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## **MILLIONS OF CHILDREN HELD HOSTAGE BY PSYCHIATRIC DISORDERS**

### **Provocative New PSA Campaign Highlighting Autism, Asperger's ADHD, OCD, Depression and Bulimia, Debuts in December in NYC**

New York City, December 1, 2007— Alerting Americans to the silent public health epidemic of children's mental illness, the [NYU Child Study Center](#) has launched a public awareness campaign called "Ransom Notes." Produced pro bono by BBDO, the debut of the public service announcements will coincide with the NYU Child Study Center's 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary and the relaunch of its website [www.AboutOurKids.org](http://www.AboutOurKids.org) as a nationwide resource for parents, educators, physicians and mental health professionals.

"Twelve million American children and adolescents face daily battles with psychiatric disorders, yet childhood mental illness remains stigmatized, under-diagnosed and under-treated," says Dr. Harold S. Koplewicz, founder and director of the NYU Child Study Center, which is dedicated to preventing, identifying and treating childhood psychiatric and learning disorders.

"Left untreated, these illnesses can hold children hostage. That's why we've chosen to deliver our message in the form of a ransom note," says John Osborn, President and CEO of BBDO New York. "We hope the campaign will act as a wake-up call to families, educators and healthcare professionals, and spark dialogue so children can get the help they need."

The umbrella ad for the campaign says *12 million kids are held hostage by a psychiatric disorder. Help a child at AboutOurKids.org.* Each of the six other ads addresses a specific disorder: ADHD, Asperger's Syndrome, autism, bulimia, depression and obsessive compulsive disorder. Each ad is in the form of a ransom note signed by the disorder with the tag line "*Don't let a psychiatric disorder take your child.*" The notes are as follows:

- *We have your son. We will make sure he will no longer be able to care for himself or interact socially as long as he lives. This is only the beginning...Autism.*

- *We are in possession of your son. We are making him squirm and fidget until he is a detriment to himself and those around him. Ignore this and your kid will pay...ADHD*
- *We have your son. We are destroying his ability for social interaction and driving him into a life of complete isolation. It's up to you now...Asperger's Syndrome*
- *We have your daughter. We are forcing her to throw up after every meal she eats. It's only going to get worse...Bulimia*
- *We have taken your son. We have imprisoned him in a maze of darkness with no hope of ever getting out. Do nothing and see what happens...Depression*
- *We have your daughter. We are making her wash her hands until they are raw, everyday. This is only the beginning...OCD*

According to Dr. Koplewicz, children with untreated psychiatric disorders are at higher risk for academic failure, school dropout, substance abuse, suicide, unemployment, and imprisonment. The statistics are grim: suicide is the third leading cause of death among young people ages 15 to 24; serious emotional problems affect one out of 10 young people, but an estimated two-thirds don't get the help they need; fewer than 10% of 80,000 public schools in the United States have comprehensive mental health services.

This campaign represents the third pro bono effort by BBDO for the NYU Child Study Center. BBDO earlier gave the organization its tagline "Giving Children Back their Childhood."

The new campaign will run on 11 billboards in December, 200 kiosks from December through the end of March, and in newspapers, magazines and on-line through the first quarter 2008 and then move into five major markets.

Free kiosk and billboard space was donated by Van Wagner. Other participants in the pro bono campaign include *New York Magazine*, *Newsweek*, *Parents*, *Education Update* and *Mental Health News*. The initial launch is expected to net over 700 million impressions over the next four months.

#### **BACKGROUND INFORMATION:**

Founded in 1997, the New York University Child Study Center is the nation's premier organization for advancing the prevention, identification, and treatment of child and adolescent psychiatric and learning disorders through scientific practice, research, and education. Last year children and families from 41 states and 26 countries around the world were evaluated and treated by the clinicians and faculty at the NYU Child Study Center.

The NYU Child Study Center is dedicated to giving children back their childhood and eliminating the stigma of being or having a child with a psychiatric disorder.

To learn more about the NYU Child Study Center, visit [AboutOurKids.org](http://AboutOurKids.org).