

# Evaluation of the Medical Legal Partnership Program

## Final Evaluation Report

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November 2022



Advancing Evidence.  
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# Introduction

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## About the Medical Legal Partnership

The Manhattan District Attorney’s Office (DANY) launched the Criminal Justice Investment Initiative (CJII) in 2014, and within it, the Family and Youth Development (FYD) Programs Initiative in 2017.<sup>1</sup> It aims to expand service providers’ capacity to implement FYD programs for populations at elevated risk of poor life outcomes, including eventual justice system involvement. The CJII is part of DANY’s broader investments to prevent crime, improve public safety, and reduce involvement in the justice system.

One of the FYD programs DANY selected for evaluation is the Medical Legal Partnership (MLP). The MLP presents an opportunity to reach and serve youth who are at higher risk for poor life outcomes and criminal legal involvement, including (a) students with disabilities, (b) youth who have dropped out of school or have disciplinary issues, and (c) youth who have been arrested or incarcerated, or are involved with family court. The MLP provides civil and educational legal services, with the aim of promoting educational attainment for higher risk youth by advocating for special education and similar services through the development of individualized education programs (IEPs) and other educational supports. Through this advocacy, the MLP aims to ensure that children and families get access to services that meet their needs. Specifically, the MLP aims to positively affect the community, and specifically families of youth at higher risk for criminal legal involvement by (a) improving functioning among families of at-risk youth and (b) improving coordination between mental health services and legal services.

The MLP is a partnership between the Legal Aid Society (LAS) and Mount Sinai St. Luke’s Child and Family Institute (CFI) that began in 2018 and continued through 2021. CFI is a hospital-based outpatient psychiatric clinic that works with children and adolescents ages 4–17 and their families. LAS provides training to CFI clinicians about how to identify youth in need of education advocacy (e.g., youth facing superintendent suspension hearings, in restrictive settings, and/or with frequent classroom removals). CFI clinicians use this knowledge to identify and refer patients with psychiatric conditions or learning or developmental disabilities to LAS. LAS then matches each family with an attorney who conducts an intake meeting to review the youth’s school and medical/mental health history. Based on this meeting, the attorney works with other LAS attorneys and a social worker to develop and implement a case strategy for each

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<sup>1</sup> The CUNY Institute for State and Local Governance now manages the CJII, which was established by the Manhattan District Attorney’s Office in 2015.

family, which may include (a) providing advice to families, (b) requesting mediation, (c) representing the youth in a suspension hearing, (d) filing a due process complaint or representing the youth at an impartial hearing, (e) attending IEP meetings, (f) identifying and assisting with applications to nonpublic and private schools, (g) securing related service providers, or (h) assisting with school transfer. LAS and CFI staff meet twice a month to discuss cases and refine strategies to best fit the families they serve.

The MLP also provides advocacy resources to parents and families. LAS staff facilitate Know Your Rights workshops, which instruct families about parental rights regarding special education and school discipline. CFI clinicians facilitate Parenting in Stress groups (short-term parenting support groups), which provide trauma-informed solutions to families of youth with serious mental illness. CFI clinicians also facilitate Positive Parenting groups (long-term parenting support groups), which aim to increase parent understanding and support for a youth's educational and health needs. Because of the disruptions caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, several components of the MLP either abruptly shifted to a virtual environment (e.g., client intake or screening, CFI staff training) or were ceased early (e.g., Know Your Rights training, positive parenting workshops) in 2020.

## **About the Evaluation**

The American Institutes for Research® (AIR®) was contracted by DANY, beginning in 2019, to design and conduct both a process evaluation and a return-on-investment (ROI) analysis of the MLP. The goal of the MLP process evaluation is to understand how the partnership is working from multiple perspectives, including those of legal advocates, clinicians, and families. The process evaluation took place in two phases. In Phase 1, the process evaluation described the four stages of program implementation: planning, installation, initial implementation, and full implementation. In Phase 2, the process evaluation captured effective strategies for implementing an MLP like this one; this phase is intended to inform policy more broadly. Phase 2 of the process evaluation also addressed how youth and their families were supported during the pandemic and the perceived influence of the pandemic on implementation of the MLP. This report primarily discusses findings from Phase 2 of the process evaluation.

The ROI analysis calculated the costs borne by families enrolling in the program and borne by the MLP in developing a case strategy plan for services, along with the estimated value of the services families received in pursuing and achieving milestones in 2019. Although data were collected to understand resources used in 2020, the study team determined that 2019 was a more typical implementation year given the exceptional circumstances faced by families and schools in 2020 due to the COVID-19 pandemic. In addition, the response rates on the data

collected in 2020 were lower than desired. Data from 2019 implementation were assumed to yield more reliable results about the overall ROI of the program.

Although a more comprehensive ROI analysis would require researchers to follow youth over a longer period (i.e., through a youth's full educational career and into adulthood) and compare their outcomes with those of similar youth who did not have access to the MLP, the analysis presented here accurately reflects the more immediate benefits of the MLP and compares these with the corresponding costs. Because this analysis does not include potential benefits that may accrue to youth and their families in the longer term, this work is a conservative depiction of how the benefits of the MLP compare with its costs. Therefore, it is likely that the actual value of the benefits from this program exceeds what is presented in this report.

## Research Questions and Data Sources

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### Process Evaluation Questions and Data Sources

The Phase 2 process evaluation used the following three data sources to address eight research questions (see Appendix A for a more detailed presentation of the research methods).

- **Staff interviews.** AIR conducted interviews with eight respondents to understand how the MLP was implemented, including what factors facilitated or hindered its effectiveness. Four of the eight respondents were CFI staff members who served various roles (i.e., clinical or medical directors, program directors, social workers). Four of the eight interviewees were attorneys and social workers for the Education Law Project<sup>2</sup> at LAS. AIR video-recorded the interviews, transcribed them verbatim, and thematically analyzed them using NVivo 12. (Please see Appendix B for the interview protocol.)
- **Family focus groups.** AIR conducted three focus groups to examine parents' and families' perceptions of the MLP and the factors that influenced their program experience. A total of eight parents and family members whose children received mental health services through CFI participated in a focus group. AIR conducted these focus groups in English (two focus groups) and Spanish (one focus group); video-recorded each session with participants' permission; transcribed and, when needed, translated the video recordings; and then analyzed focus group data using NVivo. (Please see Appendix C for the focus group protocol.)

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<sup>2</sup> The Education Law Project is housed within LAS to assist families with navigating the complex New York City special education system.

- **Administrative records.** AIR examined quarterly enrollment and service provision data for all program participants submitted to, and provided by, the Institute for State and Local Governance (ISLG) at the City University of New York (CUNY), which manages the CJII. These records included aggregate data about program enrollment and services received; aggregate data regarding the demographics of individuals served, including age, gender, race/ethnicity, and neighborhood; and the number of individuals who participated in all MLP components (i.e., screening, advocacy, Know Your Rights events, staff training, Parenting in Stress groups, Positive Parenting groups) during each quarter. Administrative record data reflected enrollment from the first quarter (Q1) of 2018 through the fourth quarter (Q4) of 2021.

Exhibit 1 shows how each data source aligns with the research questions.

### Exhibit 1. Process Evaluation Research Questions and Data Sources

Research question	Staff interviews	Family focus groups	Administrative records
1. What people or practices facilitate successful program recruitment and service delivery?	✓		✓
2. What staff and other resources are required to implement all program components?	✓		
3. What training is required to implement this program and integrate it with other CFI services?	✓		
4. What people or practices facilitate staff motivation to implement the MLP?	✓		
5. What implementation-related data elements does the program track and how does it support service provision?	✓		✓
6. What barriers to access and program successes exist? For whom?	✓	✓	
7. What are the indicators of program success?	✓	✓	
8. What people or practices facilitate sustainability?	✓		

### Return-on-Investment Evaluation Questions and Data Sources

The ROI study used the following four data sources to address three research questions. (See Appendix D for a detailed description of the research methods.)

- **Administrative data.** AIR reviewed aggregated administrative data provided by LAS pertaining to core program activities, including budget and planning documents. AIR also reviewed aggregated quarterly reports obtained from ISLG to understand the types of

families who are served by the program and the educational milestones that families pursued and achieved. AIR examined data about the number of youth who pursued and achieved each milestone in 2018 through 2020.

- **Initial interviews with LAS staff.** AIR conducted two initial discussions with the lead attorney to understand the program, process, and essential personnel involved. The study team used this information to create semistructured interview protocols to conduct interviews with other MLP staff (see Appendix E).
- **Formal interviews with LAS staff.** In 2020, AIR conducted five structured interviews with LAS staff (lead and staff attorneys, the CFI clinical director, and the MLP social worker) and in 2021 conducted five interviews (lead and staff attorneys, the CFI clinical director, and the MLP social worker) to collect information on efforts associated with program operation in 2019 and 2020, respectively. The interviews captured information about the personnel (e.g., estimates of time allocated toward specific tasks) and nonpersonnel resources (e.g., materials and equipment needed to develop plans and provide services to youth and families) that were used in the facilitation of the MLP and the services participants received after being admitted to the program (e.g., rent support, food insecurity programs, employment programs, COVID-related supports; see Appendix E for the interview protocol). The interviews included a postinterview questionnaire completed by all interviewees (see Appendix F for the follow-up activity instructions) to understand the minimum, maximum, and average amount of time they allocated toward pursuing each educational milestone. Interviews from 2020 were used to calculate the educational milestone-specific and overall ROI, while information from the 2021 interviews was used to describe COVID-related supports families received.
- **Family survey.** AIR invited all families served by the MLP to complete an online survey about the time they spent preparing for and participating in MLP meetings (see Appendix G for the family survey). In total, 44 of 227 unique family members completed the survey (19%) in 2020.<sup>3</sup> Survey information allowed us to calculate the value of time spent on the intake process and additional services to which families were referred.

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<sup>3</sup> AIR also administered family surveys in 2021, but the response rate was low (24 of 242 family members). The team determined that they should use the 2020 survey results for the ROI analysis.

## Exhibit 1. Return-on-Investment Research Questions and Data Sources

Research question	Administrative data	Initial interviews with Legal Aid Society staff	Resource cost interviews with Legal Aid Society staff	Family survey
1. What is the cost per family associated with developing a case strategy?	✓	✓	✓	
2. What are the monetized benefits a family receives in the form of legal and procedural services provided by the MLP?	✓	✓	✓	✓
3. How do the costs and monetized benefits of the MLP compare to each other?	✓	✓	✓	✓

## Demographic Characteristics of Youth and Families Served

The MLP serves youth and families from historically underrepresented or racially minoritized groups. According to administrative records from Q1 of 2018 to Q4 of 2021, more than half of the families—about 55%—that the MLP served lived in one of the four CJII focus neighborhoods,<sup>4</sup> particularly in upper Manhattan (Washington Heights, Central and West Harlem, and East Harlem), which is geographically close to the LAS office. In these neighborhoods, close to half of the population lives in or near poverty.<sup>5</sup> About one third of families served by the MLP (34%) have a high school diploma, its equivalent, or less than a high school education, and nearly all families have a household income of less than \$50,000 (see Exhibit 3).

<sup>4</sup> ISLG conducted a community audit to identify areas of need in New York City that should be the target of strategic partnerships. See <https://cjii.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/06/CJII-plan-6-23-2016.pdf>.

<sup>5</sup> New York City Office for Economic Opportunity. (2020). Data tool. <https://www1.nyc.gov/site/opportunity/poverty-in-nyc/data-tool.page>

### Exhibit 3. Demographic Characteristics of Families Served by MLP (N = 239)

	Number of families	Percentage
<b>Neighborhood</b>		
Washington Heights	41	17
Central and West Harlem	61	26
East Harlem	19	8
Lower East Side	9	4
Other: Manhattan	61	26
Other: Outside of Manhattan	42	18
Missing/unknown	6	3
<b>Education level<sup>a</sup></b>		
Less than a high school education	44	18
High school diploma or equivalent	38	16
More than a high school education	54	23
Missing/unknown	103	43
<b>Income<sup>a</sup></b>		
\$0–9,999	58	24
\$10,000–19,999	59	25
\$20,000–29,999	40	17
\$30,000–39,999	26	11
\$40,000–49,999	27	11
\$50,000–59,999	8	3
\$60,000 and higher	1	0
Missing/unknown	20	8

Note. Percentages are rounded and may not add up to 100%.

<sup>a</sup> Data on parental education and income levels were not reported in 2021.

A review of administrative records from Q1 of 2018 through Q4 of 2021 revealed that the MLP served youth from birth through age 18,<sup>6</sup> a large majority of whom—about 87%—were between the ages of 6 and 16. Almost all youth who participated in the MLP identified as Black or Hispanic/Latinx (85%). The proportion of youth who were Black or Hispanic/Latinx exceeded that of the New York City Department of Education overall (66%),<sup>7</sup> suggesting there may be

<sup>6</sup> Data were reported at the category level, but we assume that most of the children ages 0 to 5 are 4 or 5 years old.

<sup>7</sup> <https://www.schools.nyc.gov/about-us/reports/doe-data-at-a-glance>.

racial disparities in terms of the youth who require the services provided through the MLP. The MLP served a larger percentage of youth who identified as cisgender male (59%) than cisgender female (40%). A large majority of youth served by the MLP (92%) lived in single-parent households (see Exhibit 4).

**Exhibit 4. Demographic Characteristics of Youth Served by MLP (N = 265)**

	Number of youth	Percentage
<b>Age</b>		
0–5 years old	18	7
6–10 years old	101	38
11–13 years old	68	26
14–16 years old	62	23
17–18 years old	15	6
19–20 years old	1	0
21 years old or older	0	0
Missing/unknown	0	0
<b>Race</b>		
White	11	4
Black	79	30
Latinx	147	55
Asian/Pacific Islander	1	0
American Indian/Alaska Native	0	0
Two or more races	9	3
Choose not to identify	4	2
Other race/ethnicity	1	0
Missing/unknown	13	5
<b>Ethnicity</b>		
Hispanic	152	57
Non-Hispanic	98	37
Choose not to identify	4	2
Missing/unknown	11	4
<b>Gender</b>		
Cisgender male	156	59

	Number of youth	Percentage
Cisgender female	106	40
Transgender male	1	0
Transgender female	0	0
Gender nonconforming	0	0
Another gender	0	0
Choose not to identify	0	0
Missing/unknown	2	1
<b>Family Structure <sup>a</sup></b>		
Two parents	22	8
One parent	243	92
No parent/caregiver	0	0
Missing/unknown	0	0%

*Note.* Percentages are rounded and may not add up to 100%.

<sup>a</sup> Data on family structure were not reported in 2021.

## Process Evaluation Findings

The Phase 2 process evaluation findings are organized around (a) families served and types of services, (b) supports for implementation, (c) indicators of program success, (d) challenges related to the COVID-19 pandemic, and (e) growth areas and opportunities.

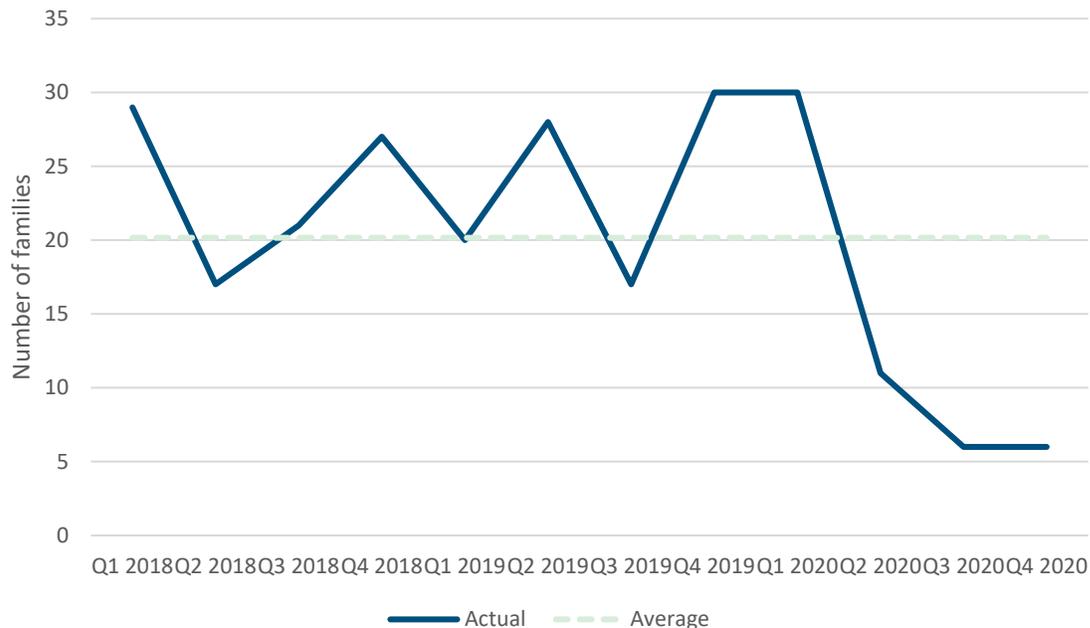
### Families Served and Types of Services

This section describes how many youth and families the MLP served and the types of services most frequently received.

***The MLP served fewer families than originally planned.*** From 2018 to 2020, the MLP served 242 families, more than two thirds of its target goal of 350 families.<sup>8</sup> However, 33 families (13%) had multiple youth served by the MLP. The MLP served an average of 20 new clients each quarter from Q1 2018 to Q4 2020. The number of referrals decreased due to COVID-19 disruptions. In both Q4 2019 and Q1 2020, 30 unique families were referred (60 across both quarters). The number of new families referred dropped down to 11 in Q2 2020 and then to 6 in both Q3 and Q4 2020 (see Exhibit 5).

<sup>8</sup> These were the most recent data that AIR received from ISLG at the time of analysis.

### Exhibit 5. Number of New Families Served by Quarter



Overall, 224 families, or 89% of all clients, completed the program. As shown in Exhibit 6, the MLP had the highest percentages of targets met in terms of providing legal screenings and advocacy, facilitating Parenting in Stress groups, and conducting Know Your Rights training. The MLP had the lowest percentage of targets met for Positive Parenting groups.

### Exhibit 6. Number of Families Served by Program Component

Program Component	Target Number	Number Served	Percentage of Target Met
Legal screenings and advocacy	360	230	64
Know Your Rights	62	44	71
Parenting in Stress	72	47	65
Positive Parenting	54	25	46

*Note.* Data are from administrative records, Q1 2018 through Q4 2021. Families may participate in multiple program components. There may be some cases where the number of legal screenings exceeds the program total, which occurs when a family is advocating for more than one youth. Each youth’s case requires a legal screening.

***The duration of services varied by client.*** On average, LAS worked with families for nearly 12 months, but LAS staff explained that the duration of interactions with families varied based on client needs. In some cases, staff met with families seven times or more to address complex

issues, while other cases were easily resolved and required less contact. From Q1 2018 to Q4 2020, the average number of days from initial client contact to the beginning of service utilization was about 29 days.

***Youth who experience complex mental health problems need education advocacy.*** Staff explained that the MLP provides educational advocacy for youth with disabilities and those who have experienced trauma (e.g., domestic violence, child custody battles). These clients require support from legal advocates to pursue educational services from the school district.

***There are multiple modes of program referral.*** Staff mentioned that there are multiple ways in which clients and families are referred to the MLP.

- **Self-referral.** Clients and families may refer themselves by filling out a referral form that is part of the clinic intake paperwork. After receiving a self-referral, a social worker will contact the client or family to assess income eligibility. If the family income is within program eligibility limits, LAS will contact the client or family to set up an initial meeting.
- **CFI staff referral.** CFI staff may refer clients to the program. In such cases, CFI clinicians fill out and submit a referral form to the MLP program administrator. Clients referred for neuropsychiatric evaluations are automatically referred to the MLP because they often experience challenges at school.
- **Parenting groups.** Clients may be referred to the program through one of CFI's parenting groups, separate from the MLP. Parenting group facilitators introduce the program and may refer interested clients and families to legal services.

Overall, staff from LAS and CFI indicated that the program was successful in reaching and referring potential clients. However, LAS and CFI plan to expand recruitment to reach more families who may experience challenges with their youth's educational services. For example, a few staff expressed that they would like to conduct outreach at a local high school support group focused on substance abuse. These respondents believe they could identify and refer a good number of potential clients if the local high school permits them to introduce the MLP in the support group.

## **Supports for Implementation**

Staff and family members described the factors that supported successful implementation of the MLP.

### ***Adequate co-location space and funding were critical to successful implementation.***

Staff described having access to an office space at Mount Sinai Morningside at least twice a week and allocating grant funds for staffing attorneys, social workers, and neuropsychologists

as essential resources that allowed CFI and LAS staff to implement the MLP successfully. A few staff suggested that having a dedicated office space at CFI equipped with a desktop computer and telephone helped them implement the MLP successfully.

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Having the space at [Mount Sinai] was really good.... It was important to the whole concept of the Medical Legal Partnership ... meeting kids where they are, meeting families where they are. So, I think being there really helped us because it allowed us to check in with clients ... or maybe bring in new clients.... All of that is harder to do if you do not have the physical space, if you are not actually interacting with the community.

— Legal advocate

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***Adequate staffing was critical to program implementation.*** Staff who were interviewed described various positions that were critical for implementing the program, including attorneys, administrative support specialists, social workers, neuropsychologists, and other clinical staff skilled in conducting comprehensive evaluations.

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Everyone has a lot on their plate, so having even ... 20% of your time or 10% of your time dedicated to this project ... gave it some importance, and it freed up time for you to do it properly.

— Clinician

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***Collaboration between LAS and CFI facilitated successful service delivery.*** Most staff who participated in the interviews said that biweekly clinical supervision facilitated effective two-way communication between CFI and LAS staff. Some staff noted that CFI and LAS staff were always available for as-needed consultations with one another by telephone or email, which allowed them to address questions promptly.

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Every other week, we would have meetings on site at CFI with the clinical staff. We would talk about any issues we were having with the project and also individual clients that we shared. So that was extremely helpful to strategize the legal side of things and just make sure we were tailoring our approach to what the clinicians thought made sense from a medical, mental health perspective.

— Legal advocate

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***Data sharing helped staff monitor cases and supported overall program success.*** All staff who were interviewed acknowledged that the exchange of data and information—medical records (e.g., psychiatric evaluation, case management notes) from the CFI and legal/education documents (e.g., IEPs, progress reports) from LAS—between the two organizations was critical to ensuring implementation fidelity and program success. Staff indicated that appropriate

information management and confidentiality processes guided this exchange of information. For example, staff reported that LAS staff obtained signed HIPAA release forms from parents or guardians before sharing their children’s protected health information.

***Clinical staff trainings informed staff about education advocacy.*** Staff who were interviewed said that LAS staff designed and delivered training programs for CFI staff, from discussing the role the MLP can play in ensuring that schools are providing the support and services youth need to an array of topics related to education advocacy and law (e.g., special education, school discipline). CFI staff characterized these training sessions as “very important” and “really beneficial.” For example, in describing the complexity of the public education system, one CFI staff explained that LAS helped “make something that is so opaque [into something] translucent and transparent.”

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It was very important for [CFI staff] to understand [LAS’s] mission and purpose, and how we would be involved with them. I think [training on the educational component] was also very helpful ... because [it] is so complex and it’s so behind the curtain.... So, by [LAS] imparting that information to us, we knew more what would be an appropriate referral to them.

— Clinician

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***Families had positive relationships with LAS staff.*** During focus groups, all family members characterized their relationship with LAS staff in positive ways. More specifically, family members described LAS staff as respectful and responsive. One family member added, “[LAS staff] have been very kind to us.... I feel that they care about us.” Another respondent said, “We have a great relationship with them.”

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There was absolute respect. Everyone was kind. They understood the situations. They did their best to make sure ... I had all documentation. So, I didn’t have to worry, “Where am I going to get this from while I’m sitting here?” So, it helped a lot to be able to have someone say, “Here you are. This is what you need. This is where you need to be. This is how we can handle this situation.” And it’s literally, basically like a plan of care, but on a legal standard.

— Family member

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***Awareness of referrals to MLP was reinforced in multiple ways.*** Staff described the structures the MLP set in place to ensure an effective referral management system. These included facilitating training sessions for clinical staff to increase their awareness of LAS’s referral system, widely disseminating referral forms through “email blasts,” and designating a point person at CFI and another at LAS to receive, transmit, and report on the progress of client referrals. LAS staff reported an increase in the number of referrals because of CFI staff training sessions.

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The most important [training] is identifying issues where there might be legal issues.... That way, [CFI staff] can actually identify it themselves and make a proper referral.

— Legal advocate

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Correspondingly, family members from the focus groups reported obtaining a referral to the MLP as their children received not only outpatient mental health but also pediatric and emergency medical services at Mount Sinai St. Luke's. Moreover, family members acknowledged the role CFI's education coordinator, clinical director, therapists, case managers, and social workers played in establishing a connection between families and LAS.

### Indicators of Success

Staff and family members described the ways that the MLP was successful and the extent to which they were satisfied with the services that the MLP provided.

***Families were satisfied with the MLP's services.*** All family members who participated in a focus group were very satisfied with the services that they received from the MLP. One respondent said, "[The MLP] helped me advocate for more services for my [child], so that [they] can be placed in a better placement that's suitable for [their] behavior IEP [goals]," which is a sentiment echoed by several other family members.

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[LAS] reached out to my son's school and pushed the fact that he needed to be transferred to another school because he wasn't getting the services that he needed there.

— Family member

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***The MLP provided families with access to services that they wouldn't otherwise have received.*** Staff explained that families and youth received educational advocacy and legal services—training programs, individual consultation, and representation—that they would not have been able to access without the MLP. All staff described the role LAS staff played in assessing the unmet needs of youth at school and advocating for their educational and legal rights by, for example, representing parents during IEP meetings, attending suspension hearings, or securing appropriate services and school placement. Moreover, a few CFI staff recognized that the involvement of LAS staff created a sense of urgency among district and school leaders and staff in terms of providing youth with the supports and services they need in order to succeed in school. Interviewees, for instance, explained that the parents and families they serve did not have the means to obtain legal services and were not aware of their children's educational rights and entitlements.

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The income level is very low to qualify for [MLP services], so [families] just wouldn't have been able to pay, even on a sliding scale, for any level of educational advocacy like this. It wouldn't have been available to them.

— Clinician

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Consistent with staff interview responses, several family members discussed the educational advocacy and legal services they received from LAS, which they would not have had access to without the MLP. These services included providing legal representation during IEP meetings and due process hearings, securing appropriate school placements for youth, ensuring that youth receive the services they need at school, and helping parents and families understand their child’s IEP.

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My son has been diagnosed with autism since he was 3 years old. In the IEP there they said he had learning disability. The neurologist told me, “But your son has to have a diagnosis of autism on the IEP.” I would talk to the teachers at the IEP meeting and they would tell me, “Yes, ma’am, we are going to add the diagnosis,” but when my IEP came in the mail, the autism diagnosis never showed up—until Legal Aid came with me and they got the diagnosis changed to autism in the IEP, and with that my son was accepted in a special education school. They would not have granted me this change without them. This change happened thanks to Legal Aid, who accompanied me.

— Family member

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Ultimately, the MLP resulted in families receiving a multitude of services. The majority of families obtained ongoing advocacy and advice on educational issues. Other services that families received included obtaining an IEP that designated their child to a nonpublic school with the state paying the tuition, obtaining appropriate class placement for their child, and obtaining or increasing services on their child’s IEP (see Exhibit 7).

### Exhibit 7. Educational Services Received Through the MLP (N = 313)

	Number of Youth	Percentage
City pays tuition to private school	3	1
Obtained initial IEP	30	10
IEP designates school and state pays tuition	48	15
Obtained private evaluation at district expense	8	3
Received compensatory education services	7	2
Obtained evaluation via related service authorization	11	4
Obtained or increased related services on IEP	31	10
Obtained appropriate class placement	36	12

	Number of Youth	Percentage
<b>Suspension dismissed</b>	2	1
<b>Manifestation determination review won</b>	4	1
<b>Obtained advice on educational issue</b>	311	99

*Note.* Data are from administrative records, Q1 2018 through Q4 2021. Youth may receive more than one educational services, and therefore percentages may not add up to 100%.

In addition to receiving educational advocacy and legal services, parents and families received assistance with Administration for Children’s Services cases, housing-related issues, and accessing community resources (e.g., Office for People With Developmental Disabilities). Family members also reported that, during the pandemic-related school closures and stay-at-home mandates, the MLP responded by offering families food assistance and ensuring that youth had access to remote learning devices.

***The MLP echoed and amplified the voices and perspectives of parents and families.*** All staff who were interviewed reported seeing changes in how families advocate for themselves to a great extent due to being clients of the MLP. More specifically, staff interviewees noted that, once a parent or family member established a relationship with LAS and received the information and resources necessary for them to advocate for their children, “They did not feel as alone.... [Instead, the tools] made them feel they had strength.”

Most family members also provided examples of how the MLP empowered parents and families to advocate for the needs of their children. Family members, for example, noted that the LAS staff “was the light ... [and] backbone” for parent and family advocates. Similarly, respondents reported that, because LAS staff “pointed [parents and families] in the right direction,” they could be more effective advocates. Furthermore, family members described LAS staff as liaisons between the New York City Department of Education—including school leaders and staff—and parents or family members.

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I've always been a good advocate for myself and others. It's just that [LAS] was the light for me. It's like, “Okay, here is the way. Now you got the floor.” They were pretty much a backbone for me. They said their piece. They got things done paperwork-wise. I mean, it's one thing to say something, but it's another thing to put things on pen and paper. And that was the biggest thing for me is they didn't do too much talking. It was like, “The school didn't do this? We're going to get on them about that.” Every single step that needed to be followed in order to get this process done with my [child], they followed through with everything.... They were just very good, very good.  
 — Focus group participant

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## Challenges Related to the COVID-19 Pandemic

Staff and families described some challenges that they encountered as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. To respond to these challenges, LAS took a proactive approach to meet the evolving needs of families during the pandemic. This included connecting with families one on one to provide support, helping families secure devices and establish connectivity in their homes, and ensuring youth continued to receive the services specified in their IEP.

***The pandemic made it difficult for clinicians to refer families.*** Nearly all staff who were interviewed explained that the COVID-19 pandemic made it difficult to refer families from CFI to LAS. Primarily, some staff noted the decrease in the number of referrals as families “struggled with other aspects of life” or “felt more reluctant to go in person for their services” during the pandemic. This is exhibited in the total number of new families who were referred to the MLP in the latter part of 2020, as shown in Exhibit 5.

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We noticed fewer referrals coming in after COVID, which we thought was maybe just linked to ... families feeling more reluctant to go in person for their services.... We weren't getting as many referrals from them after we went remote.

— Legal advocate

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***LAS and CFI staff were flexible in adjusting to virtual work during the pandemic.*** Many staff noted that staff training and communication between clinical and legal staff shifted to a virtual environment during the pandemic. For example, staff explained that regular virtual meetings were critical in “maintaining an open line of referrals ... steady communication, and strategizing” and that the virtual environment gave MLP staff the ability to share documents electronically; however, some staff described this abrupt transition as “a much more difficult process.”

***MLP provided services virtually.*** LAS staff said that they were able to adapt to a virtual setting by communicating with families via phone (e.g., text messages, phone calls, video calls) and continuing their work with schools and service providers from their work-from-home settings. Staff explained that they made phone calls to all families in their caseload during the early days of the pandemic. LAS staff also said that families were able to reach out for support or give updates without a formal meeting by simply sending a text message. Although this capability was available prior to the pandemic, usage increased significantly during the pandemic.

Family focus group participants reported that how and how often families interacted with MLP staff varied depending on the purpose of the meeting and their children’s needs. For instance, family members agreed that CFI and LAS staff checked in with families more frequently—at

least once or twice per week—by telephone during the pandemic. Families also scheduled in-person appointments or video conferences with staff attorneys, social workers, therapists, and case managers or reached out to MLP staff who made themselves available anytime via email, phone, or video call.

LAS staff reported that the shifts caused by the pandemic brought opportunities for families to engage more in their children’s educational process. For example, staff reported that parents were able to attend IEP and MLP meetings virtually, which saved time by not requiring them to travel to the meeting location. Many families became more comfortable with virtual interactions over the past year, and MLP staff all reported that the continuation of virtual meetings is now seen as a way to increase engagement among families even postpandemic.

***Children and families had greater needs because of the pandemic.*** Several staff described how COVID-19 influenced the provision of services to youth and families. For example, many youth did not make adequate progress on IEP goals or receive the special education services outlined in their IEPs due to COVID-19. Moreover, according to some staff, the sudden transition from in-person to virtual learning exacerbated inequities in access to remote learning devices and reliable wireless technology, especially for families living in homeless shelters.

***MLP provided immediate support that was responsive to families' immediate needs.*** LAS staff said that they responded to the challenge of schools closing by calling every family to gather information about what supports they needed. As one staff put it, “In the beginning, families were just trying to survive and needed help.” For example, some families were struggling to find appropriate public health supplies (e.g., masks, hand sanitizer) to exist in the changing pandemic landscape, and LAS staff connected families with existing city programs that were providing such supplies. Some families, with and without a history of food insecurity, struggled with getting food to their homes and were unable to leave due to positive COVID cases or immunocompromised family members. In those cases, LAS staff said that they connected families with food delivery services run by the city and supported families in learning how to navigate those systems for future deliveries through phone and video conversations. At a time when COVID-related deaths were particularly high in certain communities, LAS staff said that they connected families with city programs to help offset funeral expenses. As evictions became a reality for many families who were unable to pay rent because of pandemic-related loss of income, LAS staff explained how they supported families in navigating the eviction moratorium processes and helped families self-advocate for their rights.

Correspondingly, one focus group respondent said, "I have a great team from Mount Sinai [and] Legal Aid. They were always there during the pandemic to make sure we had what we needed when we got COVID." Similarly, other focus group respondents said that MLP staff "called [them] to find out if [they] needed anything." They added that support from MLP staff often included food assistance (e.g., gift cards for groceries) and digital devices for remote learning (e.g., iPads, computers).

***MLP supported families with getting devices and navigating connectivity.*** Staff who were interviewed revealed that LAS staff proactively responded to families' needs for technology and reliable internet by working with local government agencies and nonprofit organizations to ensure the distribution of remote learning devices and connection to internet services.

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[LAS] would actually give [us] a heads-up about things that were going on. [They were] like, "Just so you know, families that live in these public housing don't have adequate Wi-Fi. We're working on trying to get them adequate Wi-Fi, and that may impact any of your kids trying to do schooling from there," or "There were a lot of issues with kids not being given working tablets or delays in getting their tablets." Before I even heard about it from the patients or the parents, [LAS] would alert me of things, and then I could go into a staff meeting and say, "Hey, I heard this might be an issue. If you hear about it, let me know. We can work on these things." We were actually able to get some referrals that way, not for our traditional things but for things like, this kid doesn't have a tablet, how can they do virtual school? So, I appreciated how proactive [LAS staff] were.

— Clinician

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Staff explained that some youth did not have a device to use when schools closed, while others were reported to have received devices that were not functioning properly. LAS staff provided advocacy services to ensure that all youth had what they needed to participate in remote instruction. This included working to ensure connectivity for youth living in shelters and securing increased broadband access for families where multiple children (and/or adults) were at home participating in remote schooling (or work obligations). LAS staff reported that the availability of a functioning device and reliable connectivity became something of a lifeline for families as they tried to reclaim some normalcy during unprecedented hardships.

***MLP supported families in getting educational services during school closures.*** Due to the nature and severity of some youth's disabilities, participating in remote instruction was extremely difficult. In those cases, LAS staff explained that they worked with the school to identify strategies that would maximize youth's engagement in remote learning through use of the Plan for Adapted Delivery (PAD; a form required by the New York City school system). The PAD was the documentation required by the school that showed how students with disabilities

were to continue to receive their required services and supports in a remote learning environment. Staff said that the MLP advocated for youth to ensure that all PADs included access to a functioning device and connectivity so that all youth had the opportunity to participate in school to the furthest extent possible. Furthermore, LAS staff reviewed each PAD to ensure that the needs of each youth were being met, including instructional and related services.

LAS staff explained that, for some youth, regular participation in remote instruction was interrupted by positive COVID cases, deaths, hospitalizations in the family, or temporary homelessness. Additionally, many youth and their families were dealing with incredible amounts of stress, which made participation in schooling of any quality extremely difficult. In some cases, lack of participation in schooling led to truancy cases being brought by the school system against families. In these cases, LAS staff provided support and documentation to explain why youth were struggling and worked to find solutions, instead of punishments, for lack of participation.

***Some program components did not continue after the pandemic began.*** Staff said that training programs for parents and family members (e.g., Know Your Rights, Positive Parenting) did not occur during 2020 due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Two staff, however, described the low parent engagement in these training sessions as “always a struggle,” even prior to the remote learning shift.

## **Growth Areas and Opportunities**

This section describes improvement areas and opportunities—based on CFI and LAS staff interviews as well as parent and family focus groups—to consider for future implementations of MLPs.

***MLPs should address factors that may influence families’ engagement in the program.*** Staff interviewees revealed that families’ engagement in the program was influenced by various factors, including distrust of the legal system, experiences of trauma, and challenges with communication.

For instance, staff acknowledged how difficult it was for many families, especially those who were undocumented, to cooperate with LAS because they had “some level of fear” of the legal system.

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It probably took [families] a lot to actually agree to be in a situation where they're talking to lawyers, because there's always some level of fear, especially if there's immigration status issues.... People are not always trusting of lawyers and the legal process, so it's just important to know that some of these families ... might be reluctant.

— Clinician

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Relatedly, some staff recognized the need to understand the role trauma played in connecting with youth and their families and the importance of implementing clinical practices, education advocacy, and legal representation programs that reduce retraumatization and support youth and their families holistically.

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When [families] don't have heat in [their] homes or [they are] behind on rent or [their] other child has an issue in his high school, but [their] younger child has just been diagnosed with autism, but [the MLP] program assists younger children and the other child is not in services ... you have to take the client as a whole.

— Legal advocate

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Staff also suggested hiring more bilingual legal advocates who can provide interpretation and translation services for families who speak a language other than English at home.

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We use LanguageLine [Solutions] ... because maybe we won't have an interpreter for a particular African dialect or a particular indigenous dialect from Mexico or South America. So, we'll have to use LanguageLine or a specialized interpreter.... We do have paralegals in our office who speak Spanish, but we're offsite meeting our clients.... I think that was a missing part of it.

— Legal advocate

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***MLPs should include funding for miscellaneous expenses.*** One staff added that setting aside a budget for incentives or stipends for participation in parent training programs or miscellaneous family expenses—public transportation, school supplies, or securing their child's school placement by making a deposit—would contribute to the success of future MLPs.

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[The MLP needs] more funding for client support via [transportation fare cards] or just sometimes miscellaneous funding really. Sometimes a parent needs to make a deposit to secure her child's placement in the school that we were able to get funding for, but the funding does not kick in until later, and they need to secure their placement with a deposit.

— Legal advocate

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***MLPs should include various methods for reaching families.*** During focus groups, family members suggested different methods through which more parents and families could learn about the educational advocacy and legal services this MLP offers. For example, three family members recommended that MLP staff conduct parent and family outreach in New York City public schools, and three other family members suggested publicly disseminating information about the MLP using, for example, social media platforms, local radio stations, and community notice boards (specifically in emergency shelters and temporary housing facilities).

***MLPs should foster relationship building among the families they serve.*** Family members discussed the importance of being part of a community where family members can “hear other [families] speak about their experiences.” This could happen during support groups for parents of youth with mental health needs. Family members revealed that fostering positive relationships and promoting peer learning among families receiving MLP services was something that the MLP could do better. More specifically, apart from one family member who reported attending a group therapy session with other parents, most respondents said that they did not have the opportunity to build relationships with other family members.

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We all have something similar [experiences]. Our kids have trauma. [The MLP] helped us all. I'm teary eyed. I'm hearing everybody and I'm like, “All right, well, maybe I'm not the only parent.” Yeah, it's been hard, but it does get better. It has gotten better.  
— Focus group participant

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CFI and LAS staff had mixed opinions regarding whether the MLP fostered positive relationships and peer learning among the families they served. For instance, one staff described gathering anecdotal evidence about positive relationships built between some families. However, more staff suggested that relationship building among MLP parents and families occurred only to a moderate or minimal extent. In addition, several staff pointed out that MLP staff struggled with low engagement during group training sessions, which were the only opportunities for parents and families to connect.

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When we've had Know Your Rights trainings and there are multiple parents who participate, sometimes they're just so happy to be like, “Ugh, you're saying what I'm experiencing. Like, it's nice to know I'm not going through this alone or that, you know, it's just nice to hear another parent acknowledge how hard it is.” ... I've seen those connections. Maybe they don't go out and get lunch afterwards, but, in the moment, they're having a connection and sharing an experience in a hopefully helpful way or a way that is validating and affirming for them.  
— Legal advocate

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**Sustainability.** Despite the end of grant funding, staff described an ongoing informal partnership between the two organizations, allowing CFI staff to continue referring clients to LAS. However, LAS staff can serve families only on “a much smaller scale.” In addition, CFI no longer employs the services of a neuropsychologist, and LAS staff have not been able to hold regular office hours on site or facilitate training programs for parents and families (e.g., Know Your Rights). Regardless, MLP staff expressed their hopes to continue—or even expand—the program so that they can support more youth and families and offer more varied services, such as legal assistance on housing issues. Staff suggested seeking similar funding from within the Mount Sinai health system or other law firms that can offer pro bono legal services to sustain the MLP.

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We are continuing our relationship, but it's just when we can. I still encourage [CFI] staff to refer to [LAS]. As to how quickly our referrals can be seen or how quickly [families] can be assigned an attorney, I don't know on [LAS's] end how it's affected them not having the time delegated and parts of salaries set aside for [the MLP].

— Clinician

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## Return-on-Investment Findings

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The findings from the ROI analysis are organized into three sections: costs, benefits (i.e., value of services received), and a comparison of costs and benefits. The ROI analysis provides an understanding of how funds are leveraged by the MLP to improve youth’s educational outcomes. This analysis relied on data from the 2019 operations to provide information about more typical program implementation. Although data were collected for 2020, the operation of the program that year was atypical due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Because the quantitative ROI results are based on data representing operations prior to the pandemic, we believe the 2019 data are more indicative of implementation costs and benefits in future years and therefore more useful to prospective program implementers. In addition, the response rates on the data collected in 2020 were lower than desired. The youth served in 2019 included both new clients who entered the program in that year and existing clients who had originally enrolled in 2018 but had not yet achieved their milestone(s) and exited the program. Appendix D provides a description of the methods that were used for the ROI analysis.

This analysis provides an overall ROI for two scenarios:

- **ROI Approach 1** assumes that the value of pursuing an educational milestone is included as a *benefit* of the program, as families would not receive those supports or advocacy (e.g., referrals to other available support programs) without enrollment in the MLP. In this way,

we represent the cost of the program (i.e., staff training, initial intake meeting, development of a case strategy, and family time on the intake process) as it compares to the perceived benefits (i.e., inclusive of both interaction with the MLP in the pursuit of an educational milestone and the value of achieving the milestone). Approach 1 is a more liberal approach to the ROI analysis.

- **ROI Approach 2** assumes that the pursuit of an educational milestone is an additional *cost* of the program. Some may argue that the value of the effort put forth to pursue an educational milestone should instead be considered a cost of the program, as it is effort on the part of LAS staff to provide services and supports to youth and their families. In this way we compare the cost of the program described above that also includes the value of the pursuit activities (e.g., staff time allocated toward pursuing an educational milestone) and compare that sum to the benefit of achieving the milestone. This is a more conservative approach to the ROI analysis.

## ROI Approach 1

Below we describe the findings of the first approach to calculating the ROI.

**Costs.** The cost of the MLP under the initial ROI Approach 1 is defined as the dollar value of all resources (personnel and nonpersonnel) devoted to all activities involved in developing the case strategy. This includes all the effort put into the intake meeting and the subsequent collaboration between the family and MLP staff in creating the case strategy, which was reported by staff to be largely the same regardless of which educational milestone a youth would eventually pursue. The costs include staff time,<sup>9</sup> nonpersonnel resources (i.e., office supplies and office space),<sup>10</sup> and the time and resources of families.<sup>11</sup>

Exhibit 8 shows the average staff time allocated to the initial intake and case strategy development and the corresponding dollar value of this effort. The figures were calculated on a per-youth basis and show that the average total value of staff time spent on intake and developing a case strategy for the average youth was \$992.

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<sup>9</sup> This includes the time of the following staff: the CFI director and clinical staff, MLP attorneys, and MLP summer interns.

<sup>10</sup> The list of nonpersonnel resources, as well as their associated unit prices and annual costs, are located in Appendix D.

<sup>11</sup> For example, parents spend time at the initial intake meeting, preparing for and traveling to and from meetings, and participating in subsequent meetings to support their child in achieving identified educational milestones.

**Exhibit 8. Average Per-Youth Hours of Staff Time Devoted to Intake and Case Strategy Development and Associated Costs (in 2019 Dollars)**

Position	Time (in hours)		Total value of time (in dollars)
	Intake process	Creation of case strategy	
Supervising attorney	1.5	2.0	\$369
Staff attorney(s) <sup>a</sup>	1.8	3.1	\$284
Social worker	2.0	4.4	\$261
St. Luke’s director	0.2	0.3	\$43
St. Luke’s clinical staff	0.3	0.0	\$18
Intern	0.3	0.0	\$17
<b>Total</b>	<b>6.2</b>	<b>9.8</b>	<b>\$992</b>

*Note.* All hour and dollar estimates are calculated on a per-youth basis. Values are rounded and may not add up to the total.

<sup>a</sup> Intake process hours for staff attorneys represent the average number of hours dedicated to each intake meeting by the staff attorney and volunteer staff attorney (only one staff attorney is assumed to be involved in each intake process).

Exhibit 9 provides the amount of staff time and costs devoted to training and associated activities (e.g., onboarding new staff, ongoing training, annual conference). Note that costs associated with training are included as a cost of the program. The figures, calculated on a per-youth basis, indicate that \$294 in staff time per youth served was devoted to staff training.

**Exhibit 9. Average Per-Youth Cost of Staff Time Spent on Training**

Position	Time (in hours)	Total value of time (in dollars)
<b>Legal Aid Society training</b>		
Supervising attorney	0.6	\$43
Staff attorney	0.4	\$20
Volunteer attorney	0.2	\$10
Social worker	0.1	\$0
<i>Subtotal</i>	<i>1.2</i>	<i>\$74</i>
<b>Mount Sinai St. Luke’s Child and Family Institute (CFI)</b>		
Supervising attorney	0.1	\$12
Staff attorney	0.0	\$1
Volunteer attorney	0.0	\$1

Position	Time (in hours)	Total value of time (in dollars)
Social worker	0.1	\$2
CFI clinical staff	2.8	\$204
<i>Subtotal</i>	<i>3.0</i>	<i>\$220</i>
<b>Total</b>	<b>4.2</b>	<b>\$294</b>

*Note.* All hour and dollar estimates are calculated on a per-youth basis. Sums of individual hours or per-youth dollars may not exactly equal totals or subtotals due to rounding.

Families continued their involvement after the initial intake, meeting with the attorneys who developed their case strategy. On average, the families participated in an initial intake meeting and 1.8 additional follow-up meetings with the MLP to develop a case strategy plan and pursue milestones. The meetings lasted an average of 1.6 hours, and families spent an average of 1.8 hours preparing (e.g., gathering documents) and 2.2 hours traveling to and from the LAS offices for each meeting.<sup>12</sup> It was assumed that only one parent or guardian attended each MLP meeting based on data from LAS. The number of hours of family time devoted to meetings was projected against this average compensation rate to calculate the total dollar value associated with family effort. The total value of the average family’s time associated with participating in the intake meeting, engaging the MLP to develop a case strategy, and pursuing an educational milestone was approximately \$253 (in 2019 dollars).<sup>13</sup>

Finally, we calculated the average cost of nonpersonnel resources to be \$102 per youth served. This cost accounts for the facilities as well as office and communications equipment (i.e., cell phones, computers and software, hotspots, and a copy machine).

The overall, per-family cost—including staff time, family time, and nonpersonnel resources—was \$1,641. Exhibit 10 shows how the cost per youth was divided across MLP personnel resources (i.e., staff hours for casework and training), nonpersonnel resources (i.e., facilities, equipment, and materials), and parent time (i.e., family time devoted to preparing for and attending meetings).

<sup>12</sup> The data show that family effort did not vary greatly, so applying these averages is a good general approximation of the typical costs associated with developing a case strategy plan, regardless of the subsequent milestone that would be pursued.

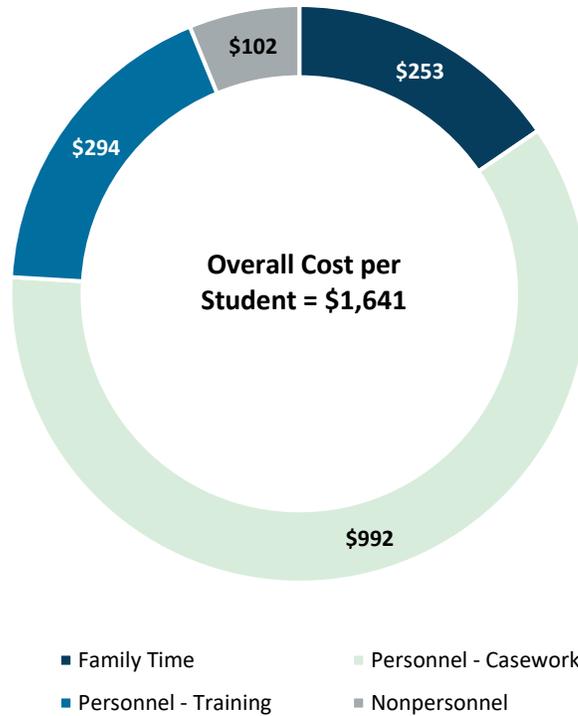
<sup>13</sup> This figure accounts for the cost of time a family spent and does not include direct costs associated with travel or childcare for parents as they attend MLP meetings.

**Benefits.** The benefits of the MLP were defined as the dollar value of all services a youth and their family received after the case strategy plan was created. Benefits calculations take into account the separate efforts on the part of MLP staff involved in the pursuit and eventual achievement of milestones. For example, *pursuit benefits* might include staff attorney time devoted to educational advocacy and IEP meetings in an effort to achieve a predetermined milestone strategy developed for a particular youth. While these could be interpreted as a cost, for Approach 1 our team determined that the value associated with these pursuits represents direct benefits to youth in the program.<sup>14</sup>

*Achievement benefits* include the monetary value of services rendered as a result of a youth achieving an educational milestone. Examples of milestones that might be achieved include obtaining an appropriate class placement, securing increased services on an IEP, and receiving tuition to attend a nonpublic school.

We distinguished between pursuit versus achievement benefits because all youth benefited from services rendered in pursuit of an educational milestone, but not all youth achieved an educational milestone during the year covered in the ROI analysis. In other words, all youth who completed the intake process and had a case strategy developed by LAS staff received the pursuit benefits, but only those youth who achieved their educational milestones are considered to have received the achievement benefits.

**Exhibit 10. Per-Youth Costs of Family Time, MLP Personnel Time, and Nonpersonnel Resources (in 2019 Dollars)**



<sup>14</sup> Note that to better understand the sensitivity of the results to treating dollars devoted to pursuit efforts as benefits, below we present findings of an alternative analysis where dollars associated with pursuit activities are instead included as costs.

Importantly, other significant nonmonetized benefits stemmed from referrals to other social services for families in need. For example, attorneys referred some families to social support programs (e.g., food banks, unemployment benefits, housing resources). However, this study did not follow individual families across all these other services and track their associated dollar values. Given that 26 of 45 family survey respondents in 2019 and 14 of 24 in 2020 reported being referred to one or more of these nonmonetized benefits, the estimated benefits presented here—which focus only on those related to education that we were able to calculate—are conservative and almost certainly understate the total benefits realized by families as a result of the program.

The educational milestones that MLP staff pursued fell within one of 12 categories, 11 of which are included here.<sup>15</sup> The MLP team allocated varying amounts of effort to pursue the milestones for each case, based on the family’s needs and the complexity of the educational milestone(s) being pursued (see the Pursuit column in Exhibit 11).

The pursuit benefits were added to the achievement benefits to calculate the total benefits for each educational milestone (see the Pursuit and Achievement column in Exhibit 11). As shown in Exhibit 11, the dollar value of the pursuit benefits ranged from \$1,149 to \$8,742, and the range of the combined pursuit and achievement benefits ranged from \$1,149 (“Obtained advice only on educational issue”) to \$64,536 (“IEP designates school and state pays tuition”).

**Exhibit 11. Per-Youth Value of Pursuing and Achieving Educational Milestones (in 2019 Dollars)**

Educational milestone	Pursuit	Achievement	Pursuit and achievement
City pays tuition to private school	\$6,674	\$55,794	\$62,468
Obtained initial IEP	\$7,054	\$8,655	\$15,710
IEP designates school and state pays tuition	\$8,742	\$55,794	\$64,536
Obtained private evaluation at district expense	\$2,271	\$3,600	\$5,871
Received compensatory education services	\$8,338	\$20,293	\$28,631
Obtained evaluation via related service authorization	\$1,870	\$3,600	\$5,470
Obtained or increased related services on IEP	\$7,144	\$25,000	\$32,144

<sup>15</sup> One of the 12 categories, “parent reimbursed for services,” is not included in this work because it was reported that no families pursued this milestone during the study period.

Educational milestone	Pursuit	Achievement	Pursuit and achievement
Obtained appropriate class placement	\$8,338	\$8,655	\$16,993
Suspension dismissed	\$3,188	\$364	\$3,552
Manifestation determination meeting won	\$2,697	N/A	\$2,697
Obtained advice only on educational issue	\$1,149	N/A	\$1,149

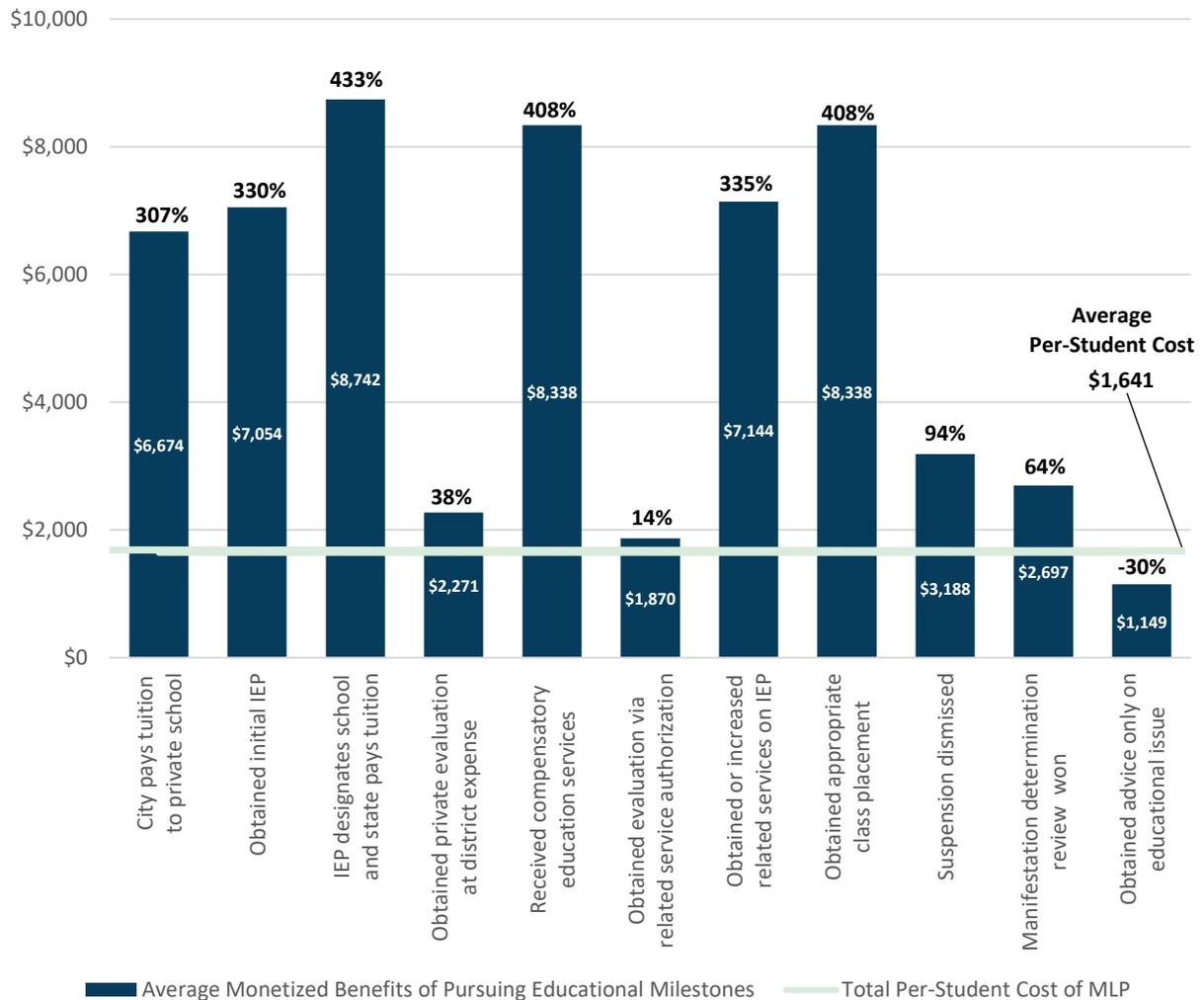
*Note.* For the last two educational milestones in this exhibit, no achievement values were available. In those cases, the only benefits calculated were those associated with the pursuit of that educational milestone.

**Comparing Costs and Benefits.** Exhibit 12 shows the average per-youth cost of the MLP as it compares with the monetized benefits that families received as a result of pursuing specific educational outcomes. The benefits of pursuit activities ranged from \$1,149 (“Obtained advice only on educational issue”) to \$8,742 (“IEP designates school and state pays tuition”).

The bold percentages at the top of the columns in Exhibit 12 indicate the size of the ROI associated with the pursuit benefits of each milestone. Each figure expresses, in percentage terms, the value of pursuit benefits above and beyond the cost. The findings show that when we focus on the ROI of the pursuit benefits only, all but one of the milestones have returns that are greater than zero, indicating that the average benefit of pursuit outweighs the average cost. Therefore, even for youth who never achieve the intended milestone, this approach shows that the pursuit benefits far exceed the cost of providing them in most cases. For example, the pursuit benefits associated with the milestone “City pays tuition to private school” is equal to 307%. The benefit–cost ratio for pursuing this milestone is 4.07, which means that, on average, for each dollar invested in identification, intake, and case strategy development, a total of \$4.07 in services (i.e., pursuit benefits) were provided (making up the \$1.00 investment plus a \$3.07 return). In contrast, the ROI associated with pursuing the milestone “Obtained advice only on educational issue” was –30% (i.e., in this case the benefits were lower than the cost).<sup>16</sup>

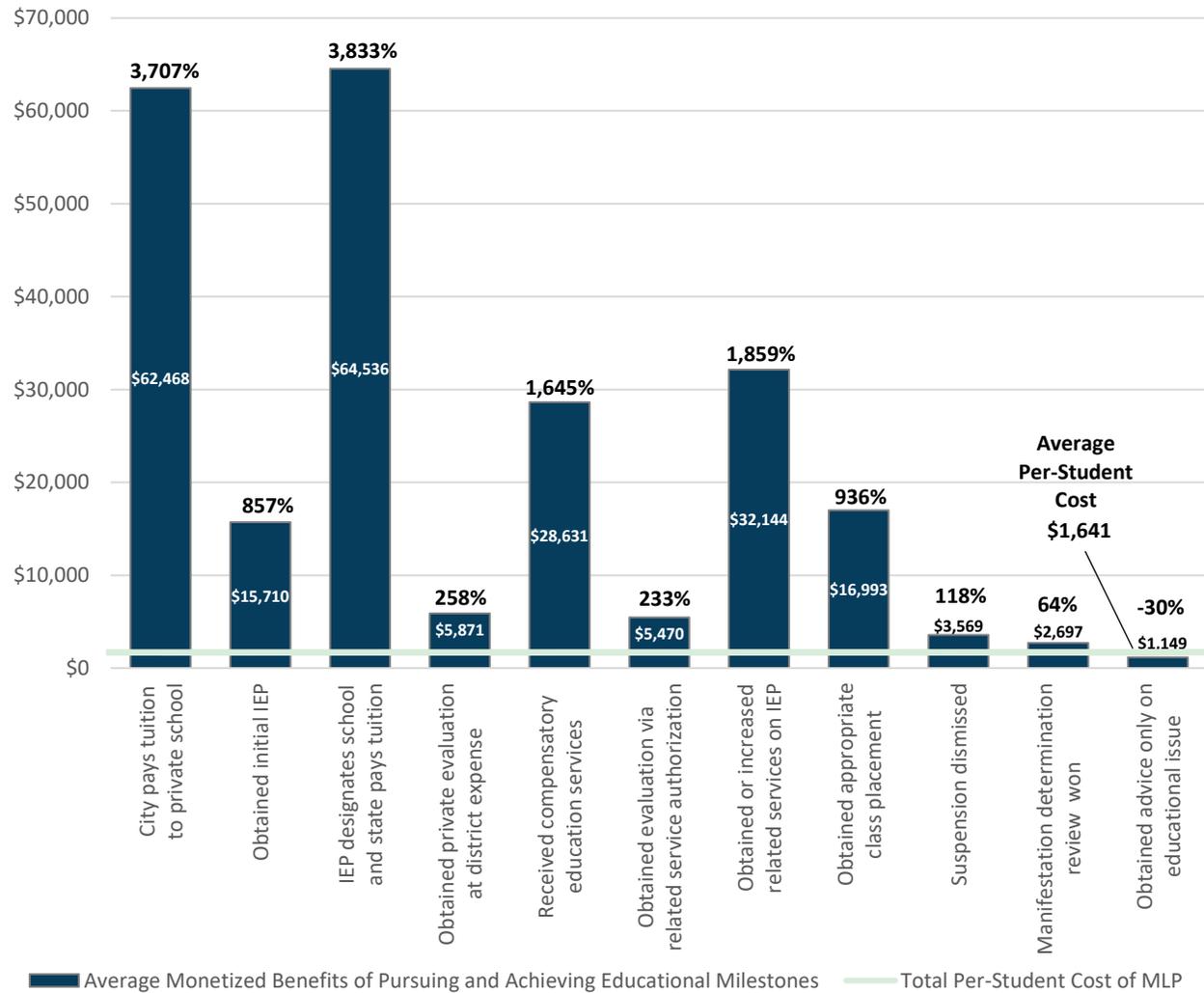
<sup>16</sup> However, this negative ROI is logical given the low dollar value of benefits for this milestone, which was not associated with any further services being rendered after advice on educational issues was provided. That is, there is no distinction between pursuit and achievement of this milestone.

### Exhibit 12. Estimates of Average Per-Youth Costs and Benefits of Pursuing Educational Milestones (in 2019 Dollars)



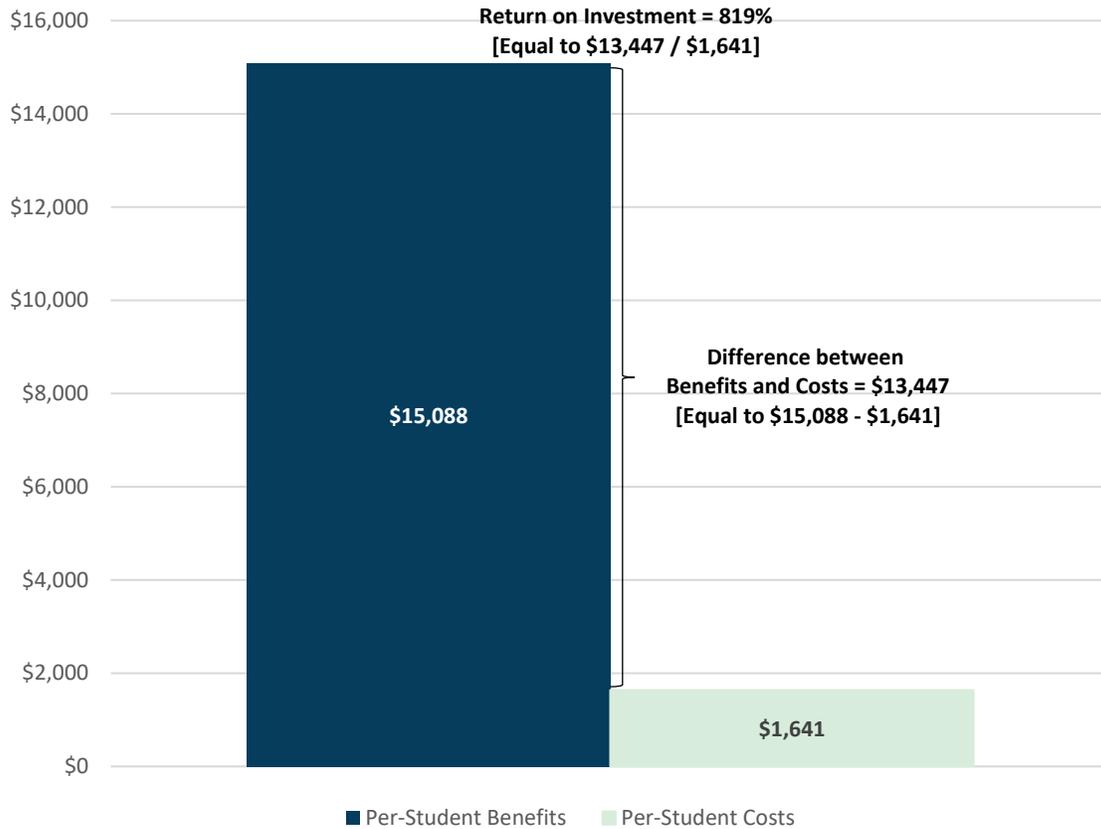
The monetary values associated with both pursuing and achieving the educational milestones are presented in Exhibit 13, along with the average per-youth cost. Once the additional benefits associated with achieving the milestones are taken into account, the corresponding ROI calculations associated with all but the last milestone (“obtained advice only on educational issue”) increase dramatically. In some cases, the ROI of pursuing and achieving several milestones was quite large, with the benefits measuring up to almost 40 times the costs.

### Exhibit 13. Estimates of Average Per-Youth Costs and Benefits of Pursuing and Achieving Educational Milestones (in 2019 Dollars)



**Overall ROI for the MLP.** An analysis of the overall ROI for the program aggregated the dollar values of all the benefits and costs corresponding with the youth for whom case strategies were developed, milestones pursued, and in some cases achieved. Exhibit 14 shows the overall benefit per youth served to be \$15,088, which is \$13,447 more than the per-youth cost of \$1,641. This translates into an overall ROI for the MLP program of 819% (equal to \$13,447 / \$1,641). This means that for every dollar invested in the MLP for 2019, the program generated \$9.19 in services for youth and their families.

### Exhibit 14. Overall Per-Youth ROI (in 2019 Dollars)



### ROI Approach 2

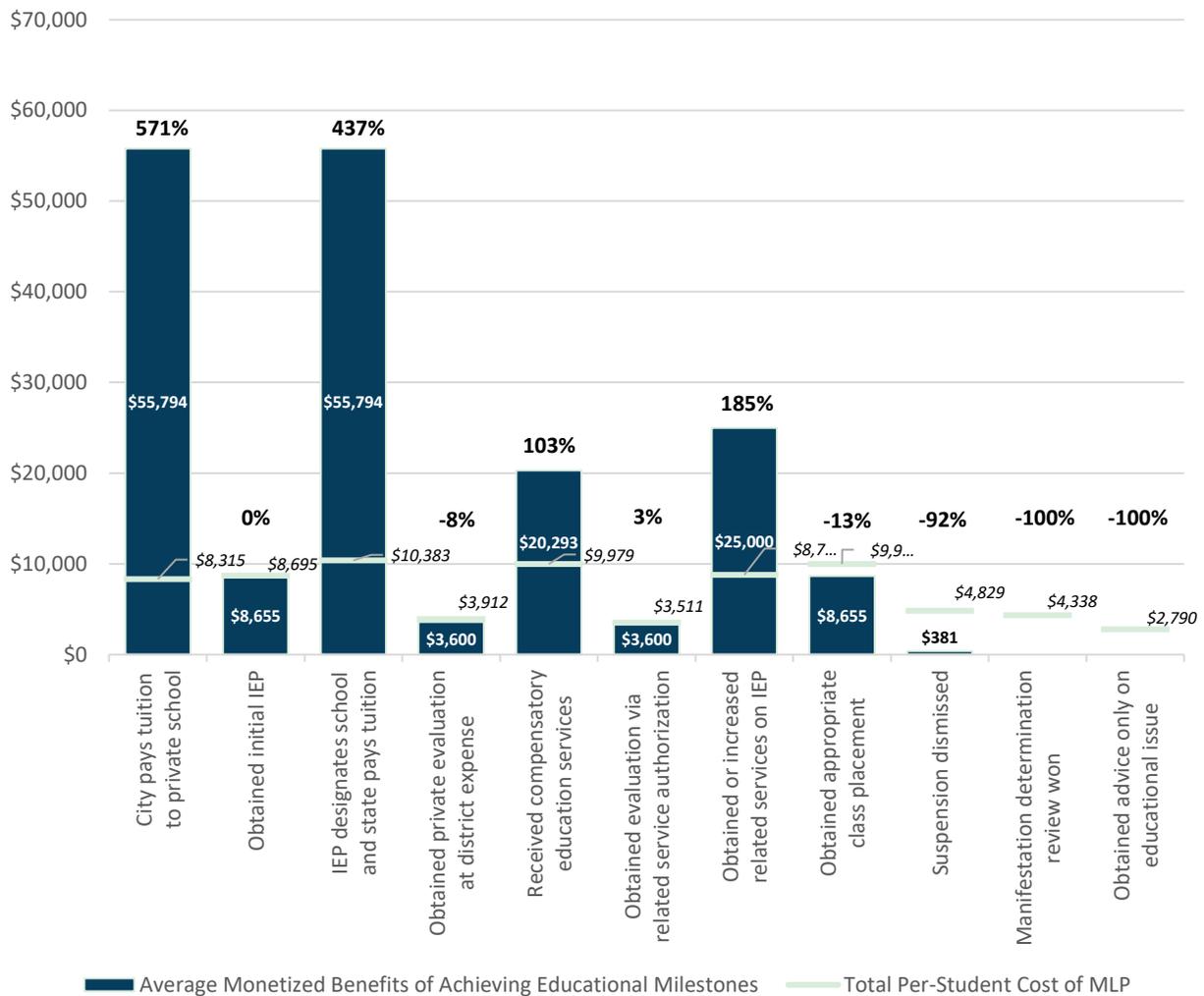
In ROI Approach 1, we included the dollar values associated with pursuing educational milestones as benefits in the ROI analysis because the services delivered in pursuit of milestones are seen as valuable to families participating in the MLP program. However, one could also argue that the value of the pursuit activities should instead be included as a cost that is incurred to achieve the desired milestones as opposed to a benefit of the program.

**Comparing Costs and Benefits.** Exhibit 15 provides the estimated benefits and costs associated with achieving each milestone when taking this more conservative approach. Because the dollar values of pursuit efforts vary across the milestones, the chart shows a different cost for each milestone achieved depicted by the individual horizontal lines intersecting each of the benefits columns (cost values displayed in italics in Exhibit 15).

Treating pursuit dollars as a cost rather than a benefit reduces the estimated ROI associated with each milestone. The results using this conservative approach show that four milestones yield estimated ROIs that are positive and substantial (ranging from 103% [“received

compensatory education services”] to 571% [“city pays tuition to private school”]). Another four milestones showed small (3%), negligible (0%), or somewhat negative (–8% and –13%) ROIs. For the remaining three milestones (“suspension dismissed,” “manifestation determination review won,” and “obtained advice only on educational issue”), the costs associated with intake, case strategy plan development, and pursuit efforts dominated the benefits, resulting in ROIs ranging from –92% to –100%.

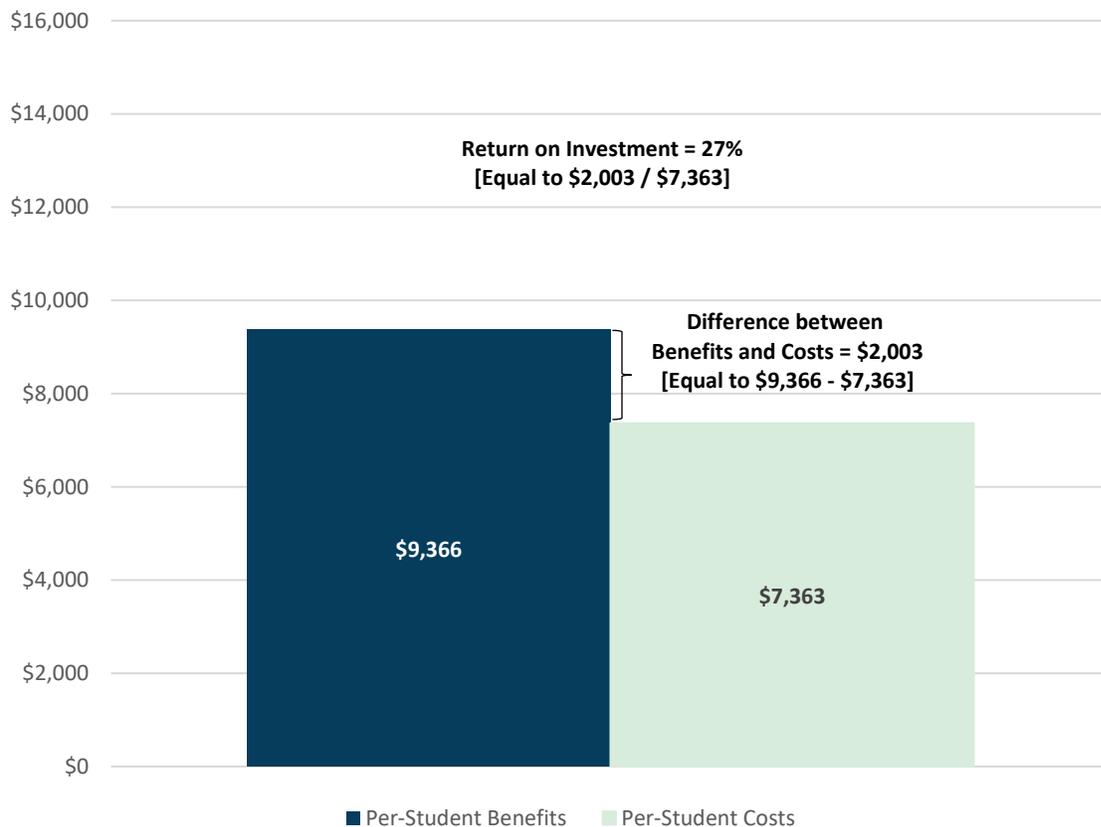
**Exhibit 15. Estimates of Average Per-Youth Costs and Benefits of Achieving Educational Milestones When Treating Pursuit Dollars as Costs (in 2019 Dollars)**



**Overall ROI for the MLP.** The study team used information about the number of youth who achieved each milestone in 2019 to determine the overall ROI realized by the program. Exhibit 16 illustrates the overall per-youth ROI using this alternative approach. The resulting overall benefit per youth (based solely on the value of milestone achievements and their relative

frequency) is \$9,366, or \$2,003 more than the per-youth cost of \$7,363 (based on the combined value of the intake meeting, case strategy development, and pursuit efforts). This yields a more moderate, but still attractive, program ROI of 27% (equal to \$2,003 / \$7,363). Using this more conservative calculation approach suggests that for every dollar invested in the MLP in 2019, the program still generated \$1.27 in services for youth and their families.

**Exhibit 16. Overall Per-Youth ROI Using Conservative Calculation Approach (in 2019 Dollars)**



## Conclusion

The findings from this evaluation suggest that integrating legal staff’s expertise in special education law into mental health care settings helps clinicians, case managers, and social workers identify youth’s needs for educational services and secure those services. LAS staff offered information regarding special education laws, provided training and support to individual families, and directly represented parents at IEP meetings and dispute resolution proceedings. These efforts promoted the academic and nonacademic outcomes of youth from historically underserved communities and youth who are at a higher risk of criminal legal

involvement. Staff interview and family focus group responses indicated that creating a successful MLP required a substantial commitment of time, resources, personnel, and funding and should be strongly driven by meaningful collaboration, evidenced by systems for effective two-way and ongoing communication and information sharing.

Process evaluation findings reveal overall satisfaction among parents and families who received MLP services. Family members noted that legal staff fostered positive relationships with the families they served. It was in the context of these trusting and mutually respectful relationships that active engagement in the MLP occurred, allowing parents and families not only access to educational legal services they would not otherwise have but also opportunities to voice their concerns and listen to ideas on how they can better advocate for their children's educational needs. Moreover, although the COVID-19 pandemic posed many challenges—including disruptions in the identification, referral, and service delivery process—the MLP's flexibility and responsiveness allowed staff to adapt to changing conditions and meet families' holistic needs (e.g., housing and utility assistance, food support, unemployment benefits) as they arose.

The ROI analysis showed that investing in the MLP yielded positive returns for youth and their families. The estimated ROI of 819% reported here shows that for each dollar invested in the MLP, youth and their families received about \$9.19 in benefits through services furnished in pursuit of milestones and the achievement of these milestones. A more conservative approach to calculating the return, in which pursuit of services was counted as a cost rather than a benefit, still yielded a healthy ROI of 27%, suggesting that youth and their families enjoyed \$1.27 in benefits for every dollar invested in the program.

Importantly, both of these results are likely underestimates because we could not calculate the value of all of the referral services that families received as a result of their involvement with the MLP or the specialized services families received during the first months of the COVID-19 pandemic. Therefore, the estimated benefits based solely on education-related services should be viewed as conservative and likely represent an understatement of the ROI generated by the program. Future potential program adopters can use this information to inform their decision making, while future research around this and similar programs could aim to follow enrolled youth to monetize other potential benefits (e.g., increased high school graduation rate).

In conclusion, process evaluation and ROI analysis findings suggest that the MLP is a promising approach to addressing the need for legal assistance of parents and families of children with disabilities. Integrating legal staff into mental health care teams to identify and attend to the unmet legal needs affecting youth outcomes can help ensure the effective delivery of educational services, especially for youth in historically underserved communities who are at

higher risk of entering the justice system. With a focus on ensuring that students with disabilities receive appropriate educational services, MLPs are essential to a more comprehensive, youth- and family-centered, and equitable education system.

## Recommendations

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AIR makes the following recommendations to program administrators, policymakers, and potential funders.

***Tailor outreach to families that speak a language other than English at home.*** Interview respondents reported that communication challenges due to language differences may contribute to low parent engagement. MLPs should ensure that the program team comprises staff members who can provide translation or interpretation services on and off site.

***Ensure adequate staff capacity to implement trauma-informed services.*** Respondents explained that the MLP serves families who have experienced trauma such as homelessness, worries stemming from undocumented immigration status, and systemic poverty. Therefore, future MLPs should include full-time social workers or other program staff who can not only provide holistic services for clients and their family members but also help the program team understand how family trauma can influence program engagement.

***Foster a sense of community among families receiving services.*** Interview and focus group responses revealed the importance of community building for parents and family members of children and youth receiving special education supports and services or experiencing mental and behavioral health challenges. Facilitating a support group for parents and families allows participants to feel that they are not alone in their experience, increasing their sense of belonging and empowerment.

***Include funding for miscellaneous expenses.*** Interview respondents suggest that parents and families who engaged in the program incurred expenses related to transportation, school supplies, and early deposits to secure their child's school placement. Future MLPs should therefore include a budget for such miscellaneous expenses.

***Seek additional funding to support program sustainability.*** The MLP should consider leveraging findings from the ROI analysis to pursue additional funding to sustain the program. Given that the benefits are high relative to the costs, this program may be enticing to grant makers. This program may also be of interest to government agencies, as preventing youth from entering the

juvenile justice system saves them the financial cost of detention and incarceration as well as the social costs associated with victims and communities.

The MLP team is working to identify ways to financially sustain the program after the current grant period. The team has partnered with the Mount Sinai Medical Legal Partnership<sup>17</sup> to identify additional funding and is planning to apply for multiple grants. Currently, the future of the program's scope is unknown, as funding has not been secured. Interviewees indicated that additional funding would be helpful in hiring a paralegal to support administrative tasks required to successfully implement the program. One respondent indicated that the program would likely continue in a limited capacity, with just the attorney staffing. All staff and family focus group participants expressed a strong desire to continue the MLP.

Implementation of these recommendations would affect the costs and possibly the expected benefits of the program. It should be considered whether these additional costs might make the program less cost-beneficial. For example, adding a Spanish-speaking attorney to the MLP staff, hiring additional social workers, and expanding opportunities for family engagement would all add additional costs to the program. However, implementation of the above recommendations may also result in increased benefits for youth and their families. Furthermore, a long-term study may show that the private and societal benefits realized as a result of engagement with the MLP may be even greater than the returns presented here.

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<sup>17</sup> Mount Sinai Medical Legal Partnership is a nonprofit organization that provides patients with free legal services to address social and environmental challenges that are rooted in legal issues, such as housing, education, personal safety, and access to health care.

## Appendix A. Research Methods for the Process Evaluation

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### Recruitment

The American Institutes for Research (AIR) worked closely with the Legal Aid Society (LAS) and Mount Sinai St Luke's Child and Family Institute (CFI) to identify and recruit participants for key informant interviews (KIIs) and focus groups. LAS and CFI provided the AIR team with a list of program staff to interview for the KIIs. The recommended sample of participants included clinicians with high rates of screening, identification, and referral; clinicians with low rates of screening, identification, and referral; attorneys; program administration staff; and social workers. KII participants were invited via email to participate in a 60-minute phone interview.

For focus group recruitment, Medical Legal Partnership (MLP) staff and AIR invited families to participate in virtual focus groups by sending them letters and emails. AIR conducted two focus groups in English and one focus group in Spanish.<sup>18</sup>

### Data Collection and Analysis

The AIR team developed the KII and focus group guides based on the research questions outlined in Appendix A. AIR's Institutional Review Board (IRB) reviewed and approved all research materials. The Institute for State and Local Governance (ISLG), LAS, and CFI also reviewed the interview and focus group guides. Participants provided informed consent to participate in the KIIs and focus groups.

All KIIs and focus group discussions were recorded and transcribed. Interviewers took detailed notes if participants declined to allow recording of the interview. Transcripts and interview notes from the KIIs and focus groups were imported into NVivo 12 for analysis. Analysts used the analytical framework of grounded theory in the analysis processes.<sup>19,20</sup> This analytical approach is guided by findings, and meaning is synthesized from the stories and experiences that interview respondents and focus group participants share.

To analyze the data in NVivo 12, AIR staff began by developing an initial list of codes based on the core questions guiding the study. Next, the team identified early patterns in the data, revising the initial list of codes as appropriate. The team then coded the data systematically

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<sup>18</sup> Families were eligible to participate in the focus group discussions if they had at least one child in the MLP.

<sup>19</sup> Glaser, B., & Strauss, A. (1967). *The discovery of grounded theory: Strategies for qualitative research*. Aldine.

<sup>20</sup> Strauss, A., & Corbin, J. (1994). Grounded theory methodology. In N. K. Denzin & Y. S. Lincoln (Eds.), *Handbook of qualitative research* (pp. 217–285). Sage.

based on the refined coding scheme. The team drew conclusions by identifying and interpreting coding patterns such as high-frequency codes and coding clusters. Team members met regularly to discuss interpretations and ensure reliability. The team revisited coded excerpts as data collection progressed until no new insights emerged from the data.

## Appendix B. Process Evaluation Staff Interview Protocol

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### Background Information

The goal of this project is to understand how the Legal Aid Society's Medical Legal Partnership is implemented, including fidelity of implementation, client experience, and factors that facilitate or hinder successful implementation. To accomplish this, we will conduct approximately 20 interviews with staff from both the Legal Aid Society and from Mount Sinai St. Luke's Child and Family Institute (CFI), including full time staff attorneys, volunteer attorneys, social worker, supervising staff, and staff who refer families for legal services.

### Objectives

The purposes of the staff interviews are to understand their perceptions and understanding of and experiences with regard to:

- Program implementation
- The legal needs of clients; staff motivation and training; program resources; data sharing; client identification and referral; program recruitment and service delivery; program service integration; and sustainability planning

All Legal Aid Society staff who work for this Medical Legal Partnership will be included. CFI participants will include interviews both staff who identify and refer large numbers of families and those who identify and refer smaller numbers of families. In this way, the factors that drive participation in Medical Legal Partnership work can be identified.

### Note to Interviewer:

- *Information in italics signifies script for the interviewer*
- {Information underlined and in brackets indicates directions for the interviewer}

### Interview Materials

- ✓ Background notes on interviewee (as applicable: what is happening in that site? Notes to help the facilitator prepare and guide the discussion).
- ✓ Interview protocol
- ✓ Timer
- ✓ Recorder and extra batteries

## Procedures for obtaining informed consent

Staff will be contacted by email and/or phone to request and schedule an interview. This request will include language related to privacy and informed consent. At start of the interview, the interviewer will remind participants about privacy and ask if they agree to be interviewed and audio-recorded. A waiver of signed informed consent has been requested from AIR’s IRB.

### Outline with Timing

Minutes per section	Topic	Elapsed time (minutes)
5	Introduction, ground rules, and informed consent	5
5	Background	10
40	Implementation questions	50
5	Indicators of Success	55
5	Recommendations and closing	60

### Introduction (5 min)

#### Welcome—Explain purpose of the interview

- *Thank you for agreeing to participate in this interview. My name is [NAME], and it is a pleasure to be talking with you today. We know your time is valuable and we appreciate you sharing your thoughts with us. Your opinions and experiences will help us better understand the current Medical Legal Partnership and provide information about how to improve this and similar programs in the future.*
- *My colleague XXX will be helping me by taking notes during our discussion. We both work for an organization called the American Institutes for Research (or A-I-R), which is an independent non-profit research organization.*
- *We are part of the research team that has been hired to do an independent evaluation of the Medical Legal Partnership between the Legal Aid Society and Mount Sinai St. Luke’s Child and Family Institute.*
- *We are here to talk with you and learn from you about several topics and issues about the Medical Legal Partnership Program. We want to hear your opinions and experiences as program staff. And we’ll also spend some time hearing from you about specific ways that you think the Medical Legal Partnership can better provide services to clients in the future.*
- *Any questions?*

## Go over ground rules

*We'll be talking for about 60 minutes.*

*Everything you tell us will be confidential. To protect your privacy, we won't connect your name with anything that you say. You can help us protect privacy by not using personal names in your responses to questions.*

*At any time during our conversation, let me know if you have any questions or if you would rather not answer any specific question. You can also stop the interview at any time for any reason.*

*Your information collected as part of the study may be used for potential future research. However, your identity will not be connected to the information and will not be disclosed.*

*There are no risks to you involved with having this conversation with us beyond those experienced in everyday life. Your feedback will provide us with information to refine the program to best meet your needs and those of other stakeholder partners.*

## Procedure to obtain consent for recording the interview

*We would like to record our discussion today so that we make sure we don't miss any of the details of your feedback. As I mentioned before, your name will not be associated with your comments, and everything that you tell us will be kept confidential. Is it all right with you if we audio record the interview?*

*[If yes] → Interviewer turns on recording within GoToMeeting.*

*[If no] → Interview will proceed with only notes being taken.*

## Background (5 min)

*Let's start by talking about your background and your experience here at [Legal Aid Society or Mount Sinai St. Luke's CFI].*

### 1. Staff background

- a. Tell me, what is your official job position/title?
- b. Tell me about your role and what are your main responsibilities here at [Legal Aid Society or CFI].

How long have you had this role? How long have you worked at [Legal Aid Society or CFI]?

## Implementation Questions (40 min)

*Now that we've talked about your role and responsibilities, I'd like to switch gears and talk about legal advocacy and the program.*

1. What resources (staff, space, administrative support) do you believe were essential to allowing you to implement this MLP?
  - a. Are there any resources that were not in place for this MLP that you think would have been beneficial?
2. What practices or systems facilitated interactions between staff from the legal side and staff from the clinical side of the MLP?
  - a. Are there things that make it easier or harder for you to interact productively with the other staff?
  - b. Are there any strategies that were not in place for this MLP that you think would have been beneficial?
3. What elements of the training do you believe were critical to ensuring the success of this MLP?
  - a. Are there any aspects of training that this MLP did not use that you think would have been beneficial?
  - b. What strategies support training of staff who turnover?
  - c. In what ways did the pandemic influence the MLPs ability to train staff? Do you have suggestions of how to address these challenges?
4. What data elements do you believe were critical for the organizations to share with each other and how were these data used?
  - a. Are there any data sources that were not shared that you think would have been beneficial?
5. Thinking about referrals specifically, what did staff do and what systems were in place to ensure that referrals went smoothly?
  - a. *Probes:* For example, did having a designated individual to receive referrals matter? Did having written referral practices matter? Did trainings help prepare clinicians?
  - b. Are there any strategies that this MLP did not use that you think would have been beneficial?
  - c. In what ways did the pandemic influence the MLPs ability to refer families and youth? Do you have any suggestions for how to address this challenge?

6. When serving families and youth, what did staff do and what systems were in place to ensure that their needs were met?
  - a. *Probes:* For example, were there certain roles that played an important part? Did trainings help staff better meet the needs of families and youth?
  - b. Are there any strategies that this MLP did not use that you think would have been beneficial?
  - c. Are there any needs that the MLP struggled to meet?
  - d. In what ways did the pandemic influence the MLP's ability to meet the needs of families and youth? Do you have any suggestions for how to address this challenge?
7. What people, practices, or systems were in place that allowed the MLP successfully implement the MLP during the pandemic? The Medical Legal Partnership program components included screening, advocacy, Know Your Rights events, staff training, Parenting in Stress, and Positive Parenting.
  - a. Are there any strategies that this MLP did not use that you think would have been beneficial?
  - b. For components that were not implemented as planned, do you believe this affected the cases or outcomes?
  - c. In what ways did the pandemic influence the MLP's ability to implement program components? Do you have any suggestions for how to address this challenge?
8. How did this MLP work with the Department of Education to ensure that families and youth were receiving the services that they needed?
  - a. Were there any strategies that this MLP did not use that you think would have been beneficial?
9. Are there any other factors that helped or hindered MLP success?
  - a. What strategies can address these barriers?
10. Where do you see the MLP going moving forward? How will it operate differently from how it previously operated?
  - a. What factors contributed to these shifts?
11. What do you think needs to be in place to sustain an MLP like this one?
  - a. What people, practices or systems that should be in place to allow an MLP to continue without outside financial investments?
  - b. Where is the most productive place to invest to sustain an MLP like this one?

- c. What people, practices or systems can allow an MLP to operate during a pandemic?

### **Indicators of Success (5 min)**

1. From your perspective, how would you know if the Medical Legal Partnership was successful? ?
  - a. To what extent have families and youth gotten services they needed that they otherwise wouldn't have been able to receive?
  - b. To what extent have you seen changes in the ways that families advocate for themselves?
  - c. To what extent have families built relationships with and learned from each other?
  - d. What people, practices, or systems are most critical to achieve success and support families and youth?

### **Recommendations and Closing(5 min)**

*Thank you for your time and participation in this discussion. You have answered many questions and shared your experiences with us and we really appreciate it. I'd like to ask you about any other suggestions or ideas about things you think may be helpful.*

1. What should the Medical Legal Partnership know about or keep in mind when providing services?
2. What do you think that the Medical Legal Partnership can do to serve clients better?
3. Is there anything else that you would like to add about any of the topics that we've discussed today?

*Again, thank you. If you have any questions about today's discussion, you can reach out using the contact information in the email you received before we started.*

## Appendix C. Process Evaluation Family Focus Group Protocol

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### Background Information

The goal of this project is to understand how the Legal Aid Society's Medical Legal Partnership is implemented, including fidelity of implementation, client experience, and factors that facilitate or hinder successful implementation. To accomplish this, during each of the two data collection periods, we will conduct two focus groups with approximately 8 to 10 family members who receive services from the Medical Legal Partnership.

### Objectives

The purposes of the family focus groups are to:

- Understand what family members think about the program
- Understand facilitators and barriers to program implementation from the perspective of the family members

Families will be selected for participation at random from a roster of current and recent clients of the Medical Legal Partnership.

### Note to Interviewer:

- *Information in italics signifies script for the interviewer*
- {Information underlined and in brackets indicates directions for the interviewer}

### Interview Materials

- ✓ Focus Group protocol
- ✓ Timer
- ✓ Recorder and extra batteries
- ✓ Consent forms

### Procedures for obtaining informed consent

Prior to the start of the interviews, a summary of the study, including participant rights as they pertain to this evaluation, will be provided to interview participants. With permission from respondents, interviews will be recorded and then transcribed to ensure complete accuracy of notes collected.

## Outline with Timing

Minutes per section	Topic	Elapsed time (minutes)
5	Introduction, ground rules, and informed consent	5
5	Background	10
30	Implementation questions	40
10	Indicators of Success	50
10	Recommendations and closing	60

### Introduction (5 min)

#### Welcome – Explain purpose of the interview

- *Thank you for agreeing to participate in this focus group. My name is [NAME], and it is a pleasure to be talking with you today. We know your time is valuable and we appreciate you sharing your thoughts with us. Your opinions and experiences will help us better understand the current Medical Legal Partnership and provide information about how to improve this and similar programs in the future.*
- *My colleague XXX will be helping me by taking notes during our discussion. We both work for an organization called the American Institutes for Research (or A-I-R), which is an independent non-profit research organization].*
- *We are part of the research team that has been hired to do an independent evaluation of the Medical Legal Partnership between the Legal Aid Society and Mount Sinai St. Luke’s Child and Family Institute.*
- *We are here to talk with you and learn from you about several topics and issues about the Medical Legal Partnership Program. We want to hear your opinions and experiences as families who receive services through the Medical Legal Partnership. And we’ll also spend some time hearing from you about specific ways that you think the Medical Legal Partnership can better provide services to clients in the future.*
- *Any questions?*

#### Go over ground rules

*We’ll be talking for about 45 minutes and you will receive a \$40 honorarium for your time.*

*Everything you tell us will be confidential. To protect your privacy, we won’t connect your name with anything that you say. You can help us protect privacy by using only first names during this discussion.*

*At any time during our conversation, let me know if you have any questions or if you would rather not answer any specific question. You can also stop the interview at any time for any reason.*

*Your information collected as part of the study may be used for potential future research. However, your identity will not be connected to the information and will not be disclosed.*

*There are no risks to you involved with having this conversation beyond those experienced in everyday life. Your feedback will provide us with information to refine the program to best meet your needs and those of other families in the community.*

### **Procedure to obtain consent for recording the interview**

*We would like to record our discussion today so that we make sure we don't miss any of the details of your feedback. As I mentioned before, your name will not be associated with your comments, and everything that you tell us will be kept confidential. Is it all right with you if we audio record the interview?*

*[If yes] → Interviewer turns on recording within GoToMeeting.*

*[If no] → Interview will proceed with only notes being taken.*

### **Background (5 min)**

*Let's start with introductions. Let's go around the room one at a time. Please briefly introduce yourself by telling us your first name, and please share one success your child has experienced so far this year.*

### **Implementation Questions (30 min)**

*Now I'd like to ask you about your experiences with the program.*

1. How did you find out about the Medical Legal Partnership?
  - a. Who referred you to the Medical Legal Partnership? Did you get a recommendation? Did you find out about it online?
  - b. Do you have any suggestions about how the MLP can reach families like you?
2. What types of legal aid do you receive from Medical Legal Partnership?
  - a. [Probe:] For example, civil, educational, criminal, immigration?
  - b. Are there any services that you did not receive that would have helped you?
3. Can you describe your relationship with the Legal Aid Society and CFI staff?
  - a. How often do you interact with them?

- b. Do you typically meet in person or over the phone? How has this changed since the pandemic began?
  - c. How has this relationship changed over time?
  - d. What are some things that may improve these interactions?
4. Overall, how satisfied are you with the services that are provided by the Medical Legal Partnership?
- a. Does the program meet your expectations? Why or why not?
5. What challenges do you have with accessing the Medical Legal Partnership?

**Indicators of Success (10 min)**

1. How has the MLP benefited you or your child?
- a. To what extent have you or your child gotten services that you otherwise wouldn't have received?
  - b. To what extent have you gotten better at advocating for yourself?
  - c. To what extent have you built relationships with and learned from other families?

**Recommendations and Closing (10 min)**

*Thank you for your time and participation in this discussion. You have answered many questions and shared your experiences with us and we really appreciate it. I'd like to ask you about any other suggestions or ideas about things you think may be helpful.*

- 1. What should the Medical Legal Partnership know about or keep in mind when providing services to families?
- 2. What do you think that the Medical Legal Partnership can do to serve families better?
- 3. Are there other topics related to the Medical Legal Partnership that we didn't discuss that you think are important?

*Again, thank you. If you have any questions about today's discussion, you can reach out using the contact information in the email you received before we started.*

## Appendix D. Research Methods for the Return-on-Investment Study

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### Methods

#### ***Application of the Ingredients Approach to the Economic Evaluation of Programs***

This study uses the ingredients method to identify the costs and benefits of the Medical Legal Partnership (MLP) program.<sup>21</sup> This method first focuses on identifying all of the personnel and nonpersonnel resources used in the production of services provided as part of the program (costs) or those resulting in specific outcomes generated by the program. The quantities of these resources are then projected against their unit prices to calculate costs and benefits. In the case of the MLP, the outcomes were defined as the receipt of MLP supports in the pursuit of educational milestones.

The first step in the ingredients approach is to identify all resources used in the program. For this analysis, all resources and their respective quantities were identified through informal conversations, formal interviews, and family surveys. Resources included MLP personnel time in the form of direct hours for student services, required training to provide services (i.e., staff attorney training, training for clinical staff at Mount Sinai St. Luke's Child and Family Institute [CFI]), and materials and facilities that were used to provide services. The time a parent or guardian spent working with the MLP to pursue educational milestones was also a required resource in the MLP.

In the next step, the American Institutes for Research (AIR) assigned unit prices to each resource (described in the data sources discussed below).

The final step of the approach is to calculate the costs and benefits as the product of (a) the quantities of resources used to deliver the various services to families and their children and (b) their respective prices.

#### ***Use of the Resource Cost Model and Defining Costs and Benefits***

AIR used a resource cost model (RCM) to collect and organize the requisite information on the resources and their respective prices and to perform the final calculations of costs and benefits. AIR originally developed the RCM to provide an organizational structure within which the ingredients approach could be applied. The structure ensures that all resources are accounted

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<sup>21</sup> Levin, H. M., McEwan, P. J., Belfield, C., Bowden, A. B., & Shand, R. (2018). *Economic evaluation in education: Cost-effectiveness and benefit-cost analysis*. Sage.

for in a comprehensive manner. The fully developed RCM for this analysis separated resources by purpose (cost and benefits), type (personnel and nonpersonnel), and activity (intake, case strategy development, pursuit of specific educational milestones). Once all information had been entered into the RCM, AIR calculated the cost of the MLP compared with the value of the benefits across all educational milestones.

**Costs.** For this study, two main activities were used to derive costs:

- initial intake meetings with families
- development of a case strategy<sup>22</sup>

Costs in this study are the value of all resources used in the intake and case strategy development process for each youth.

**Benefits.** Study benefits were defined as the monetary value of the resources a youth and their family received after the MLP developed a case strategy. Examples of resources categorized as benefits include the city or state contribution to cover private school tuition, time allocation for legal staff, and the monetary value of additional individualized education program (IEP) meetings to pursue educational milestones. The Legal Aid Society (LAS) calculated the value of some of the benefits that participating MLP youth receive (e.g., the cost of a private evaluation). Those data were used in this study to assign value to the educational outcomes for which LAS determined a value.

The benefits of the MLP were separated into the following 12 educational milestones families and their youth might pursue:

1. City pays tuition to private school
2. Obtaining initial IEP
3. IEP designates school and state pays tuition
4. Obtaining private evaluation at district expense
5. Receiving compensatory education services
6. Obtaining evaluation via related service authorization
7. Obtaining or increased related services on IEP
8. Obtaining appropriate class placement

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<sup>22</sup> This includes the initial strategy planning meeting, follow-up discussions with Legal Aid Society staff and families, and time for document collection from schools or related service providers. Interviewees described the time allocated toward all types of activities that resulted in the development of a cost strategy.

9. Suspension dismissal
10. Manifestation determination meeting won
11. Obtaining advice only on educational issue
12. Parent reimbursed for services

Benefit values for some milestones, including “obtaining initial IEP” and “obtaining appropriate class placement,” were not provided by LAS. In these cases, AIR used findings from the Special Education Expenditure Project (SEEP) to estimate the value of the services.<sup>23</sup> To estimate the benefits associated with “suspension dismissal,” the research team used aggregate parent salary information provided by LAS to account for parents’ time spent supervising the suspended child. Some of the milestone achievements did not have an associated monetary value, and in these cases only the benefits associated with the pursuit of the milestone are reported.<sup>24</sup>

The benefits attached to these milestones were further separated within the RCM into the dollar values associated with the pursuit of each milestone. Resources involved in pursuing milestones were largely composed of effort on the part of legal staff. In contrast, the benefits associated with achieving milestones represented a variety of resource types, ranging from tuition payments to evaluative and/or special education services.

LAS staff explained that families were also referred to other services outside of the MLP. These referrals included social supports for families and youth (e.g., supports related to food insecurity and housing). Monetary values for these referral services were outside the scope of this study and are therefore not accounted for in the benefits calculated in the current analysis. This means that the benefits presented here should be viewed as conservative estimates. With these conservative estimates, LAS is assured that the comparison of costs and benefits produces a lower bound estimate of a more comprehensive return on investment (ROI) associated with the MLP.

## Data Collection

AIR collected data about resources in multiple ways to ensure that both the costs and monetary values of benefits were fully understood.

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<sup>23</sup> Chambers, J., Parrish, T., & Harr, J. (2002). *What are we spending on special education services in the United States, 1999–2000?* Special Education Expenditure Project. <https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED471888.pdf>

<sup>24</sup> No additional benefit values were incorporated into the analysis for the milestones “obtained advice only on educational issue” (for which there was no additional service provided other than the advice given during meetings, the value of which is covered in the pursuit benefits) and “manifestation determination meeting won.” For this reason, the calculated benefits should be viewed as an underestimate of the true value of all benefits stemming from the program.

## **Primary Data Sources**

AIR collected primary data from three sources for the ROI study: (a) informal discussions with the lead attorney, (b) structured interviews, and (c) family surveys.

First, AIR had two informal discussions with the lead attorney to identify key participants in the process and build contextual knowledge about the program. These conversations, along with a review of extant data, shaped the interview protocol.

Second, AIR conducted four structured interviews with MLP staff, including the lead attorney, staff attorneys, a social worker, and the CFI clinical director, in 2019. In 2020, five structured interviews were conducted with MLP staff, and two participants returned their time allocation activity.<sup>25</sup> During these interviews, AIR asked questions about the personnel (e.g., estimates of time allocated toward specific tasks) and nonpersonnel resources (e.g., materials and equipment needed to develop plans and provide services to youth and families) that were used in the program for the initial intake meeting, case strategy development, and the pursuit of an educational milestone. MLP staff were also asked to indicate the minimum, maximum, and average amount of hours they devoted to pursuing each type of educational milestone. Note that data collected about implementation in 2020 were used only to describe the COVID-related supports families received, while information about 2019 implementation was used to calculate the ROI. Lastly, we asked MLP staff about the additional services to which they referred clients during their interactions. This included services like rent support, food insecurity programs, and employment programs in 2019, with the addition of COVID-related programs and supports in 2020 (e.g., information about testing, receipt of masks and hand sanitizer, eviction moratorium support).

The resources on the cost side were quite uniform across all families involved in the program. This meant that MLP staff interviewees were able to estimate and report the average amount of time devoted to developing case strategies on a per-family basis, which included the initial intake meeting and the development of a case strategy. Once an individual case strategy had been developed (which includes the initial intake meeting and the development of a case strategy), the amount of resources used to pursue the identified educational milestone (mostly in the form of staff time) varied greatly. To understand the time allocation per family for staff effort put forth in pursuing the array of educational milestones, AIR also asked interviewees to document the average amount of time they allocated toward pursuing each of the educational milestones in tabular form.<sup>26</sup> Information from this follow-up activity allowed AIR to estimate the value of the time staff allocated toward each educational milestone.

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<sup>25</sup> The full interview protocol can be found in Appendix E.

<sup>26</sup> Instructions for the follow-up data collection activity can be found in Appendix F.

Third, AIR administered a family survey to all MLP families to capture the resources put forth by families (see Appendix H for survey response rates).<sup>27</sup> This survey gathered information about the amount of time families spent pursuing educational milestones (i.e., preparing for and attending MLP meetings). This information, along with weighted average aggregate salary information from the LAS quarterly reports, was included in the RCM to accurately value their time. The survey also asked about any other benefits they may have received due to their involvement with the MLP (e.g., referrals for food insecurity support, rent support, support for other health needs). The values of these other programs and supports to which families were referred due to their involvement in the MLP were not monetized in this work as it was outside of the scope. However, 78% of families reported being referred to services outside LAS.

### **Pricing**

AIR used various sources to identify appropriate prices, including the original LAS proposal, national pricing databases, and extant research conducted by AIR on the dollar value of providing various types of educational services to students with disabilities.

**Personnel.** Most of the pricing information for personnel resources came from the LAS proposal for the MLP, including compensation information (salary and benefits) for the lead attorney, training director (director at CFI), staff attorney, volunteer attorney, and social worker. The volunteer attorney conducts identical work to the staff attorneys and has the same training. For that reason, their time and staff attorney time were given equal value. Although the legal interns were in unpaid positions, their time has value, which is important to include, as potential future adopters of a similar program may not have interns available to support the program. This study assumed that interns had at least a bachelor's degree, along with some specialized legal training. The clinical staff at CFI reportedly had a minimum of a master's degree and some had doctoral degrees (e.g., PsyD, MD). Data from the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics was used to determine the market value for individuals with similar credentials to the clinical staff and legal interns. Annual parent income was derived from data in the LAS aggregate quarterly report and calculated as a weighted average of the reported annual family income, which was then converted into an hourly rate. Exhibit D1 shows the total annual compensation (inclusive of both salary and benefits) and the hourly rate for each personnel position discussed in interviews with MLP staff.<sup>28</sup>

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<sup>27</sup> The family survey can be found in Appendix G, and the response rate analysis can be found in Appendix H.

<sup>28</sup> All LAS employees were assumed to be full-time staff, working 35-hour weeks. The social worker, clinical director, parents, and clinical staff were assumed to work 40-hour weeks. The benefit rate used here (50.4%) came from the LAS proposal and was applied to all staff and parents.

## Exhibit D1. Compensation Rates for Personnel and Parents or Guardians (Salary Plus Benefits)

Position	Annual compensation	Hourly rate
Supervising attorney	\$187,168	\$103
Staff attorney	\$103,504	\$57
Staff attorney (retired)	\$103,504	\$57
Social worker	\$83,410	\$40
CFI director	\$192,571	\$93
CFI clinical staff	\$149,898	\$72
Intern	\$91,988	\$51
Parent/guardian	\$31,508	\$15

**Nonpersonnel.** Staff required basic office supplies to provide services to families. In addition, attorneys used LawManager to track client notes and had various books and toys in the offices to keep youth busy during meetings. The costs of these resources were not included in the current analysis (obtaining licensing prices for LawManager was difficult), but their omission likely had very little effect on the findings either quantitatively or qualitatively. AIR derived pricing information for the remaining nonpersonnel resources from the Center for Benefit Cost Studies in Education (CBCSE) and New York City mobile cellular service providers.<sup>29</sup> Exhibit D2 shows their estimated unit prices and annual costs.

## Exhibit D2. Cost of Nonpersonnel Resources

Nonpersonnel resource	Unit price	Annual cost
Computer	\$591	\$129
Copy machine and scanner	\$355	\$78
Work cell phone	\$706	\$250
Work cell phone plan	\$51	\$611
Filing cabinet	\$211	\$25
Hotspot	\$323	\$114
Hotspot plan	\$92	\$1,104
Microsoft Office suite	\$99	\$99

<sup>29</sup> The price for a mobile hotspot and monthly hotspot plan is an average of AT&T, Verizon, and T-Mobile prices. All other prices for nonpersonnel resources were obtained from the CBCSE CostOut Toolkit.

*Note.* A 3.5% discount rate was applied for resources used for more than 1 year. Useful lifespans were assumed to be 5 years for computers and copy machines, 3 years for cell phones and hotspots, and 10 years for filing cabinets. Annual costs for hotspot and cellular plans assumed 12 equal monthly payments.

**Services.** To determine the monetary value of IEP meetings and special education services provided to youth with disabilities, the research team leveraged spending information from SEEP on related service providers, general and special education teachers, and central office staff. AIR extracted additional information on the spending per youth associated with direct instruction and related services, administration and support, and nonpersonnel resources devoted to special education programming to value services provided to youth with disabilities.

**Adjustments.** AIR adjusted the prices to reflect the New York City market for goods and services in 2019 dollars. Specifically, AIR adjusted the dollars to reflect the cost of hiring and retaining staff in the New York City area using the Geographic Cost of Education Index developed by AIR (the same index used in SEEP to transform spending into national average dollars). The dollars for personnel and nonpersonnel resources were inflated using information derived from the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics Occupational Employment Statistics and Consumer Price Index, respectively.

## Analysis

AIR used LAS data on the value of achieving educational milestones to identify the average, maximum, and minimum values for each milestone. Exhibit D3 shows the value of the average, maximum, and minimum time allocation toward pursuing each educational milestone across all staff. Exhibit D4 shows the average, maximum, and minimum values of pursuing and achieving each educational milestone as reported in 2019. In the ROI, the average value of pursuing an educational milestone was used and multiplied by the number of youth who pursued that particular milestone.

### Exhibit D3. Maximum, Minimum, and Average Per-Youth Value of Pursuing Educational Milestones

Milestone	Average	Maximum	Minimum
City pays tuition to private school	\$6,674	\$10,338	\$3,930
Obtained initial IEP	\$7,054	\$12,740	\$3,387
IEP designates school and state pays tuition	\$8,742	\$14,377	\$3,925
Obtained private evaluation at district expense	\$2,271	\$4,711	\$350
Received compensatory education services	\$8,338	\$13,053	\$4,808
Obtained evaluation via related service authorization	\$1,870	\$5,844	\$372
Obtained or increased related services on IEP	\$7,144	\$11,808	\$3,701

Milestone	Average	Maximum	Minimum
Obtained appropriate class placement	\$8,338	\$14,993	\$3,758
Suspension dismissed	\$3,188	\$4,030	\$2,764
Manifestation determination review won	\$2,697	\$3,498	\$2,272
Obtained advice only on educational issue	\$1,149	\$2,509	\$303

**Exhibit D4. Maximum, Minimum, and Average Per-Youth Value of Pursuing and Achieving an Educational Milestone**

Milestone	Average	Maximum	Minimum
City pays tuition to private school	\$62,468	\$100,338	\$31,930
Obtained initial IEP	\$15,710	\$21,395	\$12,042
IEP designates school and state pays tuition	\$64,536	\$104,377	\$31,925
Obtained private evaluation at district expense	\$5,871	\$10,711	\$1,550
Received compensatory education services	\$28,631	\$49,053	\$10,008
Obtained evaluation via related service authorization	\$5,470	\$11,844	\$1,572
Obtained or increased related services on IEP	\$32,144	\$36,808	\$28,701
Obtained appropriate class placement	\$16,993	\$23,648	\$12,414
Suspension dismissed	\$3,552	\$4,636	\$2,885
Manifestation determination review won	\$2,697	\$3,498	\$2,272
Obtained advice only on educational issue	\$1,149	\$2,509	\$303

**Limitations**

One inherent limitation of this study is that we are not able to follow youth over time to observe how the services they receive from the MLP impact their educational trajectory. We are also not able to observe similar youth who did not receive services from the MLP to understand how MLP participants differ in their outcomes compared with nonparticipants. In addition, we did not observe the value of the services families receive from referrals given to them during MLP meetings (e.g., support with income, housing, and food insecurity).

Although the findings were derived from strategic data collection and sophisticated calculations, the costs and benefits may vary over time based on individual youth needs. We asked interviewees questions based on their overall experience with the program, but those experiences may change based on the types of cases they serve. Additionally, the influence of the COVID-19 pandemic on the needs of students and the type of services the MLP provided are unique to the circumstances of 2020. There is no way to value those supports, nor is it

within the scope of this study to follow youth who received these supports to later compare to youth who did not have the MLP supports.

Although this work identifies the cost and benefits of the MLP, it is not a comprehensive ROI analysis. Findings here do not represent the efficiency of the city's investment in the MLP, nor do they compare that investment with other investments the city has made in similar programs. Instead, this work identifies the true costs of the MLP by identifying and valuing all resources used in implementation. It also estimates the value of benefits received by families through the MLP and pairs these data with the cost data. Together, this information informs LAS and the district attorney of New York City about the benefits realized by families involved in the MLP. It also helps potential adopters of similar programs understand the costs and benefits associated with implementing a similar program. A comprehensive ROI study would require researchers to follow youth and families for years after their participation in the MLP to understand how the program affected their later educational attainment.

## Appendix E. Return-on-Investment Interview Protocol

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### Introduction

Thank you for taking the time to talk with me today. First, I want to tell you a little bit about our study then we will go over some consent information to be sure we are clear on expectations. After that we will begin with the actual interview. Does that work for you?

### *Study Summary*

The American Institutes for Research has partnered with the Legal Aid Society to understand the costs and benefits of the Medical Legal Partnership. The way we have framed costs to include any effort on the part of the MLP in terms of staff time and non-personnel items used to provide intake and consulting services to youth and their families resulting in a service plan. The benefits include the MLP staff and non-personnel efforts to follow the plan that has been developed to reach specific milestones, which might include one or many of the following services:

- City pays tuition to private school
- Obtained private evaluation at district expense
- Received compensatory educational services
- Suspension dismissed
- Obtained advice on an educational issue

As we talk today, I will be asking questions about the resources (amount of staff time and non-personnel items) used in the Partnership. These will focus on the effort being put toward developing plans with youth and their families. I will also ask the effort, both time and other resources, required to carry out those plans. Understanding what it takes to create a plan and pursue the educational milestones described in that plan will help future potential adopters of such a program understand what to expect. This will also give stakeholders a better understanding of the incredible work you are doing for these families. Are there any questions I can answer about the study itself?

### Personnel Referral Process (Cost)

#### *Time Allocation on Referral for Attorneys*

One of the first things we need to understand is the time spent on the referral process itself. As I understand it, there are four components typically involved in the referral process:

**Preparation for Initial Meeting with Family:** This includes review of documents related to the actual referral (either from St. Luke’s or self-referral) and materials from families.

**Initial Meeting with Family:** This includes the first meeting with the family to discuss issues and potential solutions.

**Developing a Plan to Pursue an Outcome:** This includes determining a milestone to pursue through legal services and creating a plan to achieve it.

**St. Luke’s:** This can include meeting with St. Luke’s, collecting documentation from them, ... other. \*This does NOT include semi-annual training sessions\*

**Other:** Are there other tasks that need done to develop a plan? This can include administrative tasks and meetings.

- How much time is spent on each of these activities on average per week?
- How much time do you spend with St. Luke’s each week on the referral process?
- Tell me about how you determine an educational milestone and creating a plan to reach it.

## **Personnel Services Provided (Benefits)**

### ***Time Allocation on Services Provided for Attorneys***

- As I understand it, there are several types of educational milestones that are typically pursued in this program. This includes things like (\*mention a few from list\*).
  - Thinking about these milestones, what are some of the educational milestones that you have pursued on your clients’ behalf?
  - Are there certain educational milestones that take more time to create a plan around than others? Describe.
- One important piece of information for us to understand is how much time you spend to pursue each type of educational milestone per family. I will be sending you a quick survey that will help me capture the average time you spend across all families pursuing each educational milestone.

## **Materials and Equipment**

- What equipment and materials are needed for the MLP referral process? (COST)
- What equipment and materials are needed to provide services through the MLP? (BENEFITS)

- Are there certain educational milestones that require the use of any specialized materials or equipment?
- What percentage of time would you estimate these items are used solely for the MLP?

## **Facilities**

- What offices are involved in the MLP? Tell me about those offices.
- Are there meeting or conference rooms used to meet with clients?
- Where do the Know Your Rights sessions occur?
- What percentage of time would you estimate these facilities are used solely for the MLP?

## **Training**

### ***Training for Attorneys (Initial and Ongoing)***

- Who attends these training sessions? How long do they last?
- Who facilitates the training sessions? How long does the planning take?

### ***Training for St. Luke's Staff (Fall and Spring)***

- Who attends these training sessions? How long do they last?
- Who facilitates the training sessions? How long does the planning take?

## **Other**

Are there any other resources used in the MLP that we have not discussed? If so, can you please describe them?

## **Closing**

Thank you for your time today. You have given me a lot of information that will help us represent the great work you are doing for students and their families. Remember that I will follow up with a short survey via email to ask about your time allocation toward specific educational milestones. It should only take a few minutes of your time.

Thank you again and have a great day!

## Appendix F. Return-on-Investment Interviewee Follow-Up Activity Instructions

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Dear [INCLUDE PERSONALIZED NAME HERE],

Thank you again for taking the time to talk with me about the Medical Legal Partnership. As we discussed, the American Institutes for Research has partnered with the Legal Aid Society to evaluate the costs and benefits associated with the services the Medical Legal Partnership (MLP) provides to students and their families.

For our study, the costs of the MLP are considered to be those associated with efforts leading up to and including the creation of a service plan for each student and family. This includes the dollar value of the time you spend on things like the referral process and document preparation. The benefits of the MLP are considered to be the dollar value of the services a student and their family receive after a service plan has been created. This will include efforts on your part such as time spent preparing for and attending IEP meetings or suspension hearings. As we discussed in your interview, understanding the typical time that you spend pursuing each type of educational milestone with a student and their family will be necessary to determine the benefits families receive.

Attached is the follow-up worksheet for recording the amount of time you spend achieving different milestones with the students and families you serve. For each educational milestone listed in the attached document, please provide your best estimate of the time you have spent over the past year in terms of the following:

13. The average amount of time you typically spend pursuing this educational milestone
14. The least amount of time you have spent pursuing this educational milestone
15. The most amount of time you have spent pursuing this educational milestone

In addition, we would like to know the total number of students/families you have worked on each milestone with over the past year.

Please be comprehensive when estimating the average amount of time you spend with a student and their family pursuing a milestone. For example, if you typically spend about 6 hours reviewing documents to prepare for an IEP meeting, 2 hours at a preparation meeting with the parents, 2 hours at the IEP meeting, and 1 hour debriefing with the family regarding the outcome, that would be an average of 11 hours pursuing that educational milestone. However,

if you have one family that only required a total of 5 hours total, that would go in the minimum section. And if you had a family that took nearly 45 hours in pursuit of this educational milestone, that would go in the maximum section.

Remember, the per-student time allocation estimates you provide should be across all families you have served throughout the program, regardless of how many weeks or months you have been working with them. These three time allocations will help us understand the average time, as well as the upper and lower ranges allocated to each educational milestone.

If there are educational milestones you have not pursued based on the needs of the students in your caseload, please leave them blank. Once you are finished, please reply to this email and attach your completed form. If there is anything else you would like me to know about your time allocation for the MLP, please include it in your email as well.

## Appendix G. Medical Legal Partnership Family Survey

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The American Institutes for Research (AIR) partnered with the Legal Aid Society (LAS) to understand more about the Medical Legal Partnership (MLP). We understand that the MLP provided some legal counsel to your family over the past year or so and we would like to know more about that. We would like to understand more about the amount of effort it takes for families to use the MLP services.

This survey will take about five minutes to complete and there is no obligation to participate. However, should you wish to complete the survey, we will send you a \$20 Target gift card as thank you. The answers you give here will not be shared and will be kept confidential. We will only use these answers for this study and will destroy the information after the research study is finished.

If you would like more information about this project, you may contact the Project Director, Amanda Danks, at the American Institutes for Research at 919-918-2321 or at [adanks@air.org](mailto:adanks@air.org). For questions regarding your rights as a subject participating in this research, please contact the Institutional Review Board (IRB) at [IRBChair@air.org](mailto:IRBChair@air.org) or toll free at 1-800-634-0797.

\* Note: Single asterisks denote questions/language added for the 2021 survey.

### ***Contact Information***

The information in this section is needed to send you your gift card after you complete the survey.

1. Name
2. Email address
3. Phone number

### ***Tell us about yourself***

This information will help us understand who is responding to our survey.

4. Gender
  - Male
  - Female
  - Transgender Male

- Transgender Female
  - Rather Not Say
5. Race
- Asian/Pacific Islander
  - Black
  - Hispanic/Latino(a)
  - White
  - Two or More Races
  - Rather Not Say
6. Ethnicity
- Hispanic
  - Non-Hispanic
  - Rather Not Say
7. Where do you live?
- Washington Heights
  - Central or West Harlem
  - East Harlem
  - Lower East Side
  - Manhattan
  - Outside of Manhattan
  - Rather Not Say
8. What is your zip code?
- [text box]

### ***Medical Legal Partnership (MLP) Meetings***

In this section, please think about your experiences over the past year.

9. How many MLP meetings did you attend over the last year? \*This can be a meeting that happened either through a phone call or video chat.\*

- [text box]

10. How long was a typical meeting?

- Please round up to the nearest hour. For example, if the meeting was 2.5 hours long, you would round up and enter 3 hours.
- [text box]

11. How long did it take you to prepare for a typical meeting with the MLP? This can include things like gathering paperwork or making phone calls with MLP staff or the school to get the information you need.

- Please round up to the nearest hour. For example, if the meeting was 2.5 hours long, you would round up and enter 3 hours.
- [text box]

12. How much time did it typically take you to travel from your home/workplace to the Legal Aid Society?\*

- Please round up to the nearest hour. For example, if it takes 30 minutes to get there, you would round up and enter 1 hour.
- [Text box]

13. How do you usually get to the meetings with the MLP? (select all that apply)\*

- Subway
- Bus
- Taxi/Rideshare (Uber, Lyft)
- Walk
- Other [text box]

### **Services**

14. What other services have you been referred to through your relationship with the Medical Legal Partnership?

- Support with housing issues (for example, Section 8 housing application)
- Support with food insecurity (for example, SNAP or food bank)
- Support with health issues (for example, CHIP or insurance coverage)
- Support with income issues (for example, unemployment benefits or welfare)

- Other [write in]  
*\*Selection Options from 2021 Survey*
- Securing devices for school participation
- Getting internet/Wi-Fi in the home
- Housing
- Food insecurity/Food delivery
- COVID-related funeral expenses
- Eviction moratorium support
- Support getting medicine/medical supplies
- Getting supplies for COVID-19 safety (for example, masks or hand sanitizer)
- Employment services
- Other [write in]

15. If you could have additional services from the MLP, what would they be?\*

- [text box]

Thank you for taking the time to tell us more about your experience with the Medical Legal Partnership. We will send your gift card soon. Best of luck to you and your student!

## About the American Institutes for Research

Established in 1946, with headquarters in Arlington, Virginia, the American Institutes for Research® (AIR®) is a nonpartisan, not-for-profit organization that conducts behavioral and social science research and delivers technical assistance to solve some of the most urgent challenges in the U.S. and around the world. We advance evidence in the areas of education, health, the workforce, human services, and international development to create a better, more equitable world. For more information, visit [AIR.ORG](https://www.air.org).



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