

Energy Assistance: A Piece of the Economic Justice Puzzle

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Agenda

- Introduction
 - Who are we?
 - What is Economic Justice?
- Goals and Impacts of Energy Assistance
- Limitations of Energy Assistance
- An Introduction to Legal Services
- Mapping our Networks: what resources exist in your community?



Poverty

- How is Poverty defined?
 - Dictionary definition of ‘poor’: “lacking sufficient money to live at a standard considered comfortable or normal in a society.”
 - Income metrics
 - Federal Poverty Level
 - Area Median Income
 - Self Sufficiency Standards
- What is the impact of poverty?
 - Emotional, psychological, physical
- What is Economic Justice?



Energy Assistance

- What is it?
- What is the goal?
- What is the impact?
- Limitations of Energy Assistance



Legal Services

- Civil legal services to low-income Americans
- Legal Services offices often do:
 - individual client representation,
 - class action litigation,
 - administrative advocacy,
 - policy work,
 - community education, and
 - social work.

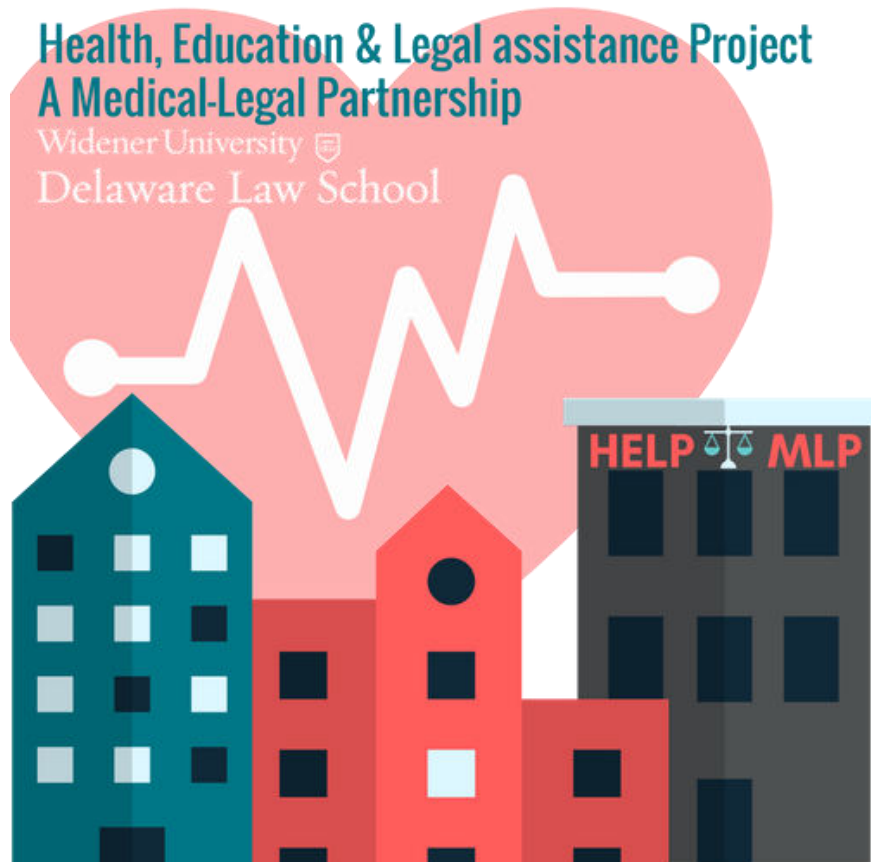


CLS's Energy Unit

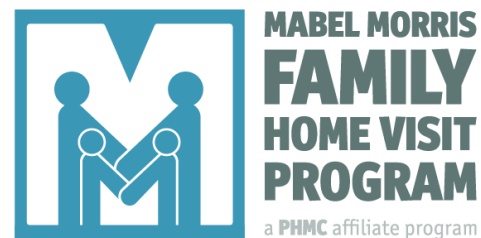
- Advocates for access to safe, affordable water, electric, and home heating services
 - **Direct representation** of individuals and groups
 - **Systemic advocacy** and policy work
 - Community **education** and empowerment



HELP:MLP and Nursing-Legal Partnership: Who We Are

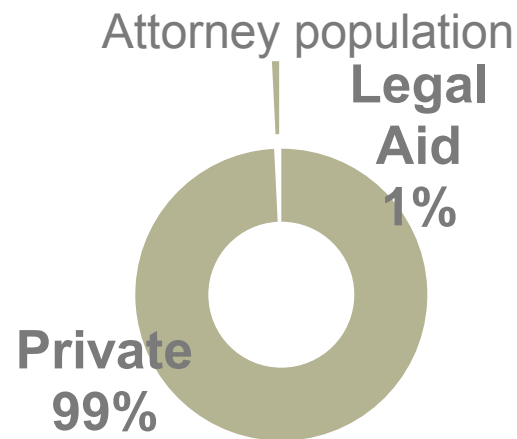


**IN PARTNERSHIP
WITH**



WHY CREATE AN NLP?

- **To close the justice gap**
 - The ratio of people at or below 200% poverty to legal aid attorneys is 14,229:1
 - More than 80% of the legal needs of low-income individuals go unmet.
 - Most low-income individuals face between 1-3 unmet legal needs per year.



NLP CLIENTS' LEGAL NEEDS

487 individual legal issues have been addressed in two years:

- **I:** income and insurance: 47%
- **H:** housing and utilities: 23%
- **E:** education and employment: 8%
- **L:** legal status: 6%
- **P:** personal and family stability: 16%

Nurses and lawyers also collaborate on systemic advocacy projects and cross-disciplinary trainings

WHY CREATE AN NLP?

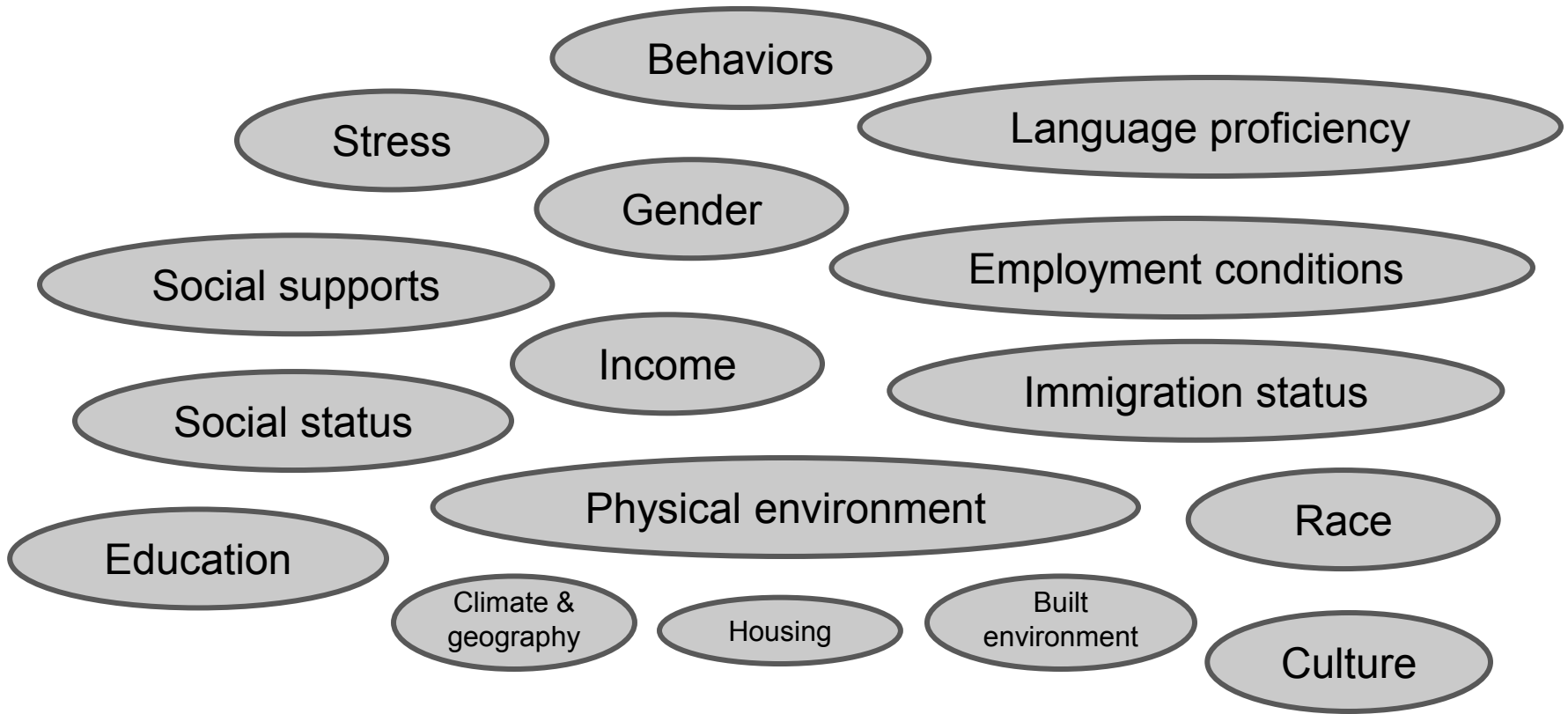
- To address the social determinants of health

What Determines Health?



Source: McGinnis et al, 2002

WHAT ARE SOME OF THE SOCIAL DETERMINANTS?



WHOLE-CLIENT TREATMENT/REPRESENTATION

- **“The client is the expert on her own life”**
 - Let the client set her own priorities, but use our expertise to understand and help her achieve what she wants
- **“Meet the clients where they are”**
 - People face different barriers and limitations
- **Why is this important?**
 - Our clients are human beings with complexity
 - Outcomes improve and costs decrease
- **Case examples involving utilities issues**

LANGUAGE ACCESS

- Identifying and reducing barriers to meaningful access to services is part of the whole-client model!
 - Especially important in self-advocacy situations!
- Failure to provide language access as a form of discrimination
 - Ex: federal regulations for health care providers
- What does meaningful language access mean?
 - Speaking to a spouse instead of the client?
 - Using the client's 8 year old child as an interpreter?
 - Allowing the client to bring her own interpreter?
 - Calling your friend who grew up speaking another language at home for help with interpretation?
 - Developing, funding, implementing, and advertising a written policy for front line staff on identifying the need for and obtaining interpretation services?

Regional Housing Legal Services

- Regional Housing Legal Services (RHLS) is a nonprofit law firm with unique expertise in affordable, sustainable housing and its related components — community and economic development, utility matters and preservation of home ownership. RHLS provides innovative project and policy solutions that help create sustainable communities offering decent, safe and affordable housing for lower-income Pennsylvanians.



Legal Services is Changing

- Traditional legal services is siloed; MLP is, in part, a response to that siloing
- Funders continue to push for greater impact; systems change
- Collaboration with cross-sector partners is a strong strategy for impact & systems change
- More traditional legal services attorneys are looking to build cross-sector partnerships



How To Connect?

- Make friends with your local legal aid program
- Don't necessarily start at the top -- try to figure out who is trying to span programs/issue areas and start with them
- Build the relationship like any other relationship
- Recognize they are time-strapped and constrained by organizational priorities and funder requirements
- Look for win-win projects; just sending them more clients is unlikely to generate a strong, creative partnership



Mapping Your Community

- What are the needs of the community and individuals you serve?
 - Housing, Employment and/or Benefits, Healthcare, Transportation, Food, Education
- How can these needs be met? Who can help them meet those needs?
- Are there gaps in meeting those needs?

