

Camden Coalition Medical-Legal Partnership Significantly Enhances Addiction Care

New evaluation shows most who received integrated legal assistance during addiction treatment were able to resolve key legal issues while recovering.



CAMDEN, NJ, UNITED STATES, April 8, 2025 /EINPresswire.com/ -- Most individuals with substance use

disorders who received legal services through the Camden Coalition and Rutgers Law School's Medical-Legal Partnership (MLP) were able to resolve at least one critical legal issue, according to findings from [a new evaluation](#). The evaluation also showed 75% of participants in the MLP

intervention reported significant progress in their substance use recovery.



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Kathleen Noonan, Camden Coalition President and CEO

The Camden Coalition, Cooper University Health Care, and Rutgers-Camden Senator Walter Rand Institute for Public Affairs published the new report, "Offering Holistic Support: [Findings from the Camden Coalition's Medical-Legal Partnership Evaluation](#)," on April 8, 2025. The evaluation was comprised of survey data featuring 70 MLP participants — 39 of whom provided qualitative interviews — and 13 staff members, as well as analyses of program data collected since February 2022.

Overall, a majority of surveyed MLP participants reported a sense of support from the collaborative approach to care during their substance use disorder treatment, as well as confidence that their legal issues would be resolved through their provided attorney. The evaluation also identified five considerations for community-based organizations who are interested in implementing their own MLP.

"Legal hurdles including risk of eviction, loss or denial of benefits, or the threat of penalties and incarceration are all barriers to an individual's opportunity to overcome addiction and other behavioral health issues," Kathleen Noonan, President and CEO of the Camden Coalition, said. "The latest analysis from our MLP program not only demonstrates that link, but supports our

approach to addressing complex health and social needs through person-centered, collaborative methods of treatment.”

The MLP was launched in November 2017 to help individuals, particularly those with complex health and social needs, overcome legal barriers that impact their health and recovery. The program integrates legal services into healthcare settings, including Cooper Center for Healing, an addiction medicine care center within Cooper University Health Care. MLP attorneys collaborate with care providers to identify legal issues among patients with substance use disorder during their care. More recently, the MLP bolstered its comprehensive care supports by adding community health workers to its legal teams.



Medical-Legal Partnership attorney and care team member working together on a case.

Patients assisted through the MLP have received pro bono services during their recovery including court representation, housing and eviction support, and assistance with securing public benefits. Devon Ziminski, Senior Research Project Administrator and lead researcher on this project at the Walter Rand Institute, expressed gratitude for the opportunity to partner with the Camden Coalition and Cooper in the MLP evaluation and to learn how such interventions may more effectively benefit individuals experiencing addiction.

“Our findings indicate that the MLP program facilitated legal case resolution and record clearance, provided emotional and financial relief, and supported housing stability for individuals who are navigating complex legal issues and active or former addiction,” Ziminski said. “This research has important implications for service delivery and coordination between the healthcare and legal sectors for people in our communities in need of support.”

The scope and scale of substance use disorder as a public health crisis cannot be overstated; nearly 50 million Americans have experienced addiction in the past year, according to the National Survey on Drug Use and Health. Only a fraction of such individuals will seek and complete treatment.

The new MLP data show the reality of what these individuals face in overcoming their complex health needs. More than 70% of surveyed participants were diagnosed with at least two mental health disorders, and 40% were diagnosed with at least two chronic diseases. Their legal needs ranged from criminal matters (43.8%), to landlord-tenant issues (23.4%), and municipal-based fees or fines (23.8%).

“This is what makes the Camden Coalition MLP a novel approach to integrated care,” Jeremy Spiegel, Esq., Medical-Legal Partnership Supervising Attorney, said. “It shows a priority for not only treating the individual’s addictions, but resolving the underlying legal, social, and clinical issues that may fuel it. It’s more than enough of a challenge to overcome addiction without also having to worry about getting access to insulin or resolving an eviction threat. Our team is putting patients in a position to recover in a sustainable, and replicable, way.”

You can learn more about the Camden Coalition Medical-Legal Partnership [here](#).

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About Camden Coalition

The Camden Coalition works to improve care for people with complex health and social needs in Camden, NJ, and across the country. The organization implements person-centered programs and pilots new models that address chronic illness and social barriers to health and well-being. Supported by a robust data infrastructure, cross-sector convening, and shared learning, its community-based programs improve outcomes for some of society’s most vulnerable individuals. The Camden Coalition’s National Center for Complex Health and Social Needs (National Center) connects complex care practitioners with each other and with data, tools, and other resources. For more information, visit www.camdenhealth.org

About Walter Rand

The Senator Walter Rand Institute for Public Affairs (WRI) at Rutgers–Camden has been a long-standing and trusted regional community partner for over 25 years. WRI honors former Senator Rand’s dedication to Southern New Jersey and exists to produce and highlight community-focused research and evaluation leading to sound public policy and practice in the region. With that as a foundation, WRI convenes and engages stakeholders in making connections across research, policy, and practice in support of Camden City and Southern New Jersey residents. Using social science research methods, WRI specializes in transforming data into actionable information across a variety of areas, including workforce development, education, transportation, and public/population health. WRI reinforces and amplifies Rutgers’ research, teaching, and service goals by connecting the multidisciplinary expertise of faculty to regional problems, developing research and professional skills in students, and linking the resources of higher education to communities in Southern New Jersey.

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