Medical-Legal Partnership: An Innovative Strategy to Address Social Determinants of Health

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Agenda for the Presentation

1) Examine the link between housing and health
2) MLP: Why and How
3) Addressing housing concerns through MLP
Taking a closer look: Asthma

- Despite significant advances in our understanding and treatment of the medical disease and
- Despite major reduction in ambient air contaminants
- THE PREVALENCE OF ASTHMA IN CHILDREN HAS ALMOST DOUBLED NATIONALLY in the last 30 years.
Figure 4-2: Lifetime Asthma Prevalence Among School Students by Health District, Pennsylvania 2003/04-2008/09 (Combined Data)

Legend:
- Percent: 8.4%
- 8.5% - 9.2%
- 9.3% - 9.8%
- 9.9% - 10.2%
- 10.3% - 11.7%
Are there unique conditions in Philadelphia and especially North Philadelphia that put children at risk for asthma?

YES...
Poverty and Median Income in Philadelphia

NEARLY 1 OUT OF EVERY 2.5 CHILDREN LIVES BELOW THE FEDERAL POVERTY LINE.

Poverty by Age Group

Total Population: 430,000+
- Children under 18: 135,000
- Adults 18-64: 265,000
- Seniors 65+: 32,000

Median Household Income: 25 Largest Cities

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>City</th>
<th>Median Household Income</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>San Jose</td>
<td>$60,502</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>District of Columbia</td>
<td>$59,400</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>San Francisco</td>
<td>$58,200</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Seattle</td>
<td>$57,900</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>San Diego</td>
<td>$56,600</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Charlotte</td>
<td>$55,800</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New York City</td>
<td>$55,600</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Austin</td>
<td>$54,900</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Boston</td>
<td>$53,900</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fort Worth</td>
<td>$53,300</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Denver</td>
<td>$52,600</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Los Angeles</td>
<td>$52,300</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jacksonville</td>
<td>$52,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Phoenix</td>
<td>$51,700</td>
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<td>Chicago</td>
<td>$51,500</td>
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<tr>
<td>Houston</td>
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<tr>
<td>San Antonio</td>
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<tr>
<td>El Paso</td>
<td>$50,700</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dallas</td>
<td>$50,600</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Columbus</td>
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<tr>
<td>Indianapolis</td>
<td>$50,400</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Columbus</td>
<td>$50,300</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Philadelphia</td>
<td>$50,100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Detroit</td>
<td>$50,000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

National Average: $50,502

Shared Prosperity Plan, Philadelphia 2013
Housing Characteristics

- Occupied
- Vacant
- Owner Occupied
- Renter Occupied
- Rent is 35% or more of income
- Houses built before 1940
- Houses built before 1979

Philadelphia
US

2008-2012 American Community Survey
Common Substandard Housing Concerns and Increased Risks

- Rodent and cockroach infestation
- Water leaks and mold
- Peeling paint and lead paint
- Exposed wires and uncovered radiators
- Insufficient heat or running water
- Overcrowding

- Increased Asthma
- Increased lead poisoning
- Increased Injuries
- Radiator burns
- Window falls
- Fires from improper wiring, lack of smoke detectors, use of space heaters
- Increased infectious diseases
## Conditions of Housing Philadelphia and US

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Condition</th>
<th>% Philadelphia</th>
<th>% National</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Rodents in home in past 3 months</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leak(s) inside home</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Open cracks or holes inside homes</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moderate or severe physical problems with home</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lacking a working smoke detector</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hole in Roof</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Broken plaster or peeling paint inside home</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Broken windows</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Holes in floors</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rooms without electric outlets</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Overall rating of structure is poor</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Foundation crumbling, cracks or holes</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The Big Picture

- Your Health may be more influenced by your zip code than your genetic code
Life Expectancy Within Philadelphia

Children born today in parts of North Philadelphia have an average life expectancy up to 20 years shorter than children born in Society Hill, according to a study by Virginia Commonwealth University.

Philadelphia: A tale of 2 hills

Syria and Iraq
74 years old
The Solution?

• There is no **one** solution

• Medicine alone is not the answer
Medical Legal Partnership

A Medical-Legal Partnership (MLP) is a partnership between at least one attorney and a healthcare clinic or hospital whose primary purpose is to serve low-income and other vulnerable individuals.

MLPs integrate legal services into the healthcare setting to address social determinants of health.
Why Legal Advocacy in the Clinical Setting?

Physicians and other health care providers are trusted, credible resources

Screening for legal issues in the clinical setting facilitates preventive law

Improves access to remedies for social determinants of health
Each stakeholder has unique needs

• Legal services provider
• Target Population
• Medical providers
• Healthcare system
Starting a Medical Legal Partnership

Strong core belief that affecting the social determinants of health leads to direct long-term health improvement (and perhaps cost reduction)

Needs assessment

Provider education

Referral form and a starting workflow
Legal barriers that impact health and well-being

I-HELP categories

- Income supports & Insurance
  - Medical Assistance, SSI, SNAP, public benefits
- Housing & Utilities
  - Housing Conditions, Evictions, Accessibility, Shut-off Prevention
- Employment & Education
  - Evaluations, IEPs, Accommodations for Disabilities
- Legal Status
- Personal & Family Stability
  - Protection From Abuse Orders, Divorce, Child Support, and Custody
St. Christopher’s Hospital for Children MLP: History

Started in 2011

Provides free civil legal services to families in the resident run primary care practice, newborn clinic, and center for children with special health care needs

To date, over 40,000 families have been screened for unmet legal needs
  ◦ On average, 40% indicated at least one unmet legal need
Screening for Social Determinants

Every family receives a screener at the start of the visit to self-identify unmet legal needs

- Resident or attending reviews the screener and refers to the MLP attorney or social work as necessary
- Some issues, such as food insecurity or utility shut-offs, can be handled directly by the provider
Total Legal Needs by Type Since 2011
Core Component #1: Direct Legal Services

Provide on-site free legal services to families:

• Brief advice
  • Preventative law: goal is to prevent crisis
  • Position families to be in the best position if the situation escalates

• Full representation
  • Send demand letters to landlords to address housing concerns
  • In-court representation
    • Eviction defense and/or negotiate a settlement
Core Component #2: Provider Education and Care Integration

Attorneys train providers to identify legal issues that impact patient health
- Resident rotation on Social Determinants of health
- Noon Advocacy Lectures about MLP topics
- Available for curbside consults and a resource for advocacy projects

Providers educate and assist attorneys with relevant expertise.
- Ex – medical certifications (LIHEAP), SSI/SSDI, MA, etc.
Core Component #3: Internal and External Systems Change

Develop practice-wide protocols to standardize the provider response
  • Utility medical certification forms, CAO caregiver forms

Track and monitor legal and social needs of the patient population
  ◦ Local and state advocacy
Lessons Learned

Need a streamlined workflow

Screening adaptability

Continuous provider and staff education

- 1:1 training for residents and new staff on social determinants
- Regular staff-wide training

Maximize attorney hours on-site
Challenges

Funding

• Sustainable partnership requires a financial contribution from the health center

Time

• Dedicate onboarding time to social determinants of health including MLP

Confidentiality

• HIPAA

• Attorney/client relationship