

# The Role of Medical-Legal Partnerships in Harm Reduction Models



**“In working towards the prevention of substance use disorders, it is important to appreciate those social determinants of health, policies and actions that precipitate adverse outcomes.”**

*In managing or preventing substance use disorders, nothing should occur in isolation. People and systems of care are complex. They require frequent observation, assessment and understanding. To this end, systems focused on medical cases, statistics and abstract ideas do not take fully into account the reality of a patient's situation and place too great an emphasis on the individual as being the source of their own suffering. Such paradigms often neglect that individuals may be affected by their environment, which may perhaps negate the influence of social systems and existing policy on health outcomes. In working towards the prevention of substance use disorders, it is important to appreciate those social determinants of health, policies and actions that precipitate adverse outcomes. Furthermore, empowering stakeholders to engage with clinicians and policy maker processes related to treatment and prevention, is an essential step in understanding what is needed, and how best practices might be implemented.*

*-Robert Baillieu M.D., M.P.H., Physician and Senior Clinical and Practice Advisor  
Treatment and Prevention Strategies to Reduce Opioid Misuse*

*Main page content*

*Date: April, 23, 2021*

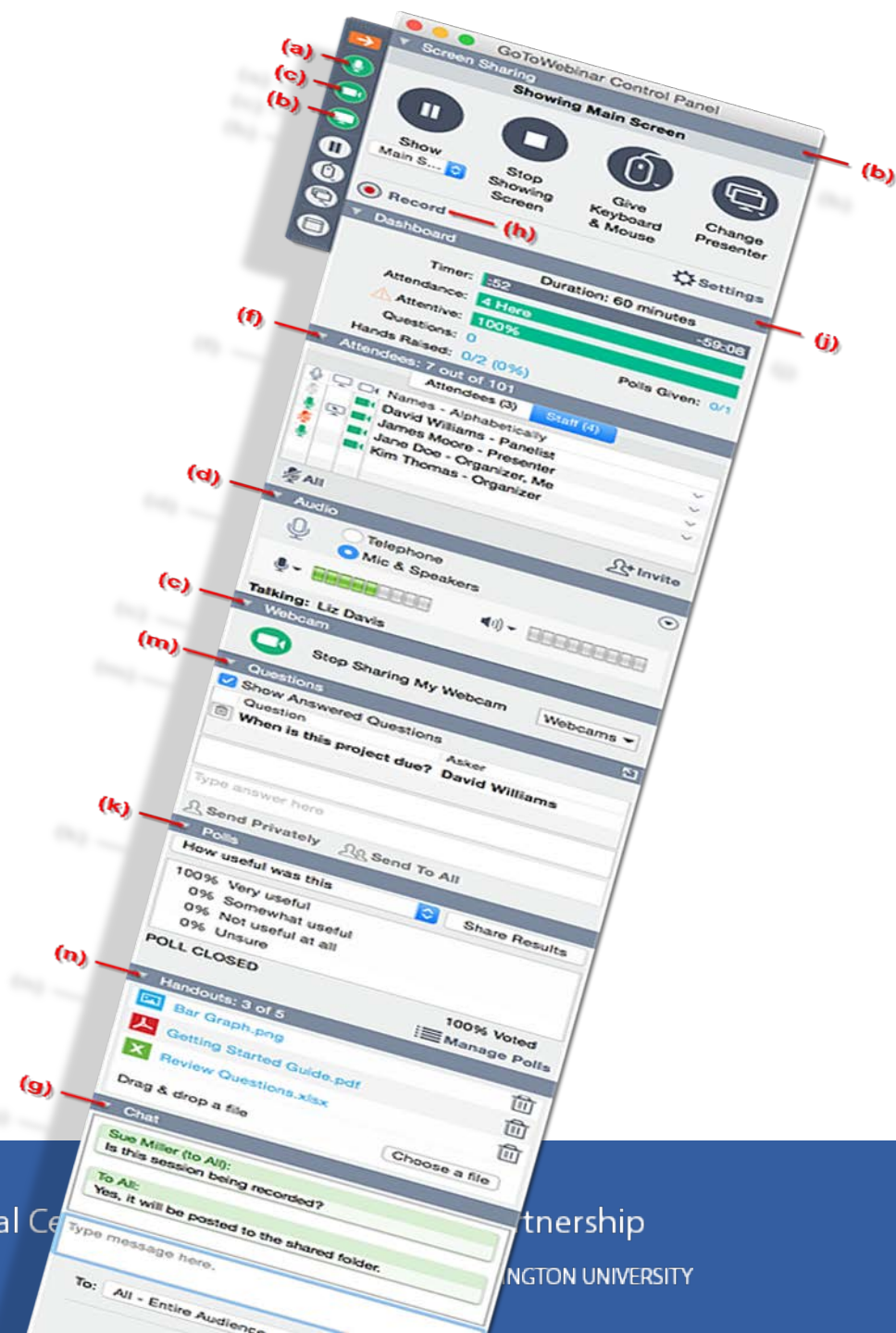
# Acknowledgements



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# Housekeeping

- By default, everyone joins on **mute**
- Type questions **into the Chat pane** ([Desktop App only](#)) or **Questions pane**
- This session will be **recorded**
- Email [aprildaniels@gwu.edu](mailto:aprildaniels@gwu.edu) for help



# Learning Objectives

- Understand the role of health centers in addressing substance use disorder
- Understand how MLPs play a role in addressing substance use disorder
- Learn by example: How HealthLinc's MLPs provides a holistic harm reduction and recovery intervention for their community

# Who's Here Today

Host and Panelists

National Center for Medical  Legal Partnership

AT THE GEORGE WASHINGTON UNIVERSITY

# Opening & Introductions

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**Bethany Hamilton, JD**

Co-Director

National Center for Medical-Legal Partnership

# Panelists

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## **Beth Wrobel**

CEO

HealthLinc

## **Sarah Everett**

Senior Staff Attorney

Indiana Legal Services

## **Cara Jones**

Program Evaluation Manager

HealthLinc



# *Health Centers as the Entry Point*

# The Other PHE: The Opioid Crisis

2017



DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH & HUMAN SERVICES

Office of the Secretary

Washington, DC 20201

## DETERMINATION THAT A PUBLIC HEALTH EMERGENCY EXISTS

As a result of the consequences of the opioid crisis affecting our Nation, on this date and after consultation with public health officials as necessary, I, Eric D. Hargan, Acting Secretary of Health and Human Services, pursuant to the authority vested in me under section 319 of the Public Health Service Act, do hereby determine that a public health emergency exists nationwide.

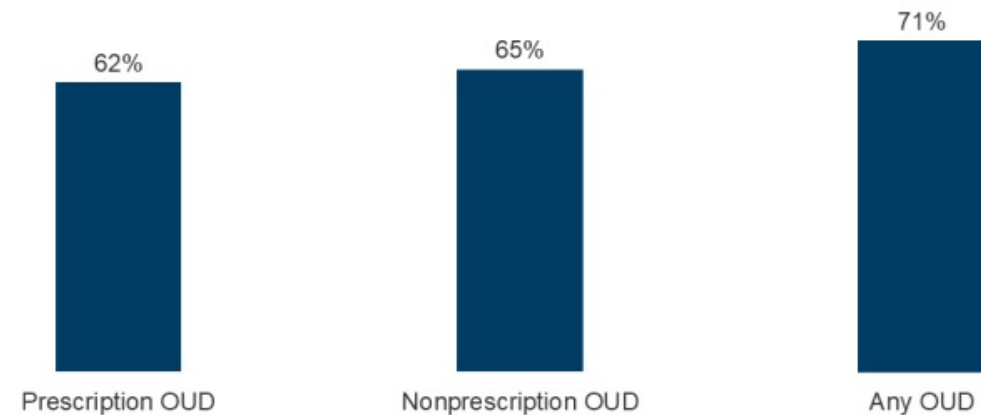
Date 10/26/2017

/s/  
Eric D. Hargan  
Acting Secretary

2020

Figure 1

Share of Health Centers Reporting an Increase in the Number of Patients with Opioid Use Disorder in the Past Year



SOURCE: KFF and Geiger Gibson/RCHN Community Health Foundation 2019 Survey of Community Health Centers.



# Primary care is a key entry point behavioral health services



## 2019

Mental health services to health center patients grew by 188% from 2010-2019

Health centers tripled their behavioral staff in 10 years

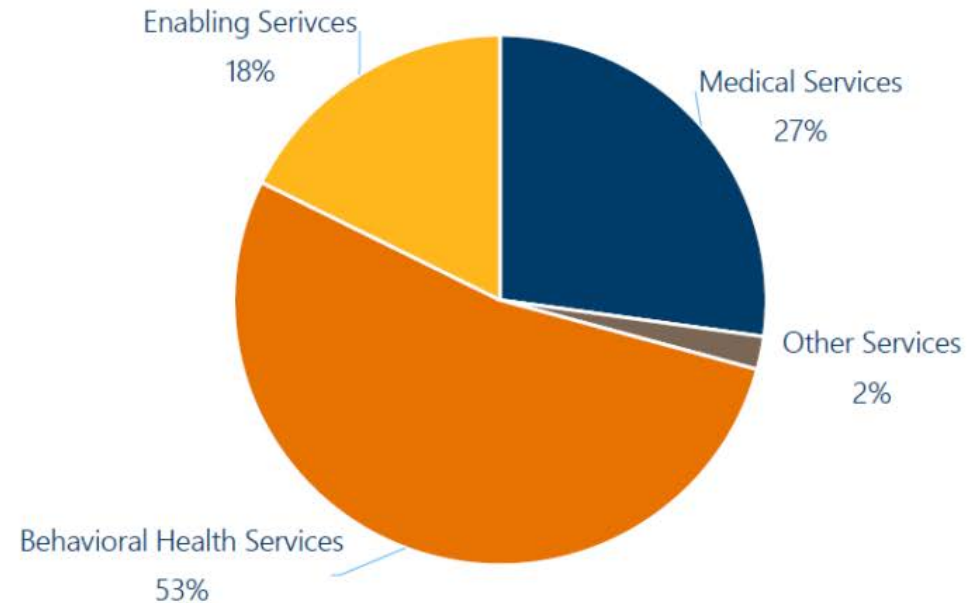
And...

## Behavioral Health Services Were the Most Common Services Delivered Virtually by Health Centers in 2019

Figure 5-23

Percent of Virtual Visits by Service

478,333 visits were conducted virtually in 2019



Note: Behavioral health includes services for mental health and substance use disorder; Enabling services includes case management and education specialist services; Other services includes vision, dental, and other professional services.

Source: 2019 Uniform Data System, Bureau of Primary Health Care, HRSA, DHHC

Source: NACHC's Community Health Center Chartbook 2021. See <https://www.nachc.org/research-and-data/research-fact-sheets-and-infographics/2021-community-health-center-chartbook/>

# Dimensions of Recovery: Legal Services as a Recovery Service

Legal services delivered as part of a medical-legal partnership can function as one critical recovery service alongside medical treatment and other supportive services.

FOUR DIMENSIONS OUTLINED BY SAMHSA THAT SUPPORT LIFE IN RECOVERY



# *Defining the Medical-Legal Partnership Approach*

Defining the  
Approach



## **MEDICAL-LEGAL PARTNERSHIP**

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.

National Center for Medical  Legal Partnership

AT THE GEORGE WASHINGTON UNIVERSITY

# MLPs embed lawyers as members of the health care team, creating:

- Healthier patients
- A stronger health care workforce
- Improved health equity

## Legal Assistance

to address patients' social needs & help the health center workforce operate at "top of license"

## Training

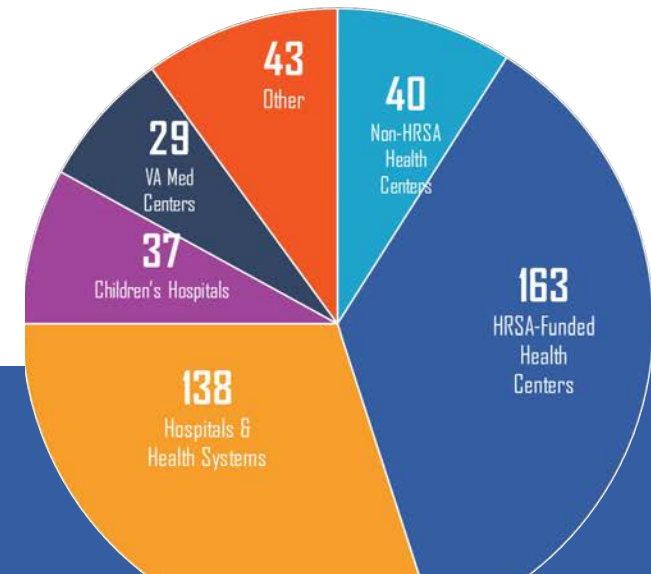
to build knowledge, capacity & skills that strengthen the health center workforce's response to SDOH

## Clinic-Level Changes

that leverage legal expertise to shape clinical practices to address many patients' needs at once






## Policy Change Strategies

that advance healthy regulatory, administrative, & legislative policy solutions for whole communities





# How Legal Services Help Health Care Address the Social Determinants of Health

Common SDOH	How Legal Services Can Help	Impact of Legal Services on Health / Health Care
<p><b>INCOME &amp; INSURANCE</b> Resources to meet daily basic needs</p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Appeal denials of food stamps, health insurance, cash benefits, and disability benefits</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Increasing someone’s income means s/he makes fewer trade-offs between affording food and health care, including medications.</li> <li>• Being able to afford enough healthy food helps people manage chronic diseases and helps children grow and develop.</li> </ul>
<p><b>HOUSING &amp; UTILITIES</b> A healthy physical environment</p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Secure housing subsidies</li> <li>• Improve substandard conditions</li> <li>• Prevent evictions</li> <li>• Protect against utility shut-off</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A stable, decent, affordable home helps a person avoid costly emergency room visits related to homelessness.</li> <li>• Consistent housing, heat and electricity helps people follow their medical treatment plans.</li> </ul>
<p><b>EDUCATION &amp; EMPLOYMENT</b> Quality educational and job opportunities</p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Secure specialized education services</li> <li>• Prevent and remedy employment discrimination</li> <li>• Enforce workplace rights</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A quality education is the single greatest predictor of a person’s adult health.</li> <li>• Consistent employment helps provide money for food and safe housing, which also helps avoid costly emergency health care services.</li> <li>• Access to health insurance is often linked to employment.</li> </ul>
<p><b>LEGAL STATUS</b> Access to jobs</p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Resolve veteran discharge status</li> <li>• Clear criminal / credit histories</li> <li>• Assist with asylum applications</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Clearing a person’s criminal history or helping a veteran change their discharge status helps make consistent employment and access to public benefits possible.</li> <li>• Consistent employment provides money for food and safe housing, which helps people avoid costly emergency health care services.</li> </ul>
<p><b>PERSONAL &amp; FAMILY STABILITY</b> Safe homes and social support</p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Secure restraining orders for domestic violence</li> <li>• Secure adoption, custody and guardianship for children</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Less violence at home means less need for costly emergency health care services.</li> <li>• Stable family relationships significantly reduce stress and allow for better decision-making, including decisions related to health care.</li> </ul>

*This chart is reprinted from “Framing Legal Care as Health Care,” a messaging guide created by the National Center for Medical-Legal Partnership. Please do not recreate it without permission.*



## Studies show that with MLP services:



People with chronic illnesses are admitted to the hospital less frequently.



People more commonly take their medications as prescribed.



**People report less stress and experience improvements in mental health.**



Less money is spent on health care services for the people who would otherwise frequently go to the hospital, and use of preventative health care increases.



Clinical services are more frequently reimbursed by public and private payers.

# THE OPIOID CRISIS IN AMERICA & THE ROLE MEDICAL-LEGAL PARTNERSHIP CAN PLAY IN RECOVERY

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Those legal issues that can be hardest for individuals to overcome and that are most closely linked with recovery, are areas where MLPs have already demonstrated impact and promise.

[Available at: medical-legalpartnership.org/resources](https://medical-legalpartnership.org/resources)

# *The Medical-Legal Partnership Approach as Harm Reduction*

# Harm Reduction Defined

Harm reduction is any behavior or strategy that helps reduce risk or harm to yourself or others.

- CDC -

Steps to Care Workbook, What is Harm Reduction

<https://www.cdc.gov/hiv/pdf/effective-interventions/treat/steps-to-care/my-stc/cdc-hiv-stc-what-is-harm-reduction.pdf>

# Let's Learn by Example

## HealthLinc Medical Legal Partnership Panelists' Presentations

National Center for Medical  Legal Partnership

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# Questions and Answers

Use the chat feature to send questions.

National Center for Medical  Legal Partnership

AT THE GEORGE WASHINGTON UNIVERSITY

# Thank You

National Center for Medical  Legal Partnership

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# Contact Information

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[medical-legalpartnership.org](https://medical-legalpartnership.org)



[National\\_MLP](https://twitter.com/National_MLP)



# *HealthLinc*

## *MLP & Harm Reduction*

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CEO  
HealthLinc

***Sarah Everett***

Senior Staff Attorney  
Indiana Legal Services

***Cara Jones***

Program Evaluation Manager  
HealthLinc

**We Create Healthy Communities**



# Who is HealthLinc?



**Services:** Medical, Dental, Optometry, Podiatry, Chiropractic care, Behavioral health, Pharmacy, Pediatrics, Women's health, Medication Assisted Treatment (MAT), Mobile Integrated Response Services (MRT), Community outreach, Enrollment Assistance, and Medical-Legal Partnership

**Operates out of 5 counties in Northern Indiana with 11 stand alone clinics, 2 school-based telehealth centers, and a mobile unit.**

**Offering Telehealth and Drive Thru Point of Care Testing for COVID!**



# *HealthLinc MLP: The Why*

## **The Beginning**

*East Chicago, IN lead and arsenic contamination in public housing development*

## **Now**

*COVID-19 hits and IN Governor declares “shelter in place”  
55-year-old patient with disability receives an eviction notice with 3 days to vacate. Day 1 water was turned off.*

**HealthLinc MLP Attorney Sarah worked diligently to get water turned on and removed the eviction until after shelter in place**



# HealthLinc's Funding Journey

**2017**

*Pilot in East Chicago from a local foundation*

**2018**

*Indiana University Research Arm funds expansion/evaluations to other clinics*

**2019**

*Foundations and United Way, IDOH gets Integrated BH grant funds MLP*

**2020**

*United Way, MAT funds and MIRT grant (state)*

**2021**

*United Way, MAT funds, add funding from Medicaid Managed Care Company*



# *HealthLinc/ILS MLP Model*

- *MLP staff is a part of the treatment team*
- *MLP is an additional tool in the health care practitioner's toolbox*
- *MLP staff helps health care staff understand how civil legal outcomes impact health outcomes*



# *MLP and Harm Reduction Models*

- *Not necessarily a traditional approach to civil legal assistance*
- *Attorneys and legal staff must understand the patient's journey with health care and substance use disorder*
- *Drug use and overcoming substance use disorder is a continuum*



# *Education on Harm Reduction Models*

- *Judges*
- *Adverse parties*
- *Community*
  - *Landlords, attorneys, etc*





## *MLP during COVID-19*

- *Paperless files*
- *Remote signings*
- *Civil Legal Assistance needs shifted*
- *Working with HealthLinc staff, particularly CHWs*
- *Newsletter*





## *Areas of Legal Assistance Helpful in Harm Reduction Models*

- *Maintaining housing*
- *Maintaining relationships with family*
  - *Custody*
- *Maintaining employment*
- *Maintaining benefits*
- *Individualized Education Plans for minors*



# PIPBHC

## Promoting the Integration of Primary & Behavioral Health Care (State, IDOH)

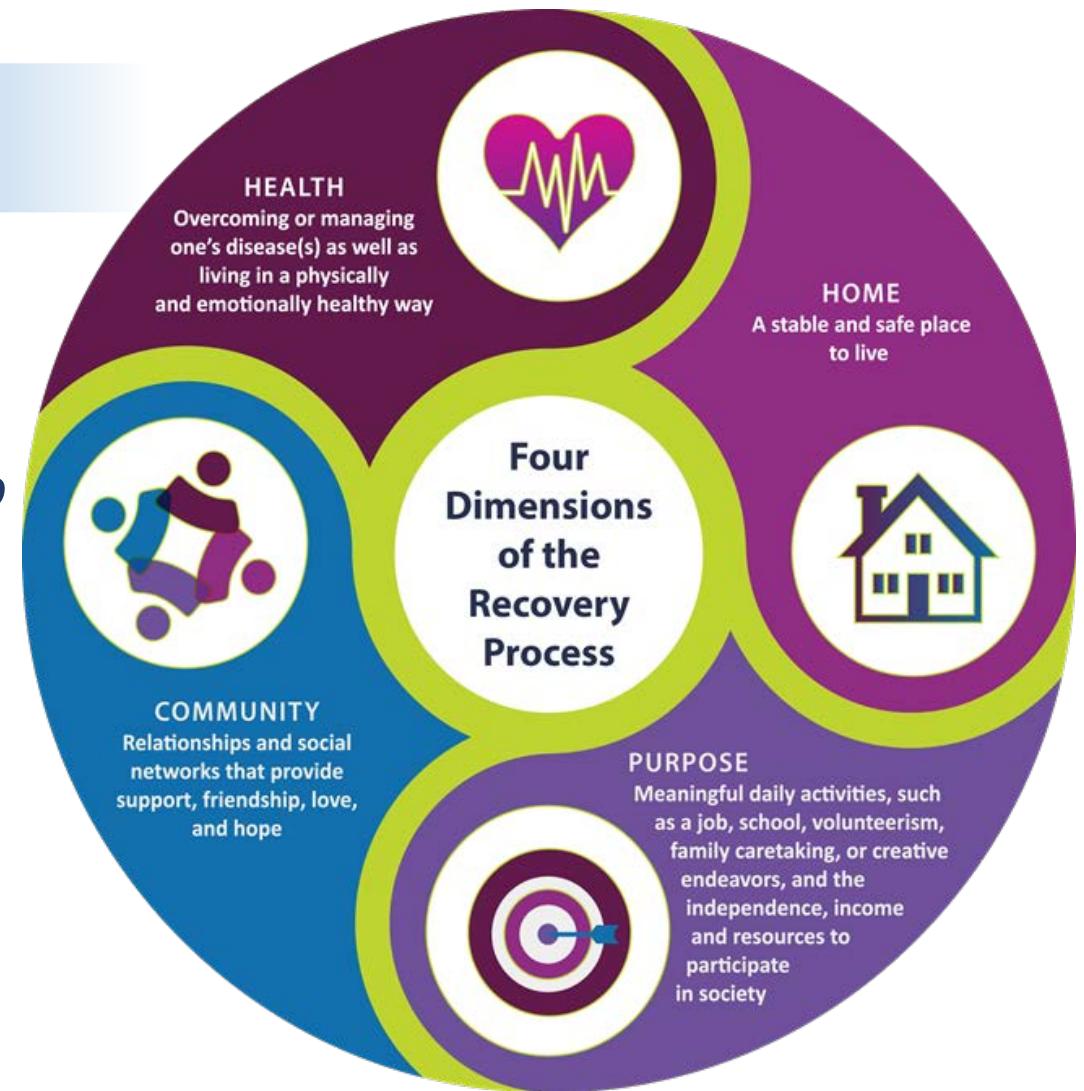
- Target population of patients with cooccurring mental and chronic conditions
- Staffs a team of 10 Community Health Workers (CHWs)
  - They provide care coordination, health promotion, individual and family support, referral to community and social support services
- CHWs have sent in roughly 55% of the MLP referrals since 2020
  - PRAPARE screening, identifying social needs



# MIRT

## Mobile Integrated Response Teams (State, DMHA)

- *Staffs 15 Peer Recovery Coaches to work with Law Enforcement, EMS, and CBOs to respond to individuals struggling with opioid or stimulant use disorder*
  - *Build recovery capital, address social determinants of health, provide recovery support*



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# MLP Case Example

## MIRT Intake at HL Clinic

- *Patient with substance use disorder needing assistance with getting treatment, boyfriend accompanies her to appt*
- *Peer and Law Enforcement Officer are able to get patient separated from boyfriend to complete intake interview, IPV is disclosed*
- *Officer intervenes with boyfriend while peer gets patient out the back of clinic*
  - *Got patient into shelter, donated clothes, medication Rxs & MAT*

## *How can MLP help?*

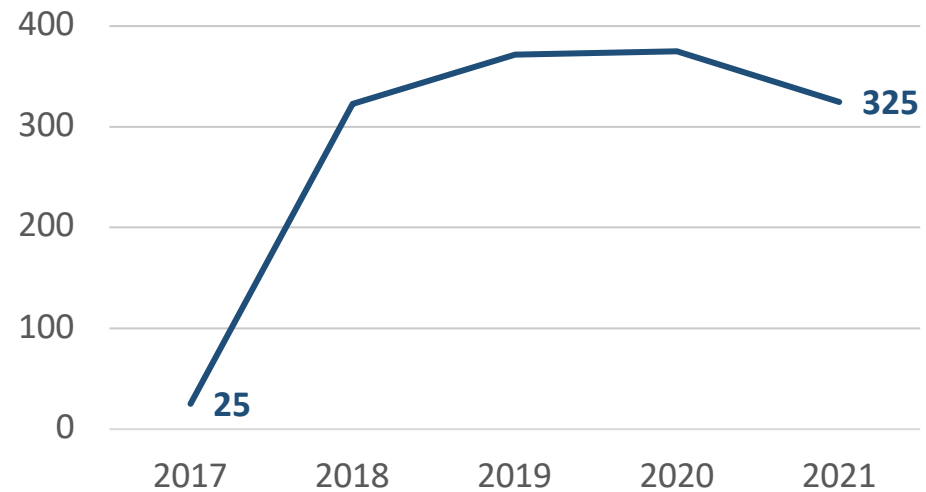
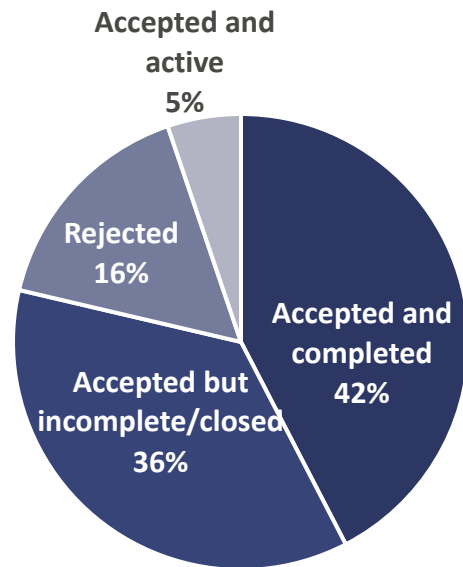
*Protective order, housing assistance, divorce*

*Social needs have to be addressed in tandem with substance use treatment, including legal needs*

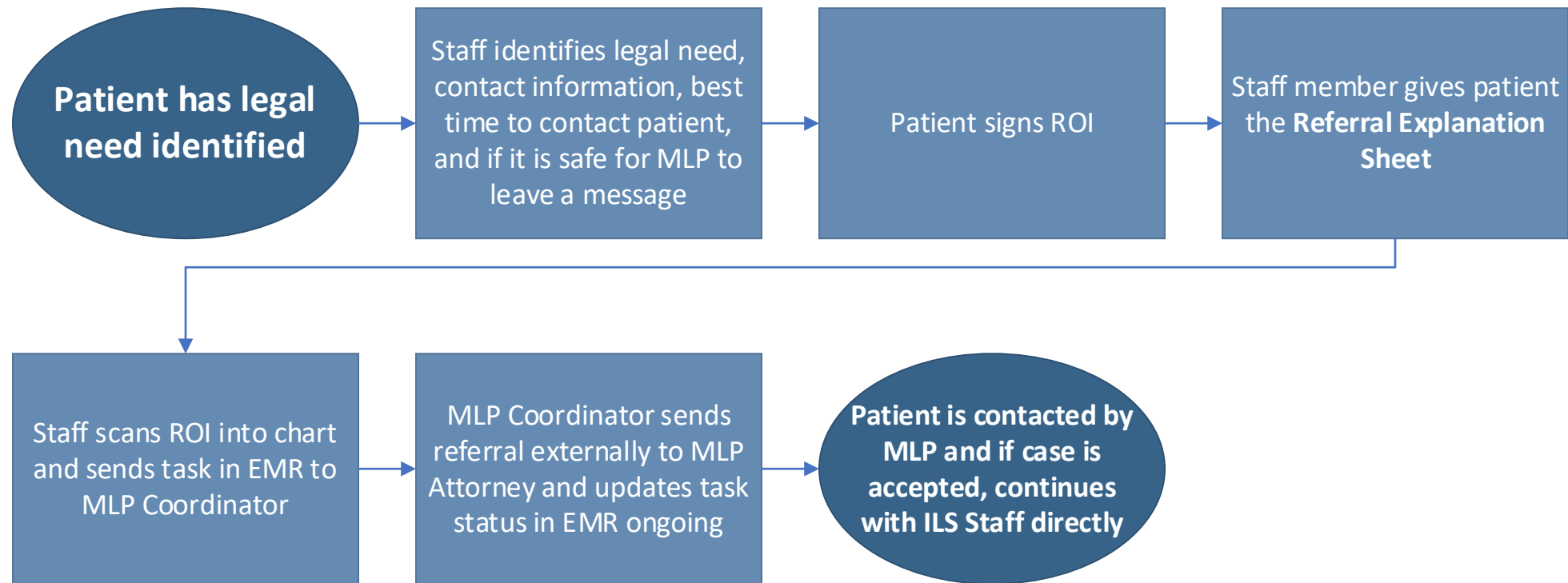


# MLP Program

1420 referrals to MLP since 2017\*



# MLP Workflow





ILLINOIS

MICHIGAN

LAKE MICHIGAN

HEALTHLINC  
EAST CHICAGO

HEALTHLINC  
EAST CHICAGO HARBOR

HEALTHLINC  
MICHIGAN CITY

HEALTHLINC  
LA PORTE

HEALTHLINC  
CENTENNIAL

HEALTHLINC  
SOUTHEAST

HEALTHLINC  
IUSB  
DENTAL

HEALTHLINC  
IUSB  
MEDICAL

HEALTHLINC  
MISHAWAKA

HEALTHLINC  
PORTER-STARKE

HEALTHLINC  
CORPORATE

THE HEALTHY VIKES  
TELEHEALTH CLINIC

HEALTHLINC  
VALPARAISO

INDIANA

THE HEALTHY CATS  
TELEHEALTH CLINIC

HEALTHLINC  
KNOX

**HealthLinc**

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*Thank You!*

*Questions?*

*Beth Wrobel*

CEO

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EAST CHICAGO | KNOX | LA PORTE | MICHIGAN CITY | MISHAWAKA | SOUTH BEND | VALPARAISO