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## **NYU Child Study Center Offers Children with ADHD A Fun and Rewarding Summer Experience**

**July 12, 2007 (New York, NY)** – As parents and teachers know, children with Attention-Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) thrive in a setting that emphasizes achievement and success and maintains consistency and, therefore, predictability. To that end, the NYU Child Study Center created the Summer Program for Kids (SPK), New York's first all-day, therapeutic camp exclusively for children with ADHD, which is now in its tenth year. The SPK combines traditional summer camp activities, such as swimming and arts and crafts, with academic and computer activities, to improve social skills and raise self-esteem of children ages 7 to 11.

“Often, we find that our campers felt out of place at other camps where there was not a real understanding of their needs,” says Karen Fleiss, Psy.D., clinical director of the NYU Child Study Center Long Island Campus and the Summer Program for Kids. “Many of the children have a very low self-esteem, so we put a lot of attention on positive reinforcement and instilling a much-needed sense of confidence.”

The staff to child ratio is 1 to 1.5, allowing the children to get the individualized attention they need. The SPK counselors are advanced psychology undergraduate majors or graduate students who undergo a month-long intensive training to gain an understanding of children with special needs and to learn behavioral strategies. The counselors help kids improve social behavior; friendship skills; academic competence; problem-solving skills; self-esteem; classroom behavior; sports competence; anger control; and rule following, among others.

The SPK format is based on the Summer Treatment Program, which was a behavior therapy component of the Multimodal Treatment Study of ADHD (MTA), the largest clinical trial of children with ADHD funded by the National Institute of Mental Health. The MTA study consisted of 579 children who were treated at six university medical centers across the United States and one in Canada. Each child was randomly assigned to one of four treatment conditions for 14 months – medication, usually Ritalin; behavior therapy; a combination of both behavior therapy and medication; or regular community care, which included in most cases Ritalin prescribed by community doctors instead of MTA staff.

“From this initial trial, we found that the two MTA treatment conditions that involved medication management were equivalent, and superior to the other treatments in reducing the symptoms of ADHD; that lower doses of medication were needed to obtain symptom reductions in the combined treatment condition; and that the effects of behavior therapy were roughly equivalent to medication treatment provided in the community,” according to Howard Abikoff, Ph.D., a principal investigator of

the MTA and director of the Institute for Attention Deficit/Hyperactivity and Behavior Disorders at the NYU Child Study Center.

Parents of the campers are encouraged to take part in weekly training sessions offered throughout the summer. These sessions tie together what kids are learning in the program to what is happening at home. Parents are able to share their experiences with each other and learn effective behavior management techniques that help encourage their children to follow the rules and promote independence and positive self-esteem.

Parents of children who participate in the camp report that the progress their kids make during the summer carries through to the school year. The full-day camp runs for eight weeks, beginning June 25 and ending August 17. The camp is located in Throgs Neck on the campus of SUNY Maritime College.

The Child Study Center also offers a follow up booster program during the school year for campers, designed to reinforce social skills learned at the SPK. The key components of the booster program include: a social skill of the day, a behavioral point system; a home-based reward, practice, and reinforcement system; close clinical supervision; and monitoring through use of a daily report card. The program consists of 8 weekend day field trips. Last year's trips included: Central Park Zoo, Bowling at Chelsea Piers, Museum of Natural History, MAKE, Mars 2112, Sony Wonder Tech Lab, ESPN Zone, and Planet Hollywood.

ADHD is a group of related childhood problems that cause difficulties with behavior, academic performance, and peer relationships in about five percent of school-aged children. In the United States alone, it affects between one and two million children.

Watch "A Summer in Paradise" – a online video on the NYU Child Study Center's Summer Program for Kids – at [http://mc-rms01.med.nyu.edu/ramgen/realmedia/summer\\_paradise.rm](http://mc-rms01.med.nyu.edu/ramgen/realmedia/summer_paradise.rm). Learn more about SPK, ADHD, and the NYU Child Study Center at [www.AboutOurKids.org](http://www.AboutOurKids.org).

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## **NYU Child Study Center**

The NYU Child Study Center is dedicated to the understanding, prevention and treatment of child and adolescent mental health problems. The Center offers expert psychiatric services for children, adolescents, young adults, and families with emphasis on early diagnosis and intervention. The Center's mission is to bridge the gap between science and practice, integrating the finest research with patient care and state-of-the-art training utilizing the resources of the New York University School of Medicine. The goal of the Child Study Center is to bring together the most research-supported evaluations and treatments with an individualized and family centered approach. The Child Study Center was founded in 1997 and established as the Department of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry within the NYU School of Medicine in 2006. For more information, please visit [www.aboutourkids.org](http://www.aboutourkids.org).