



The Intellectual  
and Developmental  
Disabilities Council  
of Tarrant County

# **Welcome**

## **Access to Justice: the services of Legal Aid of NorthWest Texas**

**Presented by Julie Sladek and Ndidi Gbulie,  
Legal Aid of NorthWest Texas**

**Tuesday, February 9, 2021**



@IDDCouncil



/IDDCouncil



Intellectual and  
Developmental  
Disabilities Council  
of Tarrant County

## **PURPOSE**

**To transform the region into an inclusive community where individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities (IDD) thrive.**

## **MISSION**

**To bring stakeholders together to create an environment for the development of an efficient and accessible system of support for people with intellectual and developmental disabilities.**

## **Tuesday's Caregiver Education ♦ Noon-1 pm**

- **Feb. 16 – COVID-19 Vaccine Update and People with IDD**
- **Feb. 23 – Social Skill Interventions**
- **Mar. 2 – Medicaid Programs and Services Qualifications**

## **Monthly IDD Council Meeting**

**First Thursday of Each Month, 8:30 a.m. – 10 a.m.**

- **Mar. 4 – Protecting Against Online Abuse for Vulnerable Adults with IDD**

Follow us on social media for upcoming topics, events and networking opportunities



/IDDCouncil



@IDDCouncil



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of Tarrant County



**Tuesdays: March 2-April 27, 6-7 p.m.**

**A Free 9 Week Virtual Training Series**

**REGISTRATION OPEN!**

**[WWW.IDDCOUNCIL.ORG/FIRE](http://WWW.IDDCOUNCIL.ORG/FIRE)**



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of Tarrant County



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# Membership Driven

## Premier Partners:



Centered in Care  
Powered by Pride



**Fort Worth**  
INDEPENDENT SCHOOL DISTRICT

## Organizational Partners, Sponsors and individual memberships



CHANGING THE WORLD FOR CHILDREN WITH AUTISM™





Intellectual and  
Developmental  
Disabilities Council  
of Tarrant County

# Welcome New Members!

- Teresa Brashear
- Elizabeth Meadows
- Steve Brooks
- Tiffany Arnold
- Erin Fogarty
- The Self-Determination Group
- Lindsy Edwards
- Kerry Romine
- Deborah Watson

- Everett Davis
- Best Buddies International –  
***Sponsor Member***
- Robert Dominguez
- Karen Shadden
- Christine Gibson
- Kerri Staples

**Your name belongs here!**

**[Membership Form](#)**



All IDD Council members have access to monthly meetings, job fairs, transition fairs, and access to information and resources via our monthly newsletter, social media, and IDD Council website.

### ANNUAL BENEFITS AND PRIVILEGES TO MEMBERS

<b>\$5000+ (ALL BENEFITS FROM \$2500 LEVEL, PLUS ALL OF THE FOLLOWING):</b>	<b>\$2500+ (ALL BENEFITS FROM \$1000 LEVEL, PLUS CHOOSE 1):</b>	<b>\$1000+ (ALL BENEFITS FROM \$500 LEVEL, PLUS CHOOSE 2):</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Logo with link on website, ability to put our logo on their website with prior approval</li> <li>• Keynote speaker at Celebrating YOU Employer Recognition luncheon OR another premier event</li> <li>• Access to the benefits of the individual membership level for all families/employees affiliated with your organization</li> <li>• Guest feature (e.g., ad, article, profile) in an issue of the IDD Council newsletter</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Organization's name on IDD Council website</li> <li>• Tailored 1-hour training for your organization's staff or stakeholders (CEUs may be offered for an additional fee)</li> <li>• Present at a Caregiver Education session</li> <li>• Recognition in all IDD Council publications</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Monthly social media posts (1 image of your choice)</li> <li>• Speaker spot at a monthly membership meeting</li> <li>• Request of a custom topic for a Caregiver Education session; priority selection over non-member and non-custom requests</li> <li>• Recognition in select IDD Council publications</li> </ul>
<b>\$500+ (ALL BENEFITS FROM \$250 LEVEL, PLUS CHOOSE 2):</b>	<b>\$250+ (ALL BENEFITS FROM \$25 LEVEL, PLUS CHOOSE 2):</b>	<b>\$25 INDIVIDUAL MEMBER</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Banner with logo at all 4 Making Connections Disability Resource Fairs OR at April Cool's Day</li> <li>• Organizational info table at Sensory Santa</li> <li>• Permission to distribute information at events (e.g., in bags, or at the doorway)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Organizational info table at one* of the following events: April Cool's Day, CapeAbilities Job Fair, a Caregiver Education session, OR a Making Connections event</li> <li>• Choose 1 topic for a monthly Caregiver Education session from a pre-set list of topics. Priority selection over non-member requests</li> </ul> <p>* May select two organizational table events as benefit option.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Free training (non-CEU)</li> <li>• Collaboration and networking among agencies, caregivers, and other advocates</li> <li>• Recognition of membership on website and newsletter</li> <li>• Access to members-only portal with a resource directory and video/audio recordings of select presentations</li> </ul>

*...additional customized benefits available a-la-carte to meet your organization's needs!*

*CEUs may be offered for an additional fee at individual events.*

*Members at all levels will receive a discount on CEUs.*

<https://www.iddcouncil.org/join-us>

Our Presenters:

Julie Sladek



&

Ndidi Gbulie







# Legal Aid of North West Texas

**LSC** | America's Partner  
for Equal Justice  
LEGAL SERVICES CORPORATION



# Julia Sladek

## Legal Aid of NorthWest Texas

Staff Attorney

Tarrant County Medical-Legal Partnership Program  
Fort Worth Office





# Who We Are

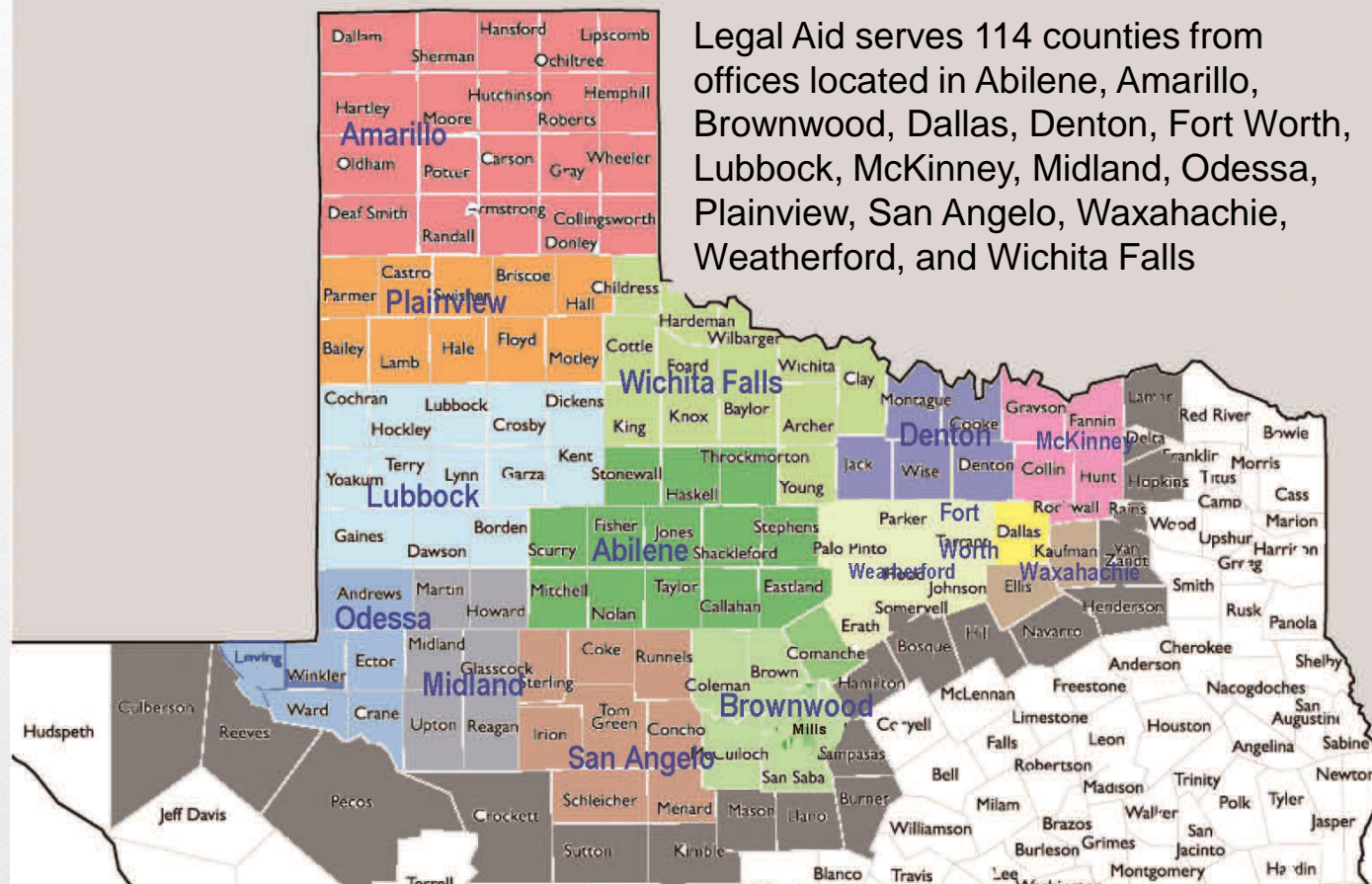
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- Legal Aid of NorthWest Texas (LANWT) is a nonprofit law firm that strives to meet the legal needs of more than 1.5 million eligible clients in its 114-county service area



## Legal Aid of NorthWest Texas

Legal Aid serves 114 counties from offices located in Abilene, Amarillo, Brownwood, Dallas, Denton, Fort Worth, Lubbock, McKinney, Midland, Odessa, Plainview, San Angelo, Waxahachie, Weatherford, and Wichita Falls





# What We Do

LANWT provides free civil legal services to eligible, low-income clients in North and West Texas. We offer help with a variety of legal matters involving wills, federal tax issues, public benefits, foreclosure prevention, consumer protection, community revitalization matters, and...

Disaster Assistance



Family Law



Landlord/Tenant Disputes



Disability Rights



# Legal Services in Texas

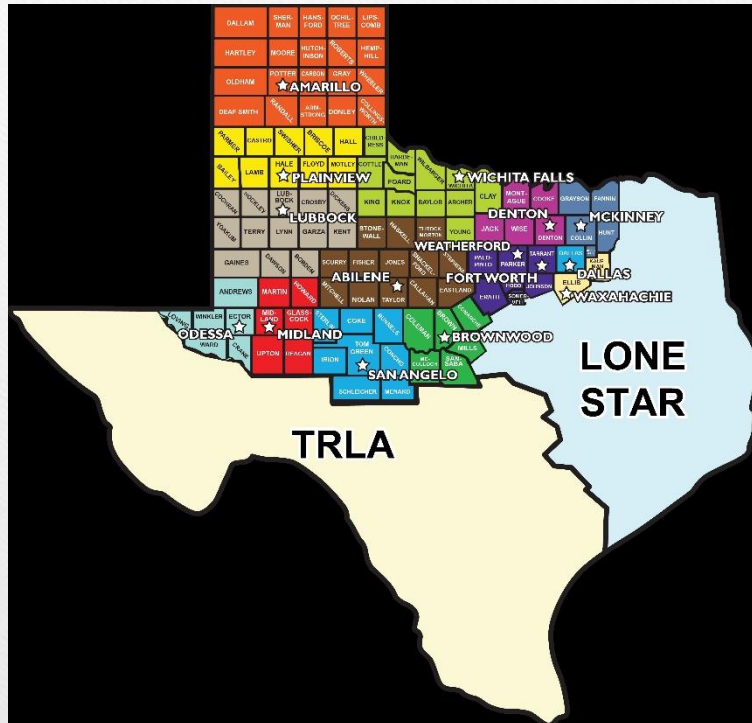
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Three programs funded by the  
Legal Services Corporation (LSC)

- Legal Aid of NorthWest Texas
- Lone Star Legal Aid
- Texas RioGrande Legal Aid



# LSC-Funded Legal Aid Service Areas in Texas



Did you know...

**LANWT is the fifth-largest  
Legal Aid program in the  
United States**

# What We Cannot Do

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- We cannot handle medical malpractice, class actions, assisted suicide, or personal injury cases
- We cannot provide representation in criminal matters





# Civil vs. Criminal Law:

## What's the difference?

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### CRIMINAL LAW

- Deals with criminal acts
- State vs Defendant\*
- Defense Attorney
- Misdemeanor / Felony
- Punishment:  
Fines, Jail, Criminal Record
- Probation / Parole

\*Exception: Expunctions and nondisclosures of criminal records when allowed by statute

### CIVIL LAW

- Landlord / Tenant
- Wills / Estates
- Real Property / Home Ownership
- Corporate / Business / Contracts
- Torts / Personal Injury
- Divorce / Custody / Support
- Protective Orders
- Punishment:  
Fines, Injunctions, Orders

# Legal Aid Eligibility

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In order for an individual to be eligible to receive services through LANWT, he or she must be:

- Income eligible
- Asset eligible
- A U.S. Citizen or qualify under another legal status and
- Have a legal problem within approved priorities



# What is “Income Eligible”?

Short answer:

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An individual who is at or below  
200 percent of Federal Poverty Guidelines

Example: A family of 4 has annual household income of \$53,000 (2021 levels)



# What is “Asset Eligible”?

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An individual seeking assistance may not have total family assets in excess of \$10,000, plus \$5,000 for each additional family member



# Eligibility and Citizenship

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- To be eligible for services, an individual must be a U.S. Citizen or have another legal status to be in this country (e.g., permanent resident, refugee, asylee)
- If a person is not a citizen and does not have legal status, LANWT can provide civil legal assistance only if the person is a victim of domestic violence

# What are “Approved Priorities”?

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- LANWT’s Board of Directors, in consult with LANWT Administration and Branch Managers, determines the types of cases within a given area that are “priorities” when considering an applicant’s case
- For example, under the area of family law, obtaining a divorce and child support for a victim of domestic violence is a priority. Obtaining a divorce for a couple who have been separated for years and have no property and no minor children is not



# Some Examples of LANWT Priorities

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- **Consumer and Finance:** Predatory Lending, Deceptive Trade Practices, Debt Collections
- **Education:** Special Education, Access to Resources, Discipline
- **Family:** Orders of Protection, Divorce, and Child Custody Involving Family Violence; Adoption; Adult Guardianship
- **Housing:** Subsidized Housing, Landlord/Tenant, Mortgage Foreclosure, Predatory Lending, Property Tax Issues
- **Health:** Medicaid, Medicare, CHIP, Home Health Care
- **Income Maintenance:** TANF, SNAP, Social Security, Unemployment Compensation, Essential Needs Driver's License

# What is “Lack of Resources”?

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- After an intake interview and staffing, Applicants may receive a letter from LANWT that says we could not take a case “due to lack of resources”
- This means that, although the Applicant needed or wanted legal representation, only advice could be provided because of existing case loads by staff attorneys or similar limitations on time or staffing



# Lack of Resources Means Demand Outweighs Supply

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- In Texas, more than **4 million people** live below poverty level (US Census Bureau)
- Lack of resources means that **fewer than 10 percent** of low-income Texans receive civil legal services (ABA)
- There is about **1 legal aid lawyer for every 7,000 Texans** who qualify for services (Texas Access to Justice Foundation)
- Texas ranks 47<sup>th</sup> in access to legal aid lawyers (The Justice Index)

# Target Areas/Specialty Grants

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- Foreclosure and Eviction Prevention Teams
- Disability Rights
- Youth Rights
- Bankruptcy Team
- Crime Victims Assistance
- Low Income Taxpayer Clinics
- Veterans
- Community Revitalization
- Removing Legal Barriers to Employment/Housing  
(e.g., criminal record inaccuracies, driver's license issues)



# Intake Procedures: How To Apply

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- In-Office Appointments\*
- Emergency Walk-Ins or Referrals\*
- Intake at Shelters\*
- Evening and Specialty Clinics\*
- Virtual Clinics via Zoom or Phone
- Legal Aid Line
- Online Intake at [www.lanwt.org](http://www.lanwt.org)

\*In-person services limited during Covid-19

# Application Process

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- Prescreen for Eligibility and Conflict Checks
- Intake Interview
- Staffing Process
  - Each case is reviewed by panel of LANWT Attorneys and Managing Attorney
  - We are unable to provide full representation in every case, but provide some level of service (e.g., legal advice) to each qualified Applicant



# Levels of Service

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- **Advice:** Legal advice and counsel related to Applicant's issue
- **Brief Service:** Legal advice plus additional service (e.g., phone call on Applicant's behalf)
- **Full Representation:** Extended service, up to and including court appearance
  - The service provided is discretionary and depends on facts of the individual case, available resources at time of application, and Applicant's eligibility

# How to Apply

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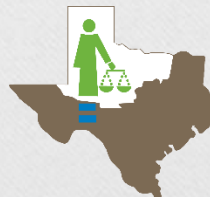
- Visit [www.lanwt.org](http://www.lanwt.org) to find individual office contact information and intake schedules, including evening, virtual, and specialty clinics
- Visit [www.lanwt.org](http://www.lanwt.org), click “Get Help” and use the pull-down menu to apply online 24/7
- Call the Legal Aid Line at 888-529-5277



# Julie Sladek

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817-569-5611

[sladekj@lanwt.org](mailto:sladekj@lanwt.org)



# **Medical-Legal Partnership: Legal Aid of North West Texas & MHMR of Tarrant County**

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**NDIDI GBULIE, Esq.**

**JULIE SLADEK, Esq.**





# What is a Medical-Legal Partnership (MLP)?

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- A **healthcare delivery model** that integrates legal assistance into patient care
- A **collaboration of health and legal professionals** to **address** and **prevent** health-harming social and legal needs (social determinants of health) for patients and populations
- There are **442+** **partnerships between** healthcare and legal **institutions**
- **48 states** in the United States of America have at least one MLP

*\*National Center for Medical-Legal Partnership*

## A Very Short MLP History

1967

- Delta Health Center in Mississippi, the nation's first federally funded rural health center, hires a lawyer to address patients' food and housing problems

1993

- The first medical-legal partnership is formed at Boston Medical Center after doctors trace pediatric asthma problems back to moldy apartments

2001

- Following an article in the New York Times about the Boston partnership, nearly 75 additional partnerships form between 2001 and 2006

2006

- The National Center for Medical-Legal Partnership launches

2010

- A Dallas medical-legal partnership was created. This partnership is with the Children's Medical Center (Children's Health), UT Southwestern Medical Center at Dallas, and Legal Aid of NorthWest Texas (LANWT).

2018

- LANWT receives funding to start a new MLP

## Medical Approach Alone Often Not Enough

### Legal Intervention Required for Complex Social Needs



Source: Beck, Andrew, et. al., “Doctors and Lawyers Collaborating to HeLP Children—Outcomes from a Successful Partnership between Professions”, *Journal of Health Care for the Poor and Underserved*, 24(2013): 1063-1073. Sandel, Megan et. al., “Medical-Legal Partnerships: Transforming Primary Care By Addressing The Legal Needs Of Vulnerable Populations”, *Health Affairs* 29, No. 9 (2010): 1697–1705, The Advisory Board Company interviews and analysis

Megan Sandel, MD, MPH,  
 Department of Pediatrics,  
 Boston University School of Medicine



## Why MLPs Matter:



- Patients often present with more than just medical problems: underlying legal, social, environmental, and financial problems impair health
- By treating these circumstances, MLPs can prevent the poverty-related cycle of medical problems and hospitalizations
- Research has shown that when legal services and expertise are used to address social needs, people are (1) admitted to the hospital less frequently (2) more likely to take their medication as prescribed and (3) report lower levels of stress (*Journal of Health Care for the Poor and Underserved* and *Journal of Clinical Oncology*)

# Tarrant County Medical-Legal Partnership

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- Collaborative effort:
  - **Legal Aid of NorthWest Texas (LANWT)**
  - **MHMR of Tarrant County**
- Provide civil legal services to low-income individuals who are receiving services at MHMR
- Staff attorneys will be located at 3136 W 4<sup>th</sup> Street, Fort Worth, TX
- The goal is to eliminate legal obstacles that interfere with the ability of clients to stabilize their lives and receive needed mental healthcare services

# Legal Aid of NorthWest Texas (LANWT)

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- LANWT is a nonprofit organization that strives to meet the legal needs of more than 1.5 million eligible clients in its 114-county service area





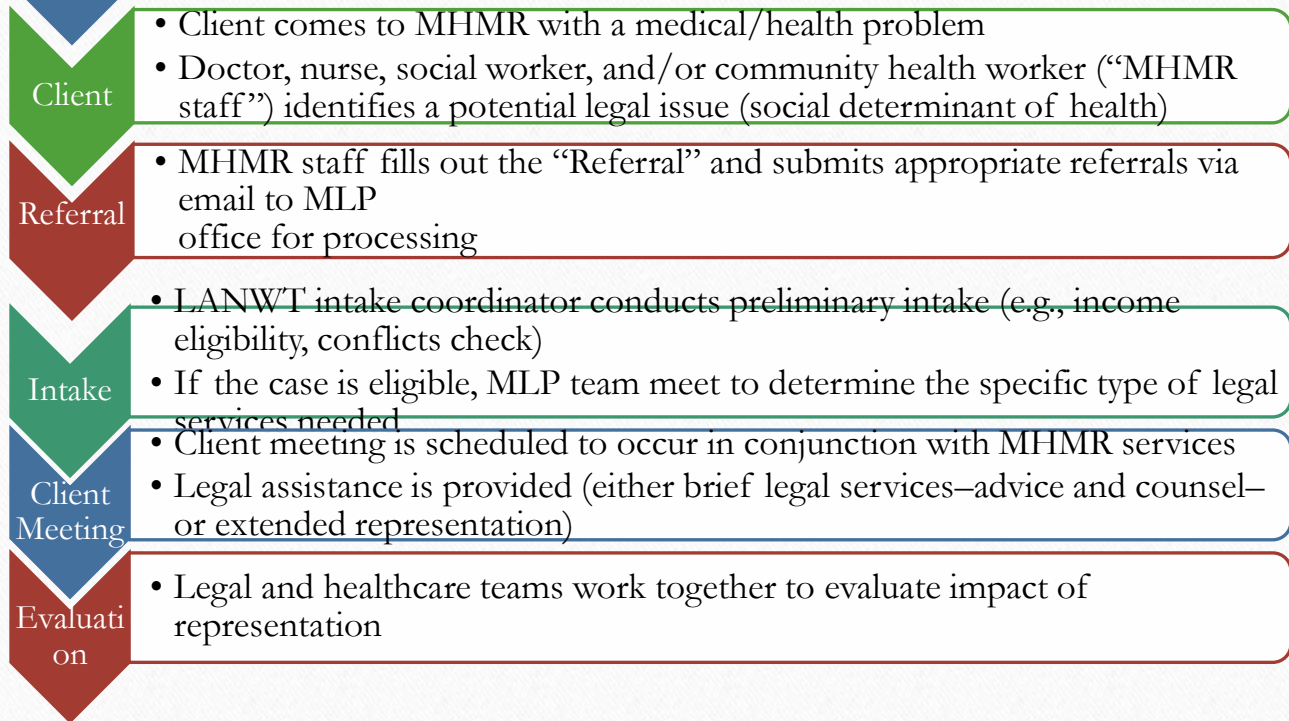
# MLP Eligibility

---

In order for an individual to be eligible to receive services through the MLP, the client must be:

- Income eligible - at or below 125% of Federal Poverty guidelines
- Asset eligible – Total household assets less than \$10,000 for applicant and \$5,000 for each additional household member
- A U.S. Citizen or qualify under another legal status and
- Have a qualifying legal problem within approved priorities

## • The Process



## Medical-Legal Partnerships Fill an Important Gap Legal Needs That Impact Health (I-HELP Model)



### **Income and Insurance**

- Insurance access and benefits
- Food stamps
- Disability benefits
- Social Security benefits



### **Legal Status**

- Expungements
- Non-Disclosures



### **Personal/Family Stability**

- Guardianship
- Advance directives
- Powers of attorney
- Estate planning



### **Housing & Energy**

- Access to housing subsidies
- Sanitary housing conditions
- Utilities access
- Foreclosure prevention
- Eviction prevention

- Edited from Original Source: National Center for Medical –Legal Partnerships, “Core Components and Activities,” <http://www.medical-legalpartnership.org/model/core-components>, The Advisory Board Company interviews and analysis.



# Tarrant County MLP Highlights and Success Stories

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- 275 Referrals in 2019
  - 58%-Income Benefits (SSI/SSDI/Medicare/Medicaid/SNAP/SUAP)
  - 24%-Housing Cases
  - 12%-Personal and Family Stability (Guardianship/Power of Attorney/Probate)
  - 6%-Non-TCMLP Eligible cases (Criminal/Personal Injury, Child Support and Divorce cases)
- Top four referring clinics
  1. Circle Drive Clinic
  2. Western Hills Clinic
  3. Homeless Clinic
  4. Penn Square Clinic

## Case #1: Eviction Prevention

It was late Friday afternoon, Sam was facing an eviction hearing Monday morning and her subsidized housing application would be denied if she was evicted. She was sick and could no longer afford her rent payments. MHMR referred the case to the MLP team. Sam was represented by a MLP attorney at the hearing and the eviction was dismissed. Her application for subsidized housing was approved. Currently, she is in the process of moving into a more affordable and habitable property and there is no eviction on record or credit report.

## Case #2: Benefits Restored

MHMR referred Kathy to TCMLP due to a denial of a recertification of her Medicaid eligibility and SSI. Kathy has an IDD diagnosis and the benefits that she received allowed her to live in an adult foster home in the community, where she had been very successful. Kathy also received case management services, RX drug coverage, and a home nurse through her Medicaid eligibility. The denial of her benefits would have taken all that away. Thanks to the MLP's intervention and advocacy, Kathy was able to remain in her adult foster home and retain her eligibility for program services and cost coverage for insurance premiums that allowed Kathy to obtain her full SSI monthly check.



# What Should You as Clinicians Do?

Contact Tarrant County MLP!



## Tarrant County Medical-Legal Partnership

NDIDI GBULIE- [gbulien@lanwt.org](mailto:gbulien@lanwt.org)

JULIE SLADEK – [sladekj@lanwt.org](mailto:sladekj@lanwt.org)



TEXAS  
ACCESS-TO JUSTICE  
FOUNDATION





Intellectual and  
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# Smile.Amazon Each Day - Every Day

**amazon**smile

**You shop. Amazon gives.**

<https://smile.amazon.com/ch/47-39999906>





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# Thank you!

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[www.IDDCouncil.org](http://www.IDDCouncil.org)