

MLP Medical
Legal
Partnership

ANNUAL REPORT

FISCAL YEAR 2024



ABOUT MLP

Medical
Legal
Partnership

The MLP offers free legal advice and representation to those in need. Our services help patients prevent evictions, secure government benefits, advocate for children's rights in school, develop advanced care plans, navigate employment concerns, handle immigration matters, and address family law and domestic violence issues. We work to ensure access to justice on almost every civil legal issue that affects patients' health and access to health care.

OUR MISSION

To improve the health and well-being of our patients and community by addressing social and environmental factors that are rooted in legal problems.

OUR VISION

To create a safer, healthier, more equitable community through access to justice.

Clinical Locations

- CHoR Brook Road
- CHoR Outpatient Pavilion
- CHoR Inpatient Tower
- Complex Care Clinic
- Emergency Department
- Hayes E. Willis Health Center
- Massey Cancer Center
- VCU Ryan White Program
- Sickle Cell Program
- Virginia Treatment Center for Children

Community Locations

- Dominion Place Apartments
- Health Hub at 25th

We provide free legal services for:

Housing



Eviction,
Landlord/Tenant,
Conditions &
Repairs

Public Benefits



Appeals for
Medicaid, SSDI,
SSI, SNAP,
TANF

Family Law



Domestic Violence,
Custody,
Guardianship

Employment



Discrimination,
Unlawful
Termination,
FMLA

Estate Planning



Wills, POA,
Advance
Medical
Directives

Education



Individual
Education & 504
Plans, Bullying,
Truancy

Immigration



Asylum
Petitions, Special
Immigrant
Juvenile Status

Consumer Law



Bankruptcy,
Debt Collection,
Predatory
Lending



A NOTE FROM OUR DIRECTOR:

On behalf of our dedicated MLP team, I am so pleased to share the impact and achievements of FY2024—a year in which we reached and supported more patients and families than ever before. As you will see in the pages of this report, we have much to be proud of in this sixth year of service to our patients, families, providers, and community. Our work embodies the mission of our health system, tackling the legal and structural barriers at the root of many health inequities.

Over the past fiscal year, we partnered with the CHoR Family Resource Center to offer onsite access to legal services, provided free legal

advice and counsel to East End residents at the Health Hub in collaboration with CVLAS and the University of Richmond School of Law, and collaborated with VCU's Center for Public Policy to evaluate our program and assess its return on investment. And perhaps most importantly, we continued to support health and social care teams in delivering the best care possible by helping to build more effective and coordinated systems of care.



With your support, we have made tangible differences in the lives of our patients and families, creating a safer, healthier, more equitable community through access to justice.

With your support, we have made tangible differences in the lives of our patients and families, creating a safer, healthier, more equitable community through access to justice. Over the next year, we are excited to expand our team with the addition of a new MLP Project Coordinator and to implement innovative strategies to add more legal capacity. Our goal is to bring free legal services to more people who need them. I look forward to our continued work together in 2025.



Allison L. Held

YEAR IN REVIEW



\$1.3 million

In legal services provided at no cost to patients and families

3,283 hrs

Donated by MLP attorneys



CASE SPOTLIGHT

Kiwanda and her three children were at risk of losing their home and owing thousands of dollars in back rent. After her Section 8 housing voucher was mishandled by the Department of Social Services, her landlord attempted to evict the family, claiming she owed five months of rent. Kiwanda had done everything she was supposed to but she was still on the verge of losing her housing.

Our MLP attorney negotiated to have her voucher reinstated and represented Kiwanda in court and won, getting the eviction dismissed. Kiwanda and her children were able to walk away without owing any rent and their housing voucher was reinstated. The MLP attorney helped Kiwanda understand that she had rights, and having someone to advocate for her gave her peace of mind. Kiwanda said her MLP attorney **“gave [her] the confidence and security to know everything was going to be okay.”**

In FY24 we experienced dramatic increases in referrals and cases from previous years:



REFERRALS

Received: **778**

Up from FY23: **20.8%**



CASES

Closed: **576**

Up from FY23: **16.1%**

Not all referrals become legal cases. Matters that are not yet ripe for legal intervention, are out of scope, or don't meet our eligibility criteria are generally referred to community resources.

IMPACT ASSESSMENT

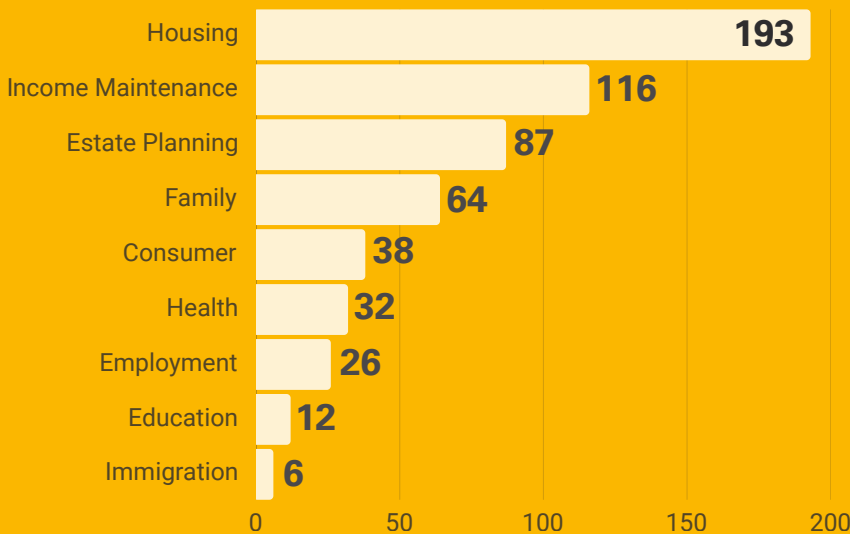
In partnership with the Center for Public Policy (CPP) at the Wilder School, the MLP at VCU Health conducted an assessment of its impact on patients and the health system in 2022 and 2023. The analysis revealed a significant return on investment (ROI), with patients benefiting from a 392% ROI, meaning they received \$3.92 for every dollar spent. This provided critical financial relief for basic necessities like food, housing, and medical care. VCU Health also saw a 261% ROI, receiving \$2.61 for every dollar invested in the program.

These results, based on a conservative analysis of nine Medicaid cases out of over 900 closed cases, suggest that our actual ROI could be even higher. The report also highlighted the MLP's efficiency, turning donations and budget allocations into returns that exceeded investments.

The CPP compared our MLP to other programs nationwide, identifying it as a leader due to its strong partnerships, wide-reaching impact, and high ROI. This analysis is now helping us refine our operations, improve program performance, and elevate the profile of our MLP. Additionally, an ROI calculator developed by the CPP will allow us to track and report annual performance, ensuring accountability and continued improvement in promoting health equity.



LEGAL SERVICES PROVIDED IN FY24



MLP attorneys provided free legal advice and representation on a wide range of legal issues in FY24. Among other benefits, their advocacy prevented evictions, enforced rights to habitable housing, addressed food insecurity by helping patients qualify and appeal denials of SNAP benefits, won Medicaid benefits enabling patients to access necessary medical care and medicine, and gave patients and families peace of mind by preparing life planning documents.



Direct Financial Benefits to Clients:

- ⊕ Medical Bills: **\$412,040**
- 🏠 Housing: **\$89,145**
- 🏛️ Public Benefits: **\$140,642**
- 👁️ Consumer: **\$72,402**
- 👛 Employment: **\$100,000**
- ⚖️ Fees/Court Costs: **\$335**

Based only on reported data; likely a conservative estimate.



Total: **\$814,564**



PRO BONO SUMMIT

The Virginia Bar Association (VBA) invited the MLP to present at the Chief Justice’s Pro Bono Summit this past summer, held at the Supreme Court of Virginia. Chief Justice Goodwyn presided over the event, which was focused on celebrating and improving pro bono legal services to address the justice gap across Virginia.

Allison Held, director of the MLP, presented to a wide audience of Bar leaders and attorneys from across the state, showcasing the MLP’s approach to addressing pro bono needs. The VBA’s 2024 Report, *The State of Pro Bono in Virginia*, outlines the top 10 pro bono legal needs, all of which the MLP at VCU Health addresses across nine patient populations.

Held highlighted how the MLP’s work aligns with statewide efforts to expand access to legal services. Many attorneys expressed interest in contributing pro bono work for VCU Health patients, while others showed enthusiasm for implementing similar programs in their local hospitals. This summit not only underscored the importance of the MLP’s work on a statewide level but will help build new partnerships and expand the impact of pro bono services in Virginia.



[Watch Here!](#)



COMMUNITY HIGHLIGHTS

WE JOINED THE FRC

In the spring of 2023, the MLP joined the Family Resource Center (FRC), a new initiative to address social drivers of health at the Children’s Hospital of Richmond (CHoR). Doctors, nurses, and social workers at the Children’s Pavilion screen visiting families for housing, food, and financial instability. When a need is found, they direct the family to the FRC. There, they can find

a wide variety of resources. A family facing food insecurity might leave with a food box, a referral to a food bank, and a connection to an MLP attorney for help with a SNAP appeal. In this way, their immediate, short-term, and long-term needs are met.

In FY24, the MLP provided legal services in more than fifty cases originating at the FRC. MLP staff or students are now on site at the FRC every weekday, and the partnership contributed to a 62% increase in MLP referrals from CHoR compared to FY23. By addressing more social and legal needs at their root, we can create a healthier, more stable community. We look forward to continuing to work with the FRC staff to better serve patients and families in FY25.

THANK YOU, MAJESTA-DORÉ!

In September 2024, Majesta-Doré Legnini completed her two-year Equal Justice Works Fellowship with the Legal Aid Justice Center, where she served as the MLP attorney in the Emergency Department. During her fellowship, she provided vital legal support on public benefits and healthcare access, helping low-income patients secure healthcare coverage, resolve SNAP benefit issues, and prevent utility shutoffs. With over 450 hours spent onsite and more than 300 consultations, Majesta-Doré became a trusted partner and key resource for patients and staff. We are excited to continue our partnership with LAJC and grateful that Majesta-Doré will remain a valuable support for patients and providers.



OUR CURRENT TEAM



Allison Held
Associate General
Counsel
Director, MLP



Julianne Lane
Intern, VCU School of
Social Work



Marley Manjarrez
Legal Fellow



Molly Hunold
Program Manager



Amanda Teppo
Extern, Richmond Law

Thank You.

Last year's successes were made possible by our incredible community. We extend our heartfelt thanks to our providers and legal partners for advocating for our patients and families, as well as to our interns from the VCU School of Social Work and Richmond Law, whose insights and experiences have enriched our efforts. We are so grateful for the generous funding of the MCV Foundation, the Herndon Foundation, and the Virginia Sargeant Reynolds Foundation. We also appreciate you, our readers—please reach out to learn how you can contribute to our impact!

PARTNERS:

