

2023

YEAR IN REVIEW



MLPB
ADVANCING HEALTH
THROUGH JUSTICE

MLPB

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THROUGH JUSTICE

2023 PARTNERS

Blackstone Valley Community Health Center

Blue Cross Blue Shield of Rhode Island

Boston Accountable Care Organization

Boston Medical Center Living Well at Home Program

Boston Medical Center Pediatrics

Brigham and Women's Hospital

Brockton Neighborhood Health Center

Care Transformation Collaborative – Rhode Island/PCMH Kids

The Children's Trust, including Healthy Families Massachusetts and Family Supports

Community Care Cooperative

Community Care Partners

Community Health Worker Association of Rhode Island

East Boston Social Centers – *Every Child Shines*

Hasbro Children's Hospital

Integra Community Care Network

Lynn Community Health Center

Memorial Hospital Family Care Center, Care New England Medical Group Primary Care

Prospect Health Services Rhode Island

Rhode Island Department of Health, Office of Family Visiting

Saint Anne's Hospital

Steward Medicaid Care Network

Thundermist Health Center Accountable Entity

Toll Gate Pediatrics (Coastal Medical)

Tri-County Community Action Agency



PHOTO BY RICHARD ASINOF, CONVERGENCE RI

A NOTE FROM AMY COPPERMAN, MLPB EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

I am so pleased to present MLPB's 2023 Annual Report.

An Annual Report is an opportunity to reflect on all that we accomplished and what is yet in front of us. I am more eager than most to reflect, having just completed my first year as MLPB's Executive Director. In January 2023, I was welcomed in by MLPB's staff, board, partners, consultants and our fiscal sponsor TSNE. It has been a joy getting to know the wide range of people who are invested in MLPB, and I am grateful for their guidance and insights as I settled in.

For months now, I have observed and absorbed what the daily work at MLPB looks like. I have come to see that what MLPB does is unique in the landscape of medical-legal partnerships. Our work looks upstream and joins a healthcare system that tackles root causes of health and wellbeing. As we accompany health and social care teams on their journeys to provide the best care possible, together we are building more effective and coordinated systems of care. This work keeps social needs at the forefront of care decisions.

Building on that foundational work, MLPB breaks down barriers to legal information, infuses nontraditional spaces with legal insight and knowledge, and empowers advocates who are not attorneys to engage in legal problem-solving.

It is this radical notion—that people who are not attorneys can engage in legal problem-solving—that animates our vision for what true health care can be. We use our grounding in legal education to help build the capacity of others, and our vision is that legal problem-solving one day becomes an integral part of the fabric of quality healthcare.

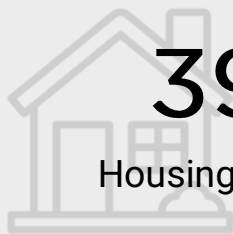
I am honored to partner with so many forward-thinking organizations. I am supported by a talented and committed group of Advisory Board members. And I am humbled to work with nine superstars on our staff.

In the pages of this report, you will read about MLPB's accomplishments in 2023. Recently, MLPB launched a strategic planning process for the first time in seven years. We are excited to sharpen our vision for what's possible and aim for bigger and better ways to bring legal problem-solving strategies into care spaces. I look forward to sharing the results of that process, along with all that 2024 has to bring.

CONSULTATION, BY THE NUMBERS

1,008

Consults in 2023



394

Housing Consults

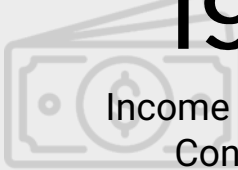
300

Personal & Family Stability Consults



190

Income Supports Consults



110

Immigration Consults



14

Education Consults



Care teams outreached to MLPB with a wide variety of legal questions in 2023. Of the 394 **Housing** questions:

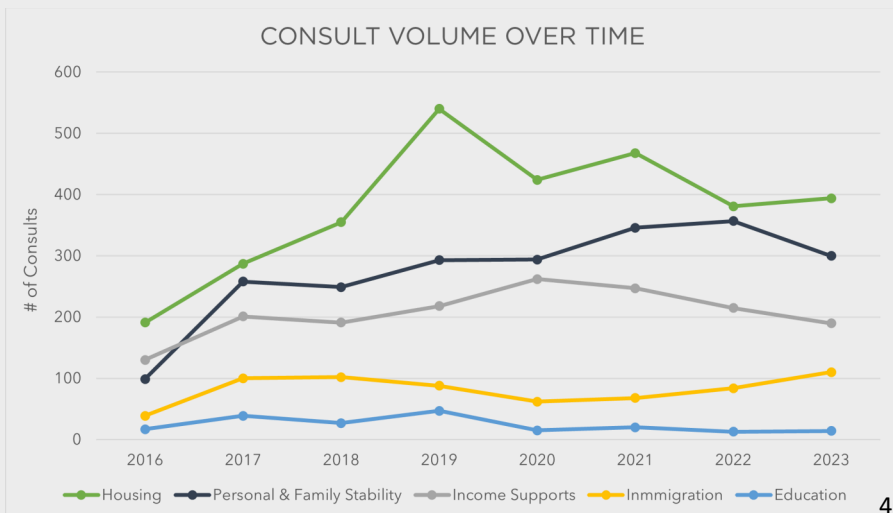
- 68 related to permanent housing access, and 31 related to temporary shelter access.
- 64 addressed conditions issues like mold or pests.
- 89 questions were in service of a family in an active eviction process; 64 additional eviction-related questions were preventative.
- The remaining 71 questions related to a range of issues, including foreclosure prevention, reasonable accommodations, utilities security, and more.

Common **Personal & Family Stability** questions addressed criminal systems, explaining child welfare processes, guardianship, custody, and identity documents.

Income Supports questions related mostly to disability benefits, health insurance, immigrant eligibility for public benefits, and general assessment of benefits.

The number of newly immigrated families rose significantly in both Massachusetts and Rhode Island in 2023. Relative to other questions, the largest increases in consultation questions related to **Immigration**. Across partnerships, care teams supported a growing population of individuals who did not know whether they had a pending application for residency, a pending removal hearing, or whether they qualified for any legal status at all.

Though only a small fraction of the consults, many of the **Education** questions related to special education and access to appropriate services.



SPOTLIGHT ON TRAINING

In 2023, the MLPB Law & Policy team delivered **47** trainings to more than **1,100 individuals** in total! Trainings covered over **21 unique topics**, and the most common trainings were:

- Housing Stability Fundamentals
- Immigration Status Basics
- Introduction to Family Law
- Guardianship & Less Restrictive Alternatives



The MLPB *Unlocking Access* training series provides regular opportunities for care teams to engage in fundamental and advanced topics related to health-related social needs detection and legal problem-solving.

Trainings in 2023 included:

- Housing Stability Fundamentals
- Education Advocacy Basics
- Utility Protections
- Food & Income Security
- Immigration Status Basics
- Immigration & Benefits Eligibility
- Guardianship & Less Restrictive Alternatives
- Criminal Systems Involvement & Housing
- Employment Protections for Pregnant Workers
- Advocating Through Human-Centered Storytelling
- Maximizing Tax Benefits to Support Financial Stability

“Thank you again for a **great, personable, and interactive** presentation! Immigration status can be quite the muddy waters but the way you broke everything down and **related it back to families** was masterclass.”

- Program Coordinator



NEW STAFF AND ADVISORY BOARD

In addition to our Executive Director, MLPB welcomed three new staff and three new Advisory Board members! Each brings a wide array of skills, backgrounds, and experiences, and we are thrilled that they have chosen to be part of our team.

Many thanks to Peg Metzger and Geoff Wilkinson, who wrapped up their many years of service on the MLPB Advisory Board in 2023. We are deeply grateful to both of them for sharing their time, insight, and expertise over the years.

NEW MLPB STAFF



Sarah Yan
Law & Policy Consultant



Terrence Theus
Communications Coordinator



Stephanie Duggan-Lykes
Law & Policy Consultant

NEW MLPB ADVISORY BOARD MEMBERS



Sandra Best Bailly
Simmons University School
of Social Work
Simmons Institute for
Inclusive Leadership



Carinel LeGrand
*Income Eligible Energy
Efficiency Program Manager*
Rhode Island Energy



Deborah O'Brien
President & CEO
Community Resources
for Justice

ADVOCACY AND SYSTEMS CHANGE

MLPB is always looking for ways to leverage our experiences with partners to bring lessons learned to larger policy arenas. Here are a few examples of that work:

AMICUS LETTERS

MLPB submitted letters in support of tenants who brought appeals in two Massachusetts housing cases: **Jason Dacey v. Sandy Burgess** and **Fort Point Investments, LLC v. Hope Kirunge-Smith and Avery Goldman**.

Unfortunately, the decisions in both cases were not favorable to tenants, disabled people, unrepresented litigants, and low-income tenants attempting to access government benefits to pay off rental arrears. Even though both decisions reinforce existing power imbalances between tenants and landlords in court, it was important for MLPB to highlight the health and health equity dimensions of these housing cases.

POLICY CAMPAIGNS

MLPB signed on to support **more than 20 policy campaigns** in Rhode Island and Massachusetts that focus on maximizing income, implementing tenant protections, increasing affordable housing, increasing government benefits for low-income people, expanding immigrants' rights, and ensuring protections for older and disabled adults.

In July, we submitted testimony for Cover All Kids, an ongoing campaign to improve access to health care for immigrant children in Massachusetts.

WRITTEN COMMENTS

MLPB submitted comments related to:

- Massachusetts Department of Transitional Assistance accessibility and community outreach efforts (*March 2023*)
- Regulatory changes proposed by the United States Department of Housing & Urban Development regarding disability discrimination (*July 2023*)
- 1115 Waiver Amendments in Rhode Island and Massachusetts

COALITIONS AND WORKING GROUPS

MLPB participates in a several community focused coalitions and working groups:

- MassHealth Social Services Integration Working Group
- Rhode Island Life Index
- Massachusetts Healthy Homes Coalition
- Boston Breathe Easy at Home

MLPB participated in GenUnity's Health Equity program in the spring of 2023, and findings for our partnership with the Lynn Community Health Center's Moms Do Care program were presented at a March 2023 MLP Conference at Yale Law School.

BUILDING THE EVIDENCE BASE

Tufts Interdisciplinary Evaluation Research (TIER) recently conducted a mixed methods evaluation of our partnership with **Healthy Families Massachusetts**. Key findings include:

- Home visiting team members consulted with MLPB for 15% of all Healthy Families participants.
- These participants were significantly more likely to experience challenges related to **child protective services, employment, health insurance, and housing**, as compared to the total Healthy Families program population.
- MLPB's support of home visiting staff had positive impacts on the workforce including:
 - ◇ Increased access to resources and increased ability to advocate for participants.
 - ◇ Ongoing professional development opportunities.
 - ◇ Recognition of systemic injustice and validation of staff sentiment when a denial of services or other barriers to social supports didn't "feel right."

We are very grateful for our partnership with The Children's Trust that has enabled this work together.

MLPB collaborator **MaryCatherine Arbour** and the team from **Brigham and Women's Hospital** published a mixed methods evaluation of BWH's innovative primary care-based housing program in **Health Affairs' *Housing and Health*** edition. Among the findings:

- Patients in the program had "2.5 **fewer primary care visits** and 3.6 **fewer outpatient visits** per year compared with those who were not enrolled, including fewer social work, behavioral health, psychiatry, and urgent care visits."
- Patients self-reported "mental and physical health benefits, and some [patients] expressed having **stronger connections to their health care providers** [as a result of the program]."

MLPB is proud to partner with BWH's Social Care Team to provide legal information and problem-solving at regular case reviews.



CURRENT STAFF

Meg Baker, Administrative & Finance Manager
Jeannine Casselman, Law & Policy Director
Amy Copperman, Executive Director
Stephanie Duggan-Lykes, Law & Policy Consultant
Kate Gannon, Law & Policy Consultant
Jeff Gilbert, Partnership & Project Manager
Rebecca Kislak, Law & Policy Consultant
Nedhi Teixeira, Law & Policy Consultant
Terrence Theus, Communications Coordinator
Sarah Yan, Law & Policy Consultant

CURRENT ADVISORY BOARD

Melissa Nott Davis, JD | Chair
Cheryl R Clark, MD, ScD | Vice Chair
Sandra Best Bailly, MSW, LCSW
Rachel Irvine, MPH, MBA
Fred Kemper, JD
Carinel LeGrand, MPA
Kirsten Meisinger, MD, MHCDS
Deborah O'Brien, BS, RN, MPA
Everett Shorey, MBA

MLPB equips communities of care with legal education and problem-solving insight that fosters prevention, health equity and human-centered system change. Through training, consultation and technical assistance – our *team-facing legal partnering* framework – we help teams and organizations better connect people and populations to the resources and legal protections they seek.

MLPB is a fiscally sponsored organization of Third Sector New England, Inc. (TSNE).