

# Applying the MLP Approach to Housing Issues for Children and Communities

(Learning Collaborative, Part 3 of 4)

February 10, 2021, at 1-2 p.m. Eastern Time



National Center for Medical  Legal Partnership

AT THE GEORGE WASHINGTON UNIVERSITY

# Part 3:

## Applying the MLP Approach to Housing Issues for Children and Communities

*In this session, participants will learn about the intersection of health and housing and the role of MLPs with a particular focus on the healthy housing issues impacting children. This interactive discussion will highlight the work of the Health Justice Project, based at Loyola University School of Law. It will address current challenges facing MLPs, as well as policy advocacy focused on increasing tenant protections.*

Presenters:



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# HEALTH JUSTICE PROJECT

The Health Justice Project is a medical-legal partnership between Loyola University Chicago School of Law, Legal Aid Chicago, and Erie Family Health Centers, a federally qualified health center providing health care services to low-income people in west and north Chicago and the northern suburbs.

HJP recently launched a new MLP in Maywood, Illinois in collaboration with Loyola Medicine and the Stritch School of Medicine.



# INTERSECTION OF HEALTH AND HOUSING

Strong evidence characterizing the impact of housing on health, including:

Health issues caused by substandard housing (mold, lead, rodent/pest infestation);

Impacts of unsafe neighborhood and community:

Industry & brownfields



asthma

Community safety



violence & toxic stress

Access to healthy foods



obesity & cognitive development

Negative health implications of eviction and unstable housing.



# UNIQUE IMPACT ON CHILDREN'S HEALTH

Healthy housing issues impacting children include:

Lead exposure → cognitive and behavioral impact

Mold and pests, environmental toxins → asthma

Eviction & housing instability impact:

- Mental Health

- Physical Health

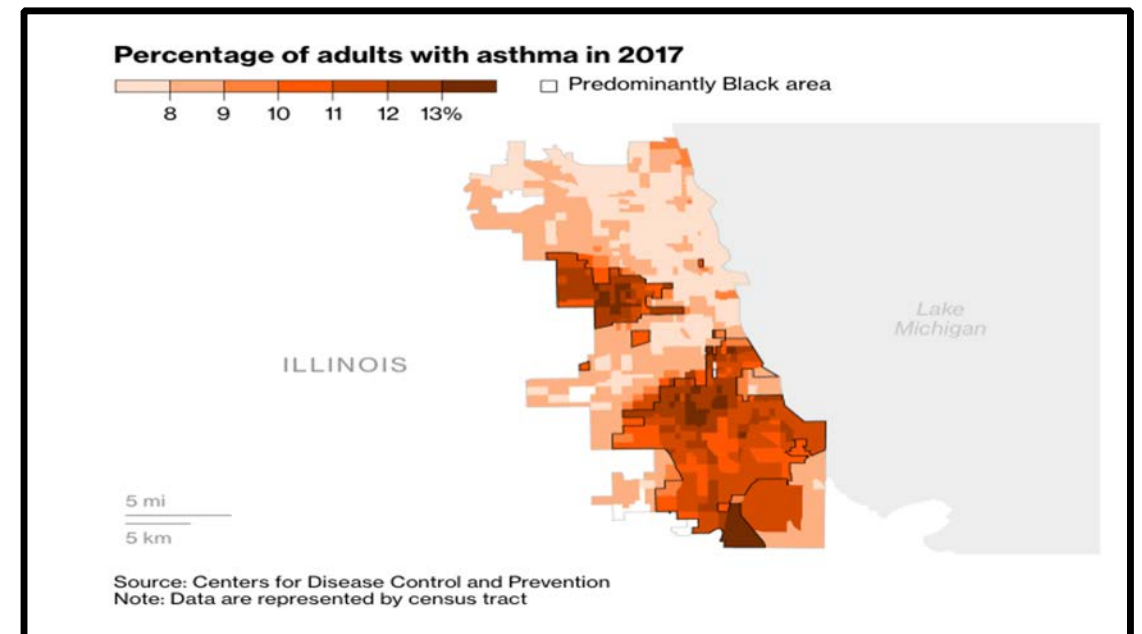
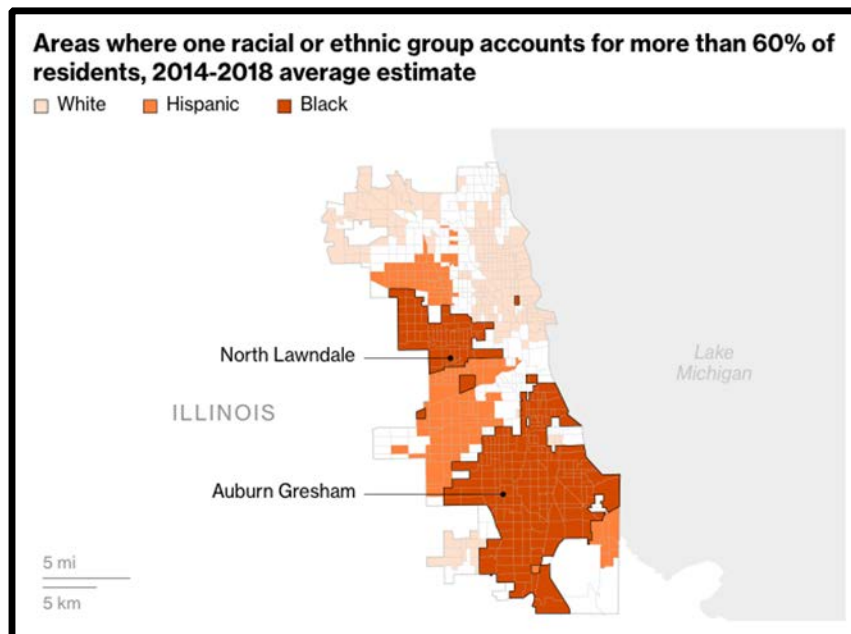
- Educational outcomes



# SIGNIFICANT RACIAL DISPARITIES IN IMPACT

Black children are two times more likely than white children to suffer lead poisoning.

Black children are more than seven times more likely than white children to die from an asthma attack.

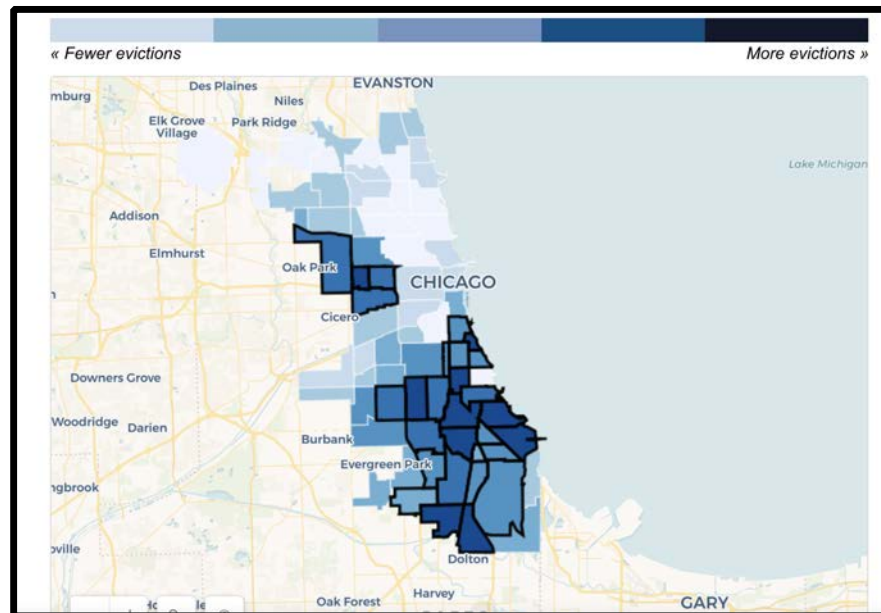


Source: CityLab, *Mapping the Disparities That Bred an Unequal Pandemic* (2020), Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and Census Data

# SIGNIFICANT RACIAL DISPARITIES IN IMPACT

Approximately 47 percent of children in homeless families are Black, although Black children make up just 15 percent of the U.S. child population.

Significant racial disparities in rates of eviction filings lead to greater housing instability among Black and Latinx families in Chicago



Source: Chicago Tribune, *Renters in Chicago's black neighborhoods 4 times as likely to face eviction as those in white areas (2019)*, Lawyers Committee for Better Housing Data

# HJP HEALTHY HOUSING ADVOCACY

## PATIENTS-TO-POLICY: LEAD

PART  
**3**

APRIL 2018 | PATIENTS-TO-POLICY STORY SERIES  
Medical-Legal Partnerships That Worked Upstream  
to Promote Health and Transform Care

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# Keeping Children Safe from **Lead Poisoning**

Story by Kate Marple & Erin Dexter

The first sign that a home has a lead hazard is usually when a child tests positive for lead poisoning. Despite the fact that more than four million children in the United States live in federally assisted housing and many of those units are decades old, homes are not assessed for lead hazards before families move in.



# SUSTAINING ADVOCACY FOR HEALTHY HOUSING FOR CHILDREN

## Individual Upstream Challenges

## CASE STUDY: INDIVIDUAL ADVOCACY

34 y/o F food service worker, single caregiver to two foster children, ages 1 and 2, and two teenage children

Referred to HJP due to conditions problems in federally subsidized basement apartment in project-based housing development in Chicago

### Conditions Concerns:

Sewage back up in bathroom during rainstorms

Mold

Multiple requests for repair to landlord go unanswered for two years

Routine lead screening reveals elevated levels in foster child – second foster child tested and also had elevated lead levels

Provider drafts note to landlord suggesting apartment change → no response

# CASE STUDY: INDIVIDUAL ADVOCACY

## **HJP Response and next steps:**

Engaged landlord, notifying of representation and client concerns

Lead inspection completed

Submitted documentation request to landlord's attorney

Within one week, client moved to new apartment in same building

New family moved into client's prior basement apartment

Recent store-bought lead test of new apartment identifies presence of lead paint

Team continuing to investigate building and management company for potential for further advocacy - concerns about broader conditions issues for the whole development

## CONTINUED LEAD POLICY WORK – INFLUENCING IDPH RULES

Public comments in response to Illinois Department of Public Health proposed rules related to lead inspections in 2019

Collaboration with pediatric health partners at Erie – strong impact on work group and IDPH that pediatric providers were involved in providing feedback!

Comments adopted by IDPH and rules now in place

# CONTINUING TO PRACTICE UPSTREAM: ENGAGING WITH COMMUNITY PARTNERS

Worked with coalition of housing advocates led by Housing Action Illinois and the Lawyers Committee for Better Housing to advocate for and passed protections in suburban Cook County, including:

- Lockout protections (effective immediately);

- Procedures for tenants to withhold rent to pressure landlords to make repairs;

- Notice requirements and protections against excessive late fees, etc.

Now focusing on community outreach and education.



# CONTINUING TO PRACTICE UPSTREAM: ENGAGING WITH COMMUNITY PARTNERS

Proactively Addressing Substandard Housing (PASH) Program Advocacy – Partnership with Loyola’s Legislative and Policy Clinic, who is leading an effort to pass a rental inspection ordinance in Chicago.

Goals:

Catching substandard housing issues before they rise to the level of harming tenants through proactive, systematic inspections;  
Mitigating risks of privacy violations and tenant displacement.

Close collaboration with impacted communities and tenant advocates.



## CHALLENGES

Undocumented immigrants and housing conditions

COVID-19 financial strains and rent

Balancing individual advocacy with upstream advocacy

## THE MLP MODEL, COVID-19, & HOUSING ADVOCACY

### COVID Equity Response Collaborative Loyola (CERCL)

Outreach and free COVID-19 testing in Black and Brown communities in the near western suburbs of Chicago

Social and legal needs screenings for those seeking testing

Providing resources on rental assistance, public benefits, and eviction moratorium



# GENERAL QUESTIONS & ANSWERS



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