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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

**Juvenile Firesetting Epidemic:
Brandon and MA Dept of Fire Services and Parents for Residential Reform Partner
For Cross-Discipline Collaboration**

Natick, MA- On May 11, 2007, Brandon School & Residential Treatment Center, in partnership with the Massachusetts Department of Fire Services, Massachusetts Association of Safety and Fire Educators (MA SAFE) and Parents for Residential Reform, is hosting a conference in order to embark on regional collaboration between professionals and agencies that intervene in juvenile firesetting. *The Northeast Juvenile Firesetting Conference: Pathways to Collaboration & Intervention* will provide a unique opportunity for mental health, fire service, education, social service and juvenile justice professionals to receive the most up-to-date information and best practice models for multi-disciplinary collaboration, in responding to problem firesetting behavior. Workshops will address: *Firesetting: Assessment & Intervention Options, Responding to Fires in Schools, Working with Parents & Families* and *Fire Safety for Firesetting Kids*

Key Speakers include: Lewis H. Spence, Commissioner of MA Department of Social Services, Robert Kinscherff, J.D., Ph.D. Assistant Commissioner of MA Department of Mental Health, Sgt. Paul Zipper, Ph.D. of Massachusetts State Police- Fire and Explosion Investigation Unit, Robert Stadolnik, Ed.D President of FirePsych, Inc. and Erin Morrison, RN of Shriners Hospital for Children-Boston.

For more information about this conference visit www.brandonschool.org. For information on juvenile firesetting visit The Massachusetts Department of Fire Services website at www.mass.gov/dfs.

The Juvenile Firesetting Epidemic:

For decades the U.S. has had a tremendous firesetting /arson problem among youths under the age of 18. The term *firesetting* describes the behavior of intentionally setting fires and is used in place of *arson*, which is accurate only when a child or adult has been tried and convicted of this crime. The overwhelming majority of fires set by adults and children never result in an arrest or conviction and, therefore, are not *arson*. Juvenile firesetting is a societal danger larger in scope than most people realize, and much more widespread than numbers measured by arson convictions. Juvenile firesetting and arson are not on everyone's mind, but emotional and economic costs are high and everyone is affected. It impacts professionals in fire service, juvenile justice, burn care, mental health, child welfare, public schools, insurance companies, not to mention parents and families. Consider the following facts:

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Fact: Juveniles represent more than *50% of all arrests* for arson in our country and 66% of these juveniles are under the age of 15.

Fact: Arson is the only violent crime tracked by the FBI where *juveniles make up the majority of arrests*.

Fact: Adolescent females represent the fastest growing population among juveniles involved in firesetting. Recent studies suggest females are responsible for 20-25% of firesetting among adolescents.

Fact: Annual property loss from intentionally set fires in the U.S. totals over *\$1 billion*.

Fact: Total *damages to U.S. education facilities are over \$200 million per year. Damages to school buildings total approximately \$150 million dollars per year. 75%* of these fires occur during school hours and most are started in a bathroom.

Fact: 75% of all brush fires that are set occur after the school day ends, between 3-6pm

Fact: Estimates of *30-40% of children admitted for pediatric burn care were burned in a fire that either they set or that was set by another child*. Children under the age of 6, especially young African-American and American Indian boys, remain at highest risk for injury or death due to fire.

Hundreds of lives lost, thousands of injuries sustained, billions of dollars in property damage point to a national crisis. Significant contributors to this nationwide firesetting crisis are the curious, delinquent, impulsive, trauma-motivated, and occasionally pathological, firesetting behaviors of children and adolescents. Firesetting and arson among juveniles has long been an *orphan behavior*, known by everyone but belonging to no one. Experts contend that the most important step in addressing youth firesetting is multi-disciplinary cooperation. Juvenile firesetting is a behavior that can be very successfully treated, but only through collective and cooperative efforts is there a chance to effectively intervene in this serious behavioral epidemic.

Due to the leadership provided by The Massachusetts Department of Fire Services, Massachusetts schools have adopted a new mandatory reporting law that requires all fires set on school grounds be reported to the local fire department. Also in the Northeast Region, Brandon School & Residential Treatment Center in Natick, MA has responded to this nationwide problem and has developed two programs for both the assessment and treatment firesetting youth.

About Brandon:

Since 1966, Brandon Residential Treatment Center, Inc. in Natick, MA has been providing services for troubled boys and their families. In addition to treatment and educational programs for a broad range of behavioral and emotional disorders, Brandon operates a specialized program for the intensive treatment of boys with firesetting behaviors and has recently pioneered a short-term residential assessment service, called a Rapid Firesetting Assessment, the only of its kind in the country.

About MA Department of Fire Services (DFS):

The State Fire Marshal heads the DFS, the sole agency within state government responsible for overall coordination of fire service policy and operations. Within DFS is the *Massachusetts Firefighting Academy*, providing fire training to municipal fire service personnel.

The *Massachusetts Fire Training Council* is a 13 member body appointed by the Governor which is the policy-making body for the Academy. The Council is also the sole certifying agency for the certification of all levels of fire service personnel in the Commonwealth. The mission of the

Department of Fire Services is to provide the people of Massachusetts the ability to create safer communities through coordinated training, education, prevention, investigation, emergency response and leadership.

About Parents for Residential Reform:

Parents for Residential Reform (PFRR) is a project of the *Federation for Children with Special Needs*, that provides support, information, referral, and other services to parents and professionals regarding residential educational settings and group home care for children with special needs. *PFRR* has developed a support network of families in similar situations throughout MA and now nationwide. *PFRR* also hosts the Children Missing from Care Project, a collaboration of *PFRR*, the *Federation for Children with Special Needs* and the Department of Social Services. To date, this program has helped to recover hundreds of young people from the streets and bring them back to safety. Thanks to funding provided by the MA Department of Education and DSS, as well as private donations, *PFRR* is able to serve over 3100 children and their families each year. For more information go to pfr.org

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