

# Medical Legal Partnership Project a Valuable Resource for Patients and their Families



## An Interview with Bonnie Roswig, JD, Senior Staff Attorney

When patients and families are facing hardships such as discrimination, financial problems, or unsafe housing – in addition to their child's medical needs – they might feel as if they have nowhere to turn.

Enter Bonnie Roswig, JD, the Senior Staff Attorney for the Medical-Legal Partnership Project (MLPP), a partnership between Connecticut Children's Medical Center, the Center for Child Advocacy, and other area health care organizations. She provides legal representation for children and families in matters affecting children's health, education and welfare.

Studies show that financial hardships can directly impact children's health and wellbeing. Consider a family with young children who cannot afford their utility bill and is facing utility termination. To help families with these problems, "we invite patients to our 'Keep the Power On' utility clinics," Roswig said. "At the clinics, the utility companies are on site to hopefully enter families into affordable payment arrangements. Volunteers also meet with each and every attendee to provide budget counseling and to educate the family about community resources. Connecticut laws about when a household should be protected from utility termination are complicated and confusing," Roswig added. She helps medical providers and families navigate the laws.

Families may also have a hard time navigating issues that come up surrounding medical disabilities. Roswig recounted a case in which a four-year-old diabetes patient was not allowed to attend a daycare because of their medical condition, which violates the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). Such discriminatory actions are not uncommon, but families may not have the resources or knowhow to take action. The MLPP advocates for these patients to get them the care and services they deserve.

"The MLPP sees itself as part of the healthcare deliv-

ery system for [patients] in terms of better healthcare outcomes," Roswig said.

To help strengthen the quality of care provided by Connecticut Children's, Roswig works closely with our doctors, nurses, social workers and other staff on specialized training programs. "For example, an otherwise eligible patient gets denied because special statutory language is not used," Roswig said. "I go to different departments and do trainings on what the medical professionals need to know and what they should tell patients."

Roswig has developed a set of resources specifically for health care providers and families, which are



available at [www.connecticutchildrens.org/mlpp](http://www.connecticutchildrens.org/mlpp). Among the materials are a "series of two-page guides for physicians on the different areas that they run into in the course of their treatment of patients – Social Security Benefits (SSI), utility laws, special education, disability and workplace rights of parents with children with disabilities."

Roswig encourages anyone who suspects a patient's family is in need of legal help to contact her directly. "Please call, please email," Roswig said. "Have patients call me directly if you don't quite know how to address the patients' issues."

Bonnie Roswig  
[broswig@connecticutchildrens.org](mailto:broswig@connecticutchildrens.org)  
860-545-8581

For more information, visit  
[www.connecticutchildrens.org/mlpp](http://www.connecticutchildrens.org/mlpp).