



**Health, Education and Legal Assistance Project:
A Medical-Legal Partnership at Delaware Law School**

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Prevalence of Civil Legal Needs

74% of families with low incomes experienced at least 1 unmet civil legal need within the past year.

39% experienced 5 or more unmet civil legal needs.

20% experienced 10 or more unmet civil legal needs.

Source: Legal Services Corporation. (2022). The Justice Gap. <https://justicegap.lsc.gov/resource/executive-summary/>

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“Justice Gap”

92% of people with low incomes and unmet legal needs did not get any or enough help for their problems.

- 53% did not know where to find an attorney they could afford.
- 49% of all requests to civil legal services organizations are rejected due to limited resources.

Source: Legal Services Corporation. (2022). The Justice Gap. <https://justicegap.lsc.gov/resource/executive-summary/>

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Health-harming Legal Needs

- **Unmet legal needs lead to poor health and can be especially detrimental during pregnancy, infancy, and early childhood.**
- Examples include:
 - Homelessness
 - Poor housing conditions
 - Utility shut off
 - Income insecurity and accessing public benefits
 - Domestic/intimate partner violence
 - Child welfare involvement, custody, divorce
 - Pregnancy discrimination
 - Issues related to immigration status
 - Many others!



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HELP: MLP Goals

1. Identify unmet legal needs among pregnant and parenting families through regular screening.
2. Improve families' stability and health by resolving unmet legal needs.
3. Strengthen the advocacy capacity of public health partners to address harmful social and structural determinants of health through training and education.
4. Improve community-wide outcomes through systemic advocacy and policy change.



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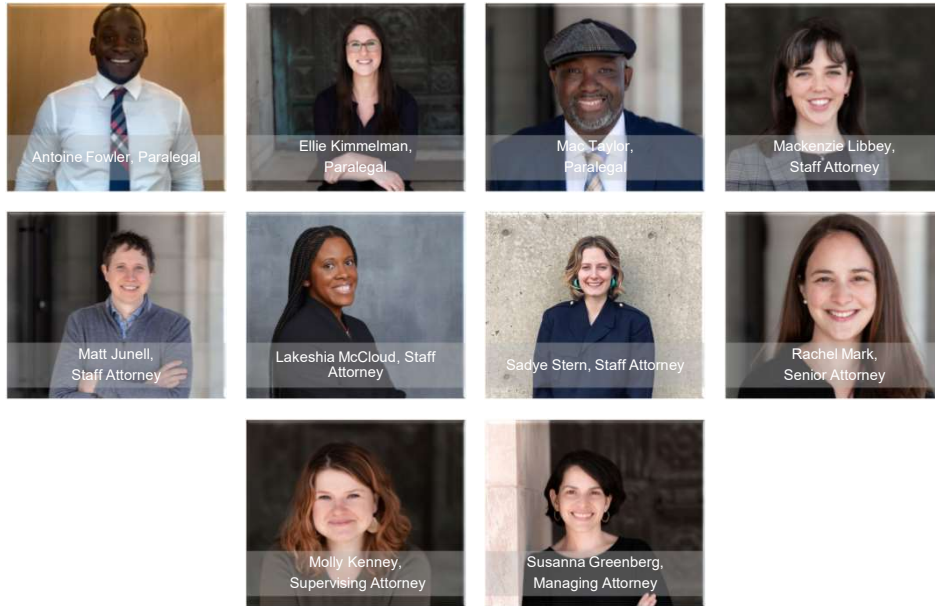
HELP: MLP's Current Partnerships

1. **Family Advocacy and Integrated Resources (FAIR) Project**
 - Serves families participating in Philly Families CAN maternal and child health home visiting programs in Philadelphia.
2. **Medical-Legal Partnership at The Foundation for Delaware County (MLP at TFDC)**
 - Serves participants of TFDC's public health programs, including Housing Opportunity Program for Equity (HOPE), Nurse-Family Partnership (NFP), and Healthy Start.
3. **SOAR Project**
 - The SSI Outreach, Access, and Recovery (SOAR) Project, supported by the Delaware County Department of Human Services, assists people with disabilities at risk of homelessness with obtaining critical benefits.



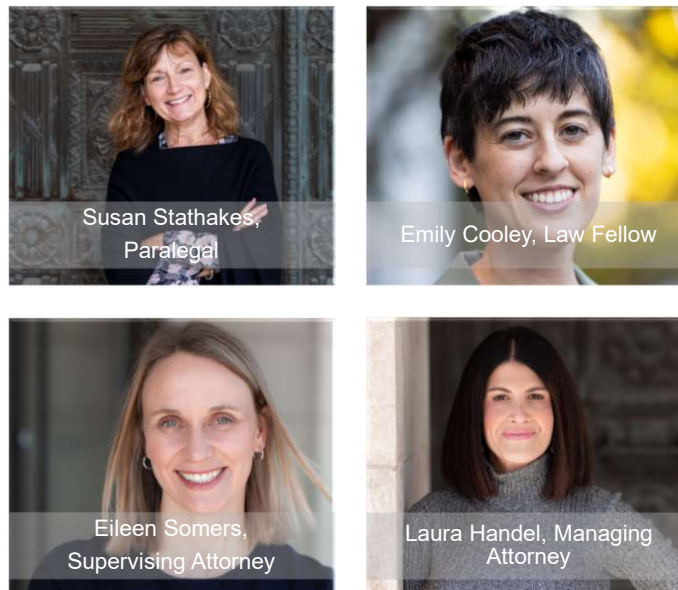
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HELP: MLP's FAIR Project Legal Team



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HELP: MLP's Delaware County Legal Team



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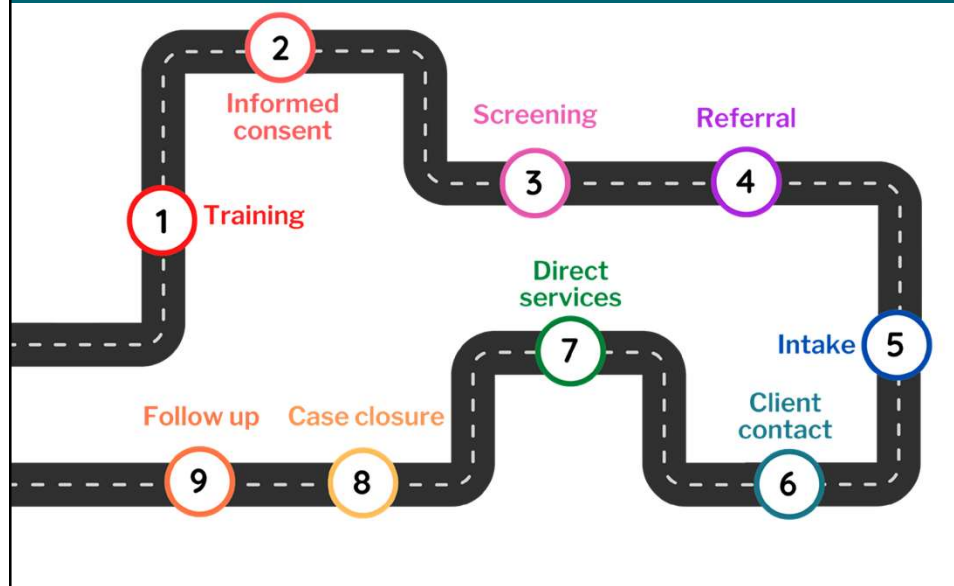
Our Approach

- Collaborative, holistic and preventative approach.
- Specializes in remediating legal needs that impact maternal and child health.
- Generalist lawyers/ paralegals with a strong referral network.
- Provides continuity of representation.
- Lowers stress through services and accessibility.



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Referral Pathway



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Legal Needs Screening

- Assess needs across five areas:
 - Income and insurance
 - Housing and utilities
 - Education and employment
 - Legal (immigration) status
 - Personal and family stability
- Recommend partners screen families upon enrollment to their program and at least annually.
- Provide training on how to conduct screening and make referrals.

Housing and Utilities Needs ▾

Do you or your family own or rent your home?

Own
 Rent
 Chose not to respond
 Other

Are you currently homeless or living in a temporary housing situation (for example, staying with family or friends)?


Yes
 No
 Chose not to respond

Do you currently live in subsidized housing (for example, Public Housing Authority [PHA], Section 8, Housing Choice Voucher, Emergency Housing Voucher, etc.)?

Yes
 No
 Chose not to respond

Are there any safety problems in your home (for example, lead, peeling paint, electrical or structural hazards)?

Yes
 No
 Chose not to respond



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Training and Education

- Provide regular training, education, and technical assistance on social, legal and policy issues that impact pregnant and parenting families. Topics include:
 - MLP screening and referral (offered multiple times per year)
 - Housing law (tenants' rights, fair housing rights, accessing housing services and benefits)
 - Preventing utility shut off and accessing utility assistance programs
 - Navigating public benefits and public insurance programs (e.g., TANF, SNAP, WIC, Medicaid)
 - Family law (child welfare, custody, child support, paternity)
 - Financial counseling and resources for families
 - Navigating issues when youth turn 18 years old
 - Disability law and how to access benefits for people with disabilities
 - Immigration law
 - Voter rights
- Partners can submit requests for training and technical assistance through an electronic form.

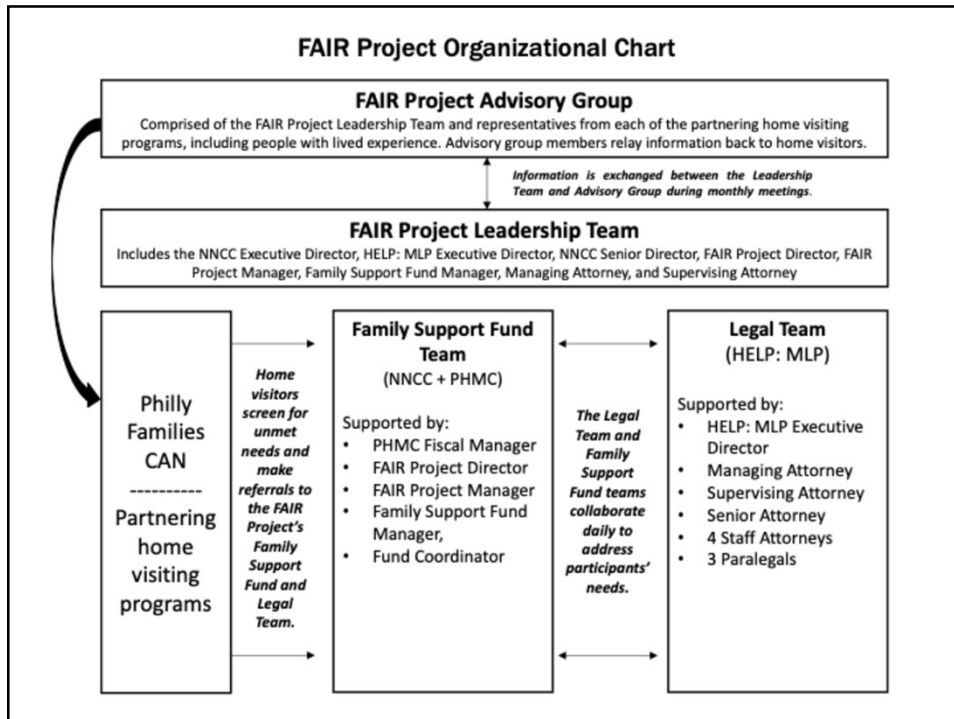
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The FAIR Project (est. 2022)

- Supported by the William Penn Foundation through July 2025.
- Operated by National Nurse-Led Care Consortium (NNCC), HELP: MLP, and Public Health Management Corporation (PHMC).
- Serves Philly Families CAN-affiliated home visiting programs' participants.
- Provides integrated legal services and emergency financial assistance through a Family Support Fund.



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FAIR Project Family Support Fund

- Operated by National Nurse-Led Care Consortium (NNCC) and Public Health Management Corporation (PHMC)
- Provides low-barrier, rapid-response financial support to help families meet their personal and family goals.
- Due to their long-term and trusting relationships with clients, home visitors can identify families' needs before they become crises.
- With client permission, HELP: MLP collaborates with the Family Support Fund; however, the Fund makes all decisions regarding administering financial assistance to clients.
- The Fund supports a wide range of needs, including housing, utilities, clothing, food, transportation, childcare, etc.



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FAIR Project Eligibility

- Philadelphia families who are enrolled in home visiting programs that are partnered with the FAIR Project can be referred to the FAIR Project.
 - There are no additional income or other eligibility requirements.
- Current home visiting partners include:
 - Maternity Care Coalition
 - National Nurse-Led Care Consortium
 - HopePHL
 - Carson Valley Children's Aid
 - Health Federation of Philadelphia
 - ParentChild+



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HELP: MLP at TFDC (est. 2010)

- Operated by The Foundation for Delaware County (TFDC) and HELP: MLP.
 - Project established as one of three national HRSA grantees to establish a MLP in Healthy Start.
- Provides integrated legal services to participants of TFDC's public health programs:
 - Nurse-Family Partnership
 - Healthy Start
 - Housing Opportunities Program for Equity (HOPE)
- Collaborates with the HOPE team, which provides housing-related assistance to families.



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HELP: MLP's SOAR Project (est. 2023)

- Supported by the Delaware County Department of Human Services.
- SOAR is a national model aimed at improving the likelihood of applicants receiving Supplemental Security Income (SSI) benefits the first time they apply.
- Eligibility criteria:
 - Delaware County residents who are
 - Homeless or at risk of homelessness (broad definition) and
 - Have a disabling condition that prevents them from working.
- Assist adults **and children** with disabilities.



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Example Impacts and Outcomes FAIR Project February 2023 – January 2024

- 1,135 legal matters for 556 unique participants were addressed.
- Obtained at least \$533,796 in annualized financial support and benefits.
 - Including support from the Family Support Fund, the total annualized financial impact on families was \$822,901.
- Obtained public benefits (e.g., TANF, SNAP, WIC, subsidized childcare) for at least 53 families resulting in \$191,785 in annualized benefits.
- Obtained \$57,010 in Unemployment Compensation (UC) benefits and \$25,070 in annualized Social Security benefits.
- Prevented eviction for at least 42 families and obtained rental assistance in at least 152 cases (\$299,306). Avoided at least \$39,290 in housing-related costs for families.
- Prevented utility shut off or restored utilities in at least 123 cases and obtained at least \$36,677 in utilities assistance.
- Families report high satisfaction, lowered stress, improved quality of life, and improved relationships with their children as a result of FAIR services.

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Example Impacts and Outcomes MLP at TFDC January – December 2023

- 491 legal matters for 183 unique participants were addressed.
- Obtained at least \$595,771 in annualized financial support and benefits.
- Obtained SNAP for 54 families, TANF for 21 families, and Medicaid for 24 families.
- Obtained \$20,436 in annualized Social Security benefits.
- Prevented eviction for at least 35 families and obtained rental assistance for at least 26 participants.
- Avoided at least \$50,728 in housing related costs for participants.
- Prevented utility shutoff in 38 cases and obtained \$18,347 in utility assistance for families.
- 100% of clients reported that they strongly agree or agree the MLP services decreased their stress, improved their quality of life, improved their health, and helped to improve their relationship with their children.

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Client Quotes

"She has helped us get food stamps, so food isn't a struggle anymore."

"My family is so grateful for the Foundation of Delco! They helped pay my past due rent to prevent my family and I from being evicted and prevented us from being homeless."

"I honestly don't know where me and my family would be standing had it not been for Mrs. Eileen I learned so much from her and will hold her so dear and close to my heart. I appreciate everything."

"The legal services provided greatly affected my family in a good way because I was able to stay in my home and I didn't have to bother with court proceedings as the attorney handled everything on my behalf. Eileen was easy to contact and explained everything to me."

"They helped me get approved of the lead removal from the property that I am in and helped when my landlord has been trying to get over my family and I."

"Laura was great. She explained everything and she reassured me that she could get this over in time for the issue to be resolved and it was, and she's greatly appreciated."

"The entire team on my case was amazing."

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Client Quotes

"I was on the verge of a mental breakdown dealing with post partum depression and anxiety on top of being behind three months in my rent. I didn't know if I was coming or going, the Family Support Fund really added ease to my stress."

"Helped saved my housing, which saved my life."

"Everyone I spoke to was so helpful and understanding. My case worker was patient and explained everything as the process happened and didn't make me feel like I wasn't important or looked down on."

"The support I received from these services improved my ability to sustain my household."

"The legal team helped me get my food stamps back. My card has been hacked and I lost all the benefits that was in it."

"It's impacted me so much I've been struggling to catch up to my bills due to decrease of money and hours at my job."

"MacDonald Taylor was very kind and compassionate when it came to my case. He even checked in on me when I least expected it! He is for the people."

"Ellie is amazing. She was awesome during my hearing with LIHEAP."

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Case Narratives

Alicia's Story*

When HELP: MLP connected with her in March, Alicia's SNAP had been cut off since November. She had reapplied and been denied because, according to the welfare office, she had failed to provide proper verification documents. Through talking to Alicia, the attorney found out that she had been receiving notices and communications from two separate welfare offices about her case and, likely due at least in part to this confusing state of affairs, had not received a notice requesting verification documents. The HELP: MLP attorney advocated with the welfare office to reconsider her application and she was awarded \$562 in retroactive benefits from the date of her application plus \$281/month going forward.

**Names have been changed.*

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Case Narratives

Erica's Story

After arriving in the U.S. about nine months prior, Erica needed some form of income while pregnant with her daughter. Based on her immigration status, she did not qualify for federal TANF, but she did qualify for TANF funded by the state. After applying and submitting all required documentation, the welfare office rejected her application based on a faulty conclusion about her immigration status. The HELP: MLP attorney advocated with the welfare office to educate them about her status, the availability of state-funded TANF, and her eligibility. Her application was ultimately approved, and Erica now has a small but steady income to help support her and her baby's needs while she lives with family.

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Case Narratives

Sera's Story

Sera's family included Sera, who was pregnant, her partner, and two children. Sera and her partner were working hard to make ends meet. Sera just received her first paycheck from a new, higher paying job. Her partner also just found employment after a brief time in jail. Because of the temporary loss of his income, Sera's family was unable to pay rent for a few months and the landlord threatened to file for eviction. After Sera's home visitor screened and referred Sera to the FAIR Project, HELP: MLP supported the landlord and client in receiving Targeted Financial Assistance through an eviction diversion program to cover delinquent rent while the Family Support Fund worked with the landlord to fund an extra month of rent, ensuring the family has time to strengthen their own finances and maintain their housing. While Sera was navigating her housing issues, her family also lost their food assistance. When Sera began her new job, the County Assistance Office shut off her SNAP benefits due to missing paperwork which the client believes she submitted. Sera's family was left without food to last them through the month while awaiting their first paychecks. Her home visitor supported Sera with applying for WIC, the Family Support Fund assisted the home visitor in identifying another support program that gave the client funds to buy groceries, and the legal team resolved the SNAP enrollment challenges.

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Resources

- [HELP: MLP webpage](#)
- [HELP: MLP's SOAR Project](#)
- [The Foundation For Delaware County's Community Programs](#)
- [The FAIR Project](#)
- [Philly Families CAN](#)
- [National Center for Medical-Legal Partnership](#)
- [SOAR Model](#)



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Contact Information



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