

Promoting Family Advocacy through Medical-Legal Partnership

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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.

Breaking the Cycle of Vulnerability



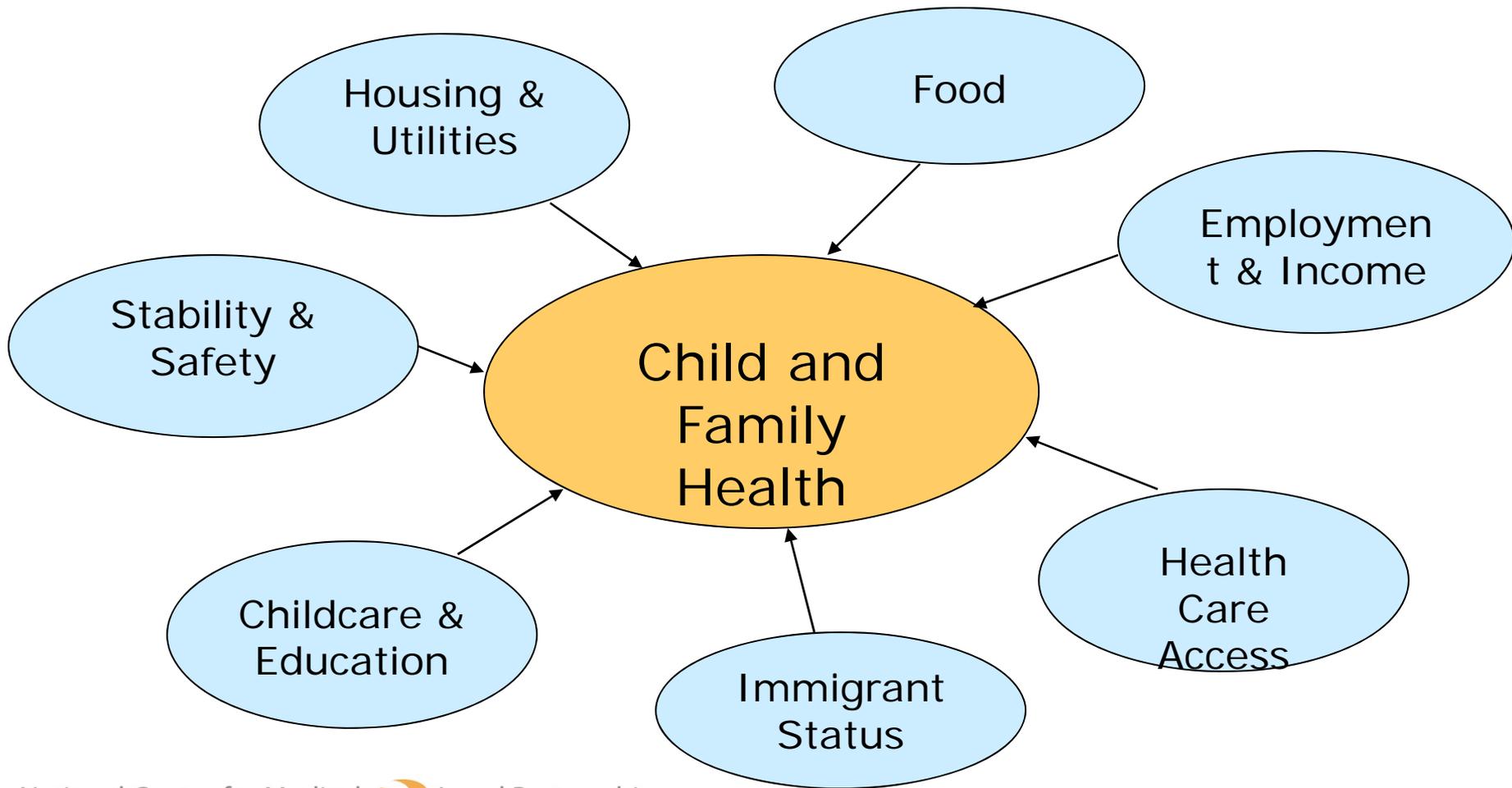
Adverse social conditions make people vulnerable to poor health, and poor health makes people vulnerable to adverse social conditions.

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

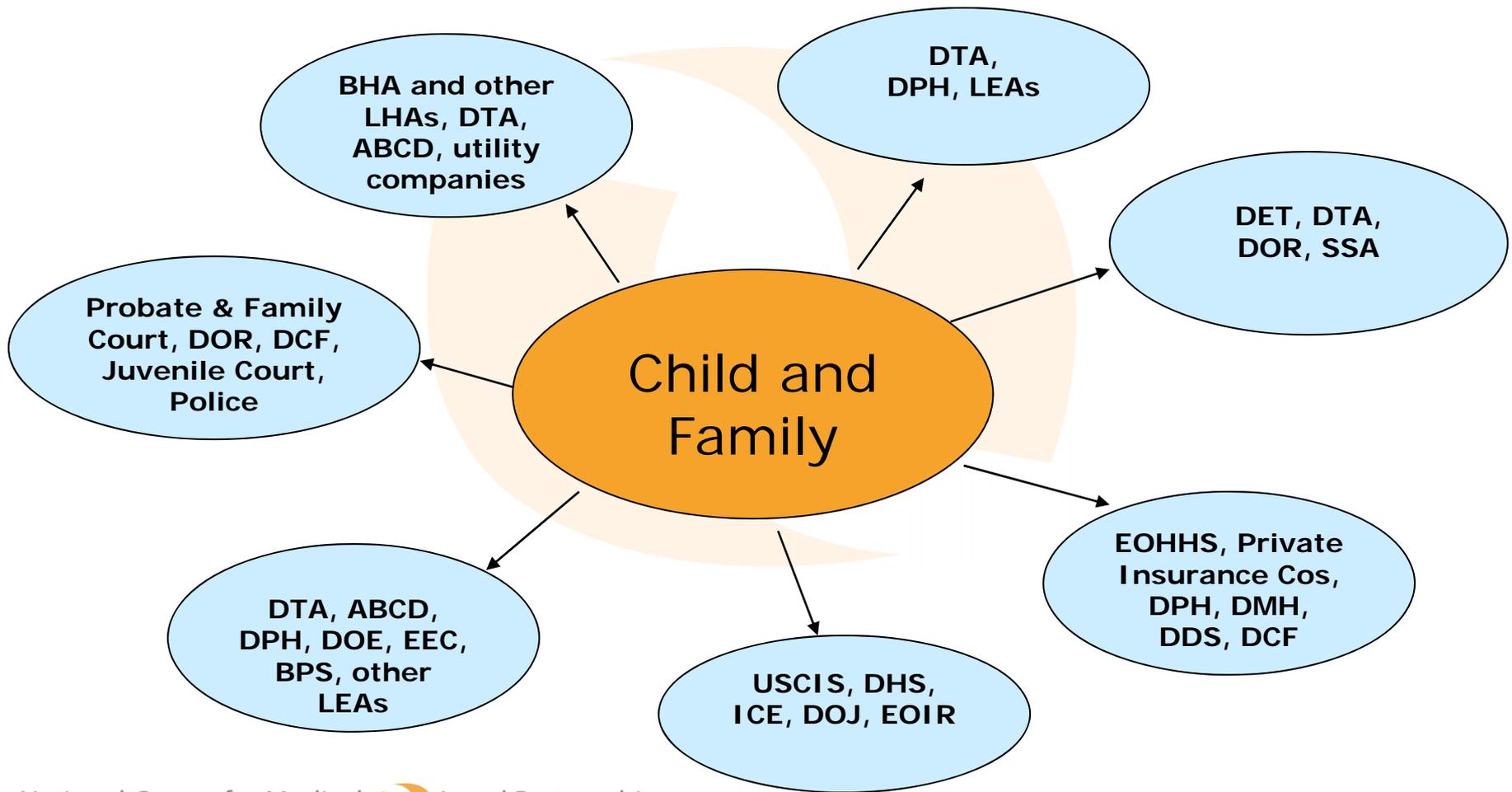
**Many health disparities
have legal solutions**

How does MLP Work?

Wide Range of Laws Governing Basic Needs Influence Health



Forcing Families to Navigate Numerous Complex Bureaucracies



Why Legal Advocacy in the Clinical Setting?

- Healthcare providers are trusted, credible resources for families
- Screening for legal issues in the clinical setting facilitates detecting legal problems before they reach a crisis

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

Core Functions of an MLP

MLPs are marked by a commitment to three core functions:

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- 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

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

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

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

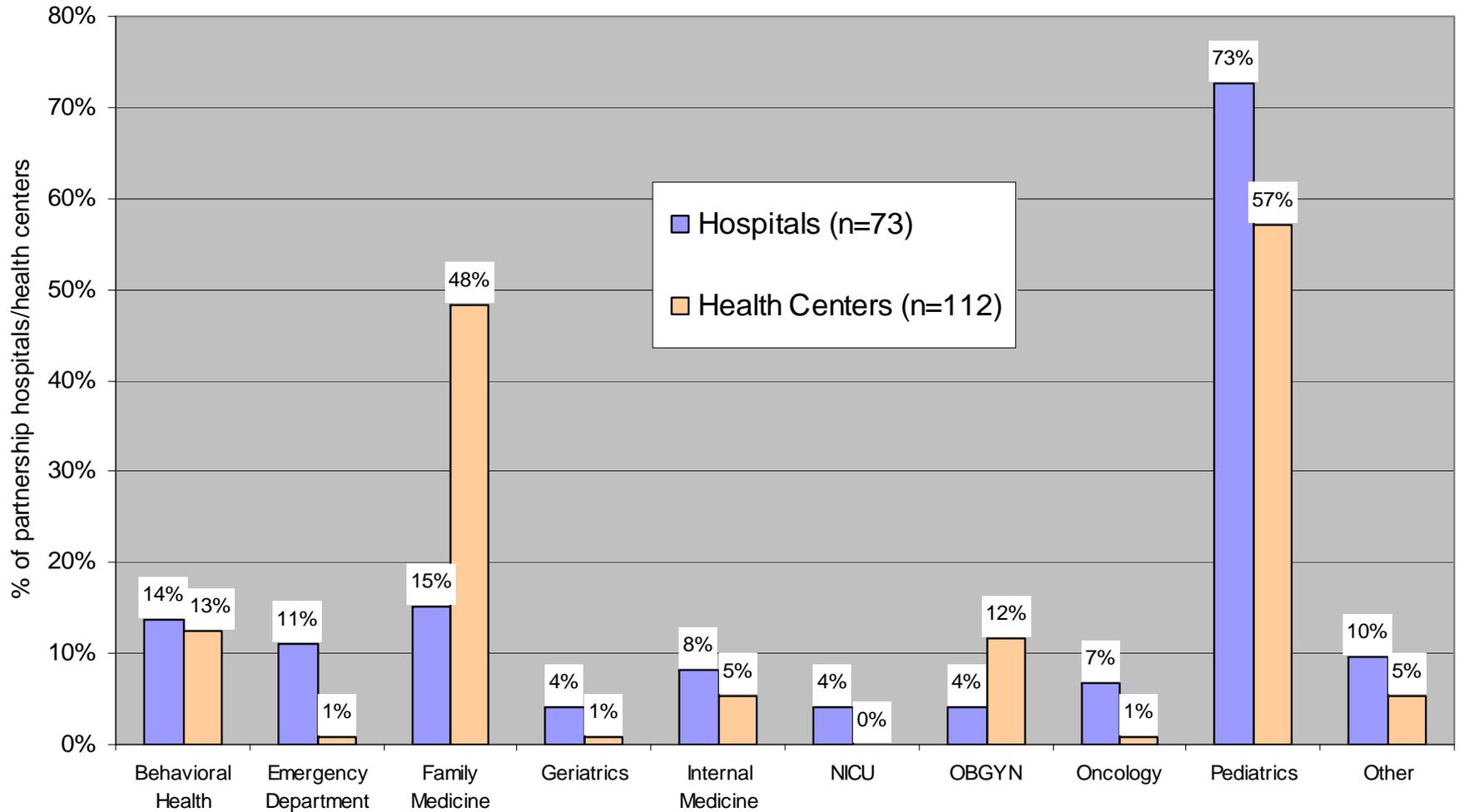
MLPs serve vulnerable populations including:

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

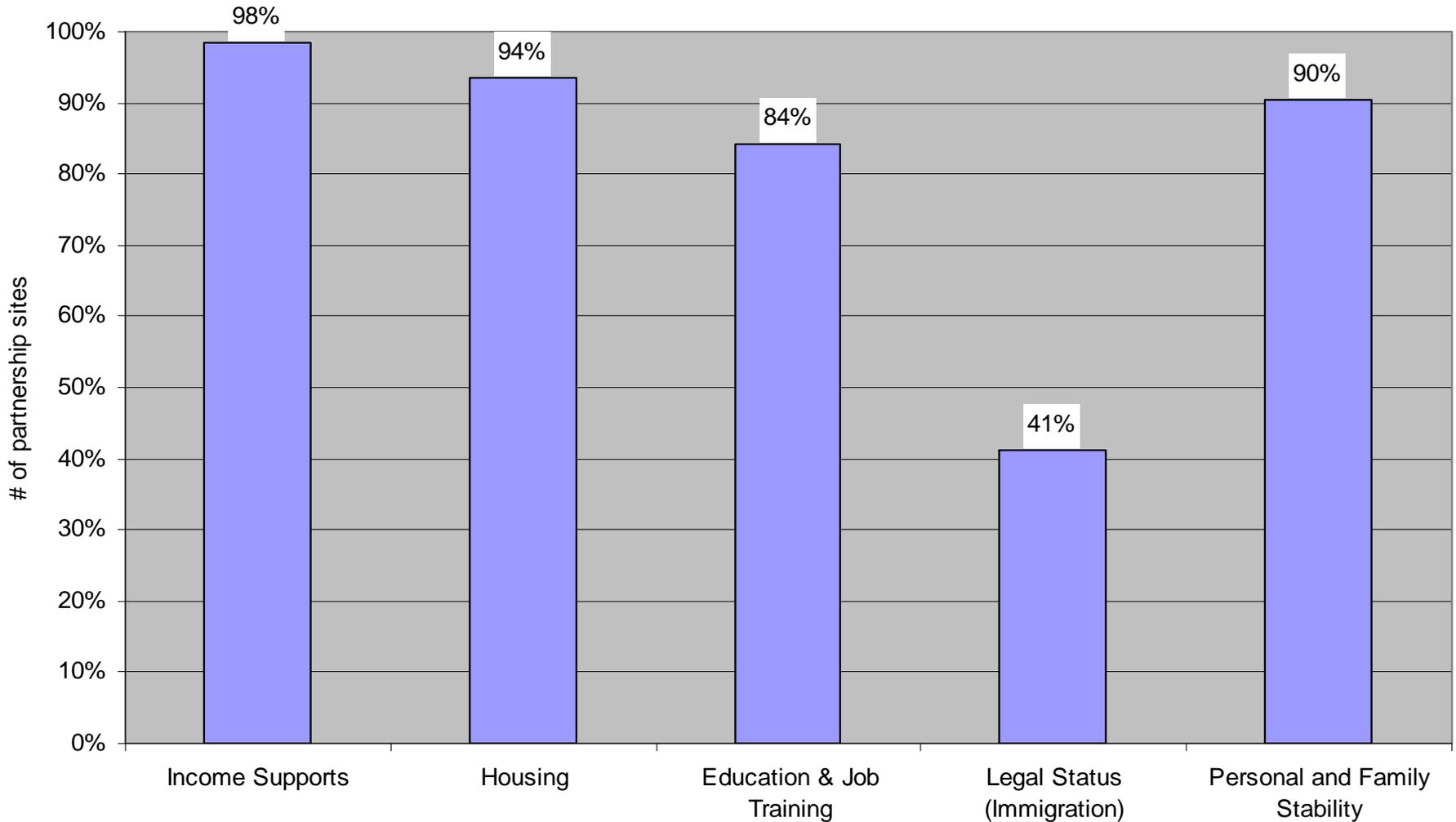
MLP IMPACT

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.

Clinical Settings



Common Legal Needs





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

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

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.

[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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Getting Started

Below are frequently asked questions for those who are thinking about starting a medical-legal partnership. For additional information, [request an MLP 101 binder](#).

Frequently Asked Questions

WHAT IS MEDICAL-LEGAL PARTNERSHIP?

Medical-Legal Partnership (MLP) is a health and legal services delivery model that aims to improve the health and well-being of vulnerable populations by integrating legal assistance into medical settings. MLPs help patients get their basic needs met and optimize healthcare. Recently featured in the *Los Angeles Times* and the *New York Times*, there are now MLP programs in more than 200 hospitals and health centers in 37 states.

HOW DOES MLP WORK?

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The materials in the resource section were developed by staff at the National Center for Medical-Legal Partnership and sites in the MLP Network. We encourage you to use the resources and adapt them to your partnership. Please be sure to acknowledge NCMLP and, where applicable, the medical-legal partnership who developed the resource on those materials, including training presentations.

You don't need a user log-in to learn more about medical-legal partnership or access the resources you need to start a partnership!



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