

Medical-Legal Partnership Project

Changing the Culture of Pediatric Practice

The MLPP works with pediatric, family medicine and behavioral health providers to encourage a holistic approach to children's health care and improve children's health outcomes.

Children and their families often need legal assistance to help resolve medical problems.



Six Basic Questions

Asking these questions can help medical practitioners assess each family situation.

1. Do you have enough food?
2. Are your housing conditions safe?
3. Is there enough money to pay for basic necessities?
4. Do you have problems getting your health insurance to pay for services and medications?
5. Is your child receiving an appropriate education?
6. Are you or your family victims of domestic violence?

Alina

Alina is a quiet teen with soft brown eyes. Her eyes reveal a lack of focus that causes great concern.

Alina's family moved to the United States two years ago. Her stepfather had found work and the family moved close to his job. Within weeks, the horrible domestic violence the family had suffered before their move began again. Alina's stepfather beat the girls and their mother, and Alina was raped repeatedly. Alina's mother finally took action, escaping with the girls to seek refuge with a cousin's family.

Alina's history of abuse and the domestic violence she continually witnessed contributed to problems that had begun to manifest years earlier. She suffered from ongoing seizures and began to experience hallucinations that directed her to harm herself and her family. Alina's pediatrician was very concerned about her physical and mental health status.

To help the family get assistance, Alina's pediatrician called the Medical Legal Partnership Project. An MLPP attorney called the Department of Social Services (DSS) to explain the family's circumstance. Years of violence had left the mother with disabling trauma, making it very difficult for her to find full time work. Alina was so emotionally disabled that she could not attend school on a regular basis and needed her mother's constant care.

The MLPP's successful legal advocacy helped Alina's family get emergency assistance from DSS. At Alina's SSI disability hearing, the MLPP submitted evidence of Alina's impairments, including records from medical and psychiatric facilities. The MLPP obtained Alina's educational records, which documented significant learning disabilities exacerbated by her psychiatric condition.

The MLPP attorney was concerned about the stress Alina's mother would suffer when she testified to the violence, sexual abuse and psychotic episodes that led to the application for disability. Fortunately, the Judge ruled in favor of Alina's appeal based on submitted documentation.

Alina's physical and emotional challenges continue, but the MLPP recently helped her secure an appropriate educational setting. We continue to carefully monitor the family's progress.

Medical Legal Partnership Project Resources Available

Publications

(available at www.kidscounsel.org/publications)

For Attorneys and Medical Practitioners

Adolescent Health Care: Legal Rights of Teens

Answers common questions for pediatric, family medicine and behavioral healthcare providers.

Quick Guide to Important Resources

Contact information for patients' services and benefits.

Quick Guide to Supplemental Security Income

Eligibility, application and appeals information.

For Teens

Legal Rights Pamphlets

Topics include Teen Dating Violence, Confidential Health Care, Bullying, GLBT, Child Support, Emancipation, Special Education, Immigration, Truancy.

Education and Outreach

Education and training to support advocacy.

Pediatric Residency Training & Elective Courses

In coordination with University of Connecticut School of Medicine's pediatric and family medicine residency programs, including Developmental/Behavioral and Adolescent Medicine.

Online Resources

www.kidscounsel.org/mlpp

For Information

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Center for **Children's** Advocacy

Medical Legal Partnership Project

Improving Children's Health Outcomes



Medical Legal Partnership Project

Improving Children's Health Outcomes

The Center for Children's Advocacy's Medical Legal Partnership Project (MLPP) began in 2000 as Connecticut's first medical-legal collaboration, and the second project of its kind in the United States.

The MLPP is now a national leader, providing interdisciplinary legal intervention and working with collaborative partners to address healthcare disparities on behalf of children at risk both locally and nationally.



Growing up in poverty presents a serious threat to a child's health.

Children who live in poverty are exposed to serious health risks at a much higher rate than other children. Their families are often not equipped to secure appropriate care when they are ill or injured.

Connecticut's children are at particular risk.

The child poverty rate in Connecticut's largest cities is alarming. Minority groups are especially vulnerable as they experience disparities in access to health care, language or cultural barriers, and are more likely to be poor.

Who is eligible for MLPP services?

The MLPP provides legal advocacy for low-income families. There is no charge for services. Referrals are received from pediatric and family medicine providers, and at MLPP clinics on-site at walk-in community healthcare clinics.

Offices throughout the community.

Community-based locations allow families to easily reach the MLPP and access medical-legal advocacy services. In Hartford, the MLPP has offices at Saint Francis Hospital and Medical Center, Connecticut Children's Medical Center, The Hospital of Central Connecticut, Burgdorf/Bank of America Health Center, Charter Oak Health Center, and Community Health Services.

Eliminating barriers.

The MLPP provides proactive on-site legal intervention in a healthcare setting. We improve health outcomes through:

- Legal representation of children whose healthcare needs are not being met
- Cross-disciplinary response to complex health issues
- Medical-legal systemic advocacy
- Comprehensive training for pediatric, family medicine and behavioral health providers, and for school-based clinicians.

Multidisciplinary Training for Better Care

The MLPP holds multidisciplinary trainings for medical, mental health and legal providers on issues that affect children's health outcomes. These cross-training opportunities help each discipline understand the complexities of poverty-related health issues and the opportunities to improve them.

- Plenary sessions such as "grand rounds," hospital-wide trainings and legal advocacy seminars
- Small group sessions for pediatric departments
- Individual consultations with medical and social work staff
- Conference presentations to medical, social work and legal providers
- Residency training in pediatric, family medicine and psychiatry training programs through the University of Connecticut School of Medicine
- Consultations and information for community providers, including behavioral health and school based clinicians.

Systemic Advocacy to Help Thousands

The MLPP and its medical partners identify health-related issues that require systemic intervention. Individual cases and cross-training sessions provide awareness of complex issues that affect the families of many Connecticut children. Systemic work includes:

- Legislative advocacy to protect the state's most vulnerable children
- Communication with state agencies to address inequities in care
- Advocacy with benefits providers to assure appropriate coverage

Specific information about the MLPP's systemic and legislative work is online at www.kidscounsel.org/mlpp.

Areas of Legal Representation

The Medical Legal Partnership Project represents clients in matters relating to:

- **Housing**
Habitability, disability discrimination
- **Disability Benefits**
Including Supplemental Security Income (SSI) appeals
- **Public Benefits**
Entitlement programs
- **Medicaid Advocacy**
Coverage denials for medically necessary care and treatment
- **Educational Rights**
Special education and related services for children with disabilities
- **Access to Healthcare & Educational Benefits**
For immigrants and refugees
- **Civil Rights**
Confidentiality and emancipation
- **Access to Appropriate Services**
For children with disabilities and/or mental health needs
- **Utility Shutoffs and Terminations**

The Medical Legal Partnership Project is a collaboration between the Center for Children's Advocacy, Connecticut Children's Medical Center, Charter Oak Health Center, Community Health Services, Inc., Burgdorf/Bank of America Health Center, Saint Francis Hospital and Medical Center, and The Hospital of Central Connecticut.

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