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### New England healthcare leaders put health-related social needs on the agenda

**Boston, MA:** Today at the Federal Reserve Bank of Boston, MLPB convened leaders from MA and RI healthcare organizations and put health-related social needs front-and-center, in preparation for an accountable care landscape that meets every person's health needs. Administrators, physicians, nurses, social workers, community health workers, and policymakers came together in an interdisciplinary setting to build skills and learn strategies – related to housing instability, immigration status, and more – that aren't covered in medical school or other training for health sector workforces.

“Care teams often are the ‘first responders’ to the social, economic, and environmental conditions that make people experience ill health,” said **Christina Severin**, President & CEO of Community Care Cooperative, a Medicaid accountable care organization serving members across the Commonwealth. “There’s no playbook for this,” she added. According to **Dr. Megan Sandel** of Boston Medical Center and Children’s Health Watch, “the test of Medicaid reform will be if health systems can sustainably meet the needs of vulnerable populations while addressing underlying disparities, such as those found among kids of color with asthma.” **Carrie Bridges Feliz**, Director of the Community Health Institute at Lifespan – a Rhode Island-based health system – observed: “screening for and responding to health-related social needs is a new frontier that reinforces our commitment to the concept of patient-centered healthcare.”

Driven by MLPB’s expertise in current workforce and community needs, the event spotlighted:

- Strategies to build and maintain trust with patients confronting immigration challenges, many of whom are disengaging with medical care due to fear of detention and deportation.
- Approaches to supporting people whose health is affected by unstable housing.
- The value of integrating an assessment of strengths, not just risks or deficits, when screening people for health-related social needs.
- The role of risk adjustment in assuring that organizations serving large numbers of medically and socially complex patients can sustain their services. (See [Risk Adjustment’s New Frontier: Social Determinants of Health](#), a brief co-authored by MLPB this past year.)

“With the introduction of value-based healthcare financing, health systems have new incentives to recognize and address people’s health-related social needs,” said MLPB CEO **Samantha Morton**. “MLPB wants to ensure the health workforce is prepared to take on these new, high-stakes responsibilities successfully.”

**About MLPB:** MLPB equips healthcare and human services workforces with upstream problem-solving strategies that address health-related social needs. Leveraging our public interest law expertise, we advance health equity for individuals, families, and communities.

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