

# Where legal services fit within a health care organization's response to SDOH

## Defining the terms

Medical-legal partnerships often reference social determinants of health, social needs, and legal needs. What is meant by each?

### SOCIAL DETERMINANTS OF HEALTH

are broadly defined by the World Health Organization as the conditions in which people are born, grow, work, live, and age. These circumstances are shaped by economic and social policies, political systems, and social norms, and they contribute significantly to health disparities.

### SOCIAL NEEDS

are the more immediate, individual needs that patients enter the health center with every day as a result of social determinants of health.

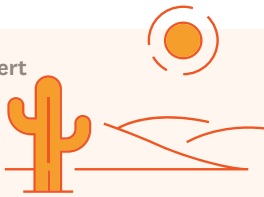
### LEGAL NEEDS

are, simply put, the subset of social needs that have legal solutions. The distinction is made to help health care organizations understand where lawyers can be helpful\*.

*\*This chart highlights a variety of legal needs that MLP lawyers can address for patients.*

FOR EXAMPLE

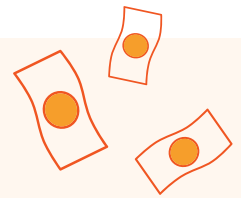
#### A food desert



#### A family's need for fresh produce today



#### A family's need to file an appeal after their SNAP benefits are incorrectly cut



## How different team members address social needs

Community health workers (CHWs), case managers / social workers, and lawyers can all help address patients' social needs in different ways, and can work together to ensure everyone works at the "top of their license."

HERE'S HOW

### A FAMILY OF 4

is struggling to make rent after one Mom is unable to work during her cancer treatment.



### A Community Health Worker

can help the patient fill out applications, pull documents together, and may go to benefits office with her.

### A Case Manager / Social Worker

may work with the patient to determine what housing, disability, insurance, and food benefits she is eligible for. They write support letters and gather medical documentation as needed.

### A Lawyer

may advise the patient about the Family Medical Leave Act and job protections to help ensure her job is waiting for her after treatment. They can help CHWs and case managers understand benefit eligibility and problem-solve as needed. They may assist the patient with appeals if benefits are denied.

## MLP is one of the only interventions that tackles both individual needs and the underlying policies

### Training activities and direct legal services help health centers address individuals' legal needs.

When a landlord refuses to make improvements to an apartment with mold, an MLP lawyer can enforce safe housing laws to get the mold removed.



### By detecting patterns in patients' needs and using upstream strategies to target unhealthy policies, MLPs prevent future problems and advance health equity.

An MLP team works together to change their city's lead ordinance to prevent children from being lead poisoned at home.