The Medical Legal Partnership for Children | Toledo
RAISING THE BAR FOR CHILD HEALTH

Report to the Community
The Toledo Medical-Legal Partnership for Children (MLPC) is a unique program in which doctors and lawyers work together to provide free legal services to pediatric patients and their families on a broad range of issues that affect child health and wellbeing. Patients served by the MLPC are the most vulnerable in our community – children living in poverty.

Pediatricians recognize that the health status of their child patients is often negatively affected by social and environmental conditions that cannot be remedied through medical care alone. The establishment of the MLPC has allowed medical personnel to witness firsthand the benefits that onsite legal assistance can provide to patients.

By providing access to legal services through a trusted environment, such as a medical clinic, MLPC Legal Aid attorneys reach families who often do not realize they have legal rights or know how to access an attorney. Attorneys maintain office hours at pediatric clinics throughout the community and they accept referrals from pediatricians and other pediatric health care staff, providing children and their families with advice, referrals and representation in civil legal matters. In addition, the MLPC coordinates collaborative outreach and systemic advocacy in the Toledo-Lucas County community and throughout Ohio to improve access to health care services and access to appropriate quality education for children with disabilities.
The Toledo MLPC is a collaborative partnership among Advocates for Basic Legal Equality, Inc. (ABLE), Bright Horizons Advocacy and Consulting, Legal Aid of Western Ohio, Inc. (LAWO), Mercy Children’s Hospital, ProMedica Toledo Children’s Hospital, University Pediatrics at the University of Toledo Medical Center, the University of Toledo College of Law Legal Clinic, and United Way of Greater Toledo.

An active multi-disciplinary advisory board composed of partners and representatives from the community supports the MLPC.
Nearly 33 percent of Lucas County children live in poverty and approximately 62 percent are eligible for Medicaid. Since its inception in 2007, the Toledo MLPC has received more than 1,500 referrals and accepted hundreds of cases, assisting pediatric patients and their families with various legal matters including obtaining access to health care, public benefits, safe and affordable housing, appropriate special education services, securing custody for relative caregivers, and resolving health related consumer matters. In addition, the MLPC has obtained thousands of dollars in financial benefits for families.

Legal services provided through the MLPC are at no cost to the patients. The MLPC serves clients primarily through direct referrals from a medical provider. Physicians and other staff at partner sites are trained to identify patients and families who may benefit from legal assistance. The MLPC then provides services to the family, addressing all legal issues that have an effect on child health and wellbeing and on family stability. The MLPC attorneys provide legal advice, referrals, and full representation including education, custody, housing, public benefits cases, and access to health care.

Legal Aid attorneys from ABLE and LAWO work with medical personnel from the MLPC to provide training to medical and mental health providers on topics ranging from housing law and children’s Medicaid law to special education law. In addition, physicians, Legal Aid attorneys, and social workers present at Pediatric Grand Rounds focused on interdisciplinary collaboration to improve child health and wellbeing.
MLPC attorneys actively collaborate with their medical partners and Disability Rights Ohio to identify and address issues related to the process of prior authorization for certain Medicaid funded services and equipment. An ABLE attorney with the MLPC also joined a statewide stakeholder work group facilitated by Voices for Ohio’s Children to ensure that children throughout Ohio with special health care needs can obtain the services and equipment they need under Medicaid programs and policies.

The MLPC Education Advocacy Initiative partnered with Disability Rights Ohio (DRO), ABLE, LAWO, the Ability Center of Greater Toledo, and the Ohio Poverty Law Center to raise awareness with Toledo Public Schools (TPS) and the Ohio Department of Education regarding ongoing systemic violations of state and federal special education laws. Meetings with TPS to share concerns related to Child Find, least restrictive environment, and disciplinary practices for students with disabilities have been ongoing.

Attorneys with the MLPC participate in a discipline work group and a special education work group with Toledo Public Schools personnel and other community stakeholders to ensure that the district is responsive to the rights of children with disabilities in its special education and disciplinary practices. In addition, the MLPC Education Advocacy Initiative continues to advocate for new district practices regarding police involvement with students with disabilities.
Because he had significant expressive and receptive language delays and had difficulty expressing his wants and needs, Tyler had difficulty connecting with other students at school, often spending recess and lunch periods alone. When his Mom tried to get him help, Tyler was denied services because his speech language assessment did not place him within the guidelines followed by the Medicaid Managed Care program in determining coverage for speech therapy.

Tyler's primary care pediatrician referred him to an MLPC attorney who filed for a hearing to appeal the denial. Tyler's Mom and his teacher testified at the hearing and his attorney argued for coverage for Tyler under Medicaid for children, Early Periodic Testing Diagnosis and Treatment (EPSDT) which requires that Medicaid eligible children receive all medical treatments and services necessary to “correct or ameliorate a medical condition.” The hearing officer determined that the Medicaid Managed Care provider did not properly consider EPSDT.

Tyler was reevaluated and approved for speech therapy services. Since beginning his therapy, Tyler's mom reports that he is making new friends and is now excited about going to school.
Helping Donna find safety for herself and her family.

Donna was first referred to an MLPC Legal Aid attorney by her doctor when she told him she feared for her family's safety. Donna’s husband had been recently released from prison and the abuse she experienced throughout their relationship resumed. Her husband threatened her repeatedly, eventually aiming a gun at her and pulling out a chunk of her hair in front of their young children.

Donna worked with her Legal Aid attorney to obtain a five year Civil Protection Order (CPO) against her husband and a divorce. Donna now feels safer and better able to move forward with her life, including caring for her children who have chronic health conditions.
Attorneys with the MLPC collaborated with Toledo Fair Housing Center (TFHC), the Reentry Coalition of Northwest Ohio, and the Kirwan Institute at the Ohio State University to improve access to affordable housing in Lucas County. Results of this policy advocacy include changes in a number of Lucas Metro Housing Authority (LMHA) policies to improve affordable housing access and mobility.

Health care and legal professionals with the MLPC have developed materials and conducted outreach in preparation for systemic advocacy plans in the areas of improving child access to healthcare and access to healthy housing. The MLPC has engaged in expanded education and advocacy to improve child enrollment in Medicaid and to improve access to health care and coverage for medically necessary services.

The MLPC Legal Director testified before the Ohio House of Representatives Education Committee regarding the potential consequences of pending legislation allowing for extended school removals for children with mental health needs and informing the committee of the responsibilities of school districts under state and federal special education laws.
MLPC Open Cases 2007 through 2013

- Education: 300
- Housing: 257
- Family: 157
- Income Maintenance: 127
- Health: 124
- Consumer: 32
- Other: 47 *

* Other includes Employment, Juvenile, Individual Rights, and Miscellaneous
Chloe was a high school senior who was struggling with depression and thoughts of suicide. She was hospitalized briefly and when she was released, the school would not let her return because of her mental health issues. Chloe was told that she would have to complete her final year of high school via correspondence and internet courses, even though her mental health team informed the school that she was stable and needed to get back to her normal life and routine to heal.

A counselor referred Chloe and her Mom to the MLPC and she was assigned a Legal Aid attorney. Her attorney convinced the school to develop a 504 plan that provided the accommodations and support Chloe needed to transition back to school.

Not only did Chloe graduate with honors, she was awarded a presidential scholarship to a prestigious university. She and her mother were both thankful to the MLPC and the Legal Aid attorney for their help in getting Chloe back on track for an exciting future.
The Toledo Medical-Legal Partnership for Children aligns poverty law advocates with healthcare professionals serving low-income, medically vulnerable patients. As a result, children and families with health-harming legal needs get the legal care they need.

When health care personnel and legal services work together, kids living in substandard housing get the legal help they need to ensure that housing codes are enforced so that they breathe safely without mold triggering asthma attacks. If families need legal protection to prevent utility shut offs to ensure that they are warm and safe in their own home, the MLPC can help. These are just a few of the challenges our clients are faced with on a daily basis.

Like other Legal Aid firms and networks from across the country, LAWO and ABLE are meeting only 20 percent of the legal needs of low-income people. Bridging this “justice gap” is imperative to our missions. Your partnership in the MLPC is an investment in the future health and wellbeing of our children and our community.

Our years of experience have shown us that we cannot do this work alone – we must work together to win this struggle. With the partnership of our generous donors and friends, LAWO and ABLE can continue to serve people who would not otherwise have a voice. By giving directly to ABLE and LAWO, you help to ensure that every dollar benefits our work... work that ensures a place where the poor and disenfranchised in our community can count on receiving the civil legal help they need and deserve. Your financial support will go a long way toward helping support our mission.
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Visit donate.ablelaw.org or donate.lawolaw.org.

Give by Mail

Send a check in any amount to:
ABLE, c/o MLPC, 525 Jefferson Avenue, Ste. 300, Toledo OH 43604

Connect & Communicate

Join our mailing list or connect with us via Facebook, Twitter and/or LinkedIn for timely updates about our services, events, volunteer opportunities, case stories, and outcomes.

Together, we do the community justice.
Support for the Toledo Medical-Legal Partnership for Children has been generously provided by the following in-kind and financial donors.*

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* Please note that the entities listed have all supported the MLPC since its inception in 2007. Not all are current donors of the MLPC.
To make a referral to the MLPC:
Submit a referral form or call ABLE at (419) 255-0814 and ask for an MLPC attorney.

Visit the MLPC website: mlpc.ablelaw.org

The MLPC is a partnership among:

Advocates for Basic Legal Equality, Inc.
Legal Aid of Western Ohio, Inc.

Together, we do the community justice.

Mercy Children's Hospital
Care you can believe in.

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