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

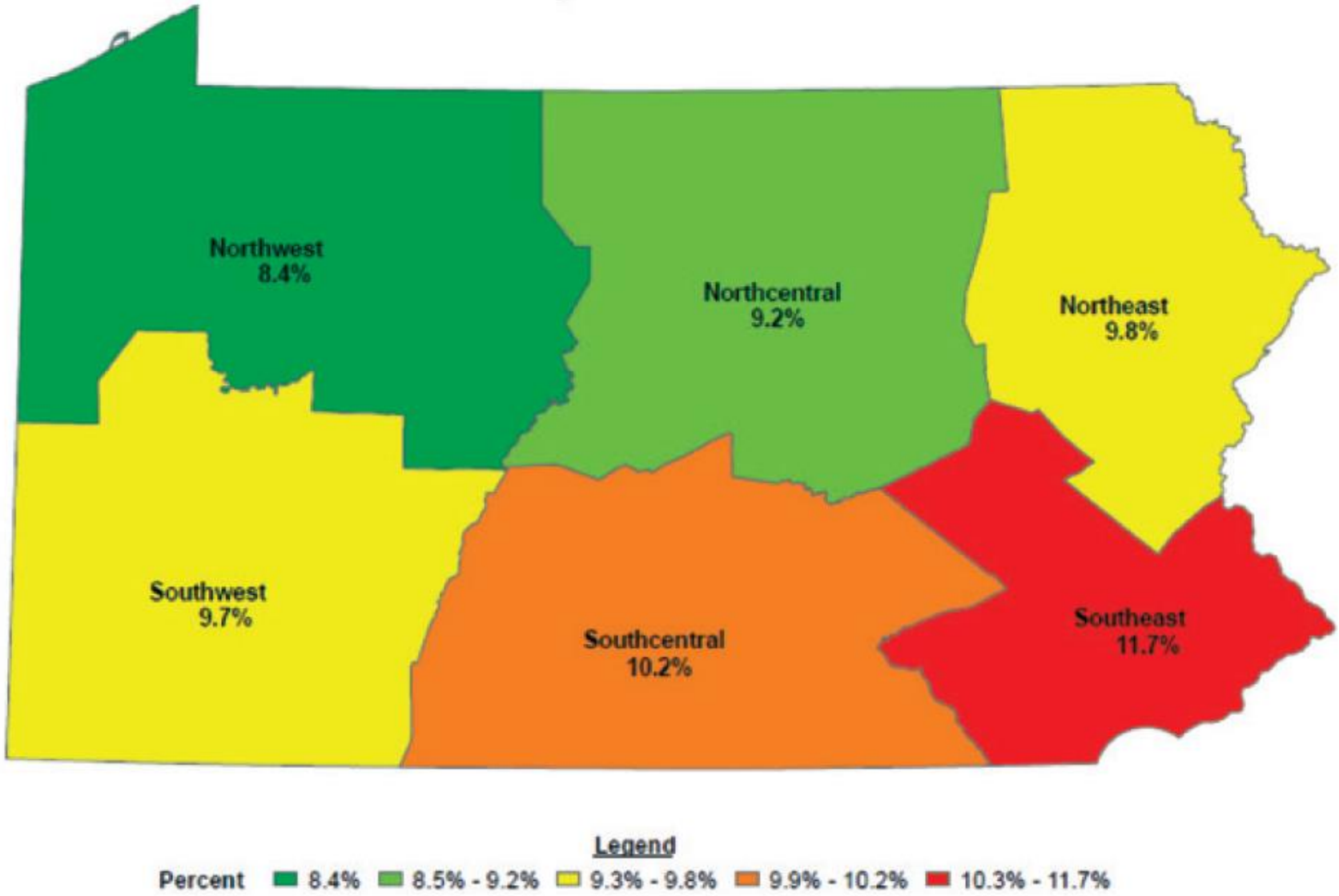
2) MLP: Why and How

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)

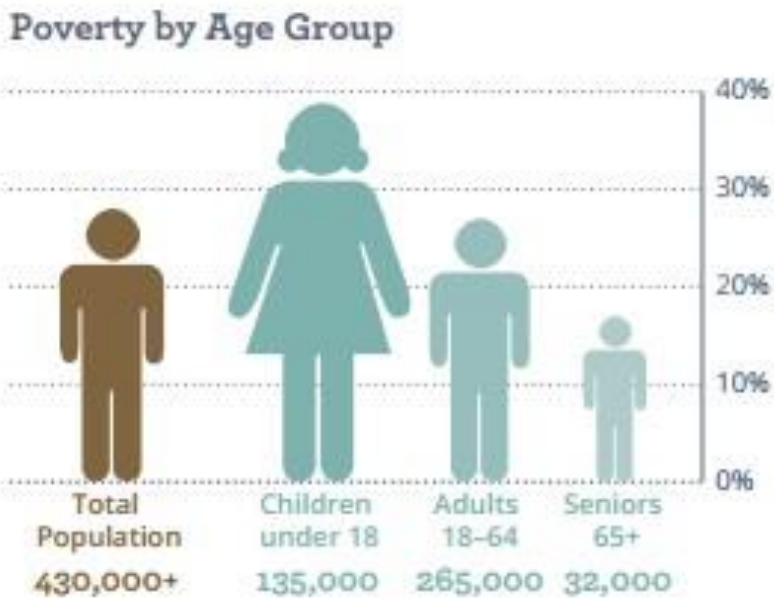


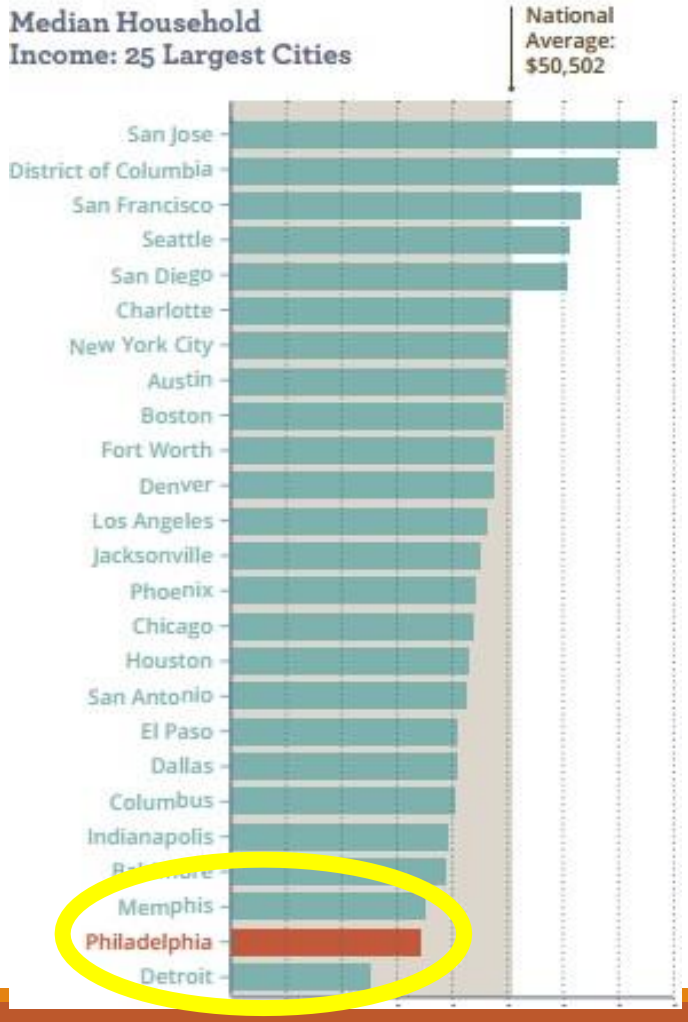
Are there unique conditions in Philadelphia and especially North Philadelphia that put children at risk for asthma?

YES…

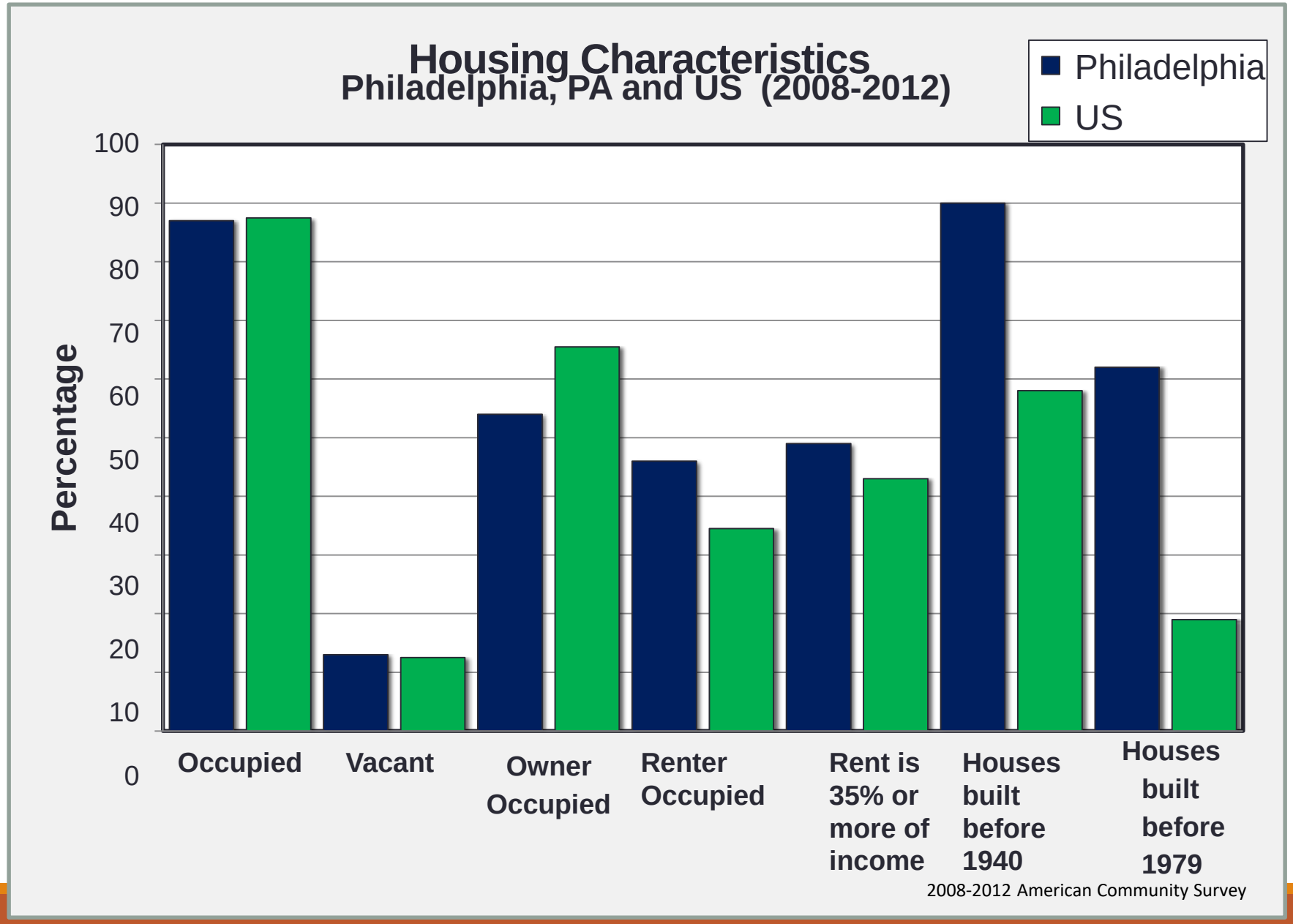
Poverty and Median Income in Philadelphia

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





Shared Prosperity Plan, Philadelphia 2013


Housing Characteristics
Philadelphia, PA and US (2008-2012)
Philadelphia
US
Percentage
100
90
80
70
60
50
40
30
20
10
0
Occupied
Vacant
Owner Occupied
Renter Occupied
Rent is 35% or more of income
Houses built before 1940
Houses built before 1979
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

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

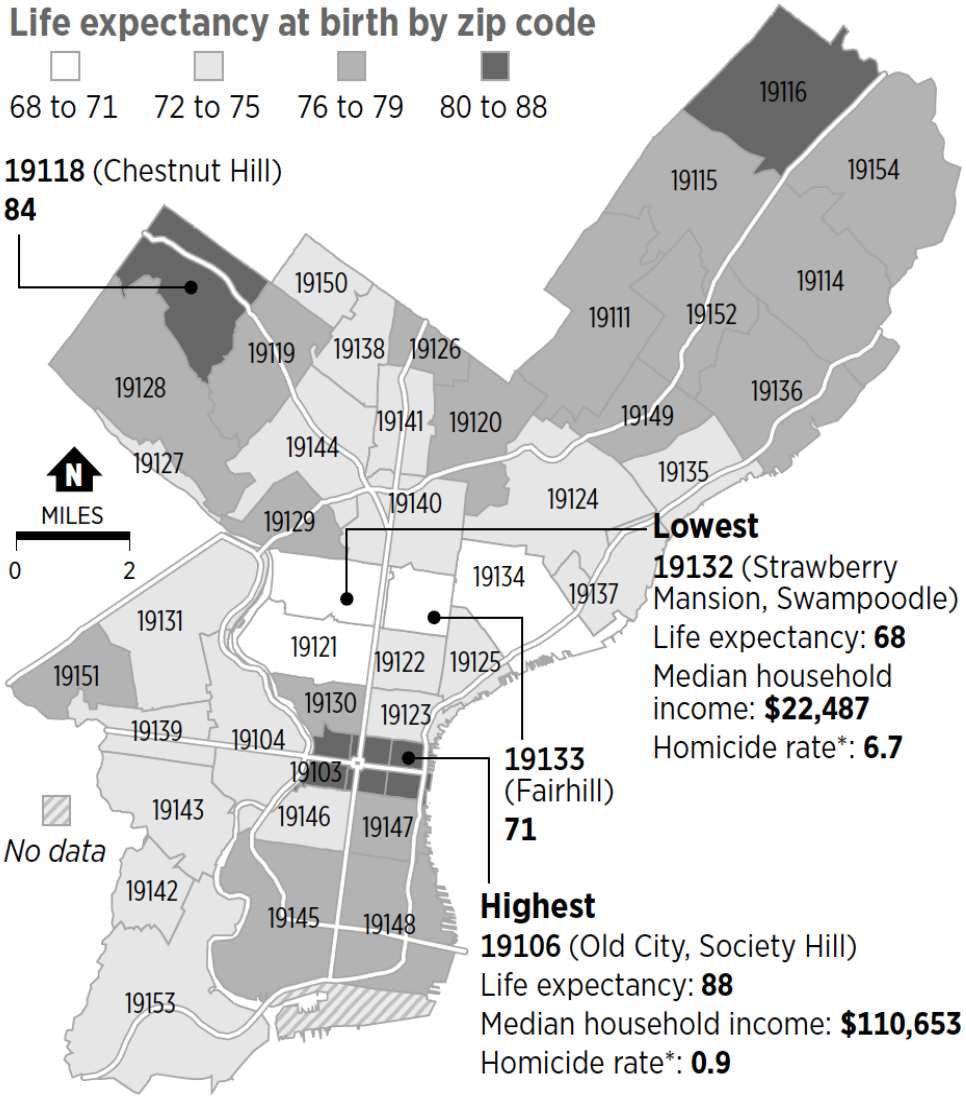
American Housing Survey (2009)

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.



* Annual rate per 10,000 residents, based on homicides from 2006-15

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

HOORAY – THAT EAR IS BETTER...
ANYTHING ELSE...?
HEAT
SCHOOL
RENT
FOOD
$
LOAN
©2004

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

1. Housing/Utilities **Please answer Yes or No Below**

a) Do you have problems with your LANDLORD getting home repairs (mold, rodents, leaks)? Yes No (L)

b) In the past 30 days, has your LANDLORD threatened to evict you or turn off utilities? Yes No (L)

c) Have you received a shut off notice from any utility (gas, electric, water) in the past 30 days? [] Utility Resources Given (Consider MLP) Yes No (P)

2. Income/Insurance Supports

a) Is there someone in your home who doesn't have health insurance? [] Insurance Resources Given (Consider MLP) Yes No (P)

b) Have you been denied in the past 90 days SSI for your child? Yes No (L)

c) Have you been denied in the past 90 days Social Security benefits (SSI/SSD) for yourself? Yes No (L)

d) Within the past 12 months we worried whether our food would run out before we got money to buy more. [] Food Resources Given (Consider MLP) Yes No (P)

e) Within the past 12 months the food we bought just didn't last and we didn't have money to get more. [] Food Resources Given (Consider MLP) Yes No (P)

f) Have you stopped getting food stamps, WIC or cash assistance? Yes No (L)

3. Education

a) Do you have concerns about your child's school or about your child's learning needs? Yes No (S)

4) Legal Status

a) Do you have any questions about your family's immigration status? Yes No (L)

5) Personal and Family Safety and Stability

a) Have you ever been hit, threatened, or abused by a boyfriend, girlfriend, or spouse? Yes No (D)

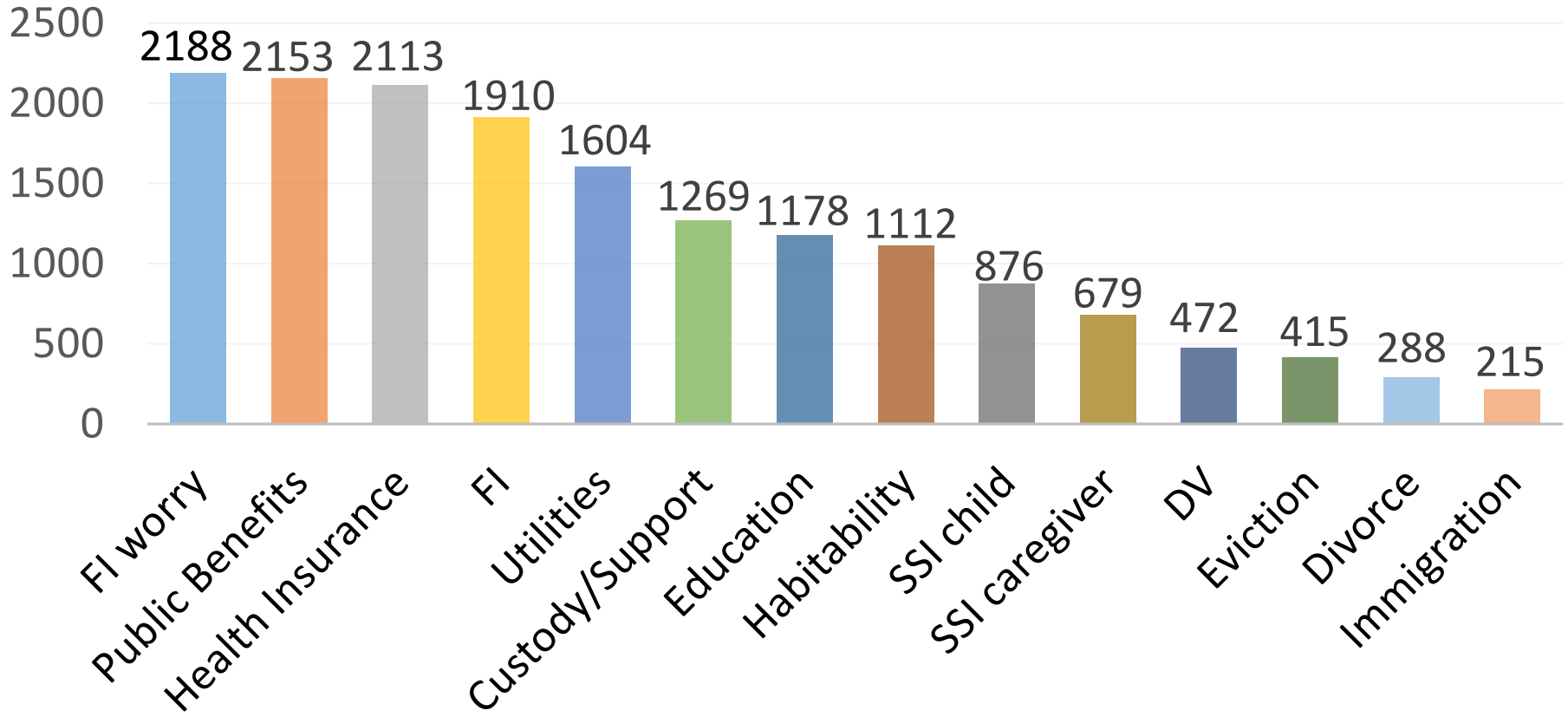
b) Do you want information about separating from your spouse or getting a divorce? Yes No (L)

c) Do you have concerns about child support or custody of your child(ren)? Yes No (L)

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
- Separate, at-least quarterly, lectures around a specific MLP issue

Confidentiality

- HIPAA
- Attorney/client relationship