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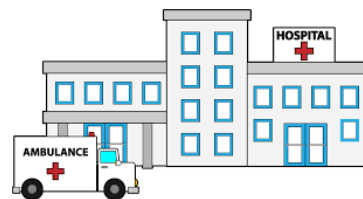
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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE-BOYNTON BEACH, FLORIDA

The Florida Association of the Deaf is pleased to announce the lawsuit brought by deaf patients against Bethesda Hospitals has been resolved.

After almost five years, the lawsuit brought by the Florida Association ("FAD") and individual deaf patients has been resolved amicably. Bethesda Hospitals will ensure effective communication with deaf patients. Any financial terms are confidential.



In the lawsuit, the plaintiffs alleged that Bethesda Hospitals failed to provide effective communication for deaf patients as required by the Americans with Disabilities Act. Bethesda denied that claim. In 2011, following the passage of an updated federal regulation, Bethesda began a policy and practice of using a video remote interpreting system "VRI" to ensure effective communication with deaf patients during medical treatment. However, deaf patients alleged that the VRI often was blurry or pixelated or that they were unable to utilize the machine due to other factors such as eyesight or the positioning of the machine.



Bethesda's policy provides for consultation with deaf patients to determine their particular needs and thus individual determinations of when a live onsite interpreter may be necessary or when "VRI" may be appropriate. Bethesda Hospitals will provide onsite interpreters, if necessary, after consideration of the content, nature and complexity of the communications involved.

The Florida Association of the Deaf is a membership organization that advocates on behalf of deaf individuals and which has hundreds of deaf members who reside in Palm Beach County, many of whom reside right in Boynton Beach, where Bethesda Hospitals are located. Many of their members are older, retired deaf individuals.

Bethesda will meet with a representative of the FAD, June McMahon, by March 30, 2018, to discuss the ongoing relationship between Bethesda and the FAD to ensure that FAD can communicate to its members that Bethesda is committed to providing effective communication to its members when they are at the hospital. Bethesda is also committed to maintaining an open door policy and will meet with any FAD member or deaf patient to discuss any concerns regarding effective communication.

The plaintiffs in this case have been represented by Clara Smit, Matthew Dietz of Disability Independence Group and Caroline Jackson of the National Association of the Deaf. For more information, please contact Clara Smit at 732-843-6600.

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