

**IMPRESSIONS
AND
IMPACT**

Impressions and Impact

Over the past nine years, LegalHealth has collected impressions from some of the healthcare providers with whom we work. The following reflections illustrate the impact and scope of our work for people with serious and chronic illness. The case stories depict how LegalHealth has improved the lives of these vulnerable New Yorkers.

Thanks to the LegalHealth attorneys and paralegals for their endless dedication to their clients.

Randy Retkin, Director of LegalHealth
Julie Brandfield, Associate Director of LegalHealth

IMPRESSIONS

“Mr. Lytch has been elated since yesterday. He received the letter from Social Security Administration some days ago and was so afraid to open the letter. Once he opened, he kept calling me to ask what does favorable mean. I knew then he was in for good news. He will bring the letter in for me to read tomorrow. He has shared with me of how grateful he is for every one of us and wants to personally thank us for the help. I would like to personally thank each and every one of you for your hard work and dedication in helping Mr. Lytch and all of our families. Without your generous contribution and kindness, our families would never be able to afford to pay for these services. On behalf of Community Services for Children and Families, Mr. Lytch and the many families that you have helped and continue to help, our gratitude is greatly appreciated.”

-Claudette Woods Green, CSW, St. Luke's Roosevelt Community Services for Children and Families.

LegalHealth has been providing onsite legal services at St. Luke's – Roosevelt Hospital since October 2002 and has served nearly 2,000 patients of the hospital.



Continuum Health Partners, Inc.



IMPACT

When her *Kings County Hospital* social worker referred Eunice to LegalHealth, She was representing herself in a court case against her landlord and feeling overwhelmed by the landlord's private attorneys. The conditions in Eunice's apartment were terrible. Her upstairs neighbor was making excessive noise at all hours of the night, preventing Eunice from sleeping and causing considerable emotional stress. LegalHealth assisted Eunice in her lawsuit. As a result, the landlord was ordered to relocate her to a new apartment and pay \$5,000 in damages. LegalHealth also made sure Eunice's Senior Citizen Rent Increase Exemption was transferred to the new apartment, which was located in a quieter part of the building.

LegalHealth has worked with Kings County Hospital since 2005 and has provided free legal services to more than 1,200 patients in that time.



IMPRESSIONS

“Patients come to the Emergency Department at Bellevue Hospital with much more than a medical diagnosis waiting to be made. Too many are left to turn to the ER due to the chaos of their lives. LegalHealth does for these patients all those things for which no number of prescriptions I write will ever cure. A chest x-ray or blood test will tell me something of disease at a moment in time, while the attorneys at LegalHealth work to treat the determinants of my patients’ health. It is for this that I am so grateful for their joining in the care we provide.”

-Paul Testa, MD, Department of Emergency Medicine, Bellevue Hospital.

LegalHealth has been providing onsite legal services at Bellevue Hospital since April 2005 and has served over 2,000 patients of the hospital.



IMPACT

Nina, an 18-year-old woman, wanted to go to college. She'd been accepted to a school of her choice, but could not afford tuition. Since the age of nine, she had been removed multiple times from her mother's home because of repeated physical and sexual abuse. But without an affidavit of financial resources required from her parents, the college would not process her financial assistance packet. Her physician at the *Mount Sinai Adolescent Health Center* referred her to LegalHealth's clinic. The attorney filed a Dependency Student Appeal that documented the reasons Nina could not contact her mother and father and included evidence that Nina's parents had not supported her for some time. Nina won the appeal and received tuition assistance. She enrolled not only in college, but in a new life.

LegalHealth has partnered with Mount Sinai Hospital since 2001, and opened a second clinic at the Adolescent Health Center in 2007. LegalHealth has provided free legal services to over 2,000 patients at Mount Sinai.



IMPRESSIONS

“The ability to actually do good things for people is not related to what happens in the hospital, but what happens in their life. You need to have partnerships with people who can make the patient’s life work. I prescribe the drugs, but the patient can’t take them if the pharmacy won’t give them. The pharmacy won’t give them if the patient doesn’t have insurance. The patient can’t give insurance if she has legal problems in getting Medicaid. So while I could theoretically prevent her from getting sick, without LegalHealth it would all be in theory.”

-Howard Minkoff, MD, Chairman, Department of Obstetrics and Gynecology, Maimonides Medical Center.

LegalHealth has had a clinic at Maimonides Medical Center since 2002 and has served pediatric, oncology, medicine, ob-gyn and geriatric clinics there.



Passionate About Medicine.
Compassionate About People.



IMPACT

Since Terri's husband's imprisonment, she has struggled to raise their children alone. She sees a neurologist for her worsening headaches and is under treatment for mastoiditis, a dangerous ear condition, as well as depression with thoughts of suicide. Terri's public assistance, including food stamps and housing allowance, was cut in half when she failed to comply with public assistance regulations. When she didn't know where to turn, Terri's doctor from *Elmhurst Hospital* referred her to LegalHealth. An attorney went through Terri's paperwork and found that she actually was in compliance. The attorney applied for a fair hearing and represented Terri at the hearing. Terri won her appeal, and in addition to having her benefits restored, she was granted a \$2,000 retroactive award.

LegalHealth has had a clinic at Elmhurst Hospital since 2002 and has served over 1,500 Elmhurst patients.



IMPRESSIONS

“LegalHealth’s model is ideal, especially since it has chosen to offer free services. When LegalHealth is able to reverse denial of treatment decisions they make it possible for patients to benefit from the advancements in cancer care that are available today,

“Legal intervention in workplace issues can mean that patients often continue working, providing not only income and medical insurance but the stability and normalcy needed when dealing with cancer. An attorney’s help can also bring cancer care full circle, since lawyers are not only involved supplementarily during the care process, but can make the care process itself possible by enabling access to that care.”

-Carolyn Mesner, DSW, MSW CancerCare, Director of Education and Training and President of the Association of Oncology Social Work.

Dr. Mesner has worked with LegalHealth since 2002 when it began providing free onsite services at CancerCare.



IMPACT

Davlyn, 55, lives alone and is in treatment for recurrent breast cancer. Social Security Disability Insurance and Supplemental Security Insurance were her only sources of income. After a mastectomy, radiation treatment and chemotherapy, the last thing Davlyn needed was to worry about a possible eviction. She was behind on her rent, her gas and electricity were in danger of being shut off and Social Security was recouping money for an alleged overpayment. She had also failed to recertify her Disability Rent Increase Exemption. As a result, the rent freeze for disabled persons she had obtained was set to expire. Davlyn's social worker at the *Ralph Lauren Center for Cancer Care and Prevention* referred her to a LegalHealth. A LegalHealth attorney helped Davlyn obtain a grant to pay for part of her rent arrears and her overdue Con Edison bill. Her LegalHealth attorney also arranged for an affordable payment plan for Davlyn with Con Edison, had her rent freeze retroactively instated and is assisting her in applying for an SSI overpayment waiver.

LegalHealth has been working with the Ralph Lauren Center for Cancer Care and Prevention since 2004 and has provided assistance to more than 170 patients there.

RALPH LAUREN CENTER
FOR CANCER CARE AND PREVENTION



IMPRESSIONS

“Social workers witness the impact of the economic crisis on patient health because the public hospitals and healthcare centers in New York City function both as a sanctuary for people in high-need communities and as a gateway to other safety net organizations in the community even when their problems are not exclusively medical. LegalHealth’s model to implement legal interventions for low-income patients in the hospital setting enables hospital resources to be efficiently deployed to meet patients’ health and psychosocial needs while the onsite LegalHealth lawyer can address those problems that have legal remedy.”

-Sandra Chaiken, Director of Social Work for North Bronx Health Care Network, a Member of the NYC Health & Hospital Corporation.

LegalHealth has been providing onsite legal services at Jacobi Hospital since 2004 and has served over 1,000 patients of the hospital.



IMPACT

Tamika, an immigrant from Mali, lived in the U.S. for more than three years as an undocumented alien. After she gave birth to a baby girl, Tamika's relatives demanded she return to Mali for the child's circumcision ritual. Tamika feared her own deportation as well as the genital mutilation of her baby. She turned to her pediatrician at *Lincoln Hospital*, who in turn referred her to the onsite legal clinic. LegalHealth and its immigration colleagues at the New York Legal Assistance Group filed for political asylum for Tamika. After a two-and-a-half-year legal battle, Tamika won. She is authorized to stay in the United States, and her little girl is safe from genital mutilation.

LegalHealth's clinic at Lincoln Hospital has been operating since 2005 and has served more than 1,100 patients of the hospital.



IMPRESSIONS

“As a result of our partnership with the attorneys, our medical professionals are better able to identify the legal needs of their patients and make convenient referrals to the legal clinic attorneys onsite. Many of the obstacles that patients face in adhering to treatment have been overcome with the assistance of the dedicated attorneys who are familiar with the wide range of legal problems that can beset vulnerable cancer patients and complicate their care and recovery. By relieving patients of their legal burdens, they are free to direct their potentially limited time to more important matters such as concentrating on their health and spending time with loved ones.”

-Stewart Fleischman, MD, Emeritus Director of Cancer Supportive Services at Continuum Cancer Centers of New York: Beth Israel & St. Luke's-Roosevelt

LegalHealth has been providing onsite legal services to patients of Beth Israel Centers of New York since 2003.



IMPACT

George's cancer treatments at the *NYU Cancer Institute NYU Langone Medical Center* were covered by his employer's health insurance. But when his employer failed to make premium payments, George's coverage was cancelled. In May 2008, George's employer had provided new coverage, but the former insurance company denied his treatment claims. George had failed to obtain the required referrals and pre-authorizations, even though the policy was retroactive to April 2008. LegalHealth appealed on George's behalf and was able to overturn all the denials. The insurance company paid all of George's claims.

LegalHealth has partnered with the NYU Cancer Institute since 2007 and has helped more than 440 patients obtain the help and services they need.



IMPRESSIONS

“Many of my patients who normally would have no one to assist them with legal issues have been able to receive free legal services. In particular, I refer asthma patients who live in uninhabitable housing conditions or work amongst asthma trigger agents which prevent my patients from getting better. Because they have access to LegalHealth, they obtain results that vastly improve their quality of life and health. As an attending, I have been able to change the way we teach and practice medicine in the asthma clinic. We have developed a screening template for all asthmatic patients that includes questions which trigger referrals to the LegalHealth clinic. Our medical residents are changing the way in which they see their job – taking on all factors that may be affecting patient health. Where our hands used to be tied, we now have an effective avenue that can improve patient health.”

-Mary O’Sullivan, M.D., Director of the Smoking Cessation Clinic and treating pulmonologist at St. Luke’s Hospital

LegalHealth has been providing onsite legal services at St. Luke’s – Roosevelt Hospital since October 2002 and has served nearly 2,000 patients of the hospital.



Continuum Health Partners, Inc.



IMPACT

Ms. F is an undocumented widow in her 80s from Jamaica. Four years ago, her daughter in Jamaica sent her to New York to live with her son and his family. Ms. F's health has deteriorated to the point where she requires nearly 24 hour care. However, because of her immigration status, she lacks insurance to pay for a home health aide or nursing home. Her son has had to quit his job to care for his mother full-time. His wife is now the sole earner supporting them, their three children, and Ms. F. The Geriatric Care Center at Woodhull Hospital referred Ms. F's son after he expressed his concerns about his lack of finances to continue to care for his mother. At the same time, he was distraught over the care she would receive in Jamaica with his sister whom indicated that she does not want their mother to come back. When meeting with the LegalHealth attorney, Ms. F's son learned he was eligible to naturalize since he has been a lawful permanent resident for 5 years. Once that is filed, Ms. F's son can file to adjust his mother's status making her eligible for NY State Medicaid. With Medicaid, she can receive the homecare services she requires, and her son can return to work.

LegalHealth has provided services at Woodhull Hospital since July 2009 and served over 150 patients in the first



IMPRESSIONS

“In addition to the comprehensive free legal service we are able to provide to our patients, the connections forged with LegalHealth have enabled us to jointly respond to a public need in a crisis. After the devastating earthquake in Haiti, NYC Health & Hospital Corporation partnered with LegalHealth to open a special legal clinic at *Kings County Hospital Center and Queens Hospital* that provided free legal assistance to Haitian patients and their families seeking Temporary Protected Status (TPS). Through these clinics, 242 Haitians living in our community received legal advice and many have filed for temporary protected status and work authorization. This humanitarian effort bolstered our collective image in the community.”

-Salvatore Russo, General Counsel Health & Hospital Corporation.

LegalHealth began working with Health and Hospital Corporation Hospitals in July 2002 and has grown to having clinics at seven public hospitals around the city,



nyc.gov/hhc

Michael A. Stocker, M.D., Chairman
Alan D. Aviles, President



A Division of the New York Legal Assistance Group

LegalHealth.
Professional Partnership to Promote Well Being

IMPACT

Mr. M resigned from his job when he was 48 years old because of declining health and lived off his savings for the next ten years. With his savings depleted, Mr. M., applied for public assistance, which provided a \$250 shelter allowance. It still wasn't enough to pay his monthly rent and he fell into arrears. His problems mounted, however, when he was notified that his public assistance was being cut off. When Mr. M. told his doctor at the *Institute of Family Health*, about his declining financial situation and suit in Housing court for arrears, his doctor quickly referred him to LegalHealth. The LegalHealth attorney appealed the discontinuation of his public assistance and won. She is also representing Mr. M in Housing Court. To date, the eviction has been delayed 6 months and the attorney is advocating with DSS to get a "one-shot deal" to pay his arrears. She advised him as to his eligibility for Supplemental Security Income, and he is now receiving monthly SSI benefits of \$761. Lastly, she has helped him apply for a rent freeze under NYC's Disability Rent Increase Exemption.

LegalHealth has provided services at Institute of Family Health since July 2009, serving over 300 patients in just over one year.





A Division of the New York Legal Assistance Group

LegalHealth.
Professional Partnership to Promote Well Being

Since 2001, LegalHealth has partnered with medical professionals to address the nonmedical needs of low-income people with serious health problems. LegalHealth, the nation's largest medical-legal partnership, works with healthcare institutions to provide low-income patients with the free legal services that they need to complement their healthcare.

Each week, LegalHealth attorneys bring the law office into the hospital to help secure government benefits for patients, address housing problems, handle immigration issues, manage estate and financial matters, resolve insurance disputes and more.

Through public outreach and the generous support of donors, LegalHealth has affected the lives of thousands of people in New York's most vulnerable communities. In 2009 alone, LegalHealth provided free legal services to more than 3,700 clients at 16 hospitals and healthcare centers throughout the city.

www.legalhealth.org

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