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Advocates' Jail Diversion Program Honored by the Massachusetts Coalition for Suicide Prevention

Framingham, Massachusetts, February 11, 2009...The Framingham Jail Diversion Program, a joint program of Advocates Inc. and the Framingham Police Department, received a prestigious Leadership in Suicide Prevention Award at the Massachusetts State House this week.

"This is a program I would like to see replicated in not only every municipality in the Commonwealth, but in this nation," said state Rep. Ruth B. Balser, D-Newton, who presented the award Monday at the Massachusetts Coalition for Suicide Prevention's 10th Annual State House Event.

Sarah Abbott of Advocates, program director of the Framingham Jail Diversion Program, accepted the award, noting since 2003, Advocates staff and police officers have diverted more than 2,400 people with mental health, substance abuse or behavioral health issues from the criminal justice system into the human services system.

Bill Taylor, president and CEO of Advocates, Inc., praised Abbott after the ceremony. "The right leader is essential in a program like this," Taylor said. "Sarah has the vision, commitment and clinical expertise that make the jail diversion program a success."

Taylor further praised the Framingham Police Department for its willingness to work with Advocates over the years.

"The Framingham Police Department has partnered with us at every opportunity, every rank, to better the community and save lives," Taylor said.

Since its founding, the Framingham Jail Diversion Program has inspired similar programs in several other Massachusetts communities.

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Advocates, Inc. is a Not-for-Profit 501(c)(3) Organization.

Advocates recently secured funding from the MetroWest Community Health Care Foundation and the Health Foundation of Central Massachusetts to start a Jail Diversion Program in Marlborough.

Taylor said Advocates' continuing partnership with the Framingham Police will play a key role in establishing the Marlborough Jail Diversion Program.

Advocates, Inc., headquartered in Framingham, is among the 20 largest human service organizations in Massachusetts. With a staff of over 950, Advocates is a leading provider of residential support services; outpatient mental health and substance abuse services; intensive home-based intervention for individuals and families; job training and support; housing, benefits and legal services; and community justice programs. Advocates provides services at sites throughout Eastern and Central Massachusetts.

More information is available at www.AdvocatesInc.org

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