

# The Health Federation of Philadelphia

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## “Forging Medical Legal Partnerships to Benefit Children in Philadelphia’s Community Health Centers”

To apply for this fellowship, please go to the Stoneleigh website and complete the individual application. Send the completed application to HFP. Contact: Ann Ricksecker, MPH, 215.246.5295, [aricksecker@healthfederation.org](mailto:aricksecker@healthfederation.org)

Partnering Organization and its Mission The Health Federation of Philadelphia (HFP) ([www.healthfederation.org](http://www.healthfederation.org)) strives to improve health care services and address unmet needs for vulnerable populations through capacity building and by functioning as a network of Federally Qualified Health Centers (FQHCs).

The Problem *Health care is undermined when patients do not receive the benefit of laws intended to address social determinants of health, such as safe housing, adequate nutrition, education and domestic violence* (Sandel et al., 2010).<sup>1</sup> Children’s physical, mental and social well-being are particularly vulnerable when problems pertaining to their life conditions persist. Their preclusion from access to the essential protections and benefits that certain laws are designed to afford them further deteriorates their health and often can lead to potentially costly, long-term consequences. Currently in Philadelphia, many children’s socio-legal needs remain unmet and the high-quality health care that FQHCs are equipped to provide to children is severely mitigated in the absence of critical legal advocacy.

Solution It is often within primary care settings, such as FQHCs, where children’s and families’ unmet social, medical and legal needs intersect. In a *Medical Legal Partnership* (MLP), an interdisciplinary team of health care staff, lawyers and paralegals collaborate to integrate legal assistance into the medical setting as a component of good patient care. In collaboration with the Legal Clinic for the Disabled (LCD) (<http://www.legalclinicforthedisabled.org/>), which has demonstrated success in implementing MLPs using several national models with St. Christopher’s Hospital for Children and with Family Practice Counseling Network’s three nurse managed health centers, and with support from the Philadelphia Bar Foundation as well as members of Philadelphia’s robust legal community, HFP is well-positioned to facilitate improvements in primary care and expansion of services to vulnerable children and their families by bringing to scale the MLP model and incorporating it within Philadelphia’s FQHCs. For almost thirty years, under the executive direction of Natalie Levkovich, HFP has cultivated and sustained strong relationships with Philadelphia’s FQHCs, including those operated by the City of Philadelphia, which have been historically receptive to partnering with HFP in implementing innovative and integrated services.

Outcomes HFP’s Stoneleigh Emerging Leader Fellow will work in tandem with LCD to lay the foundation for implementation of MLPs within Philadelphia’s community health centers. By the end of the year, the fellow will produce an operationally effective and efficient MLP model designed to address the needs of children in Philadelphia and a well-researched plan for implementation, after having evaluated MLPs elsewhere and having established the feasibility of a pilot in Philadelphia. As evidenced by other MLP efforts, great potential exists for positive policy implications affecting low-income children and families as a result of alliances forged among MLP staff and policy makers who become MLP champions.

Desired Candidate Qualifications The ideal fellow will demonstrate the self-efficacy, resourcefulness and organizational skills necessary to work in collaboration with diverse partners. Additionally, the fellow will possess knowledge of the interface between law and health care. This individual will be receptive to criticism, not easily intimidated, as well as committed to a career that advances social justice through innovative endeavors.

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<sup>1</sup> Sandel, M., Hansen, M., Kahn, R., Lawton, E., Paul, E., Parker, V., Morton, S., and Zuckerman, B. (2010). Medical-legal partnerships: Transforming primary care by addressing the legal needs of vulnerable populations. *Health Affairs*, 29(9), pp. 1697-1705.

