



2024 Healthy Living Conference - City of Hope Mental Health Advocacy Services' Medical-Legal Partnerships Erik Nickels, Staff Attorney

MENTAL HEALTH
ADVOCACY
SERVICES

SUMMARY

Mental Health Advocacy Services (MHAS) provides free civil legal services to low-income adults with mental health disabilities. Most of MHAS's services are delivered through our innovative Medical-Legal Partnership (MLP) model. MHAS attorneys work closely with mental health providers from the LA County Department of Mental Health and community-based organizations like Mental Health America. MHAS attorneys train mental health providers to recognize legal issues in their patients' lives. Providers then refer these patients directly to the MHAS attorney, cutting down on the long wait times and logistical hurdles that can be a barrier to receiving legal services.

This project's main goal was to equip mental health providers with the knowledge they need to identify their patients' legal issues and assist them in living and working in the community. A special focus of this project was increasing knowledge of the Psychiatric Advance Directive (PAD) – a legal document that expresses a person's preferences for inpatient mental health treatment.

WHAT DID WE DO?

Project Goals

1. Train behavioral health care providers to identify legal issues that their patients may face.
2. Equip health care providers with basic knowledge and resources they can use to help their patients address their legal needs.
3. Provide resource materials to help educate providers and patients.

Project Objectives

- First Goal:** Conduct five legal trainings for behavioral health care providers on specific legal issues, including fair housing laws, public benefits, and PADs
- Second Goal:** Provide 50 instances of technical assistance to behavioral health care providers on legal issues related to specific patients.
- Third Goal:** Distribute flyers describing our services and information sheets related to substantive legal issues to each of our partner organizations.

Project Outcomes

18 trainings to mental health providers and the public. The subjects of these trainings ran the gamut of the legal issues we address: housing, public benefits, PADs and mental health law, criminal record expungements, special education, and more!
57 instances of technical assistance provided to our medical partners and addressing a wide variety of legal issues. Our Homelessness Prevention Project with Mental Health America and our Transition-Age Youth Project with Daniel's Place were the most common recipients.
Resource materials distributed to each of our partners explaining the logistics of our partnerships and legal information across our issue areas.



FINAL THOUGHTS

We exceeded our expected number of trainings and technical assistance cases. The demand for legal assistance in the medical setting is high.

Providers and patients both react to the idea of PADs with enthusiasm, but very few go through with creating one. We plan to do more education and advocacy to increase the use of PADs.

We believe in the power of MLPs because they create a sort of "one-stop shop" where patients can address their legal and health needs. We plan to expand to more partners and clinics in the near future.

FUN FACTS

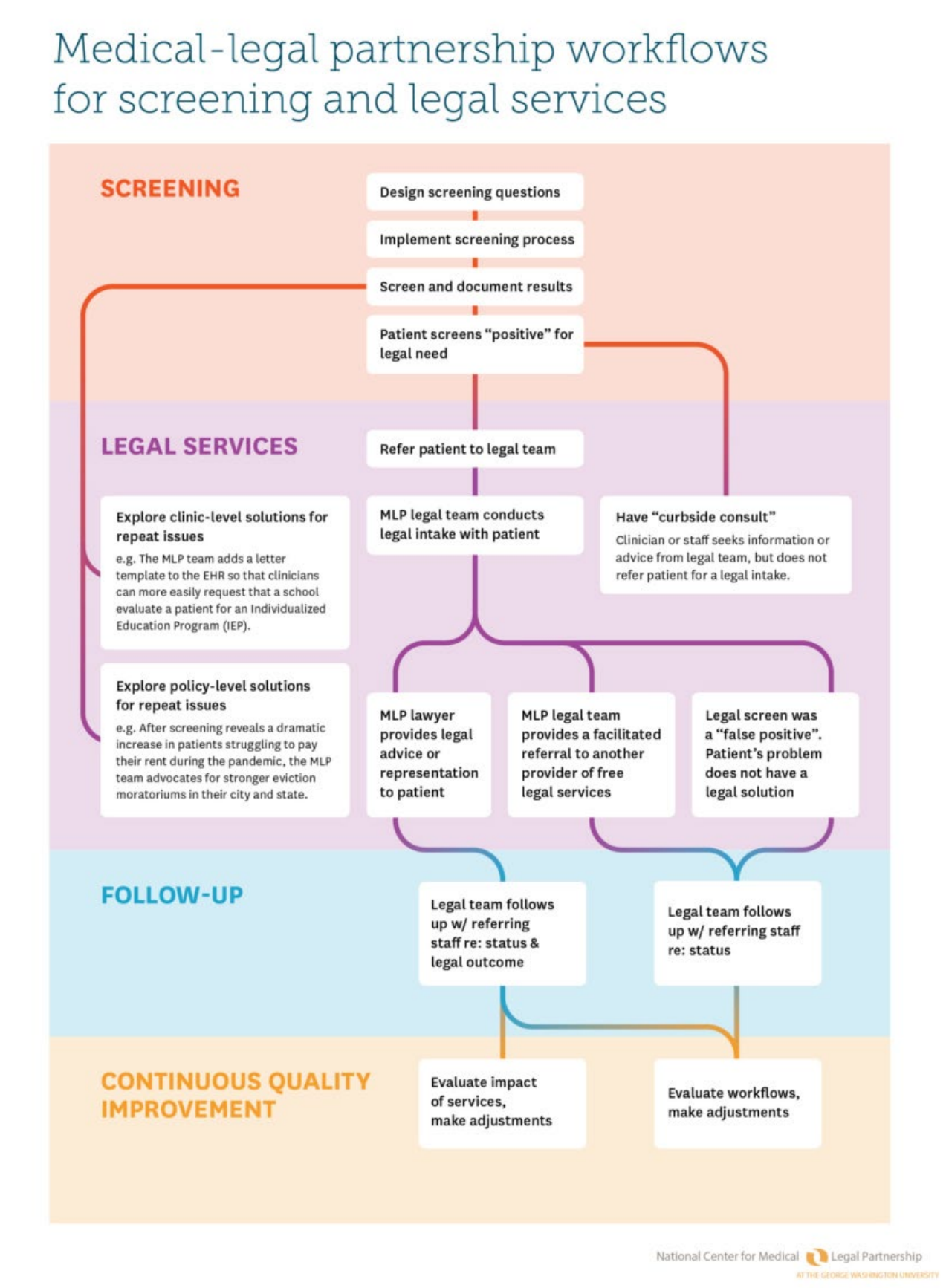
Six medical partners across **twelve** clinics

Populations served include new and expecting mothers, transition-age youth, and veterans, among others

Legal issues addressed include housing, public benefits, criminal record expungement, and PADs

MHAS is the **only legal-aid agency** in California training providers on PADs

Research shows that MLPs improve both **legal and health** outcomes



LA Law Library OPEN TO THE PUBLIC

Mental Health Treatment: Protecting Your Choices

Treatment During a Mental Health Crisis: You have Choices
Friday, July 28, 2023
1:00 p.m. – 2:00 p.m.
In-Person

Help Preparing a Psychiatric Advance Directive (PAD) - Appointment Required
Monday, August 14, 2023
12:00 p.m. – 3:00 p.m.
In-Person

In this class, learn how to state your (or your loved one's) preferences for future mental health treatment in a legal document, so that if an incident results in arrest or psychiatric inpatient treatment, those preferences are provided to medical professionals, service providers, law enforcement and family and friends. Advance planning for mental health care can protect and benefit a person who lives with mental illness, as well as their family members and loved ones.

Through a Psychiatric Advance Directive (PAD), a person can express their wishes regarding psychiatric and medical treatment. PADs may be drafted when a person is well enough to make choices and consider preferences for future mental health treatment. PADs are then used when a person becomes unable to make decisions during a mental health crisis. The instructor will discuss the purpose of a PAD, and how to prepare and finalize this important document.

Presented by: Erik Nickels, Skadden Fellow, Mental Health Advocacy Services (MHAS) (<http://mhas-la.org/>)

Registration fee: FREE

LA Law Library does not provide legal advice. LA Law Library provides legal resources and assistance with legal research as an educational service. The information presented in this program is not legal advice and is provided solely as an educational service to our partners. For legal advice, you should consult an attorney.

For more information or to register, visit: www.lalawlibrary.org/CLASSES or call: 213.785.2514 | 301 W. 1st Street, Los Angeles, CA 90012



A PSYCHIATRIC ADVANCE DIRECTIVE

describes your treatment preferences if you experience a **mental health crisis**:

- What medications are or aren't helpful
- What treatments or treatment locations you prefer
- Whom should be contacted in case of a mental health crisis
- What causes or helps prevent a crisis for you

HHS.gov