

Webinar Series

**PARTNERING WITH LEGAL AID PROVIDERS TO IMPROVE
BEHAVIORAL AND MENTAL HEALTH**



**Certified Community
Behavioral Health Clinic
Medical-Legal Partnerships to
Support Adults**

Part 1 - January 30, 2025 at 3 PM ET

Today's Moderators



Katie Hathaway, JD

Consultant

NCMLP



Bethany Hamilton, JD

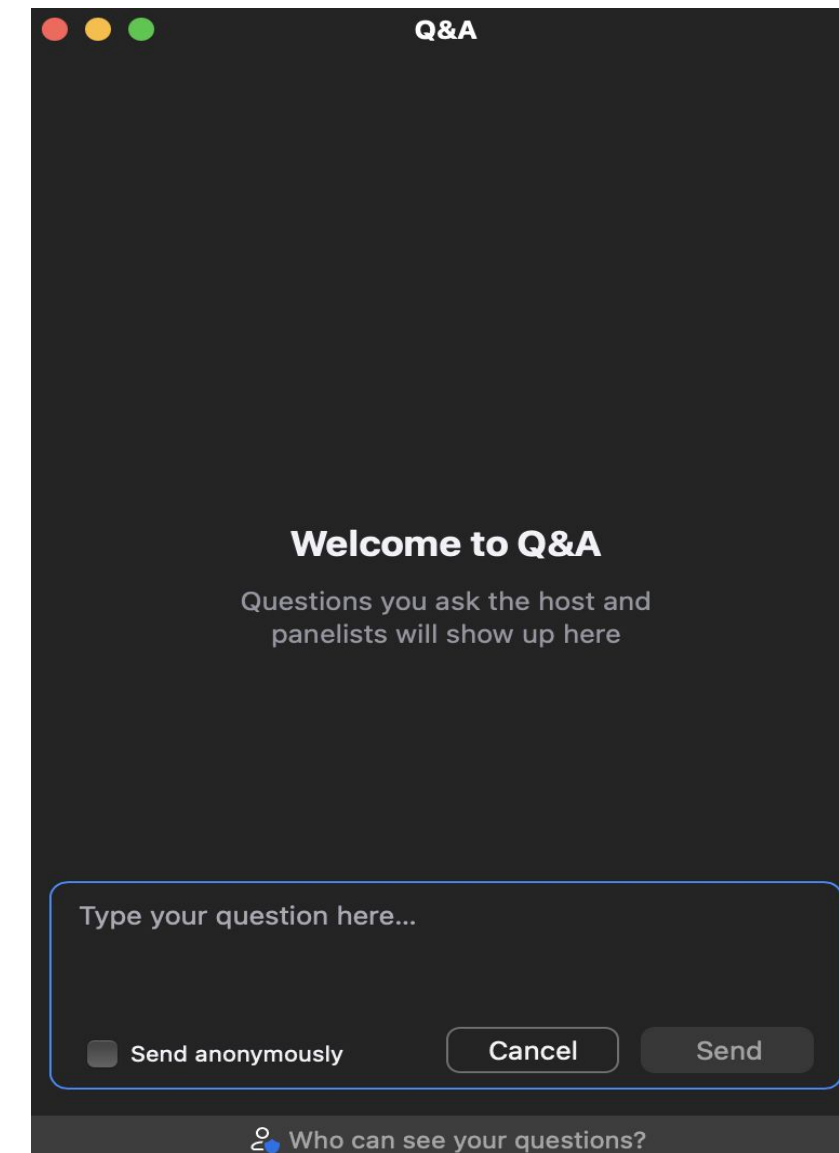
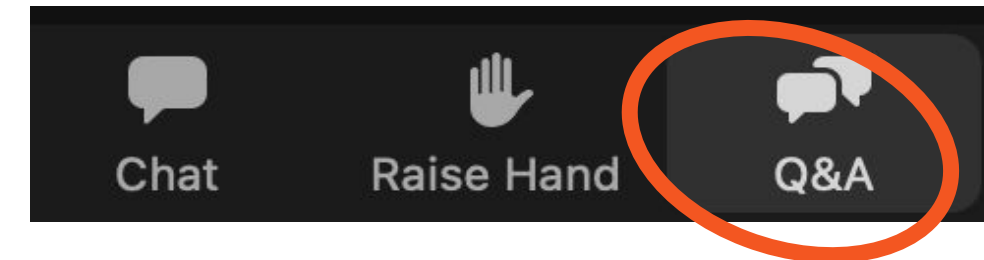
Director

NCMLP

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Housekeeping

- Attendees are muted throughout the webinar.
- Type questions into **Chat or Q&A** pane.
- Send a **chat to the Hosts & Panelists** for help.
- To activate captions, select **“Live Transcript”** and **“Show Subtitle.”**
- This webinar will be recorded and shared at medical-legalpartnership.org/resources/



Learning Objectives

- ❑ Learn about updated data concerning social risk factors that contribute to behavioral health issues.
- ❑ Improve understanding of how unmet social and legal needs impact behavioral and mental health access and outcomes for low-income and diverse adult patient populations.
- ❑ Learn about the role of medical-legal partnerships as an intervention in behavioral and mental health care.

Our Speakers



Erika Kerber, Esq.

**President/Executive
Director**
Community Health Law
Project



Sean Benoit, Esq.

Director of Litigation
Community Health Law
Project



Rehana Rasool, Esq.

Managing Attorney
Community Health Law
Project



**Brigitte D.
Johnson, Esq.**

President and CEO
Care Plus NJ



Sandy Newman

**Client Resource Manager
and Client Advocate**
Care Plus NJ

Audience Poll

Question 1: Tell us who you are

(Select the option that best describes your organization)

- Health Center (Grantee or Look-Alike)
- Certified Community Behavioral Health Clinic
- Community Mental Health Center
- Civil Legal Services Organization
- Public Defender Services
- Law School
- Medical School
- Hospital
- Primary Care Association
- Health Center Controlled Network
- Courts
- Other

Question 2: Does your organization have a Medical-Legal Partnership (MLP)?

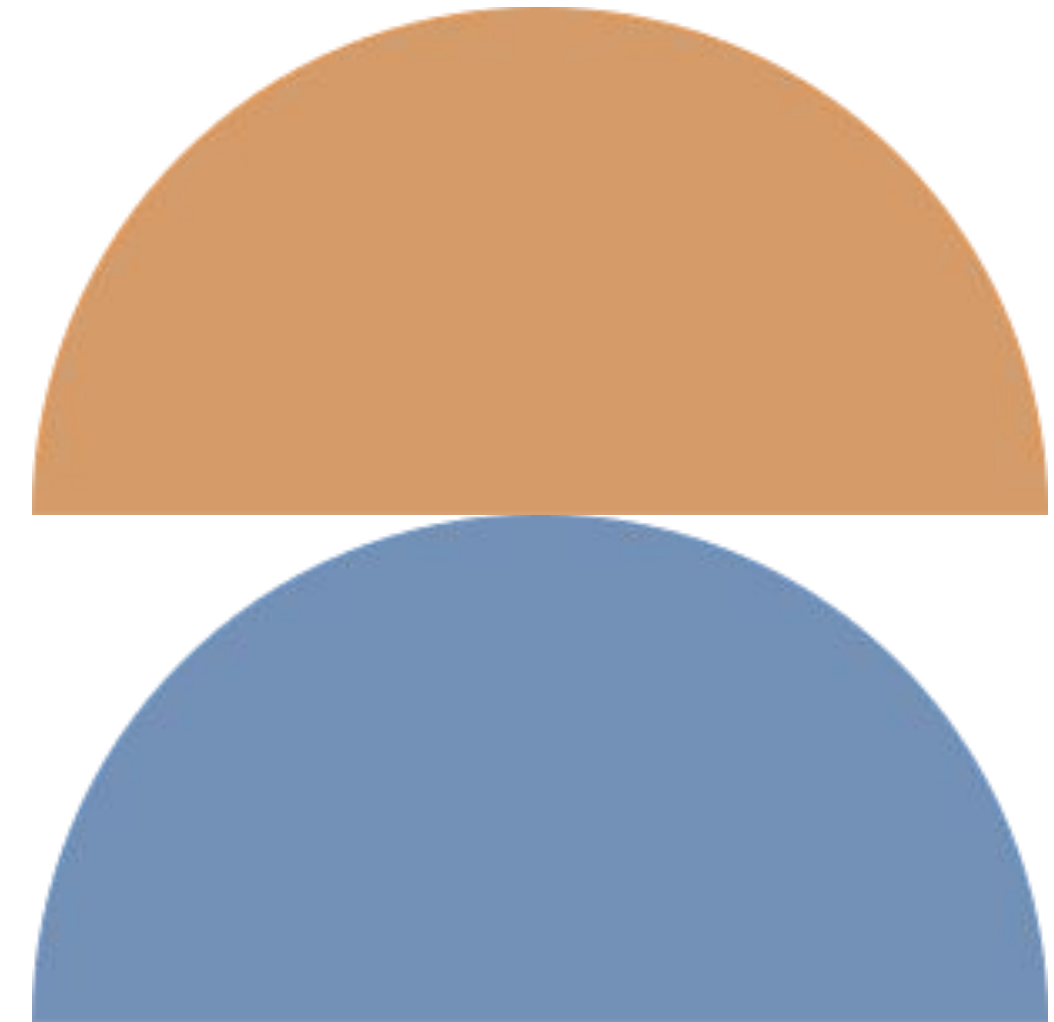
- Yes
- No
- I don't know

Question 3: Does your work focus on mental or behavioral health needs?

- Yes
- No

Medical-Legal Partnership (MLP):

A Patient-Centered, Upstream Approach for
Interdisciplinary Collaboration





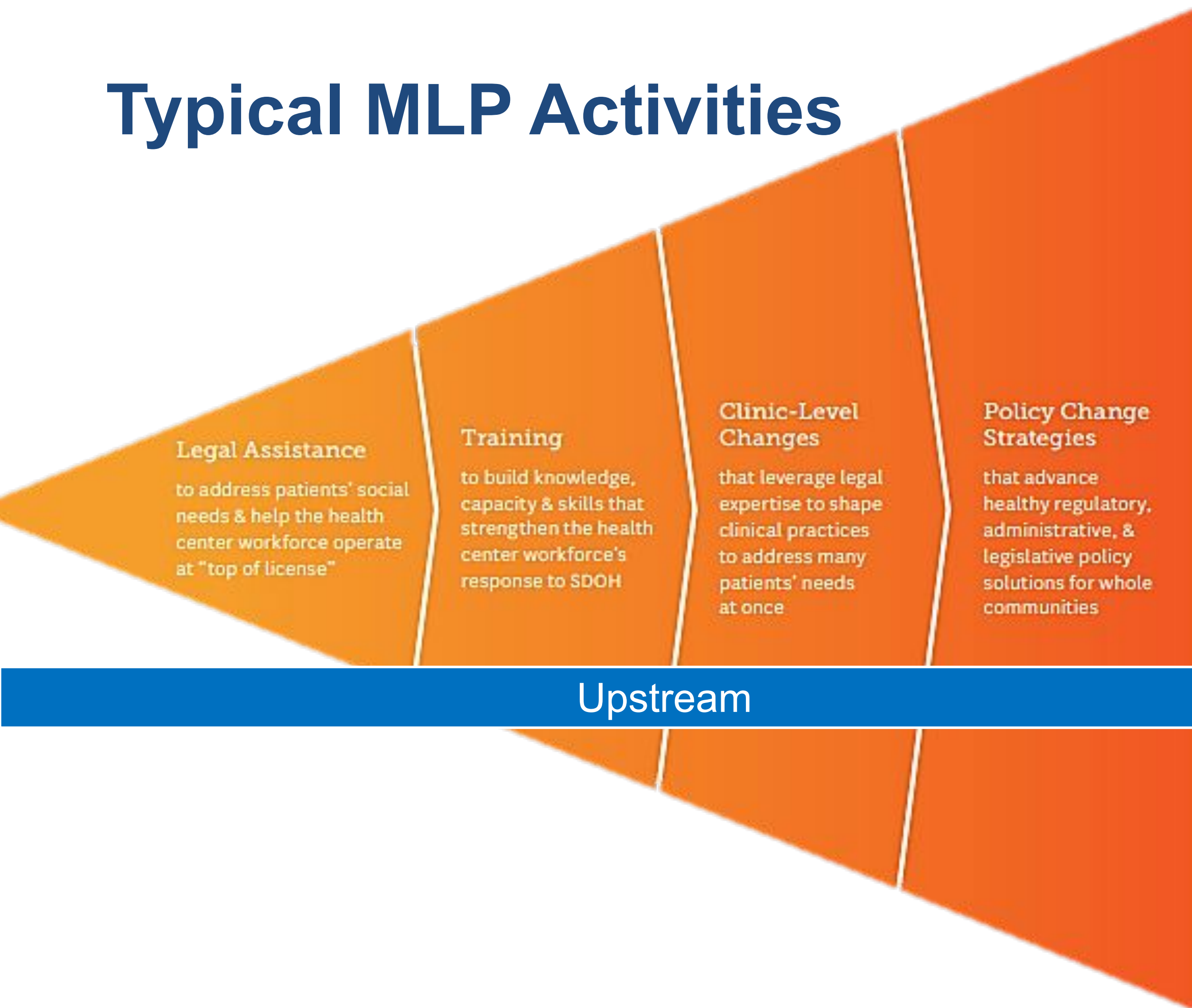
What is the MLP Approach?

MEDICAL-LEGAL PARTNERSHIP (MLP) is an intervention where legal and health care professionals **COLLABORATE** to help patients resolve **SOCIAL, ECONOMIC & ENVIRONMENTAL FACTORS** that contribute to **HEALTH DISPARITIES** and have a **REMEDY** in **CIVIL LAW**.

What is not MLP?

- Legal referral network, i.e., not closing the loop or following up to report output / outcomes
- Legal clinics
- Legal information, only
- Screening, only, for legal needs
- Partnering without equitable sharing of costs and benefits
- Partnerships without a lawyer

Typical MLP Activities



MLP moves legal aid upstream and **transforms** healthcare into a more **inclusive** and **impactful** ecosystem

Core Components of a Traditional MLP

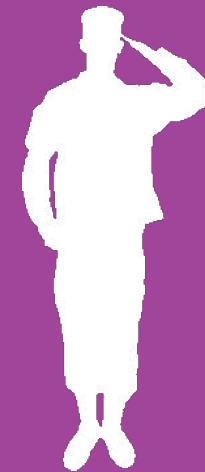
“Lawyer in residence”



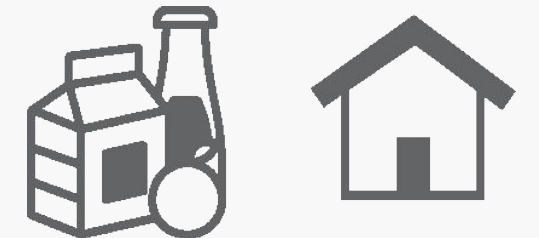
Formal agreement
b/t health & legal
orgs



Target
population



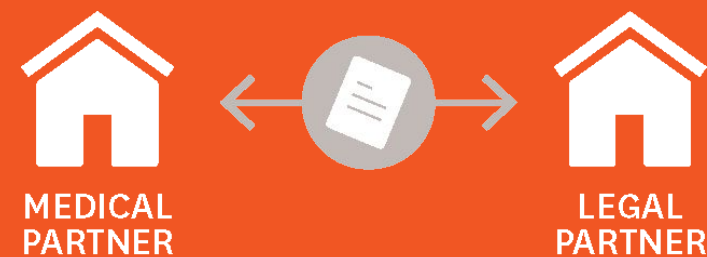
Patients screened
for legal needs



Designated resources



Information-sharing



Training on
SDOH

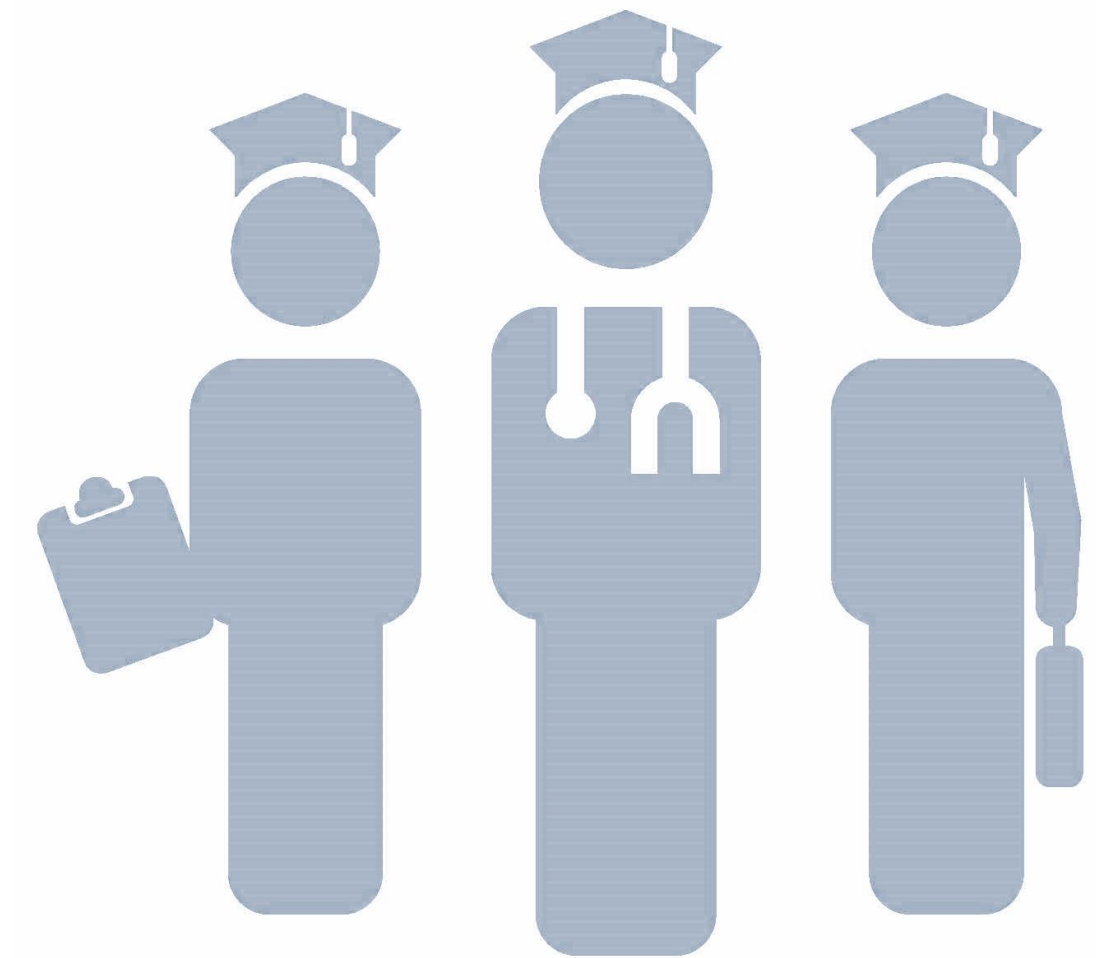


Legal staffing



Distinction: Core Components of an *Academic MLP*

ADAPTATION OF CORE ELEMENTS	PARTNERSHIPS OF VARYING LEVELS	DEFINED POPULATION FOR THE WORK	SCREENING OF PATIENTS	LEGAL STAFFING TYPICALLY BY LAW STUDENTS
	LAW STUDENTS ON HEALTH CARE PREMISES	TRAINING OF MEDICAL & LAW STUDENTS	INFORMATION-SHARING & TRAINING	RESOURCES BEYOND LAW SCHOOL FUNDS
UNIQUE TO A-MLP	PRIORITIZATION OF PRE-PROFESSIONAL EDUCATIONAL GOALS		INTENTIONALLY CURATED INTERPROFESSIONAL LEARNING ENVIRONMENTS	COMMITMENT TO ADVANCING THE EVIDENCE BASE



A summary table of the Core Elements in Academic MLPs is available in [Appendix 2](#).

[The Academic Medical-Legal Partnership \(2022\)](#) by Vicki W. Girard, JD; Deborah F. Perry, PhD; Lisa P. Kessler, MBA; Yael Cannon, JD; Prashasti Bhatnagar; Jessica Roth — *Georgetown University Health Justice Alliance, National Center for Medical-Legal Partnership.*

Medical-Legal Partnership Community Health Law Project & Care Plus NJ



A Collaboration that Works

January 30, 2025



Presenters

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Community Health Law Project Introduction

Founded in 1976, the Community Health Law Project (CHLP) is a New Jersey statewide not-for-profit advocacy and legal service organization that provides legal representation and advocacy services to low-income individuals with disabilities and the frail elderly. The organization has traditionally specialized in services exclusively for these populations, although recently the organization has begun to provide broader services through the creation of medical-legal partnerships that offer the entire range of civil law.

Through its services, CHLP maintains its clients' independence and self-sufficiency so that they can live productive lives as contributing members of their communities.

Clients are comprised of persons with chronic mental illness, intellectual and developmental disabilities, mobility impairments, sensory impairments that render persons blind or deaf, individuals living with HIV/AIDS, and more recently persons with substance use disorders and chronic health conditions. In summary, their clients are individuals who, by virtue of their age, health, or disability, cannot negotiate the complexities of daily life on their own and need the assistance of attorneys and advocates to help them with legal matters so that they may continue to live independently.

CHLP employs over 60 people, including attorneys, advocates, and support staff, who are skilled in working with these special populations. In its over 48 + years of service, CHLP has represented more than 90,000 individual clients. Each year, it provides services to approximately 4,500 people in 5,000 individual cases. In addition, CHLP educates thousands of practitioners of law, health, and social work as well as consumers and families through conferences, hotlines, special programs and its website at www.chlp.org



Community Health Law Project Introduction *(cont'd)*

CHLP Eligibility for Services:

- ***Disability***

CHLP assists individuals with mental health, developmental, physical, and visual disabilities; people living with HIV/AIDS and their families; and, in certain issues, organizations that serve people with disabilities.

- ***Residence***

CHLP assists people who live in the community. Eligibility for services varies by county of residence as determined by CHLP's funding sources.

- ***Income***

CHLP represents low-income individuals who are unable to afford the services of private attorneys. Advice, counsel, referral, and additional program services are available to others according to the terms of CHLP's service contracts and grants.



Medical-Legal Partnerships Between CHLP and NJ Health Care Providers

- MLP with addiction agency to provide legal services to their STAR consumers
- MLP with Mental Health Providers to provide legal services to PATH and ICMS Consumers
- MLP with CCBHC providers to assist their patients with legal issues
- MLP with HIV health clinics around New Jersey



Care Plus NJ and the Certified Community Behavioral Health Clinics (CCBHC) Initiatives

Care Plus NJ, Inc. (“Care Plus NJ”) is a non-profit organization with 501(c)(3) status, headquartered in Paramus, NJ. We provide comprehensive, recovery-focused mental health, substance abuse, and primary care services throughout Northern New Jersey. Since 1978, our mission has been to achieve excellence in mental healthcare and to commit to the lifelong support needed by individuals and their families, helping them reach their full potential and improve their quality of life. Care Plus NJ serves approximately 14,000 unduplicated adults and children in the northern New Jersey area.

New Jersey was one of eight states selected nationwide to participate in the initial Certified Community Behavioral Health Clinic (CCBHC) Medicaid Demonstration Program. The CCBHC model ensures access to coordinated and comprehensive care, requiring clinics to assist anyone seeking help for mental health or substance use issues, regardless of their ability to pay, place of residence, or age.

In 2017, Care Plus NJ became one of seven designated Certified Community Behavioral Health Clinics (CCBHCs) in New Jersey, providing integrated, holistic care through existing programs. This federal demonstration model is increasingly becoming the standard for delivering integrated care across the country.

In 2023, Care Plus NJ was awarded two additional Certified Community Behavioral Health Clinic (CCBHC) grants: one for Planning, Development, and Implementation (CCBHC-PDI) to develop a new CCBHC service site (targeting our Bloomfield, NJ, office) and the second for Improvement and Advancement (CCBHC-IA) to enhance and support our existing CCBHC services at our Paramus, NJ, location.



Care Plus CCBHC & Social Determinants of Health (SDOH)

As an integrated model for care delivery, our Certified Community Behavioral Health Center (CCBHC) offers a core set of services:

Crisis Services 

Outpatient Mental Health & Substance Use Services 

Screening, Diagnosis & Risk Assessment 

Person- & Family-Centered Treatment Planning 

Psychiatric Rehabilitation Services 



Community-Based Mental Health Care for Veterans 

Outpatient Primary Care Screening & Monitoring 

Targeted Case Management 

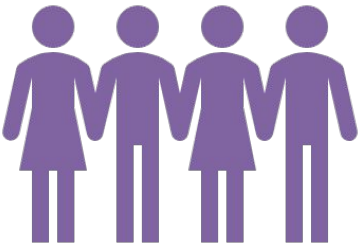
Outpatient Primary Care Screening & Monitoring 

Note: CCBHCs are responsible for ensuring all services, if not available directly through CCBHC, are provided through a Designated Collaborating Organization (DCO). This Medical-Legal Partnership agreement serves as a DCO as part of our CCBHC services.

Addressing Health Disparities & Social Determinants of Health

CCBHCs utilize an integrated and holistic treatment approach, ensuring that services are accessible to all patients, regardless of their ability to pay. By adopting a "no wrong door" philosophy, CCBHCs remove barriers linked to SDOH, allowing individuals to genuinely heal, recover, reduce their symptoms, and lead more fulfilling lives.

CCBHCs engaged in a wide array of strategies to address health disparities, including increasing:



Screening for unmet social needs that affect health

81%



Outreach to individuals who have historically been underserved or underrepresented

75%



Hiring staff who are demographically representative of the population they serve

75%

CCBHCs are making particularly focused efforts to support access among veterans, people experiencing homelessness, and those who are involved or at risk of involvement with the criminal justice system. The vast majority of CCBHCs (91%) proactively assist clients with finding or maintaining stable housing.

Medical Legal Partnership CHLP & CPNJ

In 2019, Care Plus NJ and the Community Health Law Project established a Medical-Legal Partnership which enhances the quality of life of clients by addressing all legal issues in a holistic and collaborative manner.

<i>PRIOR</i>
Time was wasted searching for legal representation to take on cases.
Clients were frequently turned away due to overwhelming waitlists at the law office.
Communication with lawyers was inconsistent, resulting in delayed case updates

<i>CURRENT</i>
Clinicians/Case managers refer patients directly to CHLP for assistance with legal matters. CHLP attorney connects with the client and case manager at Care Plus, as needed, to discuss the case and they work together to resolve the issues
The attorneys are integrated into the treatment team to provide comprehensive and holistic care to consumers dealing with mental illness, addiction, co-occurring disorders or other disabling conditions impacting their daily lives;
Having a legal partner to discuss issues with at an early stage before they escalate into crises that hinder their treatment and recovery has led to positive results with less stress for everyone.



Building Our Partnership

When we started the MLP in 2019, referrals mostly came from Integrated Case Management Services and Addictive Recovery support teams. These were often outreach programs and/or newly engaged clients in treatment. Over the years, referrals started coming from several other departments.



- We developed dual release forms for both agencies to allow for open communication between both entities. During the referral process, we explain the benefits of this collaboration to the client
- Having a designated point person at Care Plus who is well-versed in navigating both the benefits system and community resources and the overall operations of Care Plus.
- We began to track all cases using a shared comprehensive spreadsheet

Continuing to Build the Partnership

Developing Coordination

Care Plus has assigned and trained staff members from different divisions as point of contacts to help with referrals and ongoing coordination.

Bimonthly meetings between Care Plus point person and CHLP attorneys to discuss referrals and status of all open cases:

- Reviewing the cases helps us all to get to know the client and their needs
- Learn to speak the same language
- Clinical staff get an understanding of the legal process and legal issues
- Lawyers get to know the agency/departments, staffing patterns, and how that impacts the type of coordination that is needed
- The team discusses how to best empower the clients to work on their case and give extra supports to those who need it.

Care Plus treatment team meetings held to update staff and coordinate care.



Building Care Plus's Staff Knowledge + Expertise

Assessing Needs and Prioritizing Issues

Discussing cases offers a valuable tool to improve delivery of care. It helps to determine when the staff should send referrals to CHLP.

Steps That Need To Be Taken Before Referral Is Completed

- Determine if a client is ready both clinically as part of their treatment plan to work on their legal needs.
- Collect and organize all necessary documents to accompany the referral, ensuring they are properly prepared for presentation to the lawyer or court.
- Are deadlines a factor? IE. SSA Appeal Process and Court Dates

Through this process, staff increase their expertise on navigating the legal system.

Staff Development and Training

Addressing common needs to provide case managers insight and tips, and ensure appropriate referrals are made.



Addressing the Needs of Vulnerable Populations

Common Barriers to Obtaining Legal Assistance

- Low income individuals face challenges obtaining access to legal services
- Only one legal representative/attorney for every 6,415 individuals living in poverty.¹
- Often patients in mental health treatment don't ask their provider for help as they face stigmas

Breaking Down the Barriers

- MLPs help to reduce stigmas – 81% of patients are willing to share legal problems with their physicians when they are receiving support from an MLP²
- Health care providers are well-positioned to help patients get legal help
- MLP's have been shown to lower hospitalization rates after referral to the legal team³

¹ Ruble, K. A. Medical-legal partnerships help families address health outside the exam room. (2018, September). Institute for Child Success. Retrieved from www.instituteforchildsuccess.org/new-paper-medical-legal-partnerships-help-families-address-healthoutside-the-exam-room

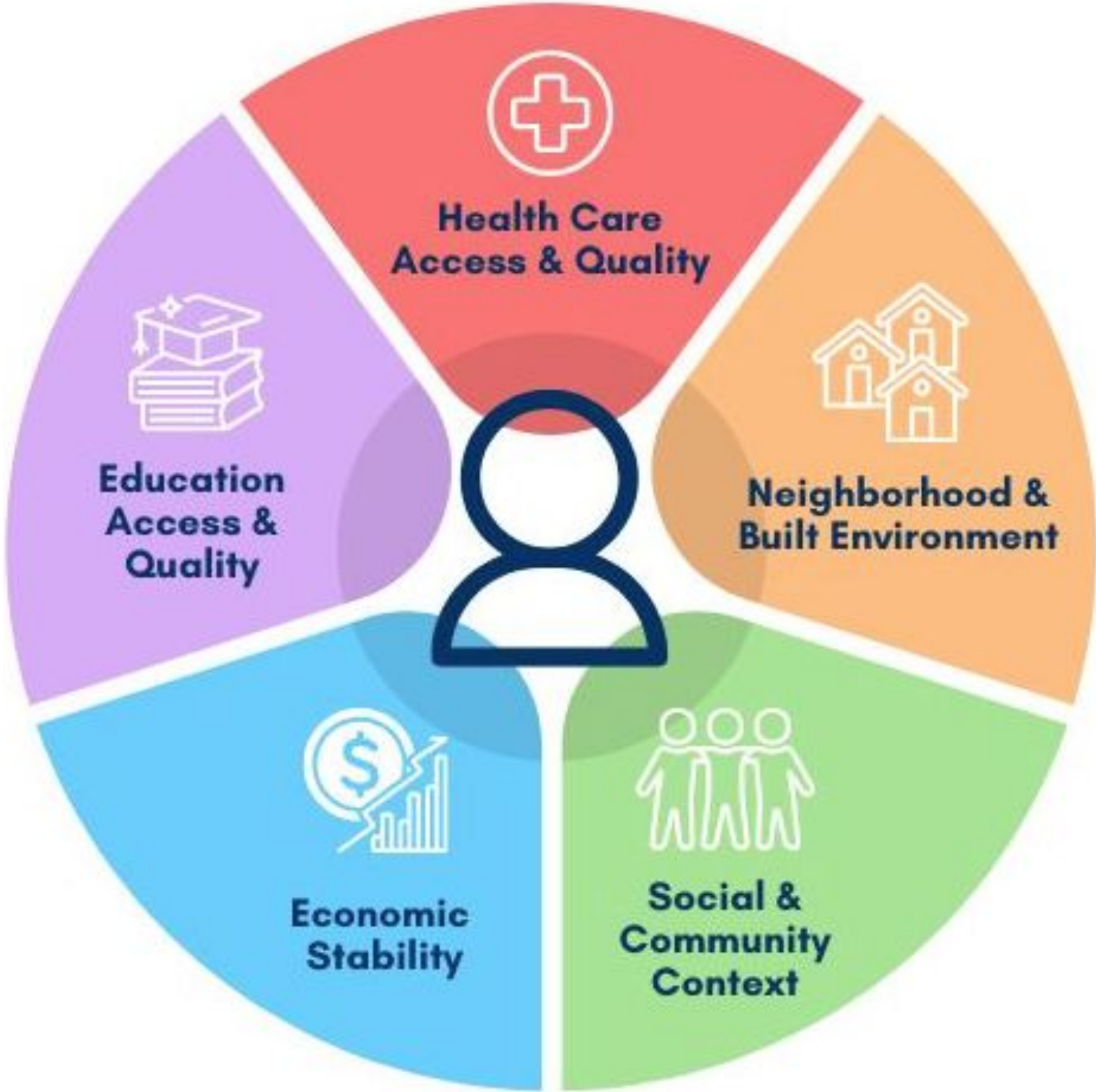
²Tobin, T. E. (2017). Medical-legal partnership in primary care: Moving upstream in the clinic. *American Journal of Lifestyle Medicine*, 13(3), 282–291. doi.org/10.1177/1559827617698417

³ Weiner, Stacy (2024). [Legal help as a prescription for health | AAMC](#)



Social Determinants of Health

- Health Care Access & Quality**
 - Health Insurance/healthcare access (Medicare, Medicaid, Denial of coverage/treatment, etc.)
- Neighborhood & Built Environment**
 - Housing (Eviction, unsafe/unhealthy housing conditions, rent, utilities, foreclosure, access to affordable/supportive housing, subsidized housing, etc.)
- Social & Community Context**
 - Managing Personal Affairs (Wills, POA, Advance Directives, Name Changes, etc.)
 - Family/Relationships (Divorce, custody, child support, domestic violence, etc.)
- Economic Stability**
 - Public benefits, income maintenance (Welfare, TANF, emergency assistance, food stamps, etc.)
 - Consumer/debts (Bills, garnishments, bankruptcy, etc.)
 - Permanent Disability/Soc. Sec. (SSD, SSI, Survivor's benefits, overpayments, etc.)
 - Employment and Temporary Disability (Unemployment, temp disability, family leave, etc.)
 - Criminal Record Expungement
 - Driver's License Suspension



- Education Access & Quality**
 - School and Education (Special Education, IEP's discipline, registration, transportation, etc.)

Impact Through Collaboration

Since 2019, our MLP has helped 124 clients to resolve over 162 legal matters.

Notable legal outcomes:

- Prevented homelessness by stopping evictions and preserving housing vouchers
- Expunged criminal records to allow clients to obtain employment
- Stopped harassment from debt collectors
- Discharged student loans based on disability
- Upheld rights to child support and visitation

Positive benefits to clients' mental health and well being:

- Increased patient engagement with medical treatment
- Significantly improved patient outcomes
- Improved patients' quality of life by decreasing stress levels
- Enhanced ability to serve patients better when collaborating with CHLP's legal team



Success Story: 66 Year Old Woman with Severe Anxiety Facing Eviction

Client Background: The Care Plus case manager reached out to CHLP regarding a client facing eviction after her landlord claimed that the unit had been sold. The client, who was receiving Social Security and working part-time to supplement her income, was at risk of losing her home.

Challenges: Landlord issued a Notice to Quit, causing client increased anxiety as she faced uncertain housing and financial instability. Also, the client had significant debt.

CHLP's Role: Represented the client in Landlord/Tenant court. Used legal defenses to obtain over 9 months to delay eviction, allowing time to secure housing. CHLP assisted in filing an emergent Chapter 7 bankruptcy which provided time to look for housing and obtain a discharge of her debts.

Collaboration with Care Plus: Care Plus case manager worked on housing solutions. Found a subsidized senior housing complex under construction. Overcame credit challenges to secure approval for the complex. Care Plus and CHLP collaborated to obtain relocation funds and arrange for movers.

Outcome: Client is now in an affordable, subsidized housing unit. Debt discharge has provided a fresh financial start, allowing focus on behavioral health treatment.



Success Story: 59 Year Old Woman With Depression Denied For Much Needed Social Security Benefits

Client Background: The client is a lifelong worker, faced severe depression after the loss of her husband. She was denied Social Security disability benefits, and was also at risk of losing her condo due to unpaid taxes and HOA fees.

CHLP's Role: CHLP identified the housing risk and helped the client navigate the denial of disability benefits. Analyzed the client's medical records and collaborated with Care Plus to prepare for the administrative law hearing. The hearing process was emotionally challenging for the client, but with support, she was able to effectively communicate the impact of her mental health on her ability to work.

Collaboration with Care Plus: Care Plus provided critical behavioral health support throughout the process. Both organizations worked together to help the client present her case to the Judge.

Outcome: Client was approved for disability benefits. The benefits enabled her to pay off taxes and fees, securing her condo and stability. The Client was able to continue her essential behavioral health treatment.



Q & A



THANK YOU!



Contact Information

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**For More Information On Our Organizations,
Please Visit Our Websites & Additional Resources:**

- www.chlp.org
- www.careplusnj.org
- [Certified Community Behavioral Health Clinics \(CCBHCs\) | SAMHSA](#)
- <https://www.thenationalcouncil.org>
- <https://www.samhsa.gov/communities/certified-community-behavioral-health-clinics/ccbhc-faqs>



Next

Part 2 - February 26, 2025 at 3 PM ET

Exploring the Community Advocacy Program, a Medical-Legal Partnership between The Legal Aid Society of Cleveland and MetroHealth



Our Speaker



Jessica Baaklini, Esq.

Senior Attorney

The Legal Aid Society of Cleveland, MetroHealth Department of Pediatrics and Obstetrics

Register Here:

<https://medical-legalpartnership.org/learning-opportunities/>

SDOH ACADEMY INNOVATIONS SHOWCASE

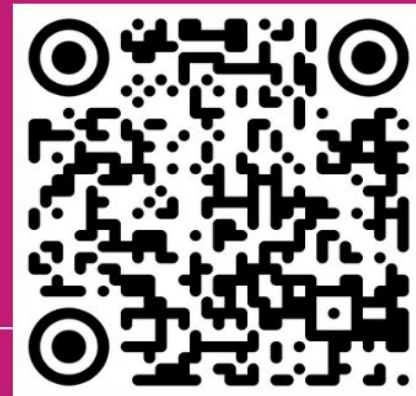
*Fostering a Healthy Future for
Adolescents and Young
Adults*



Kick-off Webinar

**APPLYING THE SDOH LENS TO
ADOLESCENTS AND YOUNG ADULTS**

FEBRUARY 12, 2025 | 3 - 4.30 PM ET



The Social Determinants of Health (SDOH) Academy is a HRSA-funded virtual training series designed to help staff from health centers, health center controlled networks, and primary care associations develop, implement, and sustain SDOH interventions in their clinics and communities.

 www.sdohacademy.com

 <https://bit.ly/showcase2025opening>

Upcoming Events

**Applying the SDOH Lens to
Adolescents and Young Adults**

February 12, 2025 | 3 to 4.30 pm ET

Learn more:

<https://sdohacademy.com/showcase-2025>

National Center for Medical  Legal Partnership

AT THE GEORGE WASHINGTON UNIVERSITY

Key Resources

Toolkit: A planning, implementation, and practice guide for building and sustaining a health center-based MLP

<https://medical-legalpartnership.org/mlp-resources/health-center-toolkit/>

Brief: How medical-legal partnership services can help address the opioid crisis

<https://medical-legalpartnership.org/mlp-resources/opioid-crisis-brief/>

Health Center & Justice System

Collaboration to Improve Mental Health

<https://medical-legalpartnership.org/mlp-resources/health-center-justice>

[-system-collaboration/](https://medical-legalpartnership.org/mlp-resources/health-center-justice)

THANK YOU!

Please take a moment to complete our post-event evaluation survey!

<https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/FVZ7WNF>

A link to the survey is also in the chat.



Contact us for assistance

For more information, contact us at ncmlp@gwu.edu



Upcoming trainings:

[https://medical-legalpartnership.org/
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National Center for Medical  Legal Partnership

AT THE GEORGE WASHINGTON UNIVERSITY