

May 6, 2020

[MEDICAL-LEGAL PARTNERSHIP](#)

Dear Colleagues:

In today's MLP COVID-19 Update, we focus on providing clinicians with a comprehensive overview of *all utility protections afforded as a result of the COVID-19 emergency*, some thoughts about yesterday's announcement from Governor Lamont that schools *will not reopen* for the rest of this school year, as well as a summary of advocacy efforts to expand the state's HUSKY programs to include undocumented children and families. Finally – a word from a new study that takes a look at the COVID-19 crisis and its disproportionate impact on communities of color.

• **Utility Protections – The First Word**

Our MLP staff, led by attorney Bonnie Roswig, has produced a helpful one-pager attached to this email and will soon be available on the Center for Children's Advocacy's [COVID-19 page](#). In addition to listing a timeline of utility protections issues by the state, the sheet summarizes the Orders from the executive branch and the [Public Utility Regulatory Authority](#) ("PURA"). These Orders include, but are not limited to:

- Emergency moratorium on termination of electricity, heat and water to residential customers during the pendency of the state's COVID-19 state of emergency
- Expansion of the moratorium to non-residential customers
- Creation of a COVID-19 Payment Program

In addition – due to ongoing MLP and partner advocacy with PURA, the state's largest utility, Eversource, *removed the following language* from its [Medical Certification Portal](#) that stated **"Fraudulently submitted medical forms will be prosecuted to the fullest extent of the law."** These portals are familiar to most primary care clinicians who are called on to certify that a patient has a "serious illness and must be afforded protection from termination of service for non-payment under applicable state laws and regulations."

• **Educating Students During the Pandemic – What to Expect?**

Numerous practitioners and clinicians have reached out to our MLP staff over the past month to ask about what to expect from school districts both now and in the future regarding the provision and delivery of educational services. While we've provided the basics and passed along state Department of Education guidance – the simple answer for families struggling with distant learning challenges and the lack of hands on

educational services is that there really are no definitive answers at this time. The state has yet to issue its guidance on summer learning (both regular and special education/Extended School Year), nor has it provided an update on what may be considered as “compensatory” for time lost during the school closure period. As soon as we receive this information, we will pass this along to you. What we do know is that there is an educational forum this Friday, May 8 at 11:00 a.m. that is entitled **Special Education Inequities Post COVID-19**. The pertinent information is as follows (courtesy of Office of Child Advocate):

Webinar on Special Education Inequity Post COVID-19 School Closures, Presented by SEEK.

UPDATE: For Spanish Translation, please dial:

Phone# 1-267-866-0999

Pin 118 39 7539

Moderated by SEEK President and Parent, Barbara Distinti, our expert lineup includes:

- Dr. Miguel Cardona, Commissioner of Education State of Connecticut
- Fran Rabinowitz, Executive Director Connecticut Association of Public School Superintendents
- Ann Smith, Executive Director AFCAMP Advocacy for Children
- Senator Douglas McCrory, Chairman Committee on Education
- Sarah Eagan, Child Advocate State of Connecticut
- Typhanie Jackson, Director of Student Services New Haven Public Schools
- Kathleen McCarty, State Representative
- Eric Berthel, State Senator

To Register for this event, click

here: https://us02web.zoom.us/webinar/register/WN_BS8Ufg42Sh62T4fTEpud4g

• **OP-ED Furthers Advocacy Efforts to Expand Medicaid for Undocumented Children**

Despite the continued efforts of many of you on this email, the state has yet to expand eligibility for Medicaid and HUSKY B coverage to undocumented children and their families. Yale-New Haven Health pediatricians Julia Rosenberg and Marietta Vazquez joined me in penning an op-ed piece that ran in last Saturday’s Courant which can be found [here](#) and attached to this email. You can let your voice be heard by forwarding this piece, or sending your own to the Governor’s chief of staff, [Paul Mounds](#), or writing the Governor [directly](#). Your voice – particularly those who are working in the clinical setting, can make a difference.

- **Health Equity and the Pandemic – Unequal Treatment?**

In an [article published on CNN.com today](#), Shelby Lin Erdman writes that although African-Americans represent just over thirteen percent of the entire US population, counties with a higher percentage of African-American residents (disproportionally black counties) account for more than half of all COVID-19 cases and almost 60% of the deaths. The unpublished study (conducted by epidemiologists and clinicians at four universities in conjunction with amfAR, an AIDS non-profit and Seattle’s Center for Vaccine Innovation and Access), concluded what those working in the social determinants of health field already know – the rates of COVID-19 diagnoses and deaths *as well as “greater diabetes diagnoses, heart disease deaths, and cerebrovascular disease deaths”* disproportionately affect communities of color, particularly African-American patients. The question is: how will our MLP, other medical-legal partnerships around the state and nation, and those clinicians who work in pediatric care in the post-pandemic landscape address these disparities early and effectively in order to reduce, and eliminate these unacceptable outcomes. As we prepare our “middle-term” goals for the next few months, we are looking at, amongst other issues, addressing behavioral health disparities and the legal ramifications that those disparities present. If you have ideas or thoughts you would like to share, please [email our MLP staff](#) - we would like to hear from you.

As always, thank you for your leadership, courage and expertise during this challenging time.

Sincerely,

The MLP Team

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