

Medical-Legal Partnership Models

Background:

ABA Support for Pro Bono Projects Involving Medical-Legal Partnerships

The American Medical Association (AMA) passed a resolution that encourages physicians to work with lawyers, social workers and nurses to improve the health and well-being of their patients. The American Bar Association's (ABA) Medical-Legal Partnerships Pro Bono Support Project: The ABA Medical-Legal Pro Bono Support Project, called Pro Bono as a Health Art, responded with overwhelming support for the AMA, stating, "The attorneys who work in such partnerships on a pro bono basis deserve high praise and we encourage more lawyers to pursue similar, pro bono work. It also is critical that Legal Services Corporation gain additional resources so their grantees can expand partnership efforts. The ABA is a strong advocate for these collaborations and is delighted to have the partnership of the AMA in moving forward."

Possible Models:

Adoption:

Example: The legal aid partner is the Medical-Legal Partnership | Boston, and the pro bono partner is Ropes & Gray.

- 1) Ropes & Gray has a lead pro bono partner who leads five groups of attorneys divided by substantive areas: family law, income support, housing, immigration and education. All attorneys and paralegals involved are part of the "core" team.
- 2) Substantive back-up
- 3) Legal aid partner does triage at health center
- 4) Legal aid partner has three choices when client is referred by medical partner:
 - a) Legal aid partner resolves on phone call
 - b) Legal aid partner determines issue is non-legal or can be referred to internal or other external legal resources
 - c) Legal aid sets up an appointment for Ropes & Gray pro bono appointment
- 5) Ropes & Gray does legal intake on-site at clinic only for set appointments
- 6) Ropes & Gray has core team meeting to determine case acceptance, staffing, etc.
- 7) Ropes & Gray notifies client and legal aid partner if it can provide ongoing legal representation
- 8) Legal aid partner provides substantive back-up support and training for Ropes & Gray on poverty law issues

Participation by direct partnering

- 1) Law firm directly partners with a health clinic, hospital or health center

- 2) No legal service involvement on day-to-day basis
- 3) Pro bono attorneys meet with patients on-site during a scheduled clinic arranged by health partner
 - a) Example: Volunteers of Legal Services (VOLS) in New York matches law firms with health care providers and provides some administrative support
 - b) Patterson Belknap is proud to be part of a unique partnership between law firms and the medical and social work professions. In VOLS' pro bono program, the Children's Project, six law firms are matched with hospitals in New York City, and Patterson Belknap has been matched with Metropolitan Hospital. This innovative program allows the firm to assist poor families with sick children who are especially vulnerable to unhealthy housing conditions, terminated public benefits and inappropriate special education placements, providing a dedicated team of lawyers and support staff to work on a continuing flow of cases.
 - c) According to VOLS' website, in 2008 ninety-eight families were served in seven hospitals, involving 143 individual lawyers and 34 legal assistants.

Single-Topic Model

- 1) Pro bono law firm specializes in a specific issue or case for the MLCP
- 2) Example: Foley & Lardner on education issues in Boston
- 3) Legal aid does all intake and only cases involving educational law are referred to Foley & Lardner

Technical Assistance Model

- 1) Law firm offers general technical assistance for things like:
 - a) Health information privacy
 - b) Ethics and confidentiality
 - c) Organizational and other operations-related topics
- 2) Example: McDermott, Will & Emery offer nationwide TA pro bono to MLCP for operations-related support for established MLCPs

Traditional Case Referral Model

- 1) Intake and screening done by legal services. Cases are shopped to law firm on a case-by-case basis.

Hybrids

Combinations of any of the above