

A Patient's MLP Legal Journey

Have you ever wondered what happens after you refer a patient to the medical-legal partnership (MLP) legal team? Let's follow a patient's MLP legal journey.

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STEP 01 Conflict Check

Done immediately after the referral

- Legal aid checks if they already represent someone else that prevents them from working with this patient
- If there is a conflict, they will refer the patient elsewhere

STEP 02 Triage

15-minute phone call (1 - 3 days after referral)

- Make introductions
- Determine if problem is within scope of services
- Assess level of urgency (e.g., Does the patient have a hearing soon?)
- Schedule intake (if the patient is eligible for services)

STEP 03 Intake

45 - 60-minute meeting (if eligible for services)

- Ask patient to share problems in their own words
- Gather demographic information
- Ask follow-up questions about referral issue & screen for other I-HELP™ issues
- Let patient know what MLP legal team can help with and how
- Discuss consent and what can be shared with the healthcare team
- Mail or e-mail the patient an application for services (copy of intake info) so they can attest that info provided is true and verify their immigration status
- Let patient know legal aid will send a retainer for each issue (for extended services)

STEP 04 Legal Care

Can take anywhere from a day to many months to over a year (depending on complexity)

Provide services to try and resolve the patient's legal problem. If the MLP legal team discovers an additional issue they can help with, the timeline starts over.

STEP 05 Resolution

Whenever issue has run its course

- Let patient know the legal relationship is ending
- Send a case closed letter. Tell them to reach back out via healthcare team if they have future issues
- Collect outcomes data
- With patient permission, update the healthcare team about the outcome of the case

Finding the Right Dose of Legal Care

There are a number of ways a lawyer can help a patient with a housing or other legal issue. Just like surgery isn't necessarily better than a pill, representing a patient in court isn't necessarily better than providing a patient with advice. The treatment depends on the severity of the problem and what solutions exist. Low intensity interventions are common and can have high value!



Lowest intensity



Information & Advice (Could take as little as a day)
Lawyer informs patient of their rights. **Example:** *Landlord makes comments about selling the property. Lawyer helps patient understand their rights if the property is sold.*



Brief Service
Lawyer does research on the patient's specific situation and provides advice. **Example:** *Lawyer advises patient that a lockout is not legal and advises them which papers to file in court to get a judge to force the landlord to unlock the door.*



Negotiation (Could take weeks)
Negotiate with a landlord or agency on behalf of a patient to resolve an issue. **Example:** *Lawyer negotiates a new lease or dismissal of medical debt case on behalf of the patient.*



Administrative Representation
Lawyer represents patient in an administrative hearing or preps the patient to represent themselves.



Court Representation (Could take months to year)
Lawyer represents patient in a court proceeding. **Example:** *Patient's landlord files for an eviction in court. Lawyer goes to court with the patient to fight the eviction.*

Highest intensity

3 Ways the Healthcare Team May Be Asked to Help

1 Provide additional mental or physical health services that allow patients to better engage in legal advocacy.

A patient may have a complex physical or mental health issue that makes it difficult to effectively engage with their legal issues. The MLP legal team might ask the healthcare team to:

- Reinforce legal advice to the patient (e.g., they need to take a particular step to apply for a benefit); and/or
- Help resolve those issues before beginning legal advocacy.

2 Educate the MLP legal team about the impact of a medical condition or prognosis.

With appropriate patient consent / HIPAA releases, help the MLP legal team better understand how a medical condition relates to a patient's housing needs or benefits eligibility (e.g., what type of modification is needed to a patient's apartment so they can safely and fully live there).

3 Provide medical evidence of a patient's disability or medical condition.

- Write a medical support letter to help a patient with a disability get a "reasonable accommodation."
- Verify a patient's disability (via form or letter) for their SSI or SSDI public benefits application.