Melmark Expands Educational Services to Charlotte, North Carolina

(Andover, MA) – May 2, 2019 – Melmark, Inc., a national leader in educational, clinical and residential services for children and adults with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) and other intellectual and developmental disabilities, announces the establishment of evidence-based special education services, in collaboration with the Charlotte/Mecklenburg school district. This pilot program is currently located at Lincoln Heights Academy, Charlotte, NC.

On April 26, 2018, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) released its biennial update estimating that one in 57 children in North Carolina are diagnosed with ASD each year. This new estimate is 15% higher than previously reported. According to information releases last month by NC’s Department of Public Instruction, 301,772 students were served in Charlotte and the surrounding counties. An additional 60,680 students in nearby counties in South Carolina have been counted by the state’s Department of Education. A rough calculation would suggest that there are 6,366 students with autism in those same counties.

Given the consistently high incidence rate, and the increased need for expert clinical and educational programs which are currently lacking in North Carolina, Melmark has been working in collaboration with a team of educators and clinicians affiliated with the Charlotte/Mecklenburg Schools, Programs for Exceptional Children, to develop an approved non-profit special needs school. The first classrooms will serve children from the Charlotte/Mecklenburg School District, as well as children residing in nearby communities in North Carolina and South Carolina. This special education program will be a less restrictive option for students prior to homebound instruction.

Following the 2017 Endrew F. v. Douglas County School District decision, the Individualized Education Program (IEP) should be “reasonably calculated to enable a child to make progress in light of the child’s circumstances.” Melmark’s program will focus on those children not making adequate progress due to the severity of their educational disability, challenging behaviors or the realization that they require additional supports to make behavioral and academic progress. With the support and expertise of Melmark’s professional staff, we will utilize a proven and established educational and clinical model to provide high quality, integrated special education services to this population in the Carolinas.
Under the leadership of Rita M. Gardner, M.P.H., LABA, BCBA, Melmark New England Founder and Melmark President and CEO, two former Melmark New England employees will oversee this initiative. Bradley S. Stevenson, Ph.D., BCBA, is the Director of Program Administration and Clinical Services and Keri Bethune, Ph.D., BCBA-D is the Director of Educational Services. Both earned their Ph.D. degrees in Special Education from the University of North Carolina-Charlotte and have NC teaching licensure in K-12 Adapted Curriculum and Severely/Profoundly Disabled K-12, respectively.

About Melmark:
With service divisions in Berwyn, PA, Andover, MA, and Charlotte, NC, Melmark is a multi-state human service provider with premier private special education schools, and professional development, training, and research centers.

We are committed to enhancing the lives of individuals with autism, intellectual and developmental disabilities and their families by providing exceptional evidence-based and applied behavior analytic services to every individual, every day. More information is available at www.melmark.org and www.melmarkne.org.

Melmark is Mission First: Every Individual, Every Day.

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Contact:
Ellen M. Kallman
Director of Advancement
Melmark New England
461 River Road
Andover, MA 01810

978.654.4371 – Direct
978.806.1911 – Cell

ekallman@melmarkne.org