Healthcare of Atlanta, Children's Medical Center of Dallas, and Children's Hospital Boston.

About Texas Children's Hospital

Texas Children's Hospital, a not-for-profit organization, is committed to creating a community of healthy children through excellence in patient care, education and research. Consistently ranked among the top children's hospitals in the nation, Texas Children's has recognized Centers of Excellence in multiple pediatric subspecialties including the Cancer and Heart Centers, and operates the largest primary pediatric care network in the country. Texas Children's has completed a \$1.5 billion expansion, which includes the Jan and Dan Duncan Neurological Research Institute; Texas Children's Pavilion for Women, a comprehensive obstetrics/gynecology facility focusing on high-risk births; and Texas Children's Hospital West Campus, a community hospital in suburban West Houston. For more information on Texas Children's, go to www.texaschildrens.org. Get the latest news from Texas Children's by visiting the [online newsroom](#) and on Twitter at twitter.com/texaschildrens.

About Houston Bar Association, Houston Volunteer Lawyers

Founded in 1981 by the Houston Bar Association, Houston Volunteer Lawyers has delivered free legal services to low-income residents of Harris County for almost a quarter of a century, by linking qualified applicants with attorneys who volunteer their time on a pro bono basis. Houston Volunteer Lawyers receives over 34,000 calls for assistance each year and annually delivers pro bono legal services valued at over \$4 million to qualified applicants. Additional information can be found by visiting www.hvlp.org or by following Houston Volunteer Lawyers on Facebook (www.facebook.com/HVLPInc) or Twitter (twitter.com/HVLPtweets).

About Walmart

Wal-Mart Stores, Inc. (NYSE: [WMT](http://www.nyse.com/quote/WMT)) helps people around the world save money and live better – anytime and anywhere – in retail stores, online, and through their mobile devices. Each week, more than 200 million customers and members visit our 10,300 stores under 69 banners in 27 countries and e-commerce websites in 10 countries. With fiscal year 2012 sales of approximately \$444 billion, Walmart employs more than 2 million associates worldwide. Walmart continues to be a leader in sustainability, corporate philanthropy and employment opportunity. Additional information about Walmart can be found by visiting <http://corporate.walmart.com>, and on Facebook at <http://facebook.com/walmart> and on Twitter at <http://twitter.com/walmart>. Online merchandise sales are available at <http://www.walmart.com> and <http://www.samsclub.com>.

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