

Medical-Legal Partnership: Transforming Health Systems By Integrating Lawyers

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"The doctor's lawyer will see you now."

National Center for Medical  Legal Partnership
RAISING THE BAR FOR HEALTH+

20 Years of Leadership
A LEGACY OF CARE 
2018 RYAN WHITE ALL GRANTEE MEETING AND 10TH ANNUAL CLINICAL CONFERENCE

History of Lawyers in HIV

- Lawyers protect HIV-patients from discrimination
- Lawyers help patients obtain public benefits
- Issues of privacy and HIV status
- Insurance coverage of HIV treatment
- Requirement of HIV testing
- HIV testing without consent

History of Medical-Legal Partnership

- Founded in 1993 at Boston Medical Center by Dr. Barry Zuckerman
- Based on the idea that medicine alone cannot help patients get and stay healthy (e.g. a child with asthma will never get healthy if she keeps going home to mold-infested housing)
- Lawyers can help patients navigate the complex legal systems that hold solutions to many social determinants of health (e.g. a lawyer can help improve housing conditions for family)

What is Medical-Legal Partnership?

MLP is a healthcare and legal services delivery model that aims to improve the health and well-being of vulnerable individuals, children and families by integrating legal assistance into the medical setting.

Medical-legal partnerships seek to:

- address the negative impact of social determinants on health and
- eliminate barriers to healthcare

in order to help people meet their basic needs and stay healthy.

What is Medical-Legal Partnership?

- Partnership between doctors and lawyers aimed at addressing social determinants of health and reducing barriers to health care by integrating legal advocacy in the clinical setting
- Goal: to ensure that individuals' and families' basic needs – for food, housing, education, health care and stability – are met
- Core activities:
 - Training and education for health care providers
 - Direct assistance to patient-clients
 - Systemic advocacy

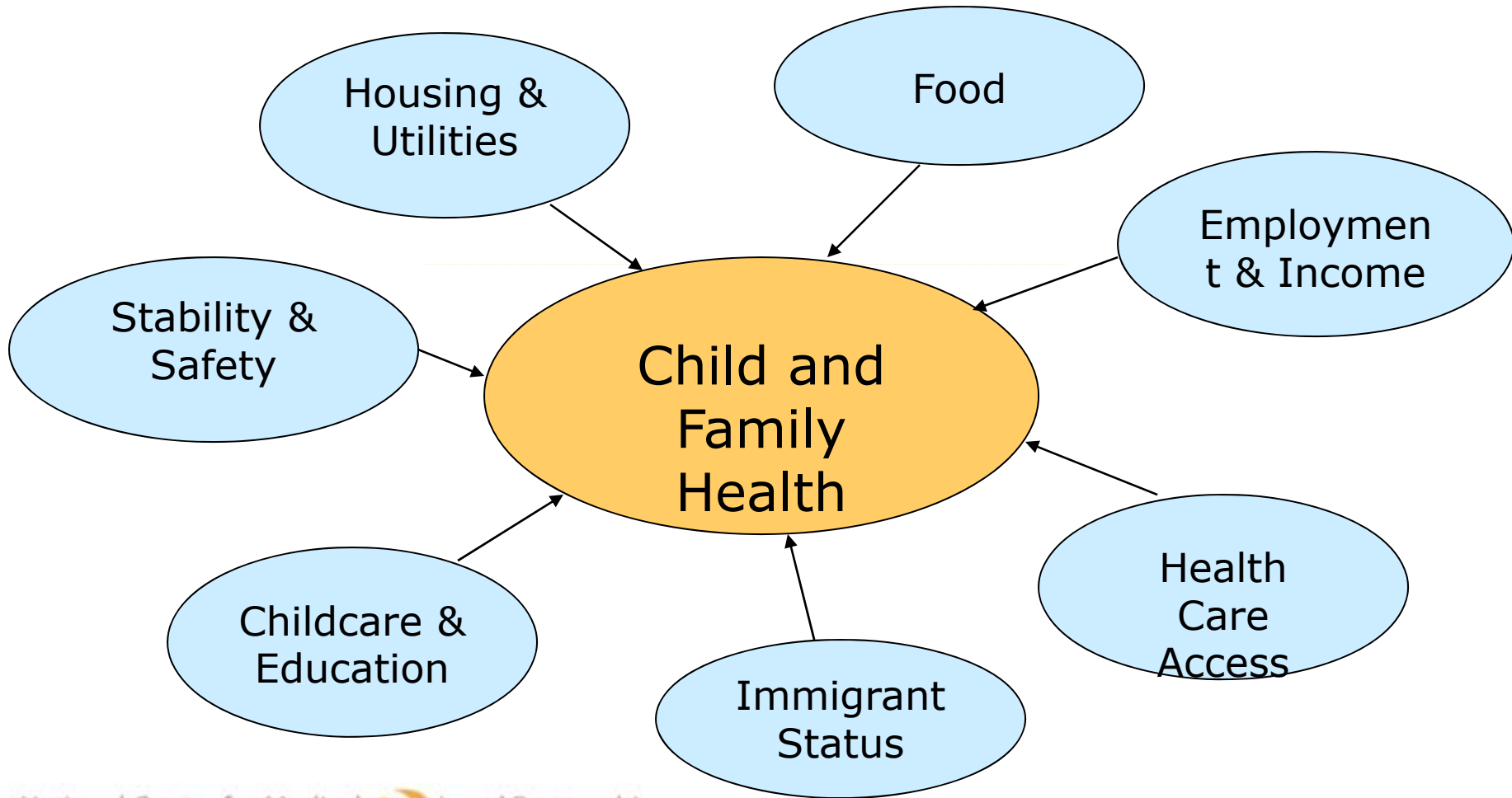
Breaking the Cycle of Vulnerability



Adverse social conditions make people vulnerable to poor health, and poor health makes people vulnerable to adverse social conditions.

MLP helps patients escape this “cycle of vulnerability” by bringing legal and healthcare providers together.

Wide Range of Laws Governing Basic Needs Influence Health



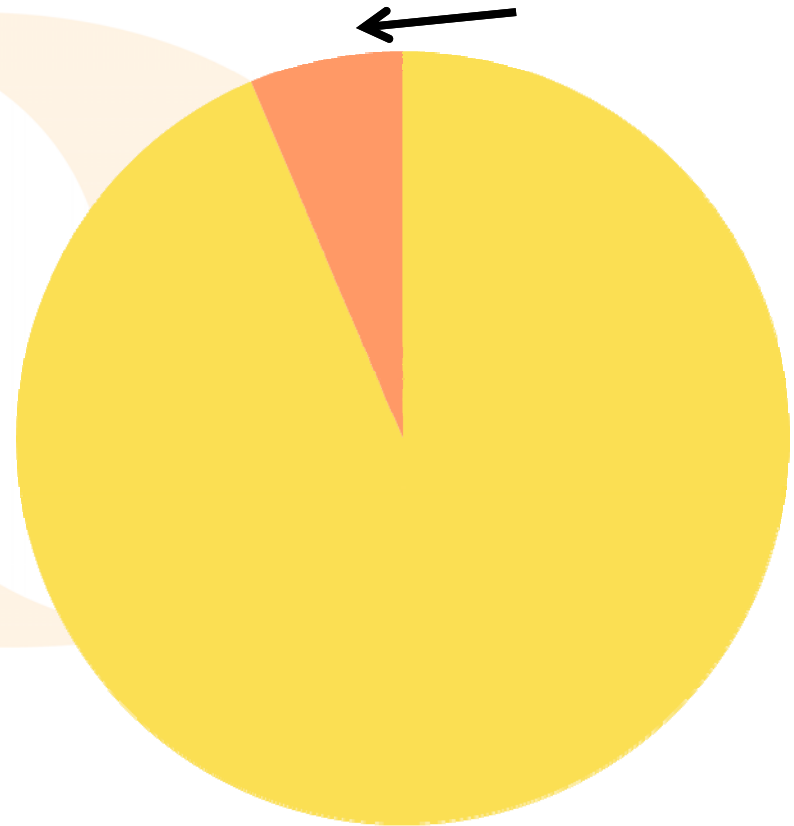
The Scope of Unmet Legal Needs

State	Year	Ave. # Legal Needs in Prior Year
OR	2000	3.2
VT	2001	1.1
WA	2003	2.9
MA	2003	2.4
TN	2004	3.3
IL	2005	1.7

- Poor families have significant unmet legal needs
- Most legal needs are going unaddressed
 - Study identified large gaps between legal needs & receipt of help for those needs
- Legal help for poor families is limited
 - Publicly funded legal aid turns away up to 60% of cases due to lack of resources

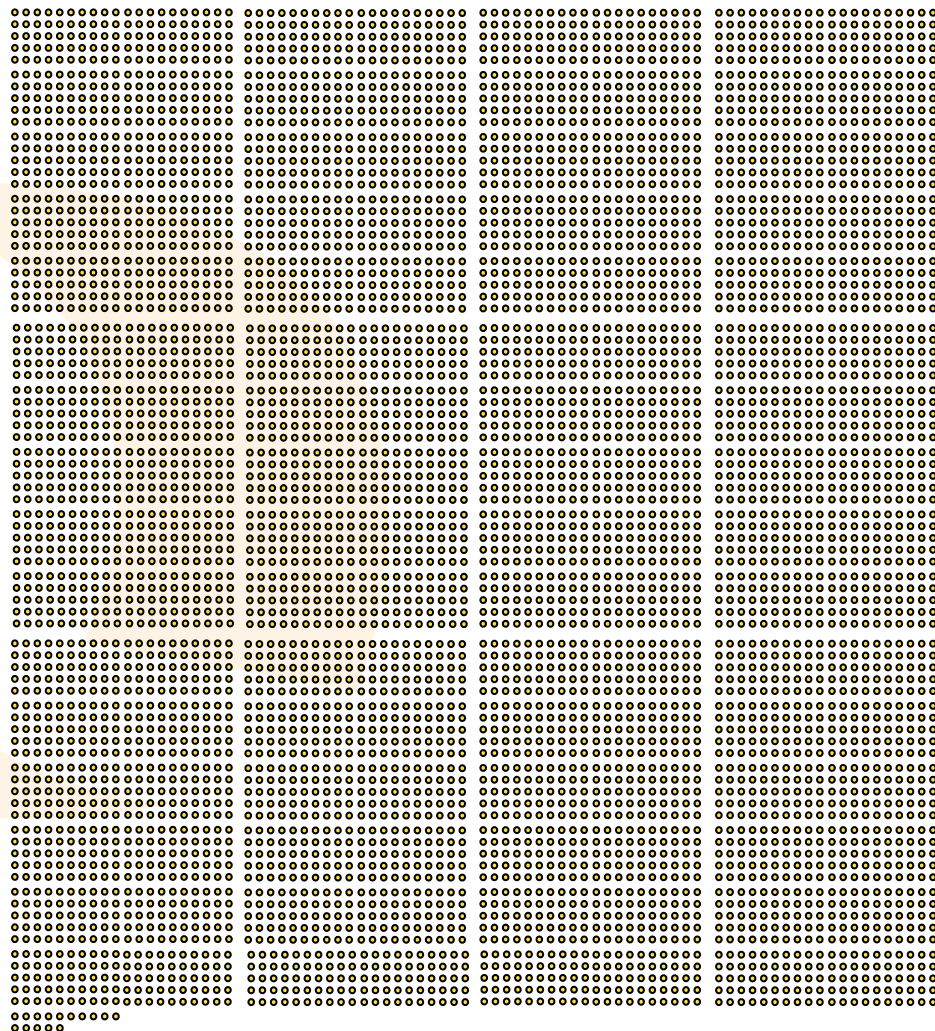
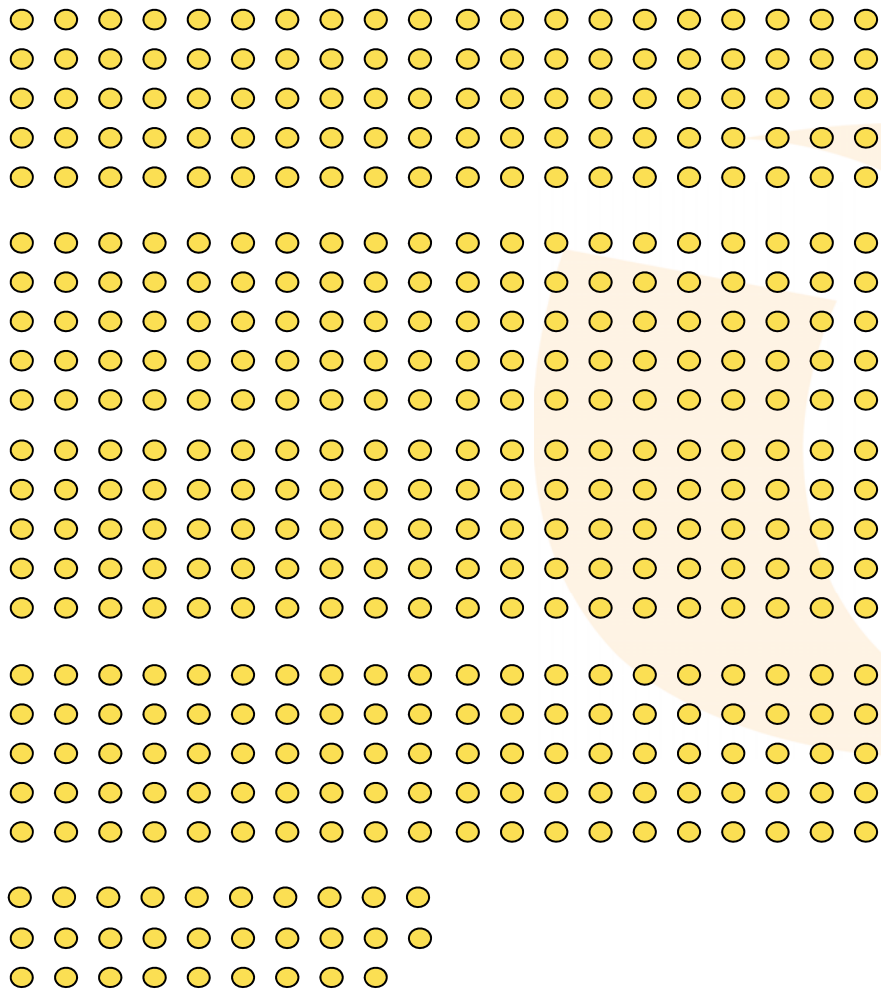
Under-resourced Legal Aid Cannot Meet All of the Poor's Legal Needs

Of the 22 million legal needs experienced annually, Legal Aid is only able to serve 1-1.5 million



General Population
Lawyer 1: 429

Low-Income Persons
Lawyer 1: 6,415



Source: Legal Services Corporation, *Documenting the Justice Gap in America, 2009*

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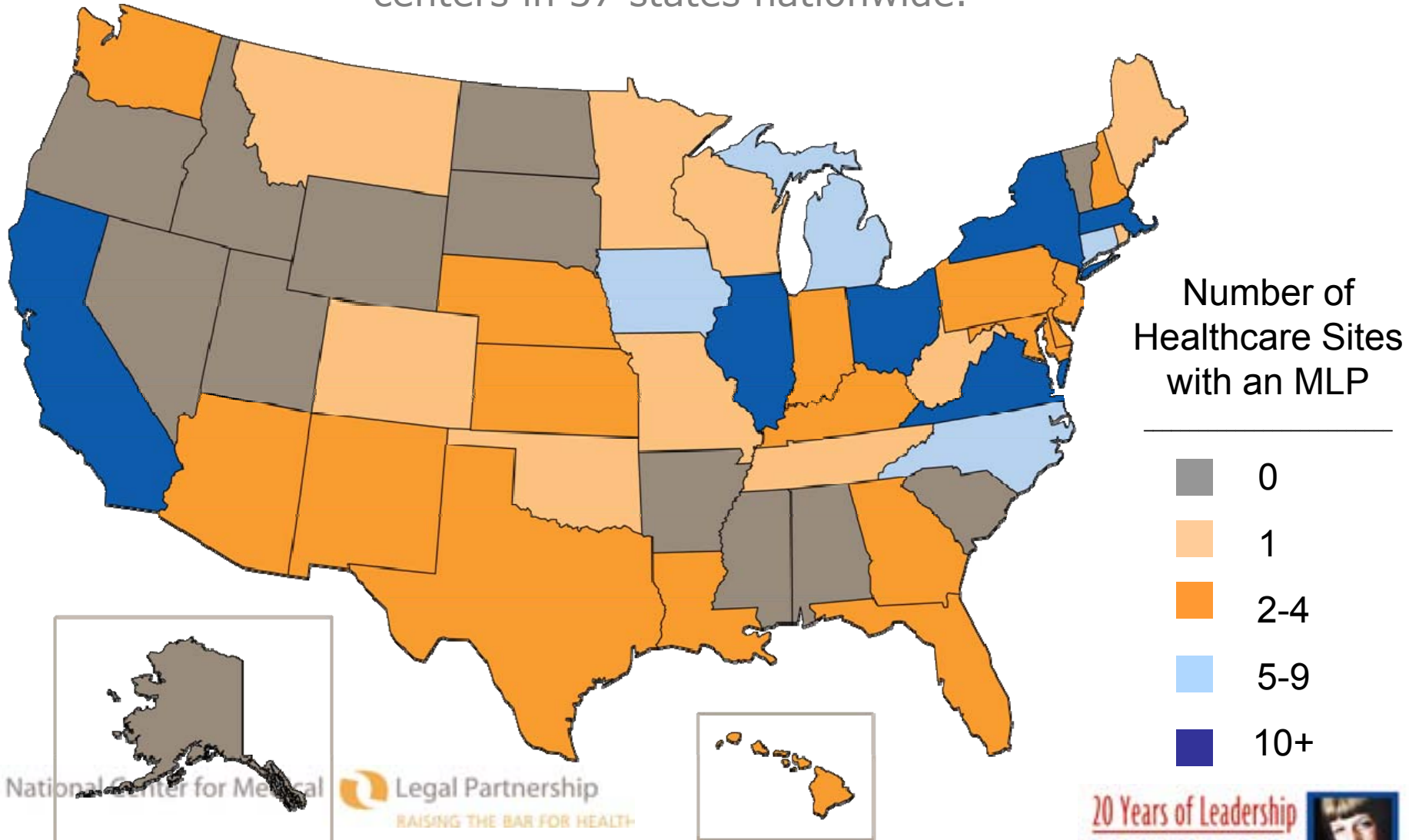
Partnership is Key

An MLP is comprised of at least one legal partner institution and one healthcare partner institution.

Legal Partners	Healthcare Partners
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Legal aid offices• Law schools• Private attorneys• Law firms• State bar associations	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Hospitals• Community health centers• Medical schools• State health departments• Healthcare associations and societies

The MLP Network

MLPs are now operating at ~200 hospitals and health centers in 37 states nationwide.



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Core Functions of an MLP

MLPs are marked by a commitment to three core functions:

- 
- Legal Advice & Assistance for Patients/Families
 - Internal System Improvement in Health Care & Law
 - External System Change

Legal Advice and Assistance

MLP provides:

- Real-time consultation for healthcare providers on legal needs, and
- Legal assistance directly to patients on complex legal problems.

Successful implementation is ensured through:

- Established referral process and feedback loop between healthcare and legal providers, and
- On-site legal provider presence at the health institution at least part-time every week

HOORAY - THAT EAR IS BETTER...
ANYTHING ELSE...?



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Internal Systems Improvement

By observing the legal needs of a diverse patient population, MLP staff are able to identify patterns of need and develop the necessary approaches to address these needs within their institutions.

MLPs achieve internal systems improvement through:

- Institution-wide policy change around practices and procedures -- eg – improved screening for SSI eligibility, improved utility service protocols, integration of pro bono attorneys in pediatric disability clinics
- Jointly created and led trainings for healthcare providers
- Jointly developed metrics and data collection/sharing

PAIN RELIEVERS



External Systems Change

MLPs advocate for systemic change, pushing to promote legislation and public policy that favors the health and well-being of vulnerable patients.

Activities include:

- Providing comments on regulatory processes;
- Testifying before legislative bodies; and
- Authoring op-eds in local media outlets.

Example: Changing regulations around utilities shut-off protection for patients with chronic illness

HIV Legal Checkup

- A model supported by the ABA in which people with HIV/AIDS receive free legal aid
- HIV-positive people can get help if they are facing issues related to confidentiality and discrimination because of their HIV status
- <http://www.abanet.org/AIDS/information/neworleanshealthrecoveryweek.shtml>

How MLP's Core Functions Relate to HIV/AIDS

- Train health care providers to identify when an HIV-positive patient is facing discrimination or not receiving the proper benefits and refer the patient to a lawyer for help.
- Patients will get the benefits and assistance they need with the help of lawyers from MLP
- Improve screening for SSI/SSDI eligibility within the hospital or health center
- MLP advocates for changes in laws to benefit HIV-positive patients

2009 MLP Site Survey Results

- MLPs provided direct legal assistance to **13,000 individuals and families**
- MLPs trained **10,000 frontline healthcare providers** on the social determinants of health

Financial Return

...for patients

33 MLPs recovered **more than \$5 million** in SSI, SSDI, food stamp and other public benefits

...for health institutions

10 MLPs recovered **more than \$800,000** for hospitals and health centers in Medicaid appeals

One Patient's Story

- Patient family struggling to pay for 7-year-old son's medical care.
- Child has heart condition, uses wheelchair, depends upon medical and school-related transportation, and needs surgery.
- Medicaid refused to cover transportation costs and full cost of surgery, claiming that family had not provided the right documentation for health insurance

One Patient's Story

- Provider at health center called MLP
- MLP counseled: Receipt of public benefit of transitional assistance automatically qualifies patient for full Medicaid benefits
- With help from MLP, provider drafted letter that stated alternative provisions of documentation
- Within one week, agency reversed decision, child was found eligible for transitional assistance, qualified for full Medicaid benefits, including transportation and surgery

The MLP Network

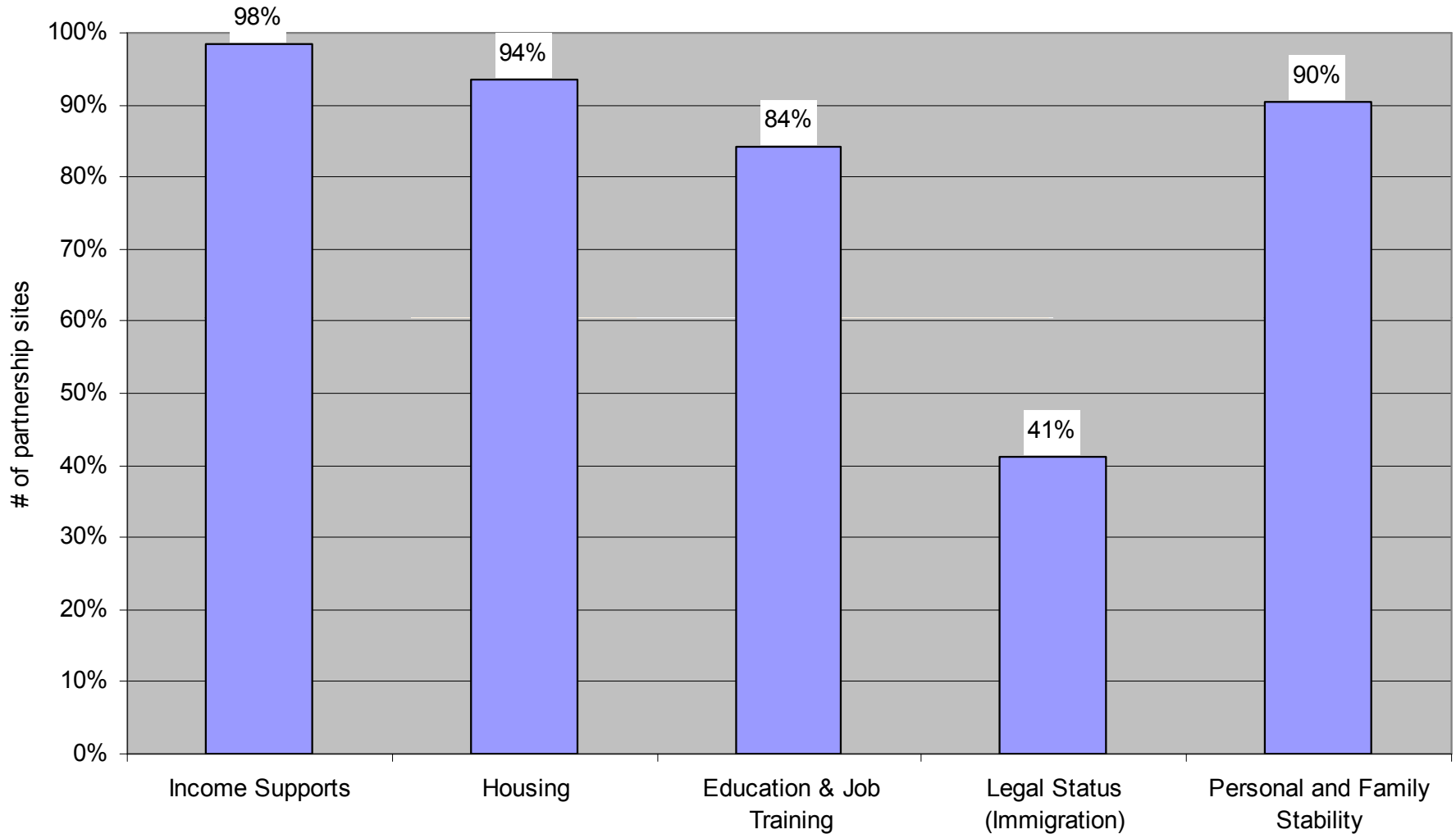
MLPs serve vulnerable populations including:

- Children
- The elderly
- Adults with disabilities
- Patients with chronic illness
- Cancer patients

MLP IMPACT

In 2009, MLPs across the country provided legal assistance to more than 13,000 individuals and families, and trained 10,000 providers on the links between unmet basic needs and health.

Common Legal Needs



Scope of Medical-Legal Partnership: Direct Service / Capacity

In 2009, medical-legal partnerships in the Network:

- Provided nearly 13,000 individuals and families with direct legal assistance
- Consulted with health care providers on behalf of patients more than **7800** times
- Had **5** active regional/statewide collaborations in CA, OH, NY, VA, and New England

Scope of Medical-Legal Partnership: Training and Education

- Twenty-nine law schools and 25 medical schools participate in medical-legal partnerships
- **Four** medical-legal partnerships have joint law school/medical school courses

In 2009, medical-legal partnerships in the Network:

- Conducted **856** training sessions for **17,236** health care providers, residents, volunteer attorneys and students

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"I'm afraid you've had a paradigm shift."

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The National Center for MLP (NCMLP)

Based in Boston, NCMLP supports the expansion and advancement of MLP across the country through a range of activities, including:

- technical assistance for existing partnerships and those looking to start an MLP (e.g. providing sample forms and grant proposals, offering guidance on strategic start-up)
- hosting of the annual MLP Summit
- engaging leadership, such as the Medical Advisory Board, to advance MLP in the professional health and legal communities
- coordination of national research and policy activities related to health disparities and vulnerable populations

Professional Resolutions in Support of Medical-Legal Partnership

American Bar Association (ABA), August 2007

RESOLVED, That the American Bar Association encourages lawyers, law firms, legal services agencies, law schools and bar associations to develop medical-legal partnerships with hospitals, community-based health care providers, and social service organizations to help identify and resolve diverse legal issues that affect patients' health and well-being.

American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP), December 2007

RESOLVED, that the Academy encourage closer and more frequent collaboration between legal service and medical professionals, and be it further

RESOLVED, that the Academy promote "medical-legal partnerships," in which lawyers work with members to identify and resolve legal issues affecting the health and well being of children.

American Academy of Family Physicians (AAFP), Pending September 2008

RESOLVED, that the American Academy of Family Physicians educate members about Medical-Legal Partnerships, in which lawyers work with members to identify and resolve legal issues affecting the health and well being of the patients of family physicians.

Starting an MLP

Visit our website at www.medical-legalpartnership.org

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In the Spotlight

[Diabetes Forecast -- Removing Legal Obstacles to Good Health](#)

[Utility Access and Health: An MLP Patients-to-Policy Case Study](#)

[A Doctor's Word: Renters' Rights to Healthy Homes](#)

[Journal of Healthcare Law and Policy Article Explores Ethical Issues of MLP](#)

Newsletter

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AMA to Vote on MLP Resolution This Week

The American Medical Association House of Delegates will vote on a resolution in support of medical-legal partnership at their annual meeting in Chicago later this week. The AMA Board of Trustees has recommended they approve the resolution. Click below to read the Board's report.

sneezing and itchy eyes. The mold in the family's Northwest Washington apartment

[Read more...](#)



AMA to Vote on MLP Resolution This Week



Washington Post Story on MLP



MLP Effective in Addressing Legal Issues, Saving Costs



New MLPs in Pittsburgh, PA and El Paso, TX

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MLP as a Health and Legal Innovation

The Iowa Legal Aid Health and Law Project and MLP | Boston have been featured in the Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality (AHRQ) Innovations Exchange

"Low-income rural families are disproportionately affected by underlying legal problems that can affect their health, many of which go unaddressed due to limited resources... The [Iowa Legal Aid Health and Law Project] has enhanced access to health-related legal assistance in a population that has no other means of accessing such services."

-AHRQ Innovations Profile, 2010

MLP and Cost Savings: Preliminary Findings

Pilot studies demonstrate fewer hospitalizations and emergency room visits after MLP intervention.

- Preliminary data from an ongoing quantitative report shows 50% reduction in ED visits after exposure to MLP services
- Qualitative interviews with 72 families at Boston Medical Center and affiliated health centers revealed fewer hospitalizations after MLP intervention

Average cost of emergency room visit: \$383

Average cost per day of a hospital stay: \$5,217

Average cost per MLP case: \$880

Sources: National Center for MLP report to Atlantic Philanthropies (2010); Hernandez, Diana. "Medical-Legal Partnerships: Linking Housing, Health and Law to Improve Family Well-being"; Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality; original research by Root Cause

Further Reading

- Medical-Legal Partnerships: Transforming Healthcare. *The Lancet*. November 2008
- Why Pediatricians Need Lawyers to Keep Children Healthy. *Pediatrics*. 2004
- Medical-Legal Partnerships: Addressing the Needs of Health Center Patients. Geiger/Gibson RCHN Community Health Foundation Research Collaborative. May 2010.

Stay Connected!

- Sign up for the MLP Newsletter at www.medical-legalpartnership.org
- If you have other questions/comments, please contact Leanne.Ta@bmc.org