The Importance of Legal Representation for Healthy Patients: Medical-Legal Partnerships in Support of Community Health

Presented at the UTCLE Health Law Conference on Friday, April 8, 2022

Social Determinants of Health

"Conditions in the environments where people are born, live, learn, work, play, worship, and age that affect a wide range of health, functioning, and quality-of-life outcomes and risks."



Healthy People 2030, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Office of Disease Prevention and Health Promotion. Retrieved [date graphic was accessed], from https://health.gov/healthypeople/objectives-and-data/social-determinants-health

Social Determinants of Health and Medical Legal Partnerships





of a person's health is determined by social factors, including:













The U.S. spends more money on health care than any industrialized country, but it ranks:









These poorer outcomes aren't the result of spending too little; they are the result of where the money is spent.



The U.S. spends \$0.90 on social services for every \$1 it spends on health care.

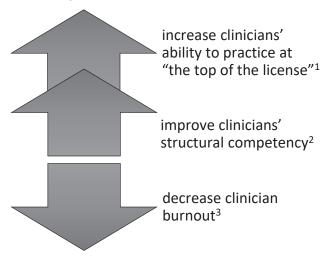
Other first-world countries with better outcomes spend \$2 on social services for every dollar they spend on health care.

Research from The American Health Care Paradox (2015) by Elizabeth Bradley and Lauren Taylor.

https://medical-legalpartnership.org/

Medical-Legal Partnership

Lawyers as Care Team Members



- MLP is a healthcare delivery model that integrates legal expertise into patient care by embedding lawyers in the clinical or hospital setting as specialist care team members.
 - In rural areas (and during pandemics), MLP lawyers often work remotely from a law office using telelaw.
- Favorable resolutions and statements from national professional organizations, including the <u>American</u> <u>Bar Association</u>, the <u>American Medical Association</u>, <u>American Hospital Association</u>, and the <u>American</u> <u>Academy of Pediatrics</u>
- Formal recommendations from the <u>National</u>
 <u>Academy of Medicine</u> to develop the MLP lawyer
 workforce and to study the contributions of lawyers
 to health; & from the <u>American Academy of Arts & Sciences</u> to increase access to justice through MLP

Emilia De Marchis et al, Physician Burnout and Higher Clinic Capacity to Address Patients' Social Needs, 32 J. Am. BOARD FAM. MED. 69 (2019), available at https://doi.org/10.3122/jabfm.2019.01.180104.
*Edward Paul et al, The Medical-Legal Partnership Approach to Teaching Social Determinants of Health and Structural Competency in Residency Programs, 92 Acad. Med. 292 (2017).
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Legal Services Inequities Predict Health Disparities

- Research shows that civil legal aid is positively correlated with health by
 - being available in adequate supply;
 - mitigating poverty and injustice;
 - · remediating acute crises; and
 - achieving broader policy gains focused on equity.

Stu's Views

MLP
Lawyer Mom

Cinderella lived below the poverty line, was forced to work in violation of fair labor standards, and had many family law problems.

James Tuefel et al, Legal Aid Inequities Predict Health Disparities, 38 HAMLINE L. REV. 329 (2015), available at http://digitalcommons.hamline.edu/hlr/vol38/iss2/7.

Identify Legal Needs to Address Root Causes

Increasing someone's income means fewer trade-offs between affording food and health care, including medications insurance eligibility or coverage, cash assistance, & disability benefits Being able to afford enough healthy food helps adults manage chronic diseases and helps children grow and develop. A stable, decent, affordable home helps a person avoid costly emergency room visits related to homelessness A healthy physical environment Prevent evictions Consistent housing, heat, and electricity helps people follow their medical treatment plans. Protect against utility shut-off A quality education is the greatest predictor of a person's adult health. Prevent & remedy employment discrimination Quality educational and work Consistent employment helps provide money for food and safe housing, which also helps avoid costly emergency health care services. Access to health insurance is often linked to employment. Enforce workplace rights Resolve veteran discharge status Clear criminal / credit histories Resolve legal name / gender marke inconsistencies Clearing a person's criminal history or helping a veteran change their discharge status helps make consistent employment and access to public benefits possible. Access to opportunity and Consistent name and gender marker identification reduces discrimination and likelihood of physical assault and increases access to care Less violence at home means less need for costly emergency health care Stable family relationships significantly reduce stress and allow for better decision-making, including decisions related to health care.

Adapted from Nat'l Ctr. for Med.Leg. P'ship, "How Legal Services Help the Healthcare System Address Social Needs," https://medical-legalpartnership.org/response/i-help/





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