

MLPP News

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Medical-Legal Partnership Project News

FOCUS

MLPP Opens Saint Francis Office

This month, FOCUS looks at the expansion of the Medical-Legal Partnership Project over the last four years, and how the project's newest partner, Saint Francis Hospital and Medical Center, has joined forces with the Center for Children's Advocacy to create full-service interdisciplinary advocacy throughout the city of Hartford.

The Center for Children's Advocacy's (CCA) Medical-Legal Partnership Project (MLPP) has once again expanded its advocacy and interdisciplinary legal services to a significant clinical provider in the greater Hartford area. As of July 2005, the MLPP moved its headquarters and began providing on-site legal advocacy in the clinical setting at the Saint Francis Hospital and Medical Center's ("Saint Francis") Pediatrics and Family Medicine departments. As with its other sites, the MLPP will work with the clinical pediatric and family medicine providers in the primary care and specialty setting to enhance the provision of health care services through legal intervention, education and training, and systemic advocacy.

The MLPP's director has moved into the Pediatrics department and will now direct the project from Saint Francis' primary care ambulatory center located in the Gengras Ambulatory Care Center at 1000 Asylum Street in Hartford. The clinicians at Saint Francis will now be able to solicit direct consultations with the MLPP, as well as refer families to the project for "legal health" related issues that affect their patients' health and well-being. In addition to the Gengras pediatric site, the MLPP also accepts consultations and referrals from Saint Francis' Family Medicine Department, including families treated at the Asylum Hill Family Practice

clinic and the inpatient services directed by both Family Medicine practitioners and Pediatrics specialists, such as the Neonatal Intensive Care unit.

In addition to the referrals and consultations, the MLPP will provide educational and training opportunities to the pediatric and family medicine departments, including informal case reviews, roundtable team conferences, and grand rounds presentations. The MLPP will also partner with pediatric and family medicine practitioners to enhance the educational opportunities available to legal and social work advocates who work with children at risk. This interdisciplinary training highlights the core fusion of legal and medical advocates who are working toward providing a more holistic care model for patients and families.

The advent of the CCA-Saint Francis partnership fulfills the MLPP's goal of providing on-site assistance and affiliation with a majority of Hartford's pediatric primary care providers. The mission of the MLPP remains the same, which is to combine the forces of child-based legal advocacy with the expertise of pediatric and family medicine providers to improve children's health outcomes in the greater Hartford region. Saint Francis now becomes the fourth pediatric provider in the city to join forces with CCA to incorporate interdisciplinary advocacy on behalf of its pediatric patients, along with the Connecticut Children's Medical Center, the MLPP's initial partner in 2000, and the city's two federally qualified health centers, Community Health Services (2004) and Charter Oak Health Center (2004).

At Saint Francis, the MLPP works with the Pediatric Primary Care Center, the Aetna Foundation Children's Center (the hospital's multidisciplinary child abuse center), the Adolescent and Young Health Program, the Behavioral and Developmental Pediatric Program, the Neonatal Intensive Care Unit, the Hartford Regional Lead Treatment Center, and the Burgdorf/Bank of America Health Center, located at the hospital's Mount Sinai campus.

Upcoming MLPP trainings at Saint Francis include monthly "Interesting Case Presentations" on September 30, 2005 and November 18, 2005, as well as Pediatrics Department Grand Rounds, scheduled for Friday, December 9, 2005 at the hospital's Chawla Auditorium on the first floor of the patient care tower.

For more information about the MLPP at Saint Francis, or any other aspect of the MLPP's advocacy services, please call the project director at 860-714-1412, or e-mail jsicklic@kidscounsel.org.

Send Us Your Cases: CCA's Monthly Interdisciplinary Team Meetings

The MLPP invites all pediatric practitioners to our monthly Interdisciplinary Team meeting, which is held the second Thursday of each month at noon at the Connecticut Children's Medical Center. The Interdisciplinary Team is comprised of pediatric primary care, specialty care and mental health practitioners who team with legal advocates and social workers to examine and discuss difficult pediatric cases, and to enhance the team's knowledge of the legal, medical and psycho-social issues surrounding children at risk. Lawyers, medical practitioners, social workers and

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students are invited to present cases at these monthly meetings, as well as to provide expert analysis and advice on case presentations and pertinent advocacy issues.

Practitioners who would like to be placed on our Interdisciplinary Team e-mail list should e-mail the MLPP director at jsicklic@kidscounsel.org.

For more information on these meetings, which are held in the cafeteria level conference rooms at CCMC, please call the MLPP director at 860-714-1412, or e-mail jsicklic@ccmckids.org.

SPOTLIGHT

TEEN DATING VIOLENCE

By Gladys Nieves, MLPP Staff Attorney

What is Teen Dating Violence?

Dating violence is more than just arguing or fighting. Dating violence is a pattern of controlling behaviors that one partner uses to get power over the other, including any kind of physical violence or threat of physical violence to get control; emotional or mental abuse, such as playing mind games, making one feel crazy, or constantly criticizing or putting one down; sexual abuse, including making one do anything they don't want to, refusing to have safer sex, or making one feel bad about their sexuality.

Teen Dating Violence is on the rise. In one study, as high as 96% of high school students reported emotional and psychological abuse in dating relationships.¹ Moreover, nearly 9% of American high school students report being physically abused by a dating partner. In Connecticut, this number jumps to 13%, higher than any other state in the nation.²

What are the legal options for victims of Teen Dating Violence?

Most importantly, the teen should talk to his/her parent or legal guardian. If a parent or legal guardian is not available, the teen should get help from a trusted adult. The teen's parent or a trusted adult may be able to provide temporary shelter and/or arrange for shelter through local domestic violence programs. They can also assist the teen in obtaining a restraining order against his/her boyfriend/girlfriend.³

Restraining orders are issued by the Family Division of the Superior Court.⁴ There is no charge to file the application for a restraining order, however, most courts will require a parent to file on a teen's behalf. If the parent is not available, the teen is encouraged to work

with a trusted adult who can file on his/her behalf as a "next friend". If a teen is 16 or older and does not have a trusted adult, the clerk's office may let the teen file on his/her own. If s/he is under 16 years old, the clerk's office can consult with a judge to determine if the teen can apply on his/her own. It is important to note that any teen 18 or older can automatically apply on his/her own behalf, as s/he has reached the age of majority and hence is legally an adult.

Once a teen files an application for a restraining order, the judge has three options. First, the judge can deny the request and dismiss the case. Second, the judge can grant the request, issue an *ex parte* temporary restraining order, and schedule a hearing. The hearing should be scheduled within fourteen days. The judge's clerk will give the teen two certified copies of the judge's order, one of which, along with the original, must be provided to a sheriff, who will give notice to the defendant of the hearing date. This must be done at least five days before the hearing date. If the judge issues an *ex parte* temporary restraining order, there is no charge for service on the defendant.

Lastly, the judge can simply schedule a hearing, without an *ex parte* temporary restraining order. In this case, the teen would be responsible for service charges, however, the teen can always make a fee waiver request. Once at the hearing, the judge will make a final determination as to whether or not to grant a permanent restraining order. A restraining order can last up to six months or longer⁵, if extended by the court, and can provide many legal protections, including prohibiting the defendant from threatening, harassing, assaulting and/or molesting the teen. The restraining order can also prohibit the defendant from entering the teen's home and/or school. Violation of a restraining order allows

police to immediately arrest the defendant and is a Class A misdemeanor.

It is important to note that when an abuser is arrested, the victim can also benefit from a protective order. A protective order, versus a restraining order, is issued solely by the criminal courts and thus, there must be an underlying criminal case. A protective order terminates when the court disposes of the underlying criminal case. A violation of a protective order is a Class D felony, a more serious offense than the misdemeanor violation of a restraining order.

For more information on Teen Dating Violence, please call Gladys Nieves at 860-545-8581. To order copies of the Center's brochures on teen dating violence, please call 860-570-5327, or go to www.kidscounsel.org/publications

Footnotes

¹ www.SafeYouth.org

² Connecticut Children's Medical Center, Violence Prevention Program. *Fact Sheet: Teen Dating Violence*

³ www.SafeYouth.org

⁴ Also known as Relief from Abuse

⁵ Extension requests must be made at least one month before the original order runs out.

We Want to Hear from You!

Submit questions for the next edition of this newsletter to jsicklic@kidscounsel.org or, call Jay Sicklick at 860-714-1412.

For information about the Medical-Legal Partnership Project, please check the MLPP website at www.ccmckids.org/mlpp, or go to www.kidscounsel.org/aboutus_programs_mlpp.

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