Using Medical-Legal Partnerships to Address Social Determinants of Health

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Lenox Hill Neighborhood House

- Lenox Hill has worked with underserved communities since 1894 when it started as a kindergarten for immigrant children.
- The Neighborhood House now serves 15,000 individuals and families in need each year through a wide array of effective and integrated services—social, educational, legal, housing, health, mental health, nutritional and fitness.
- The Legal Department was created in 2004 to provide services to the most vulnerable and underserved members of our community—frail older adults, disabled and homeless people, immigrants, low-wage workers and low-income families—through a multi-disciplinary holistic approach to legal representation.
Inequality in access to civil legal services was associated with increased rates of the following negative health outcomes:

- overweight/obesity
- hypertension
- diabetes
- low birth weights in infants
- preterm births
Access to civil legal services

- In New York, one study using the Gini income coefficient for income inequality, found that for each legal aid attorney there were 5,020 people below 200% of the Federal Poverty Line.

- Lenox Hill’s entire legal department provided assistance that benefited 5,200 low-income individuals in our most recent fiscal year, ensuring housing stability, food security, benefits, health care access and other forms of social justice for vulnerable New Yorkers.

- Our community’s need for civil legal services stems from a combination of political, economic and service-delivery obstacles that impede access to equal justice.
How do civil legal services address social determinants of health?

- Help people of lower socioeconomic status obtain secure and stable housing, health care, employment and other sources of income, and food.

- Low-income people are frequently unaware of and, even more often, unable to navigate the bureaucracy of government agencies and the maze of local, state and federal laws that profoundly affect their lives.

- By mitigating poverty consequences through acute crises remediation and policy reform, civil legal aid attorneys impact health at both individual and systemic levels.
Social Determinants of Health and Civil Legal Service Outcomes

- **Social & Economic Factors**
  - Increased access to income, education, employment, and basic necessity

- **Health Behaviors**
  - Increased access to food
  - Improved structure and support to reduce health risk behavior
  - Reduced stress

- **Clinical Care**
  - Increased access to advanced planning
  - Increased access to medical services and preventative care

- **Physical Environment**
  - Increased access to safe and healthy housing
  - Reduced disruption of utility shut-off
What is a Medical-Legal Partnership?

- A Medical Legal Partnership integrates health care, public health and legal professionals to address and prevent health-harming social and legal needs for patients, clinics, and populations.
How does a Medical-Legal Partnership impact social determinants of health?

- Although civil legal services are critical to addressing social inequities, and the health inequities they create, civil legal services are rarely integrated into the health-care setting.
- This integration transforms the health care system’s response to social determinants of health.
- Medical-legal partnerships address this by providing civil legal services in the health-care setting.
- Moreover, they integrate legal services into health care services by training health care workers to address legal issues and contribute to broader advocacy and policy reform.
Needs Assessment

- East Harlem is a diverse community with median income significantly below the rest of New York City.
- East Harlem is home to many immigrants, and residents experience more barriers to health care access than those in New York City overall.
- In addition, residents of East Harlem suffer disproportionately from chronic health conditions such as diabetes, heart disease, high blood pressure and asthma, have high rates of obesity and are more likely to face food insecurity and homelessness than other New Yorkers.
Identifying the Institute for Family Health as a Partner

- The mission of IFH is to improve access to high quality, patient-centered primary health care targeted to the needs of medically underserved communities.
- IFH is a federally qualified community health center network serving 90,000 patients annually at 27 locations in New York State.
- IFH offers top-quality, patient-centered services to people of all ages, regardless of their financial situation.
- All IFH health centers use the family practice model of care; they provide continuous, comprehensive health care for individuals and families.
Working toward integration

- Legal needs are connected to patient health and legal care is part of health care delivery.
- The Neighborhood House’s Legal Department is formally recognized as part of the health care team and service system at IFH (e.g., participates in staff meetings).
- All IFH’s patients will be screened for health-harming legal needs and have regular access to legal assistance.
- The Neighborhood House’s Legal Department team sees IFH’s patients at IFH.
- The case, clinical, and systemic priorities are set jointly by the Neighborhood House’s Legal Department and IFH’s Health Center’s Management.
- Regular communication between the Neighborhood House Legal Department and IFH’s staff that includes regular trainings and joint data collection and analysis.
Challenges

- Developing a system for scheduling & counseling clients that protects confidentiality and privacy.
- Identifying people with critical civil legal service needs appropriate for appointments.
- Integrating legal services into medical care.
Impact

- Since we started in March 2016, we have provided 37 patients with free one-on-one legal consultations with an attorney.
- Legal Services have become more recognized by IFH staff as a critical part of health care delivery at the Institute.
- We participate in staff, behavioral health, and recipient advisory board meetings at IFH.
- The Legal Department started to represent clients with Supplemental Security Income and Social Security Disability/Retirement benefit issues because of the need we saw from patients.
Success

• A patient from IFH who had his Supplemental Security Income reduced was scheduled to meet with an attorney at our first clinic.

• With our legal representation, the client prevailed on his SSI appeal and received $2,000 in benefits owed and his full benefit amount of $820 going forward.

• Additionally, the client received assistance with applying for a financial assistance program to eliminate Medicare premiums and lower out-of-pocket medical costs.
Recommendations

- Identify partners who have key staff (i.e., social workers or behavioral health providers) to refer clients for civil legal services.

- For FQHCs, funding may be allocated to Medical Legal Partnerships as an “enabling service” through Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA).

- Develop data to track the partnership.

- Ensure staff from both agencies are familiar with the project and its goals.
Resources

- National Center for Medical-Legal Partnerships
References

CHCANYS Conference

Community Health Centers addressing the Broader Determinants of Health for Patients and Communities

Presented by Colleen Flynn, Director
October 31st, 2016
Investors

Local Community Organizations

Healthy Places to Live

Capital

Grants
Loans
Equity
Technical Assistance

Play

Schools

Businesses

Jobs

Homes

Healthy Places to Live

LISC
Since 1979, LISC NYC has:

$2.3 billion
Invested

$5.4 billion
Leveraged

36,300
Affordable homes & apartments

1.6 million square feet
Of retail & community space
Stronger, Healthier Communities

Tackle social determinants of health all in the same place, all at the same time

Tool Highlights

Healthy Food Financing Initiative - build up local businesses and jobs and bring grocery stores, farmers markets and food production facilities to food deserts

Healthy Futures Fund - finance the development of Federally Qualified Health Centers in underserved and invest in affordable housing that incorporates health programs for low-income residents.

NLF Foundation Grassroots Program - provides technical assistance and funding to improve the quality, safety and accessibility of playfields.

Community Safety - supports residents, police, community developers and other people who care about a neighborhood to collaborate in addressing crime and disorder.
Communities for Healthy Food

- Tapping the **community development model** to improve healthy food access
- Leveraging CDCs’ **unique community assets**

**Integrating healthy food strategies** into comprehensive community development work to:
1. Increase access to affordable, nutritious and fresh foods
2. Educate residents and housing staff on **nutrition, healthy cooking and gardening**
3. Enable **economic development opportunities** through creating food-related jobs, improving existing or creating new healthy food venues
4. Implement a neighborhood-wide **outreach and awareness campaign**
5. Form **cross-site partnerships**
6. Provide **wrap around services**: health screenings, enrollment in public assistance programs, food budgeting and tax assistance
Communities for Healthy Food NYC Partners
Pitkin Verde Farmers Market

Partnership between Cypress Hills LDC, HHC East New York Diagnostic and Treatment Center and LISC
Two Shades of Green

TSG integrates green, healthy and cost-effective measures into existing affordable housing rehabilitation and property maintenance.

Collaborative Effort
Local Initiatives Support Corporation, NYC Department of Health & Mental Hygiene, NYC Department of Housing Preservation and Development, Mount Sinai
NYC Smoke Free
Community Development Corporation partners

Evaluation with Mount Sinai: asthma triggers, operating costs, complaints, tenant/staff pre and post surveys
LISC, the Kresge Foundation and Morgan Stanley launched the Healthy Futures Fund in 2013.

Expand Primary Care Access in underserved low-income communities nationwide

Incentivize Cross-Sector Collaboration to improve population health

Provide New Capital to health centers at a time of significant patient growth

Promote More Efficient Financial Execution to reduce costs & improve project benefits
HFF Impact

To-date, we have deployed $100 million in resources in support of roughly 400 units of healthcare-enhanced affordable housing and created primary care capacity and cross-sector partnerships supporting approximately 100,000 individuals.

In 2016, the partners committed another $100 million in resources to improve population health including Low Income Housing Tax Credit equity, New Markets Tax Credit equity and loans, technical assistance and planning grants, and program grants.
The Problem:
The population in the Bronx is burdened by a myriad of health challenges and socioeconomic circumstances that foster poor health outcomes. It is the least healthy county in New York State, and has high rates of chronic disease such as diabetes, respiratory disease and obesity.

The Solution:
The West Side Federation for Senior and Supportive Housing proceeded with the development of Tres Puentes to bring on line 175-units of affordable housing adjacent to its existing Borinquen Court in the Bronx.

It’s More Than Housing:
WSFSSH will supply free hot meals and recreational programs for residents and community members at the ground floor community center and partner with a health center to make available comprehensive primary care services on-site.

For Tres Puentes, LISC contributed $55 million in Low Income Housing Tax Credit equity, a $1.5 million pre-development loan, support through its Two Shades of Green program, and grant funds to support the clinic build out.
Brockton, MA

The Problem:
Nearly 1 in 4 residents in Brockton lives below the poverty level and the area has high rates of nutrition-related diseases like diabetes and hypertension. Places to buy healthy foods at reasonable prices or access to comprehensive primary care services are out of reach for many.

The Solution:
The Brockton Neighborhood Health Center and Vicente’s Tropical Supermarket entered into an innovative partnership to open new branches next to each other, all with an expressed shared mission to improve community health.

A Coordinated Approach:
The clinic hired a nutritionist to spearhead coordinate on-going nutrition programming with Vicente’s for delivery at the clinic, the grocery store and nearby affordable housing.

LISC provided $3,600,000 in financing for Vicente’s and through the Healthy Futures Fund $8,400,000 in New Markets Tax Credit equity and loan, and $100,000 in grant funds for BNHC.
Washington DC

The Problem:
Ward 7 is one of Washington DC’s poorest neighborhoods. Its residents have among the highest prevalence and mortality associated with diabetes in the district. Ward 7 also consistently has the highest unemployment rate as compared to other wards in DC.

The Solution:
So Others Might Eat led the development of the Conway Center, a 300,000 square foot mixed-use complex on Benning Road in Ward 7.

The Innovation:
The Conway Center is the first of its kind in the District of Columbia to offer homeless and low-income families and individuals safe affordable housing, job training and healthcare, all in one place.

For the Conway Center, LISC, primarily through the Healthy Futures Fund provided $34,000,000 in resources including $20,000,000 in Low Income Housing Tax Credit equity, $13,500,000 in New Markets Tax Credit equity and loan, and $300,000 in grant funds.
The Problem:
The problem is that St. Paul’s East Side is home to a rich cultural mix of immigrants and refugees. This population faces significant barriers and access to critical services necessary to stabilize their lives.

The Solution:
The Rolling Hills Apartments, through a partnership between Lutheran Social Services and Westside Community Health Services, will modernize a 108 unit affordable housing campus and create an on-site health delivery space in the East Side of St. Paul.

A Sustainable Model:
The partners jointly implemented a series of leadership training and community engagement activities. Many health-focused programs resulted and are sustained by the community including a walking club, community garden, health education, ESL, and financial literacy classes.

For Rolling Hills Apartments, LISC provided through the Healthy Futures Fund provided $9,400,000 in Low Income Housing Tax Credit equity and $105,000 in grant funds.
What are the goals of this evaluation?
- The Healthy Futures Fund invests in projects that co-locate a health center with a provider of non-clinical services that impact social determinants of health (such as affordable housing, job services, financial services, grocery store etc).
- The Center for Community Health and Evaluation (CCHE) is working with the Kresge Foundation and LISC to assess the potential impact of current HFF investments, inform future investment decisions, support developing the field of social finance, and build capacity for longer-term outcome monitoring of HFF-funded projects.

What is the intent of the evaluation?
- The intent of the evaluation is to understand the factors that have contributed to the progress and successes of HFF-funded projects, and to share lessons learned along the way.

Case studies
- Anticipated Spring 2017
Contact Information

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Shop Healthy – A Primary Care and Public Health Partnership

Urban Health Plan, Inc.
Elvira Rella, MS
Director of Nutrition
No conflicts to disclose
• A network of federally qualified community health centers located in the Bronx and Queens, comprised of nine (9) clinical sites, ten (10) school based health centers, three (3) part time sites, three (3) administrative sites.

2015
• 815 Associates
• 74,893 Patients
• 366,691 Visits
View of the Bronx

**Bronx**

- 53.5% Hispanic/Latino
- 36.5% Black
- **30.5%** live below poverty level
- 30% of adults are obese
- 34.4% of residents walk 10 minutes or more to purchase fresh produce

http://censusviewer.com/county/NY/Bronx
https://factfinder.census.gov/faces/tableservices/jsf/pages/productview.xhtml?pid=ACS_14_5YR_S1701&prodType=table
What is Shop Healthy?

Shop Healthy is a NYC Health Department initiative that aims to increase access to healthy foods in communities with high rates of sugary drinks consumption and obesity.
Our Resources: Team Members!
How does Shop Healthy work?

- Work with shop owners to obtain food items that meet program criteria
- Criteria are:
  - Water at eye level
  - 1% or fat free milk
  - Low sodium canned vegetables
  - Canned fruit in 100% juice
  - Whole wheat bread
  - Breakfast and/or Lunch combo
  - Healthy snacks under 200 calories
- Attain recognition from the borough president
Why does SHB work?

- Support of President & CEO
- Constant support of the DOH Shop Healthy Program
- Team commitment
  - Doctor, nutritionists, health educators
- Think beyond the 7 guidelines promoting other healthy options.
- Community engagement
Small changes with a big impact
Who our partners are

- Five supermarkets
- Four delis/bodegas
- Two pharmacies
- A bakery
- A pizzeria
- A community center restaurant
- A smoothie shop
Challenges

• Having shop owners understand the relationship between junk food and poor health outcomes

• Turnover of managers at shops

• Time commitment
Outcomes

• Increased advertising for healthier food
• Increased sale of healthier items

• Nine shop owners have received recognition for increasing access of healthier food by the borough presidents
Recommendations for forming a Shop Healthy team

• Identify individuals who are committed to make a difference in the community

• Identify 1 or 2 key shops

• Establish a trustworthy relationship with shop owner
Recommended Policy Changes

• Limit the number of fast foods establishment in a block/area

• Monopolizing of store shelves
Thank you!