



GUIDING PRINCIPLES FOR MEDICAL-LEGAL PARTNERSHIPS IN FLORIDA

Throughout Florida, health care, public health, and legal organizations have been partnering to promote and support healthy communities and advance the belief that all people deserve the same opportunity to achieve optimal health and well-being.

Medical-Legal Partnerships (MLPs) help families and individuals understand and secure their legal rights to safe housing, adequate schooling, medical care, income supports, and other health-harming legal issues, with a special emphasis on vulnerable populations. Lawyers, doctors, social workers, and other health care staff work together to remove barriers to good health.

We have the opportunity to deepen our relationships across the health care, public health, and legal sectors to build a strong foundation for Medical-Legal Partnerships that are sustainable and closely connected across the state. These Guiding Principles are not intended to be prescriptive or exclusionary. Instead, they provide a framework through which existing and future Medical-Legal Partnerships in Florida can evaluate opportunities and identify benchmarks by which to signify progress.

Our vision is to create a system in which all health organizations leverage legal expertise and services to better address communities' health-related legal needs. We recognize that building meaningful relationships across these sectors can be challenging and time-consuming. We believe that the positive impact will far exceed the investment for our neighbors, communities, and institutions.

In recognition of this potential, we embrace and adopt the following Guiding Principles.

GUIDING PRINCIPLES

1. Florida Medical-Legal Partnerships will focus on low-income or other vulnerable patient populations

such as children, older adults, patients at community health centers, patients with complex medical & social needs, and veterans.

2. Florida Medical-Legal Partnerships may begin as referral networks or co-located services, but will strive

to move toward a fully integrated Medical-Legal Partnership model, with legal services embedded in health care settings. Mature MLPs will have formal processes to screen patients' health-related legal needs, share data between health care and legal partners, communicate about patient-clients, and jointly set service and evaluation priorities that reflect their shared mission. Each MLP will annually assess their progress toward this integration.

GUIDING PRINCIPLES CONTINUED

3. In addition to providing access to legal advice and representation for patient-clients, Florida Medical-Legal Partnerships will:

- a. **engage in bi-lateral, interprofessional training** of health care and legal teams,
- b. **provide consultations** between health care and legal teams,
- c. **develop screening methods** and protocols for responding to “positive” screens for health-related legal needs,
- d. **support improvements** within health care systems, and
- e. **foster interprofessional advocacy** on the local, state, and national levels, where permitted.

4. Florida Medical-Legal Partnerships will maximize opportunities to document their impact, and legal partners will use legal case management systems and health care partners will explore opportunities to better use electronic health records systems to collect data.

5. Florida Medical-Legal Partnerships benefit from investment by all local partners, and each individual Florida Medical-Legal Partnership will pursue investment in time, resources, and money from the legal, health care, public health, and philanthropic sectors.

6. Each Florida Medical-Legal Partnership will create a Memorandum of Understanding that outlines goals, expectations, and responsibilities for all partners.

7. Florida Medical-Legal Partnerships will support one another, share ideas and tools, and pool resources when applicable and appropriate.

8. Florida Medical-Legal Partnerships will work together statewide to engage with potential public health and philanthropic investors at the state and national level.

9. Florida Medical-Legal Partnerships will engage with the private sector, in particular with lawyers in private practice, to further expand their capacity.

10. Florida Medical-Legal Partnerships will provide opportunities for the next generation of health care, public health, and legal professionals to learn in interprofessional settings through partnerships with law schools, medical schools, nursing schools, public health schools, social work schools, and other health professional schools.

11. Florida MLPs will accept referrals from fellow Florida MLPs for patients who:

- a. are **eligible for services** from both the referring and accepting MLP,
- b. **present legal cases that are within the priorities** of the referring MLP, and
- c. **reside within the service area** generally covered by the accepting MLP’s legal program.