

1. What problem were you addressing? What solution did you propose to address it?

Over 42% of Camden residents are low-income and 33.6% live in poverty. Health indicators in the city are grim, with high rates of asthma, obesity, diabetes, and hypertension. Socioeconomic factors such as poor access to housing, social isolation, and food insecurity contribute to poor mental and physical health outcomes—and earlier aging and lower life expectancies for Camden residents compared to the rest of New Jersey. While the state’s average life expectancy is 80.3 years, Camden averages only 73, with one neighborhood averaging just 67.2. Chronic homelessness—a common problem among Camden Coalition patients—has been shown to shorten an individual’s lifespan by up to 20 years.

Compounding this situation, the law frequently impacts the lives of Camden residents as they face evictions and utilities shut-offs, warrants for outstanding fines and fees, struggles obtaining and maintaining government benefits, over-policing, and more. Through serving patients with complex health and social needs, we identified a gap in access to services to address legal barriers which cause psychological stress and financial insecurity for our patients already struggling with complex needs.

Our solution, launched in 2017 in partnership with Rutgers Law School-Camden, is the Camden Medical-Legal Partnership (MLP), which serves area residents enrolled in the Camden Coalition’s care management programs, referred to us through other programmatic partnerships, and seeking care at the Cooper Center for Healing. The MLP serves low-income adults of all ages, races, and ethnicities; however, from July 1, 2022 to early March 2023, 32% of those served are aged 50+, and 10% are 60+, with the majority identifying as Black and/or Hispanic. As part of a whole-person, trauma-informed care coordination approach, we embed consulting attorneys in our community-based care teams and within Cooper Hospital’s outpatient addiction medicine program to help patients resolve legal challenges, from simple advice to full-on representation as needed.

2. What actions did you take? What worked and didn’t work toward your objectives? Please share any unanticipated benefits or barriers encountered.

Since July 1, 2022, our two MLP attorneys have worked with 132 patients in total to resolve legal issues or to refer them to other counsel with particular expertise or capacity. These issues including housing disputes or access barriers; income maintenance, often related to public benefits; matters of family law (custody/visitation, domestic abuse, financial support, etc.); nonviolent criminal matters; employment disputes; traffic violations; and miscellaneous legal matters (e.g., wills/estates, licenses/ID documents, municipal court fine and fees, etc.). Our MLP attorneys also trained Camden Coalition care team members to identify possible legal issues for further evaluation. In some cases, care team members were able to advocate for patients with the support and guidance of our attorneys.

MLP attorneys receive referrals from ongoing Camden Coalition programs and the Cooper Center for Healing. For referrals from Camden Coalition programs, the care teams form the primary relationship with the patient. MLP attorneys join the care team for scheduled visits in the community or telephonically, depending on the nature of the care management. In the case of Cooper referrals, patients often raise legal issues with their treatment team, who then alert the MLP attorney.

The integration of the attorney into the care team eliminates logistical challenges and enables immediate focus on legal issues. Care team staff and Cooper navigators often follow up with patients on

legal issues or to gather additional information and documentation needed to maximize the attorney's efficiency. Additional MLP activities included data collection, evaluation and writing, securing funding, and maintaining partnerships to support the MLP as a program.

We did not encounter any unanticipated benefits or barriers over the grant period, but looking ahead to the upcoming (May 11, 2023) end of the federal public health emergency, the "unwinding" of pandemic-related expanded Medicaid and other public benefits access, and the increase in evictions following expiration of pandemic-related rental assistance, we expect demand for legal services to increase significantly over the coming years.

3. How did you measure success--both quantitative and qualitative? Please include numbers and demographics of people touched by the work.

The MLP collaborates with the Camden Coalition's internal Data and Quality Improvement team to collect implementation and outcomes data. We track the number of patients engaged and the types of issues encountered, and we seek to denote quantitative and qualitative outcomes as applicable. For example, if we achieve a \$1500 reduction of outstanding fines and fees for a client, we track this clear quantitative value as well as any reduction in stress experienced by the client. Additional data used to evaluate the program includes administrative records from our Health Information Exchange, Medicaid claims data, follow-up with patients throughout the intervention, and longer-term survey follow-up.

Over the grant period to date, we have supported 132 patients, of whom 32% (n=43) are over 50 and 10% (n=13) are over 60. Over half of clients had legal challenges related to securing housing (27%), maintaining income (15%), or matters of family law (14%); of note, only 10% of cases were criminal matters. Here are some examples of older individuals we have worked with over the grant period:

- We helped an individual secure permanent housing after facing eviction. Our client had become unable to work on account of his complex medical condition. As a result, he then entered into a transaction with a friend to ensure that he could remain in his home for the remainder of his life. When the friend tried to illegally and wrongfully evict him from his longtime family property, we intervened to negotiate a favorable agreement securing indefinite occupancy rights for our client.
- We supported one individual with long-term chronic illnesses who wished to draft a will and power of attorney documents.
- We are currently working with one individual who has numerous outstanding criminal matters—including six felony charges in two different counties and 17 disorderly persons charges from a half-dozen municipalities—almost all of which are for shoplifting food while he was homeless over the years. Resolving these charges will enable him to get access to critical public benefits and social supports.

4. How did partnerships/collaborations enhance or challenge the project?

Collaboration across organizations and sectors is central to the Camden Coalition's approach. We operate our MLP in collaboration with Rutgers Law-Camden, which provides strategic guidance as well as research and administrative support through their legal clinical program, including subject matter expertise and consultation, as well as legal research subscriptions, use of law clinic space, and access to law library resources and librarians. In addition, Rutgers clinics often serve as a referral outlet.

Our partnership with the Cooper Center for Healing, which offers an integrative approach in providing patients access to pain, addiction, and behavioral health care in a variety of entrance points based on each individual need, has continued to deepen over the grant period. Our Maida Public Interest Fellow, who specializes in substance use issues and does most of his consultations at the Center for Healing, was approved to stay with us for an additional year (January-December 2023), enabling us to continue building this relationship.

5. Include a budget and actual for the project during the reporting period.

As discussed with Susan Hoskins, the MLP has three other funders besides FFA, and each of those grants has its own calendar/timeline. Within the 12-month FFA grant period (July 2022-June 2023), we have sought to optimize the spending of each grant based on grant end dates and specific conditions; in this context, we have opted to spend the FFA grant from January to June 2023, with all funds planned to be expended by June 30. As of February 28, we have spent \$9,164 and have \$25,836 remaining to spend from March to June:

<b>Expense</b>	<b>January-February 2023 (spent)</b>	<b>March-June 2023 (projected)</b>
Personnel: salaries and fringe	\$1,816	\$1,184
Consulting Attorney: Jeremy Spiegel, Esq	\$4,000	\$21,600
TrackVia care management software	\$3,348	\$3,052
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>\$9,164</b>	<b>\$25,836</b>

6. What conversations have you had on how to sustain the project after the grant, and do you have plans to share your results with other organizations?

The MLP has existed since 2017 with support from a host of financial and institutional partners and has become part of our care management standard of care. As such, the Camden Coalition is committed to sustaining the MLP through new and continuing funding partnerships and to sharing our results and findings in the broadest way possible, as part of our approach to change how care is designed and delivered in New Jersey. Since January 2020, we have been a state-designed Regional Health Hub in New Jersey, through which we enjoy a direct relationship with the Office of Medicaid Innovation as well as sustainable funding from the state for key Camden Coalition infrastructure and initiatives, such as the Health Information Exchange. While this funding does not directly support the MLP, it creates a privileged avenue for sharing the experiences and results of all of our programs with the state agency responsible for informing changes to Medicaid policy.

7. Feedback on FFA: How have we helped? Made it harder? What else can we do?

We have enjoyed our conversations with FFA and are grateful for the opportunity to reapply for funding for another year. Our conversation with Susan Hoskins on March 9 was especially helpful to better understand FFA's returning grantee application process and to talk through considerations for our new proposal. Overall, we have been grateful for the partnership!