Overview
Three lawyers in Steptoe’s New York office have received a Cornerstone Award from the Lawyers Alliance for New York for obtaining the dismissal of a lawsuit against a nonprofit foster care agency. Steptoe partners Mike Miller and Evan Glassman, and associate Lisa Sandoval were honored on November 4 at the annual Lawyers Alliance Cornerstone Awards ceremony recognizing attorneys and institutions that have made extraordinary contributions through pro bono legal services to nonprofit organizations.

The trio was recognized for their work on behalf of Forestdale, a 160-year old agency in Queens. In 2011, the parents of eight siblings in foster care absconded with them during a visit at Forestdale, touching off a multi-state police search before the children were located and returned. Forestdale required immediate legal assistance with securing insurance coverage, conducting an internal investigation, and responding to child welfare regulators. In addition, the parents sued Forestdale for allegedly creating the situation causing the family service agency to fight the lawsuit and defend its reputation.

Mr. Miller visited Forestdale and took the time to talk and engage with the children rather than interviewing them. When the parents filed suit, Mr. Miller appeared in New York State Supreme Court on several occasions. Even after all threats of litigation and adverse actions by regulatory authorities had subsided, he asked the Lawyers Alliance to keep the matter open for several months so that he could remain available to answer any lingering questions. More recently, Mr. Miller investigated and resolved a sensitive internal matter for Forestdale, preserving valuable city contracts in the process.

Forestdale Executive Director Anstiss Agnew commented: “Mike has been Forestdale’s guardian angel. He took the time to get to know the agency and the family involved. His commitment, integrity, and wit were instrumental in putting this case to rest and allowing us to focus on our work with families in crisis.”

In 2014 Steptoe was also recognized for representing Forestdale and successfully petitioning the court to appoint a guardian ad litem to act on behalf of the children.

Steptoe’s Mike Miller and Evan Glassman.