

Using the law to support better health outcomes

The emergence of Health-Justice Partnerships in Australia

Peter Noble, Executive Officer, ARC Justice



Understanding legal
need, health, disability
and disadvantage

The Australian LAW Survey 2012 found:

8,513,000 Australians have a legal problem each year and 3,736,000 have three or more.

65% of legal problems were experienced by 9% of respondents and 85% by 22% of respondents.

Financial strain associated with 29% of legal problems, stress related illnesses with 20%, physical ill-health with 19% and relationship breakdown with 10%.

People consult a wide range of non-legal professionals (especially health care providers) to resolve their problems.

Only 16% consult a lawyer.

L&JFNSW 2012

The Australian LAW Survey confirms that illness / disability is strongly associated with legal problems.

Problems are most frequent among those with a mental illness / disability 83% (cf 47% with neither) and 97% when combined with a physical illness / disability.

Legal problems become more common as the severity of illness / disability increases.

The integration of legal and health services provides a means to secure early intervention to prevent problem escalation. The availability of legal help is directly relevant to health promotion, both in general and in relation to reducing health inequalities.

"...virtually all legal needs (ranging from housing to domestic violence) are directly or proximally connected to health status."

Zuckerman, Sandel, Lawton & Morton The Lancet 2008

So what does this
mean for legal
service delivery?

“PROGRESS
is IMPOSSIBLE
WITHOUT CHANGE,
& those who cannot
CHANGE THEIR *minds*
CANNOT
CHANGE *Anything.*”
- George Bernard Shaw

MLP gained prominence in the 1990s championed by the Chief of Pediatrics, Dr Barry Zuckerman at Boston Medical Center.

Dr Zuckerman recognised:

that a lawyer could help patients navigate the complex legal systems that hold solutions to many social determinants of health.

that together, a doctor and lawyer had the best chance of keeping patients healthy.

Today, MLP has expanded to 276 partnerships in 35 states between:

Hospitals and health care services (including doctors, nurses, social workers and patient navigators)

Lawyers (including legal aid agencies, law schools and pro bono attorneys)

Serving a wide range of disadvantaged and vulnerable populations

Are there examples of Health Justice Partnerships in Australia?

Inner Melbourne Community Legal Partnership with the Women's Hospital, Royal Melbourne and the Royal Children's Hospital

Michael Kirby Centre partnership with the Alfred Hospital and Maurice Blackburn Lawyers

Legal Aid NSW and their community of practice (to name but a few!)

Baker McKenzie Lawyers partnership with Peter MacCallum Cancer Centre

First Step Legal

Justice Connect Seniors Law and Homeless Law

Cancer Council Pro Bono Programs

(and many more!)

What are the priorities to take the initiative forward?

More local trials / pilots

Investment in Evaluation

Academic Partnerships

Diverse funding streams, especially in the health arena

A national centre for Health-Justice Partnerships

Further research on existing examples of advocacy-health partnerships

Brief reflections on HJPs in Bendigo and Shepparton



Partnership with Bendigo Community Health targeting children with learning / developmental challenges and their families.

Large amount of family law / child protection related work



Partnership with Primary Care Connect Shepparton targeting people with complex care needs (often persistent mental health issues and substance related injuries) and multiple-interrelated legal problems – family violence, child protection and crime.

[MLP Video: Cincinnati Child Health Law Partnership](#)

For further resources visit:

www.lcclc.org.au

and click to Health Justice Partnership

Using the law to support better health outcomes

The emergence of Health-Justice Partnerships in Australia

Peter Noble, Executive Officer, ARC Justice

