



Health Justice Project

**Maywood MLP
First Three-Year Report
2021–2024**



LOYOLA
UNIVERSITY CHICAGO

SCHOOL OF LAW

CONTENTS

Introduction	01
History	03
Operations	05
Maywood MLP Leadership	06
Referrals	07
Areas of Need of Referred Patients	08
Outcomes	09
Training and Supporting Providers	11
Students' Role in the Maywood MLP	13
Acknowledgments	15

Introduction

The Health Justice Project (HJP) is an interprofessional law school clinic housed within the Beazley Institute for Health Law and Policy at Loyola University Chicago School of Law. Since its inception in 2010, the HJP has collaborated with health care providers to improve the health and well-being of vulnerable patients by providing free civil legal services and engaging in upstream policy work. The HJP utilizes the medical-legal partnership (MLP) model to embed legal advocacy in health care settings and facilitate collaboration between advocates and health care providers to identify and resolve social and legal issues that negatively affect the health of patients. As part of the HJP Clinic, law, medical, and social work students work together under the supervision of clinical faculty and supervising attorneys to advocate for people living in poverty and people with disabilities to address health-harming social and legal needs and to combat systemic barriers to good health and well-being.

On February 1, 2021, the HJP launched a new collaboration with Loyola Medicine and Loyola University Chicago's Stritch School of Medicine, extending its reach to the near western suburbs of Chicago. The new "Maywood MLP" serves vulnerable patients through an on-site presence at Loyola Medicine Maywood—Roosevelt Road, an outpatient clinic in Maywood, Illinois, and by accepting referrals for legal and social services from Loyola Medicine's Family Medicine Department and outpatient clinics. During its first three years of operation, the Maywood MLP project received 275 referrals and provided support to over 161 Loyola Medicine patients. The Maywood MLP project is supported by one supervising attorney and two clinical faculty from Loyola University Chicago School of Law; one Medical Champion, a Loyola Medicine



INTRODUCTION

family medicine physician and faculty member from Stritch School of Medicine; two AmeriCorps VISTA (Volunteer in Service to America) members; and law, social work, and medical students.

Maywood, Illinois, is the home of Loyola University Chicago's health sciences campus, including the Stritch School of Medicine, Niehoff School of Nursing, and Parkinson School of Health Sciences and Public Health. Maywood is a community with a population consisting of 61 percent Black and 31 percent Latinx or Hispanic residents. The village has faced significant economic disinvestment over the last several decades; it has a 14 percent poverty rate, no grocery store, and a life expectancy more than 10 years lower than that of neighboring River Forest. Residents of Maywood experience higher rates of hospitalization, severe COVID-19 infection,

cardiovascular disease, cancer, diabetes, and stroke than people in surrounding wealthier and whiter neighborhoods.

As part of the HJP Clinic, law, medical, and social work students work together.

The HJP's Maywood MLP addresses persistent, documented health inequities across the spectrum of health conditions through advocacy services. The project operates with the knowledge that adding lawyers to a patient's care team allows for advocacy outside the walls of the doctor's office that can address social and structural barriers to good health. By engaging law, social work, and medical students, the HJP is also teaching the next generation of professionals the value of collaboration and interdisciplinary care.

This report highlights the accomplishments of the Maywood MLP's first three years of operation—from its launch in February 2021 through January 2024; its impact on patients, community, and health care providers; and its role as a laboratory for the education of Loyola law, medical, social work, and other professional students. We are grateful to be in a position to support Loyola Medicine patients and facilitate their access to health-affirming social and legal support. Thank you for your interest in our work!

“My goal is always to take the best care of my patients that I can, and the Maywood legal project allows me to do this. They are a lifeline for me. There are so many social determinants of health that I am not equipped to treat, and I am lucky the MLP is there to do so.”

—Rebecca Maddrell, MD

History

With over a decade of experience managing MLPs, HJP Director Kate Mitchell saw an opportunity to partner with faculty and clinicians from the Stritch School of Medicine to create an MLP affiliated with the medical school and Loyola Medicine. As early as 2017, Mitchell and Stritch School of Medicine professor Amy Blair began discussing the value an MLP could add to Loyola Medicine's clinical practice in Maywood and to clinical education

by teaching medical, social work, and law students to think more holistically about medical care, interdisciplinary collaboration, and advocacy. Discussions continued into 2019, when Mitchell and Blair connected with staff in Loyola Medicine's Community Health & Well-Being division who were also exploring the development of an MLP within the Loyola Medicine system. With interests aligning, plans emerged to develop the Maywood MLP.



HISTORY

Preparations for the launch of the Maywood MLP began in 2020 with the support of medical and law school faculty, Loyola Medicine staff, students, postgraduate law fellows, and AmeriCorps VISTA members placed with the HJP. Located off the main hospital campus and in the village of Maywood, the Loyola Medicine Maywood–Roosevelt Road outpatient clinic was a natural partner. The Roosevelt clinic and its sister clinic in Elmwood Park provide primary care to patients of diverse ages and demographic backgrounds, with a substantial portion of patients insured by Medicaid and Medicare. Through prior grant-based programs for patient-centered medical homes and prior grant-based food justice initiatives such as VeggieRx, the family medicine department, clinic staff, and providers were well positioned to adapt to an initiative that provided needed support services to achieve equitable health outcomes.

With support from leaders in Loyola Medicine’s Community Health & Well-Being division, the Maywood MLP planning team designed and implemented a referral process, provider and

staff training, and educational opportunities for interprofessional student teams. This coincided with pilot programs to screen and provide resources

The Maywood MLP started accepting referrals on February 1, 2021.

for patients’ social determinants of health (SDOH) through Loyola Medicine’s Population Health division, making the integration of the new Maywood MLP seamless. The Maywood MLP started accepting referrals on February 1, 2021—while still in the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic—to provide new resources and help for Loyola Medicine patients during a time of daunting health inequities.

ADVOCACY STORIES

Beverly (not her real name) was an assistant day care director and a patient at Loyola Medicine Maywood–Roosevelt Road when she suffered a stroke and lost physical capacity to remain at her job. The job loss led to an inability to pay rent, and she lost her apartment and moved in with family. An advanced practice nurse referred her to the Maywood MLP for assistance with obtaining financial support. HJP staff and students helped Beverly understand her legal rights as an employee and provided her with information and referrals she could use to protect those rights. HJP also helped Beverly apply for disability benefits and successfully represented her on an appeal when Social Security denied her application. Even after the successful appeal, Social Security mixed up the date Beverly left her job, and the MLP student attorneys appealed the case again to protect her eligibility for benefits. Beverly’s housing situation became newly unstable during the appeal, and the Maywood MLP legal team provided additional advocacy to persuade Social Security to expedite the release of funds to meet a “dire need.”

Operations

The Maywood MLP provides legal and social support to patients of Loyola Medicine providers. Health care providers are trained to identify health-harming legal and social needs as part of their screening for SDOH, gathering of social history, and conversations with patients. When providers see a patient with a health-harming legal need, they refer them to the Maywood MLP. When a referral is received, HJP faculty, staff, and students holistically assess the referred patient's legal and social needs. The HJP then provides legal representation, legal advice, or referrals to supportive services or other legal programs in the community. The HJP's priorities are to ensure access to health care, health insurance, and other financial supports; to ensure access to stable, healthy housing; and to advocate for supports and accommodations for persons with disabilities. The HJP assists clients with a range of issues related to access to income and health insurance, family law and housing needs, education support, immigration questions, advance directives, and other issues. With support from interdisciplinary teams of students from law, social work, and medicine, the HJP assesses each client holistically and through multiple professional lenses.



Maywood MLP Leadership



KATE MITCHELL

JD, Founding Legal Champion of Maywood MLP; Clinical Professor of Law; Director, Health Justice Project; Clinical Professor of Medicine, Family Medicine, Loyola Stritch School of Medicine

“Medical-legal partnerships provide incredible opportunities for professionals from different fields to come together around the common goal of improving health outcomes, serving vulnerable patients with holistic care, and envisioning a pathway for systemic change to address health inequities. MLPs in an academic setting serve as laboratories for students from various programs to learn from each other, grow their skills more comprehensively, and envision the ways they, as professionals, can impact patients, clients, communities, and systems in meaningful and significant ways.”



AMY BLAIR

MD, FAAFP, Founding Medical Champion of Maywood MLP; Associate Professor, Family Medicine; Assistant Dean for Health Advocacy, Medical Education, Loyola Stritch School of Medicine

“I know, through many years of caring for patients in primary care, that partnering with patients and understanding their barriers to health is essential to improving health outcomes. When identifying barriers like access to housing or food, income or employment, or protections for disabling conditions, we simply cannot expect any intervention to work without a team. Working with the MLP, I feel empowered to identify and address health-harming legal needs head on, envisioning solutions that may impact not only individual patients but also policies and systems that affect communities. This is a crucial time to expand resources like the MLP to providers who work to bridge care in a fractured health care delivery system.”



MARC RAIFMAN

MPP, JD, Supervising Attorney, Maywood MLP, 2022–2024, Health Justice Project, Loyola University Chicago School of Law

“Having been a law student at Loyola myself not too long ago, I am grateful to be able to support our current students in their education—one imbued with a Jesuit spirit of service to others and *cura personalis* (care for the whole person). The Maywood MLP has provided and will continue to provide our students with the opportunity to provide direct and critical legal and social supports to patients in Maywood, while advancing the definition of a health care team.”



MAYA WATSON

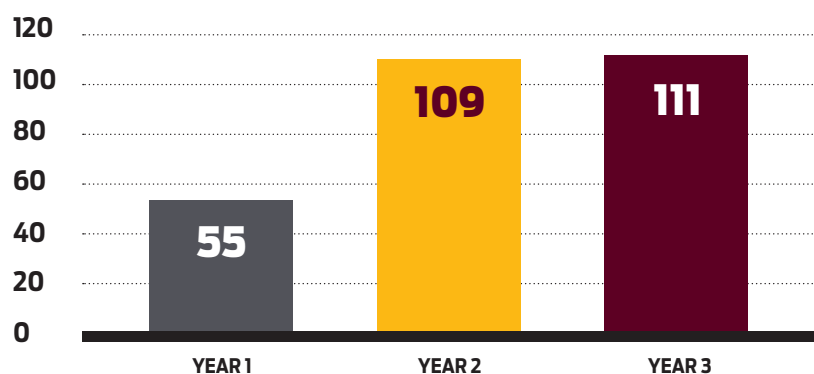
JD, LLM, Founding Director of Maywood MLP, 2020–2022, Loyola University Chicago School of Law (now serving as Assistant Clinical Professor of Law and Director of the Business and Community Law Clinic at Wayne State University Law School)

“As I reflect on my time with the Maywood Medical-Legal Partnership, it brings me great joy. I regard the years working with the revered Loyola Health Justice Project to launch and operate the MLP very fondly. Our clients were kind and patient, the providers were caring, and the community warmly embraced us.”

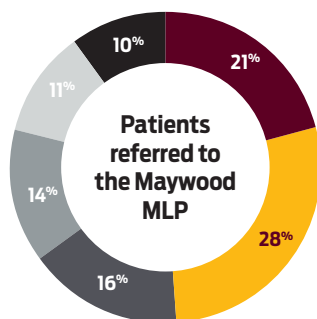
Referrals

In its first year of operation, the Maywood MLP received 55 referrals. That number nearly doubled in the second year of operation to 109 referrals and increased to 111 in year three.

Number of referrals per year



The majority of patients referred to the Maywood MLP were residents of Maywood (21%) and neighboring Broadview (28%), followed by Chicago (16%), Bellwood (14%), and Cicero (11%). The remaining referrals were from other towns in suburban Cook, DuPage, and Will counties.



Maywood	21%
Broadview	28%
Chicago	16%
Bellwood	14%
Cicero	11%
Other	10%

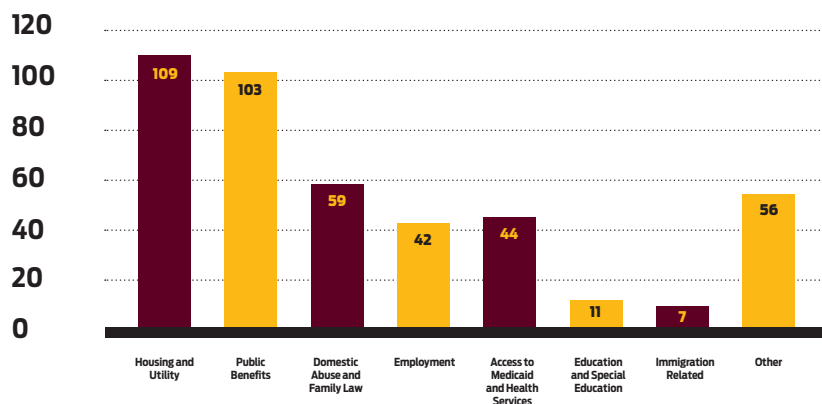
ADVOCACY STORIES

Carla (not her real name) was referred to the Maywood MLP for emergency support by an advanced practice nurse. Carla is a mother of five who was experiencing physical and verbal abuse from her partner. At the time of her referral to the Maywood MLP, Carla had already obtained an emergency order of protection, but she expressed that she was feeling overwhelmed by the situation and was in financial need. The MLP legal team facilitated her communication to the state's attorney handling her case so that she could get her questions heard and answered. The Maywood MLP also provided referrals to counseling and shelters for domestic violence survivors and financial and benefits resources to help Carla through the difficult period.

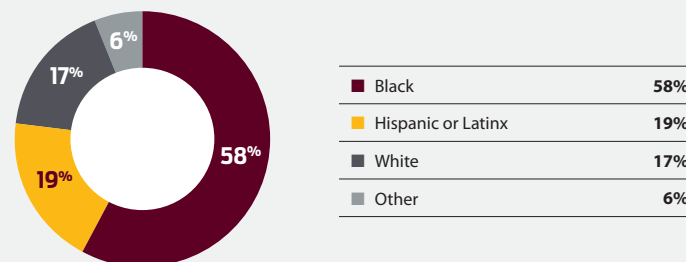
Areas of Need of Referred Patients

During the first three years, patients were referred to the Maywood MLP for assistance with housing and utility concerns 109 times, access to public benefits 103 times, domestic abuse and family law matters 59 times, employment matters 42 times, access to Medicaid and health services 44 times, education and special education concerns 11 times, immigration-related matters 7 times, and other matters 56 times. Many patients were referred for assistance with two or more legal or social issues.

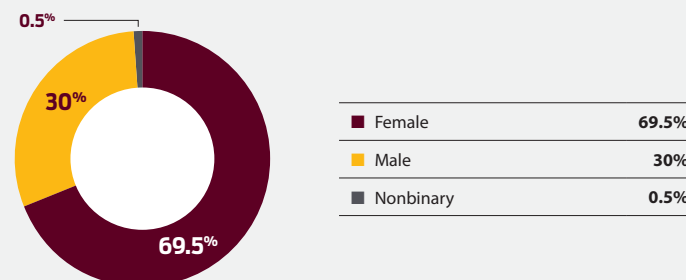
Total Needs (identified at referral)



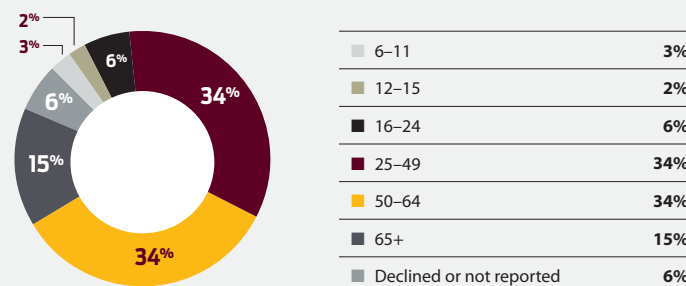
Race and Ethnicity of Referred Patients Who Reported



Gender of Referred Patients Who Reported



Age of Referred Patients



Outcomes

During its first three years of operation, the Maywood MLP provided legal counsel and advice, offered referrals and resources, and advocated for and empowered 161 Loyola Medicine patients in more than 179 cases. Student and attorney advocates helped clients to obtain and maintain healthier housing, advocated for more robust special education services, supported patients in drafting advance directives and obtaining guardianship, obtained dismissal of consumer debt, and helped to preserve or gain patient access to public benefits programs including SNAP, Medicaid, SSI, SSDI, and more.

Many patients referred in the first three years of operation still have open and ongoing cases, so not all outcomes are reflected in the closed case numbers. However, among closed and continuing cases, the Maywood MLP has assisted clients to obtain over \$200,000 in Social Security benefits and \$19,000 in rental assistance, maintained and increased SNAP benefits, reinstated a Section 8 housing voucher, obtained shelter placements for unhoused clients, and supported students with obtaining appropriate special education supports in the least restrictive environment. HJP staff members are also frequently in communication with Loyola Medicine nurses, physicians, and community health workers through on-site office hours and remote availability, providing consultations and helping to answer patient questions and direct patients to appropriate resources.

ADVOCACY STORIES

Pedro (not his real name) is the sole provider for his family of four. However, due to a back injury, he was temporarily unable to work and fell behind on several critical expenses, including his mortgage and utilities. Pedro's medical provider referred him to the Maywood MLP for assistance. Even as Pedro's health improved, allowing his return to work, he struggled to catch up on expenses and stabilize his family's financial situation. A creditor filed a lawsuit against Pedro, seeking \$2,000 in claimed credit card debt. HJP staff and student advocates advised Pedro about how to pursue mortgage and utility assistance. The HJP filed an appearance in the consumer debt case and successfully advocated for its dismissal. The HJP's Maywood MLP saved Pedro from the stress of appearing in court by himself and prevented a default judgment from being entered against him, which would have posed an additional financial strain on his family as he continued to work toward regaining financial stability.

OUTCOMES

The Maywood MLP provided services to 161 clients

including assistance with housing searches; applications and appeals for public assistance including disability benefits, Medicaid, and SNAP; preparing advance directives and obtaining guardianships; and obtaining appropriate special education services and supports, improved housing conditions, and more.

Of the 224 cases closed in its first three years, the Maywood MLP provided counsel and advice (121 cases), brief services (13), referrals (9), and full representation (10). 71 cases were closed due to client request or lack of contact. 26 cases with ongoing full legal representation or brief services remained open at the end of the third year, resulting in a total of 161 clients served by the Maywood MLP in its first three years.

224

cases closed

161

clients served

Outcomes in cases closed included the following:

- Obtained rental assistance and dismissal of eviction
- Obtained housing condition remediations from landlords
- Assisted client with advocating for elevator to be fixed in building and negotiated offer to move to lower unit
- Obtained survivor benefits
- Obtained minor guardianship for client
- Obtained dismissal of credit card debt case and avoided judgment
- Provided resources/information on guardianship and power of attorney
- Provided health care resources/information
- Provided financial resources/information
- Provided domestic violence resources/information
- Provided education resources/information
- Provided divorce resources/information
- Provided immigration resources/information
- Provided transportation resources/information
- Provided mental health resources/information
- Provided resources/information on collections, repossession, and garnishment
- Provided public benefits resources/information

Training and Supporting Providers

The Maywood MLP partners with six Loyola Medicine Family Health Centers in Maywood, North Riverside, Elmwood Park, and La Grange, and at MacNeal and Gottlieb Hospitals. These partnerships have enabled the MLP legal team to conduct 15 training sessions on MLP fundamentals including legal needs screenings and the referral process, income and access to public benefits, healthy housing advocacy, Social Security benefits, special education, and access to health. The MLP has also provided training for medical students on addressing social justice and racial health inequities through the MLP framework.

Types of health care providers who attended training sessions

Medical doctors
Nurse practitioners
Community health workers
Medical residents
Medical students

Where they work

Loyola Medicine Maywood–Roosevelt Road
Loyola Medicine North Riverside
Loyola School-Based Health Center
Stritch School of Medicine–CASCADE Leadership Program
Loyola Medicine Psychiatry Department

ADVOCACY STORIES



Rosie visited the Loyola Medicine Maywood–Roosevelt Road clinic in October 2022 to see her primary care physician. The provider reminded the 87-year-old patient of the importance of nutritious food for maintaining blood pressure control. Rosie let her doctor know that this had recently become more difficult when the Illinois Department of Human Services (IDHS) cut off her SNAP (Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program) benefits. The doctor referred Rosie to the Maywood MLP for help. The Maywood MLP learned that Rosie lost benefits because she didn't promptly answer mail that she received from IDHS to renew her SNAP. In some cases, missing a single piece of mail can cost residents of Illinois their monthly food income. Rosie eventually sent back the mail to renew her SNAP, but IDHS denied her again, this time saying she earned more than double the amount of her actual income. The Maywood MLP legal team requested a fair hearing to review Rosie's denial and was able to persuade IDHS to admit error. The Maywood MLP helped Rosie recover her monthly SNAP benefits and more than \$1,400 in retroactive SNAP benefits.

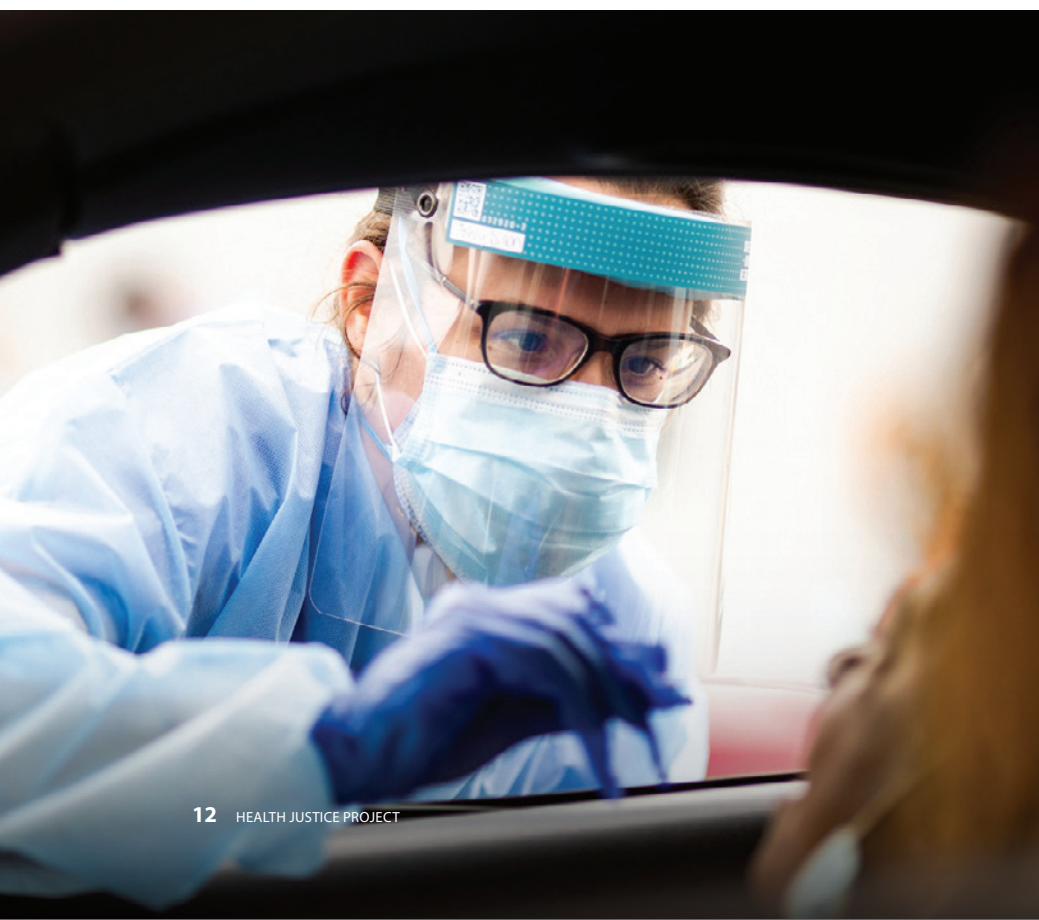
TRAINING AND SUPPORTING PROVIDERS

In addition to training, the Maywood MLP supports client advocacy by holding weekly office hours at the Loyola Medicine Maywood–Roosevelt Road clinic and developing resource materials.

In 2021, HJP staff held virtual office hours for Loyola Medicine providers two days each week. Once COVID restrictions were lifted, HJP staff transitioned to in-person office hours weekly at the Loyola Medicine Maywood–Roosevelt Road clinic, where legal staff get acquainted with provider partners and answer questions regarding patient legal needs in curbside consults. During its first three years, the Maywood MLP also developed over 30 written

resource materials to support clients' and providers' education and empowerment on a range of social and legal issues, such as housing, education, disability income, and food insecurity.

In addition to its partnership with Loyola Medicine, the Maywood MLP works with diverse community-based organizations in Maywood, such as the Community Equity Response Collaborative Loyola ("CERCL," formerly known as the COVID Equity Response Collaborative, Loyola), the Quinn Center, and Loyola Street Medicine. Through these partnerships, the Maywood MLP has conducted educational outreach and distributed over 130 resources to community members.



Students' Role in the Maywood MLP

Students enrolled in the HJP Clinic play a vital role in the Maywood MLP and gain valuable hands-on experience representing clients on a range of legal issues impacting their health and well-being.

HJP students, including law, social work, and medical students, collaborate on interdisciplinary teams under the supervision of HJP faculty and supervising attorneys. Students conduct intakes to assess the social and legal needs of patients, research the relevant legal issues, gather social supports and resources, and provide advice and counseling or full representation, including by engaging in advocacy in front of administrative agencies or in courts.

Part-time students enrolled in the HJP Weekend Clinic have also had meaningful opportunities to work with patients and advocate for their legal needs through the Maywood MLP. Part-time students conduct on-site outreach, complete intakes, provide advice and resources, and offer brief services, including, for example, by assisting clients in applying for public benefits, drafting advocacy letters to landlords or other third parties, and connecting patients directly with resources to assist them with their legal and social needs.

The Maywood MLP has had a significant impact on the students who have the opportunity to engage in this important work. Teaching students in a team-based care model promotes the development of students' interprofessional competencies and provides a vision for their future practices addressing social, structural, and legal needs of clients and patients.

“One of the most impactful experiences working with the Health Justice Project was the trip to Maywood to meet community leaders and our medical partners. Seeing firsthand the systems and structures impacting our clients provided an important context that helped my team deliver client-centered services.”

—Logan March, HJP Law Student, 2023–2024

STUDENTS' ROLE IN THE MAYWOOD MLP



Anna Ahrens

HJP Law Student, 2022– 2024

"I have never been passionate about a job. While I do not subscribe to the fallacy of a 'dream job' or that you should 'love your job,' I can say that I am genuinely passionate about my job at the clinic. The freedom and responsibility the clinic has provided me as a student has allowed me to learn so much about myself and gain more confidence than ever before. It is hard to be passionate about work if you don't feel like your opinions or contributions are valued, but in the clinic, everyone is an equal team member, and your contributions are required."

Carrie Sorensen

Part-Time Law Student, HJP Law Student, Fall 2022

"It was an invaluable opportunity for me to participate in the MLP while in law school, where I gained real-world experience advocating for clients under the guidance and support of experienced attorneys. Working both one-on-one with clients and in a collaborative team environment was an enriching experience unlike anything I had done before. I was able to expand my legal knowledge and develop communication skills that were immediately transferrable to working in my first job in law. I am incredibly grateful for having had the opportunity to be a part of the Maywood MLP."

Taylor Garis

HJP Medical Student Advocate, 2022– 2023

"During my time working with the Maywood MLP, I developed an understanding of the intricacies of patient health and how finely intertwined it is with all aspects of life. Although I'm a medical student, only a small portion of my education is dedicated to understanding the socioeconomic complexities of patients and how health outcomes are impacted. Rarely do we learn how to address these issues directly. Performing client intakes and being involved in cases with the Maywood MLP helped me feel more comfortable with beginning to address social issues with my patients and hopefully help improve their health overall. My involvement in the Maywood MLP helped to solidify my belief that these partnerships are necessary for a more patient-centered and holistic form of health care given the unjust systems in place in our society."

"Being involved in cases with the Maywood MLP helped me feel more comfortable with beginning to address social issues with my patients."

Acknowledgments

We want to express our gratitude to the following staff members, students, and volunteers for their invaluable contributions to the Maywood MLP, and to many others who might not be listed here but have in their own way contributed to improving the lives of our patients.

Health Justice Project staff members

Jenna Prochaska

Clinical Teaching Fellow, 2020–2023

Melody Chang

Medical Student Intern, Summer 2022

Tayler Garis

Medical Student Intern, 2022–2023

Leanne Jossund

Legal Intern, Spring 2022

Julianna Perez

Social Work Intern, 2021–2022

Kayley Anderson

Social Work Intern, 2020–2021

Isabel Villalobos

Social Work Intern, 2021–2022

Doroteja Dragovic

MLP VISTA Coordinator, 2020–2021

Shiv Bajaj

CERCL VISTA Coordinator, 2020–2021

Isabella Masini

Loyola Law Bridge Fellow, 2020

Haley Comella

Loyola Law Bridge Fellow, 2020

Grace Pyatt

Administrator, Beazley Institute for Health Law and Policy, and HJP

Joey Reyes

MLP VISTA Coordinator, 2023–2024

Meredith McConnell

CERCL VISTA Coordinator, 2023–2024



Dede Benissan

MLP VISTA Coordinator, 2021–2023

Dede Benissan joined the Health Justice Project in August 2021, shortly after completing her undergraduate studies at UNC–Chapel Hill. During her first year of service, she eagerly served as a dual VISTA coordinator for both the Maywood MLP and CERCL before exclusively focusing her work on the Maywood MLP in her second year. During her time here, she supported our client advocacy efforts by developing and maintaining up-to-date social and legal community resource sheets and distributing them at vaccine clinics and health fairs. In 2022, for instance, she successfully led an education and awareness campaign on the 2021 Child Tax Credit and assisted with the organization of two legal clinics in Maywood. In her work with the HJP, Dede actively worked to strengthen partnerships with medical providers by holding in-person office hours and co-leading training sessions; she also promoted our work and resources by managing our social media and websites and creating data reports that showcased community impacts.

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