



It's simple. Many people need legal care to be healthy.

SUCCESS STORY

"Margaret" was raising her two children alone since the death of her husband, a military veteran. The family struggled to make ends meet, especially since one of the children has special needs. They *really* relied on the monthly veteran's benefits check from the VA.

One day, Margaret got an "over payment" notice, stating that she owed the VA money and that their benefits would be suspended. At the family's next pediatrics appointment with **Dr. Jack Maypole** of [Boston Medical Center](#), Margaret broke down in tears, saying she had done the math over and over and couldn't understand how she was overpaid. Dr. Maypole's team immediately contacted MLPB, who met with Margaret and assessed her case.



MLPB referred the matter to two volunteer attorneys, **Vinita Ferrera** (*pictured at right, top*) and **Allison Trzop** (*pictured at right, bottom*) of [WilmerHale](#), who represented Margaret in an appeal of the alleged over payment. After many months, the VA finally backed down, admitting its error and agreeing that Margaret did not owe a dime. The family's benefits were restored, allowing them to get back on their feet.

IN THE NEWS

- MLPB's research collaboration with the [BMC's Women's Health Unit](#) is discussed in "[Burden of socio-legal concerns among vulnerable patients seeking cancer care services at an urban safety-net hospital: a cross-sectional survey](#)," an article recently published in [BMC Health Services Research](#). In the context of evaluating whether patients would report socioeconomic indicators that are potentially remediable under existing law and public policy, **77% of study subjects reported concerns with one or more socio-legal needs in the prior month**, most frequently relating to income supports, housing, employment and education.
- The above findings support the need for innovations in screening and services that address the health-related social needs of disparities populations receiving cancer care — including but not limited to medical-legal partnership. For updates on emerging solutions that reduce barriers to patient engagement with high-stakes medical treatment such as cancer care, check out this June 2016 issue brief (#4) from [FSG](#) and the [Bristol-Myers Squibb Foundation](#) — [Helping Patients Engage in Specialty Care](#) — that emphasizes the relevance of a person's social, community and environmental context.
- The risk factors for elder homelessness are complicated and recent experience has revealed the limits of current housing-based legal protections for victims of elder abuse by adult children. Learn more here: [Elder Abuse Perpetrated by Adult Children and its Consequences for Housing Insecurity: Why We Need to Recognize IPV-Parallel Elder Abuse in Housing Law & Public Policy](#).



ON THE MOVE

- Pro Bono Breakfast.** On May 11, MLPB stakeholders gathered to celebrate our *pro bono* panel's role in advancing health through justice. We heard from keynote speaker **Rodrigo Monterrey**, [MDPH's](#) Acting Director for the [Office of Health Equity](#), as well as moving testimonials from *pro bono* client **Florencia Hunt** and **BMC Pediatrics Family Navigator Ivys Fernandez-Pastrana**.



(*Pictured at right, L-R: Phoebe Souza-DFCI social worker, JoHanna Flacks-MLPB, and Florencia Hunt*)

Special thanks to long-standing *pro bono* partner [WilmerHale](#) for hosting this terrific event!

- **Social Determinants of Health Training for Career Source staff.** As part of an innovative **Health Care Workforce Transformation Fund** training initiative convened by the [Metro North Regional Employment Board](#), MLPB trained a new set of stakeholders at [Career Source](#) in Cambridge last month. This audience was admirably committed to better understanding health-related social needs and their impacts on people, whether they be patients or job-seekers. The grant that made this work possible was issued by the **Massachusetts Executive Office of Labor and Workforce Development**, and is administered by **Commonwealth Corporation**.
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- **Health Starts at Home — Phase 2.** MLPB is honored to participate in [Housing Prescriptions as Health Care](#), one of four [Health Starts at Home](#) projects awarded implementation grants by [The Boston Foundation](#). We are thrilled to be partnering with so many complementary programs ([Children's HealthWatch](#), [Project Hope](#), [Boston Housing Authority](#), [Nuestra Comunidad](#), [Boston Medical Center — Problem Solving Education](#), and [BMC HealthNet](#)) to tackle housing instability through a new intervention, and also to be "cross-pollinating" with three other partnerships funded through this exciting initiative!

DID YOU KNOW?

- **Did you know** that some individuals and families may be eligible to have their land line telephone service – critical to health and safety for many people – protected even if they are behind on their bills? As with other types of utility service, healthcare providers play a critical role in helping consumers establish eligibility for these protections. Check out our new *It Takes Two* Guide for Patients and Providers: [Staying Connected: Know Your Rights to Telephone Service](#)
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- **Did you know** that many parents have a really hard time getting "special formula" for their medically vulnerable children with unique nutritional needs? Yet again, pediatricians have been placed at the center of a complex, high stakes administrative process that impacts the baby's short-term and long-term health, and the family's short-term and long-term budget and peace of mind. Learn more in our new *It Takes Two* Guide for Families and Providers: [Getting Special Formula to Kids Who Need It: An Overview](#)
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- **Did you know** that in June the United States Supreme Court ruled in [United States v. Texas](#), affirming the lower court decisions blocking the Obama Administration's proposed DAPA (Deferred Action for Parents of Americans) and expanded DACA (Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals) programs? The individuals and families you serve still may be confused about the status of these proposed policies and whether new pathways to lawful immigration status exist. You can share our newly revised *It Takes Two* Guide for Patients and Providers: [DAPA, DACA and Immigrant Youth: What's Real? \(July 2016\)](#)
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More *It Takes Two* content will be available this fall!

NEW TEAM MEMBERS

MLPB has welcomed several new colleagues over the past few months:



Jo Charles, a second-year doctoral student at the [Harvard T.H. Chan School of Public Health](#), has joined MLPB as a volunteer and will support efforts to inform housing policy frameworks that account for common barriers to community safety. His research interests focus on social and behavioral determinants of health, specifically the relationship between discrimination and disparities in health outcomes. Jo is a graduate of Northeastern University, where he majored in Economics and double minored in History and LPS (Law, Policy, and Society). Jo will soon be applying to law school. He hopes to combine his public health training with a legal degree in order to pursue a career in advocacy and social policy.

Kara Hurvitz, JD, MSW has joined MLPB as an attorney serving the [Department of Pediatrics at Boston Medical Center](#), continuing one of our organization's oldest and most formative partnerships. Prior to joining MLPB, Kara worked as a Social Services Advocate at the Committee for Public Counsel Services. In that generalist advocacy role, she assisted court-involved individuals and families with a broad range of high-stakes needs at the intersection of civil and criminal law. Kara is a graduate of Pennsylvania State University, Boston College Law School, and Boston College Graduate School of Social Work.



Fred Kemper, JD joined us in mid-May through a six-month [Pickering Fellowship](#). At [WilmerHale](#), Fred focuses his practice on securities litigation and has also represented multiple *pro bono* clients in veteran's benefits, unemployment, and domestic violence-related matters. Fred is a graduate of Connecticut College and Boston University School of Law. As a law student, he interned for the Boston office of the Securities and Exchange Commission and the United States Attorney's Office for the District of Massachusetts. Before law school, Fred worked for ICF International, where he consulted on business processes, organizational development, and public policy for various federal agencies.

Michelle Wang joined MLPB through the [Wellesley College Lumpkin Summer Institute for Service Learning](#). This 10-week program is designed for students with a commitment to service, and challenges them to participate in social change in the Greater Boston area. Here, in her own words, are her goals for this internship: *I hope to deepen my understanding of the gradient of wealth and access to resources among different communities in Boston and actively address health disparities through innovative efforts. Through sociology fieldwork in Framingham, I discovered how social and legal challenges are causes for many people's medical conditions. Therefore, I am especially intrigued by MLPB's approach to promoting health equity through legal advocacy and social supports. I am excited and honored to work and contribute within MLPB's dynamic, passionate, and team-oriented environment.*



Welcome Jo, Kara, Fred, and Michelle!

SAVE THE DATE!



Our next annual conference will be held on **Thursday, November 10, 2016** at the [Federal Reserve Bank of Boston](#). Check out the 2015 conference agenda [here](#) and mark your calendars!

Our mission is to equip healthcare and human services teams with legal problem-solving strategies that promote health equity.

We are a fiscally sponsored program of [Third Sector New England, Inc.](#)

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