



Medical-Legal Partnerships to Improve Maternal Health

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What are Social Determinants of Health?



“[C]onditions in the environments in which people are born, live, learn, work, play, worship, and age that affect a wide range of health, functioning, and quality-of-life outcomes and risks.”

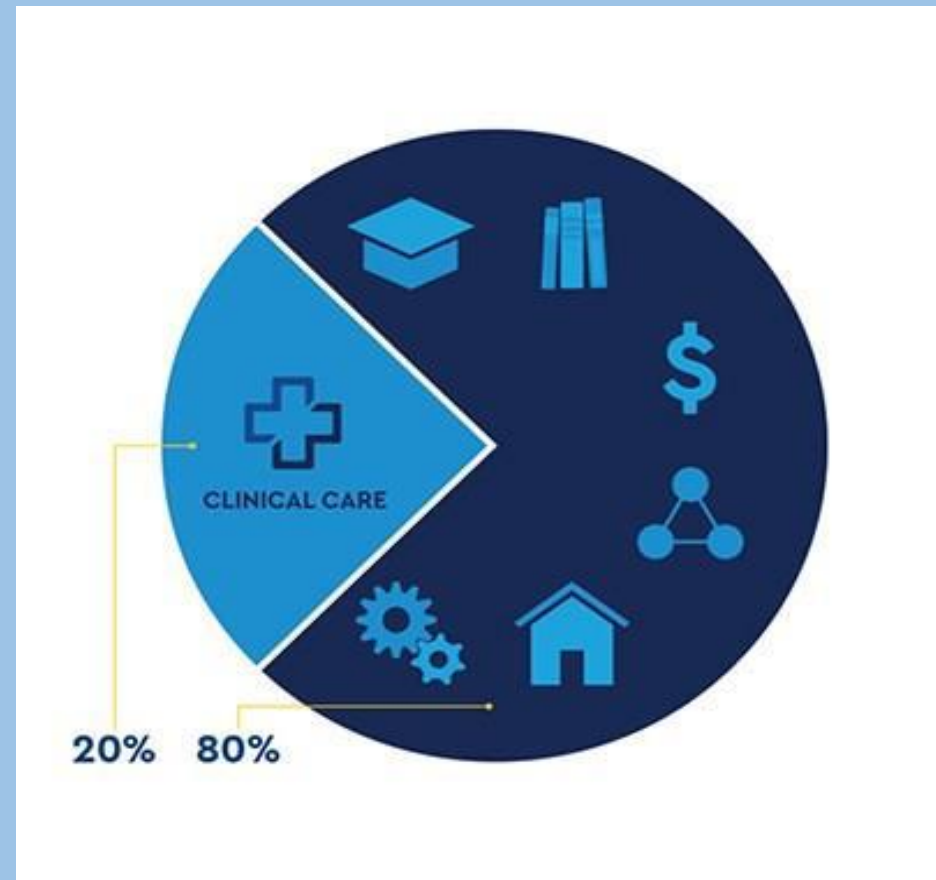
Source: Office of Disease Prevention and Health Promotion, 2020 Topics and Objectives

Common Social Determinants of Health

- **Income & Health Insurance:** Resources to Meet Basic Daily Needs and Healthcare
- **Housing and Utilities:** A Healthy Physical Environment
- **Education and Employment:** Quality Education and Job Opportunities
- **Legal Status:** Access to Public Entitlements; Jobs
- **Personal and Family Stability:** Safe Homes and Social Support

How do Social Determinants of Health Affect Health Outcomes?

- 80% of a person's health is determined by Social Determinants of Health, while 20% is impacted by clinical care.



- The U.S. spends more money on health care than any industrialized country, but it ranks:
 - 42nd in life expectancy
 - 169th in low birth weight
- These poorer outcomes are the result of where the money is spent.
 - Other first-world countries with better outcomes spend \$2 on social services for every \$1 they spend on healthcare.
 - The US spends \$0.90 on social services for every \$1 it spends on healthcare.

Examples of Legal Assistance Addressing SDOH:

- Fighting unlawful evictions
- Forcing landlords to comply with building or health codes
- Restraining orders for victims of domestic violence to keep themselves and their children safe
- Workers need protection from unsafe or toxic working conditions
- Access to entitlements and food stamps
- Health Insurance Coverage Issues

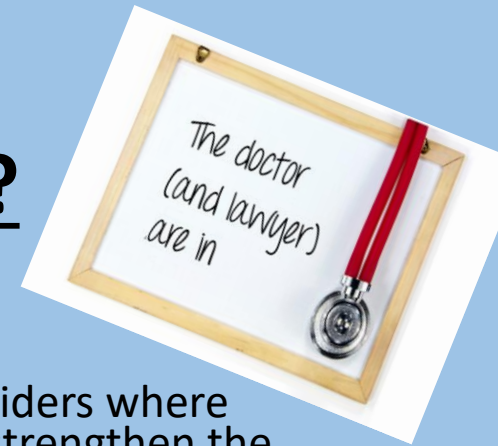


According to a recent study:

In 2017, **71%** of low-income households experienced at least one civil legal problem including problems with health care, housing conditions, disability access, and domestic violence.

Legal Services Corp. The Justice Gap (2017)

What are Medical-Legal Partnerships?



Partnerships between health care providers and legal service providers where attorneys are embedded as specialists in health-care settings to “strengthen the social determinants of health among low and moderate income patients using the force of law.”

- Integrate civil law attorneys into health care settings.
- Attorneys train health care workers to screen for health-harming legal needs.
- When problems are found, like unsafe living conditions, these problems can be addressed preventively through the in-clinic attorney.
- Allows doctors and lawyers to work together to help patients by strengthening legally protected social supports.
- Some partnerships leverage their knowledge and expertise to advance local and state policies that lead to safer and healthier environments.

Source: National Center for Medical-Legal Partnership; Center for Health Policy at Brookings

IMPACT OF MEDICAL-LEGAL PARTNERSHIPS

- When Legal Expertise is Used to Address Social Needs:
 - Individuals with Chronic Illnesses are Admitted to the Hospital Less Frequently
 - People More Likely to Take Their Medications as Prescribed
 - People Report Less Stress
 - Less Money is Spent on Health Care Services for Those who Would Otherwise be Frequent Hospital Users
 - Clinical Services are More Frequently Reimbursed by Public and Private Payers

Source: National Center for Medical-Legal Partnership (citing to several research articles)

Medical-Legal Partnerships to Improve Maternal Health

A pregnant woman living in poverty faces stress that often has negative consequences for her and her baby's health. Unmet housing needs, lack of access to quality healthcare, financial insecurity, immigration status, and family stability are just some of the SDOH affecting pregnant women. Many of these stressful situations require legal aid.

CHLP's Medical-Legal Partnerships

- Behavioral Health Providers
 - Addiction Treatment Providers
 - HIV/AIDS Treatment Providers
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- Horizon NIH Program - Utilizes CHW's
 - IOT-SEI (Integrated Opioid Treatment & Substance Exposed Infants) – Provides comprehensive array of services for opioid dependent pregnant women, their infants, and families – including legal services.

Maternal MLP's in Other States

California

- Beginning in 2018, developed Maternal Medical-Legal Partnership between legal aid attorneys/Equal Justice Works Fellows and Nurse-Family Partnership (NFP) Program to address the SDOH of low-income mothers in Los Angeles County.
- NFP provides physical and mental healthcare to low income pregnant and post-partum mothers through a home visitation model.
- The MLP provides free direct legal services in conjunction with the NFP.
- Address health-harming legal issues
 - Food and income insecurity
 - Family violence
 - Access to insured and affordable healthcare
 - Housing instability and habitability issues

Delaware

- In 2013, began as a pilot project b/w Delaware Div. of Public Health and Delaware Community Legal Aid Society with support from the Collaborative Improvement and Innovation Network to Reduce Infant Mortality led by the National Institute for Children's Health Quality.
- MLP works as a referral system from healthcare providers to legal services. Providers are trained in how MLPs improve health outcomes and how to refer to the legal partner.
- Clinicians and social workers give their patients a questionnaire called the "Perceived Stress Scale" to assess anxiety and stress levels and obtain additional information about stressors during the patient visit. If appropriate, the patient is referred to the legal partner.
- MLP participants reported an improvement in mental and physical well-being and lower levels of stress.

Pennsylvania

- Began in 2016, MLP based in Philadelphia which is a Nursing-Legal Partnership that brings together lawyers and nurses to improve the lives of mothers and children living in poverty.
- Lawyers with expertise in public benefits, housing, consumer and other areas of poverty law collaborate with nurses to screen mothers for unmet legal needs that harm maternal-child health using the following I-HELP categories:
 - I – Income Supports
 - H – Housing & Utilities
 - E – Education
 - L – Legal/Immigration Status
 - P – Personal & Family Stability
- MLP is funded through multi-year grants from local, national, and international funders.

Texas

- Austin's People's Community Clinic Medical-Legal Partnership created a legal checkup to help pregnant women in Texas.
- The MLP created videos for patients to watch that cover different issues including health insurance, food security, domestic violence, employment, housing, healthcare decisions, parental rights, and breastfeeding rights.
- In addition to the videos, MLP attorneys are embedded on site at the clinic and attend group medical visits and address patients' legal issues.
- Patients reported less stress and increased legal literacy to help empower themselves to better understand their rights.
- Providers reported improved self-efficacy in providing whole-person care.

GRANT IMPACT REPORT



Medical-Legal Partnership Outcomes Suggest Addressing the Legal Needs of Pregnant Women Lowers Extreme Preterm Birth Rate

Grantee: Legal Aid Society of Greater Cincinnati

Project Name: Maternal Health Law Partnership (M-HeLP)

bi3 Funding Priority: Maternal and Infant Health

Grant Award: \$874,000

Grant Timeframe: 2016-2019

Grant Purpose: To improve health outcomes for pregnant patients of the TriHealth Good Samaritan OB-GYN Center by resolving health-harming legal needs through legal advocacy and increasing engagement in prenatal care.

Project Partners: TriHealth Good Samaritan Hospital and Cincinnati Children's Hospital Medical Center

Key Accomplishments

- Created a screening tool for civil legal needs and integrated it into TriHealth's electronic medical record (EMR)
- Screened 88% (2,809) of 3,184 maternity patients during the grant period
- Referred 802 patients to legal support to resolve health-harming legal needs
- 900 cases were opened to address health-harming legal needs (some patients required more than one legal case)
- Conducted 17 training sessions on a variety of legal topics for 286 Good Samaritan team members

Key Outcomes

- 36% reduction in extreme preterm birth rate (1.4% for M-HeLP mothers compared to 2.2% for the total Good Samaritan population delivering during the same period)
- 97% of cases (670) completed with an outcome that resolved individual social needs
- Estimated cost savings by preventing 18 extreme premature births is more than \$1 million

Overall Learnings

- The most common health-harming legal needs included inadequate or unsafe housing, access to public benefits (e.g. Medicaid, food stamps) and family law issues.
- Integrating screening for social determinants into patients' EMR and provider workflow increased the capability of TriHealth providers to identify and take action to address patients' needs.
- Cohesive and accurate data collection requires proactive planning and investment.
- Health-harming legal needs can arise at any time during pregnancy and the newborn period; ongoing screening is necessary to identify and address new issues.
- Successful shared project management depends upon meaningful investment and sustained commitment from all partners.
- The current fee-for-service medical reimbursement structure makes sustainability challenging for programs addressing the social determinants of health, partners continue to look for opportunities to leverage value-based reimbursement and other funding sources.

Promising Sustainable Sources of Funding for Medical-Legal Partnerships

Medicaid Financing Models

- Medicaid Managed Care Contracts
 - Eg. Eskenazi Health & Indiana Legal Services – Contracted with a Medicaid managed care entity to sponsor a Medical-Legal Partnership at two of their health centers.
- Medicaid §1115 Demonstration Waivers
 - Eg. LA County Dept. of Health & Neighborhood Legal Services of LA County – Provide legal services to the vulnerable MediCal beneficiaries targeted by the LA Whole Person Care Program. \$500,000 was designated for legal services, technical assistance, and training for the first year of the demonstration program. Whole Person Care also uses 1:1 local to federal matching funds to support the Medical-Legal Partnership.
- Delivery System Reform Incentive Payment (DSRIP)
 - Eg. NYC Health+Hospitals & NY Legal Assistance Group – The NY State Delivery System Reform Incentive Payment Program is the main mechanism NY state is using to redesign their Medicaid program and address population health goals. The program provides funding for this Medical-Legal Partnership collaboration.

North Carolina Medicaid Managed Care

The NC Dept. of Health & Human Services recently released a RFP for Medicaid Managed Care Prepaid Health Plans which states that:

- Prepaid Health Plans are required to provide access to medical-legal partnerships for legal issues adversely affecting health.

Thank you!

Contact Information

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