

# Lawyers, Healthcare Providers, and Advocates

Partnering to address barriers to health equity for survivors of sexual and domestic violence



COMMUNITY LEGAL  
AID SOCIETY, INC.  
EQUAL ACCESS TO JUSTICE

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Explain the importance, and potential challenges, of measuring health outcomes for survivors served via the partnership

Discuss the legal needs of survivors of domestic and sexual violence and barriers to access legal services

# Let's Get Started

1

Erin Ridout, DCADV: Public health approach to domestic violence

2

Laura Graham, CLASI: Medical Legal Partnerships from the legal perspective

3

Brittany Haswell, CHILD, Inc.: Medical Legal Partnerships from the advocacy and survivor perspective

4

Q&A

# Delaware Coalition Against Domestic Violence

We are the statewide, nonprofit coalition of agencies and individuals working to stop domestic violence in Delaware.

Our program areas include:

- Training and certification

- Public policy and systems advocacy

- Domestic violence prevention

- Awareness and collaboration





**Domestic and sexual  
violence are public  
health issues.**

# Domestic violence can lead to adverse health consequences



Physical and  
Chronic  
Conditions



Health Risk  
Behaviors



Mental Health



Reproductive  
Health

**Domestic violence can reduce the effectiveness of health services.**





# Upstream Approach

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DV & SV Prevention

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Screening in Healthcare settings

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Preventing eviction & Supporting legal needs



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Preventing eviction & Supporting legal needs

Interdisciplinary partnerships

Medical-Legal Partnerships

# The Domestic Violence – Community Health Worker Project



# The Goal

Creation of an innovative, sustainable service delivery model which integrates DV services with health care services in order to improve access to care and comprehensively address health disparities.

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# So, what do we do?

Training &  
Technical  
Assistance

DV-CHW  
Service  
Delivery

Policy &  
Advocacy

# **Policy & Advocacy**



# **Policy & Advocacy**

Healthcare Screening

Only 5-10% of PCP settings and 17% of OB/GYNs regularly screen for DV

# **Policy & Advocacy**

Healthcare Screening

Safety and Privacy in Healthcare

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Sustainable Funding

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CHW Reimbursement

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Medical Legal Partnerships

# Community Legal Aid Society (CLASI)

Non-profit law firm providing free civil legal services to Delawareans since 1946

Three offices:

Wilmington (New Castle County) – Urban

Dover (Kent County) – Suburban and rural

Georgetown (Sussex County) – Resort and rural



**COMMUNITY LEGAL  
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# Mission

To combat injustice through creative and persistent civil legal advocacy on behalf of vulnerable and underserved Delawareans.

Policy Work

Community Education

Individual Representation



# Who We Serve

People in poverty

People with disabilities

People who are elderly

People who have been victims of crime or discrimination

# MLPs at CLASI

DMLPs for  
Survivors of  
Domestic,  
Family, or  
Sexual Violence

DMLPs at  
Christiana Care  
Health System  
(CCHS)

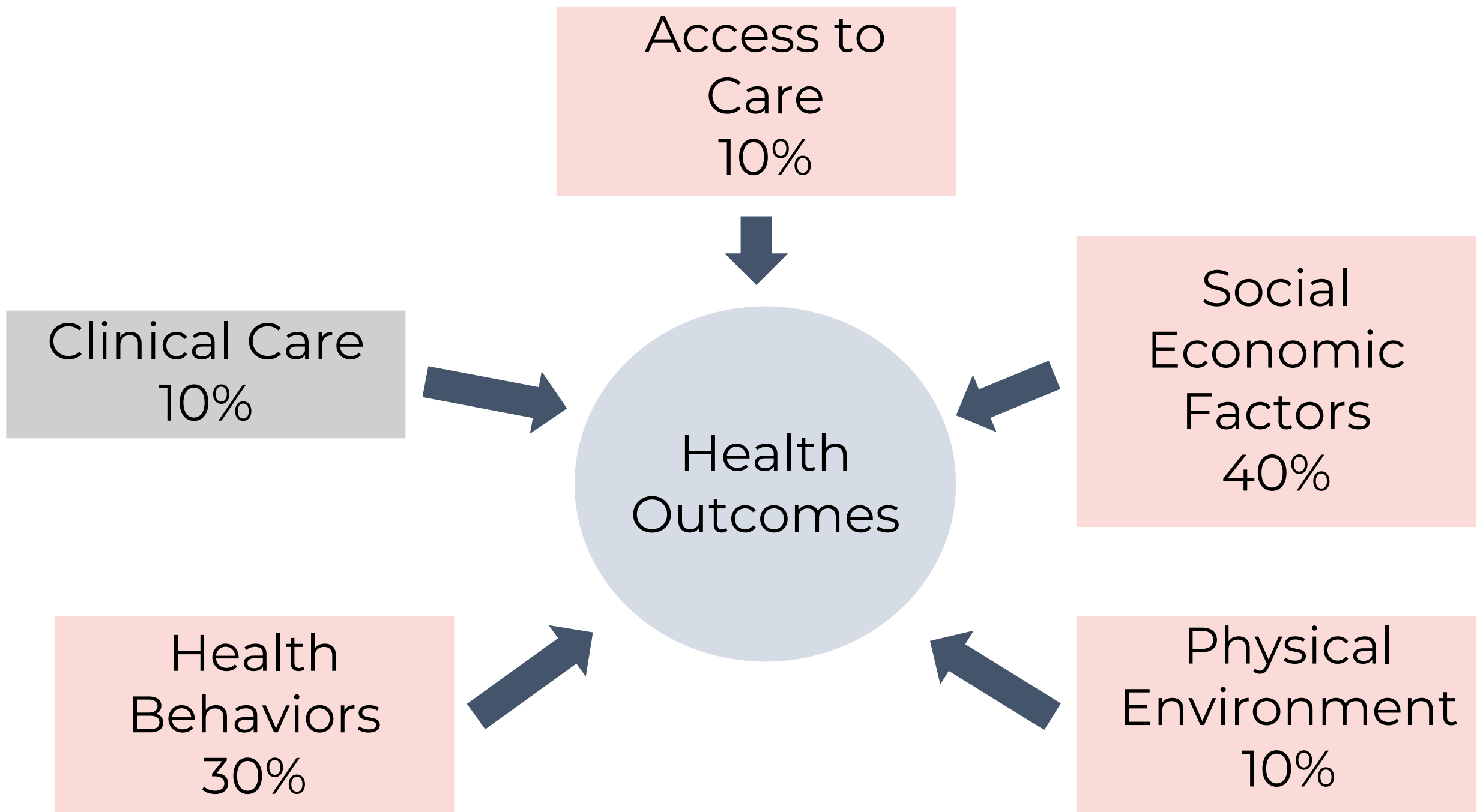
DMLP for  
Pregnant /  
Postpartum  
Women

Connections  
MLP

Division of  
Substance  
Abuse and  
Mental Health  
(DSAHM)

Neighborhood  
Multidisciplinary  
Legal Aid

# **Overview of Medical- Legal Partnerships (MLPs)**



As of 2019, **12%**  
**of Americans**  
live in poverty

Delaware's  
poverty rate is  
**11%** overall, **16%**  
**for children**



# **Low Income Households**

Financial anxiety and food insecurity

Under-utilization of public benefit programs

Worry over ability to remain housed and pay utilities

Safety concerns in the home or with their children

# Legal Needs & Low Income Households

1 to 3 unmet civil legal needs per year

Fewer than 1 in 5 receive assistance with an unmet civil legal need

Fewer than 5% had opportunity to meet with a lawyer to discuss the unmet need

**1 : 429**

**1 : 6,415**

# History of Legal Aid as Health Intervention



**1967**

Mississippi  
doc hires  
lawyer for  
patients'  
food and  
housing  
issues



**1980s**

Civil legal  
aid agencies  
assist health  
care  
institutions  
meet end-  
of-life needs



**1993**

Boston Medical  
Center involves legal  
aid to address  
landlord issues  
around mold  
exposure and  
pediatric asthma



# Benefits of an MLP



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Improved physical environment





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Decreased stress

Decreased hospitalization and ED  
visits





**Legal  
Intervention  
Improves  
Health**

# MLP Benefits for Survivors

Survivors report more legal needs than the average low-income household

Access to legal aid can reduce DV and mitigate collateral consequences

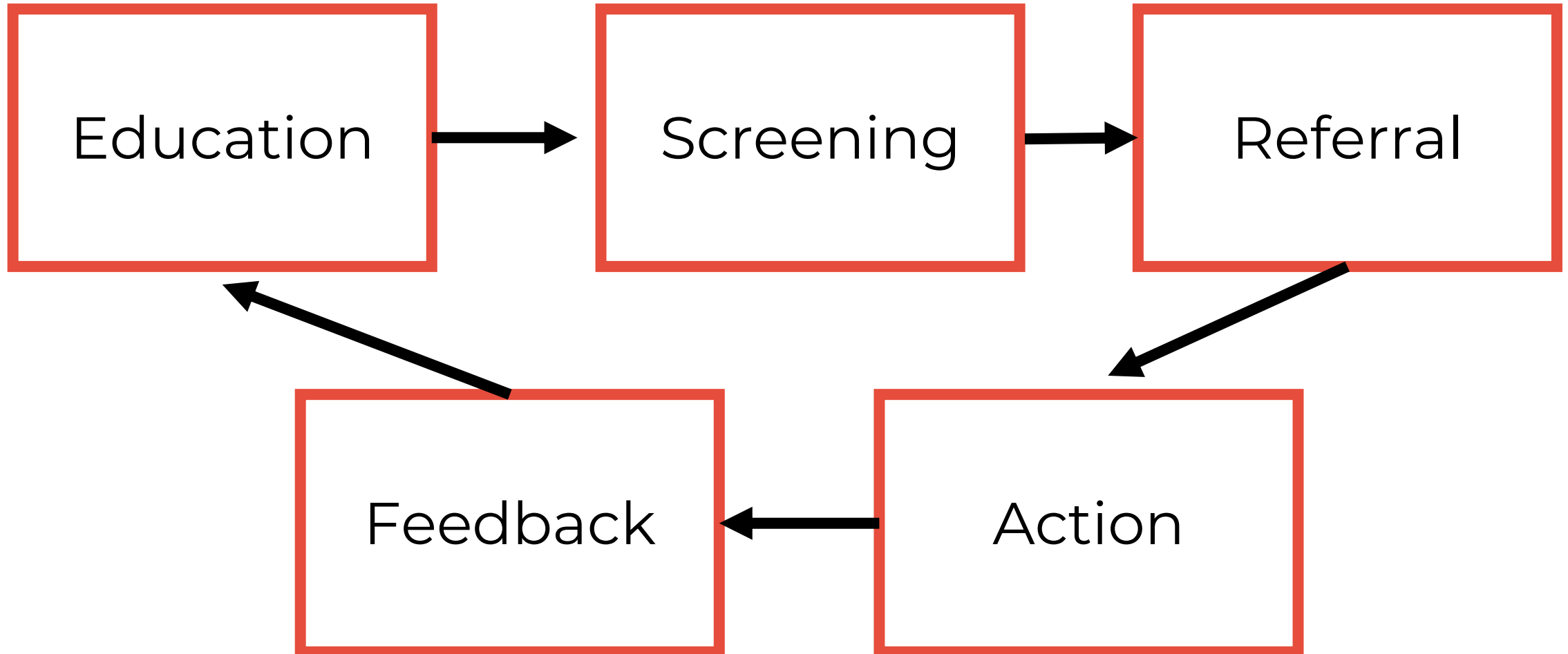
Survivors without legal representation are more likely to be later victimized

The two most significant barriers for domestic violence survivors to receive legal aid are **inadequate program funding** and **strict eligibility requirements**





# The MLP Process



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**Screening:** An integrated legal needs screening tool identifies unmet legal needs

**Referral:** When a legal need is identified, the patient is referred to DMLP (with consent)

# The MLP Process

**Action:** Legal team contacts the patient within 48 hours (2 business days) to investigate and begin addressing the legal problems

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**Feedback:** Health care partner is informed of legal case outcome (with consent)

# **I-HELP Legal Screening Tool**

Developed by National Center for MLP

Administered by health and social service partners

Identifies common legal issues that impact health and well-being



<b>I</b>	Income Supports
<b>H</b>	Housing & Utilities
<b>E</b>	Education & Employment
<b>L</b>	Legal (immigration) Status
<b>P</b>	Personal & Family Stability



# **DV MLP Workflow**

DV provider screens using referral form

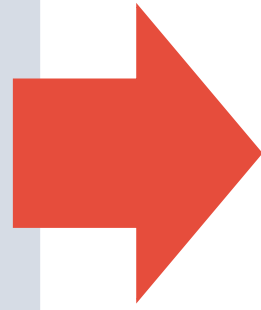
DV provider gives forms to DV MLP staff member

Forms to CLASI MLP, confirming receipt of referral

CLASI contacts survivor within 48 hours to provide legal services

CLASI provide feedback to DV MLP staff member

**What if  
survivor  
does not  
meet  
eligibility or  
does not  
consent to  
referral?**



**Non Referral Provider  
Consults**

Email to ask a general  
legal question without  
providing any identifying  
information

# Interdisciplinary Teamwork

Logistics of creating a partnership

- Co-location or separate office space

- Name a champion at the provider partner or allow all staff to refer

- Legalities: MOUs, protected info/confidentiality

- Frequent and effective communication

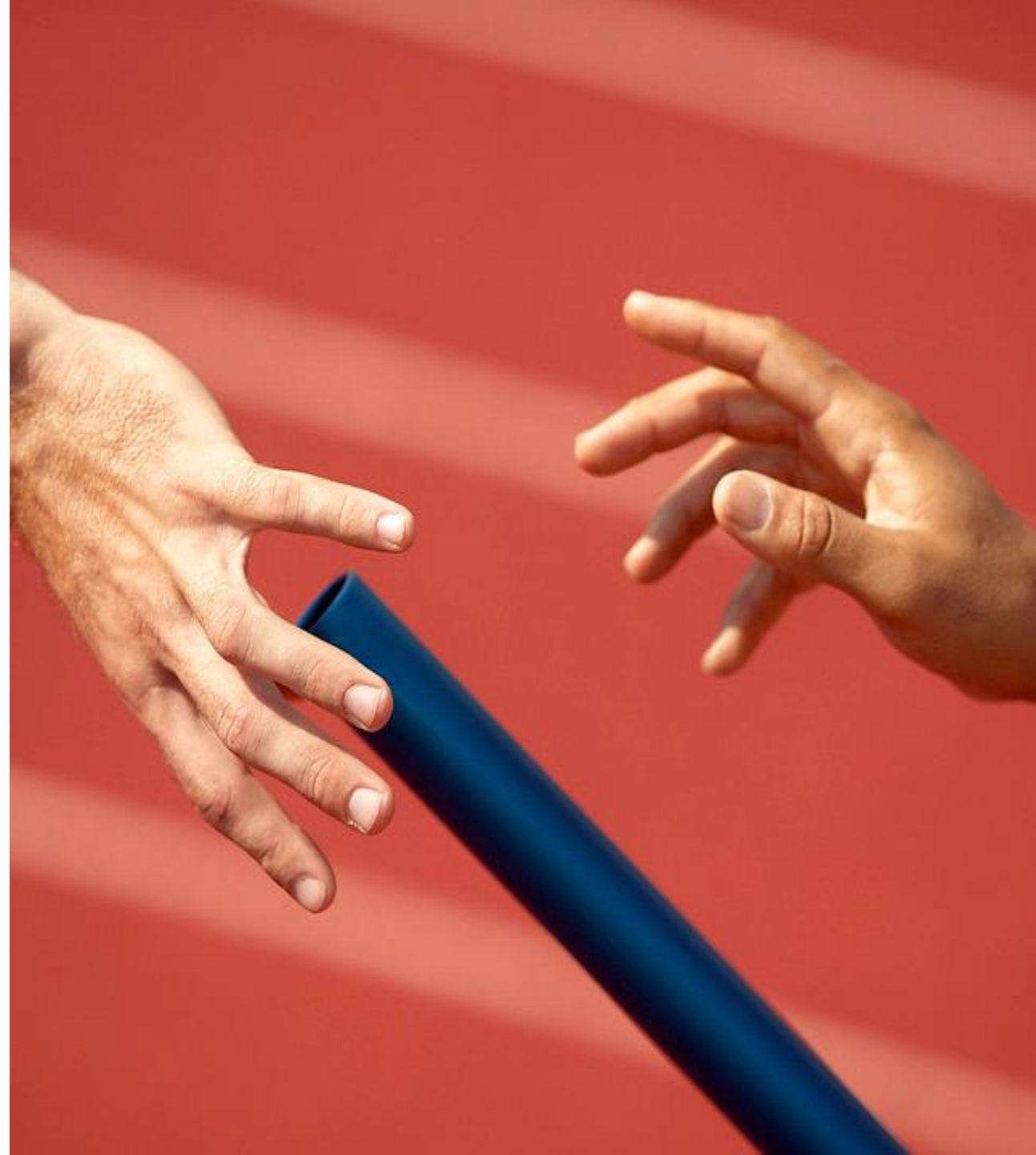
# Interdisciplinary Challenges

Funding and sustainability

Maintaining roles –  
attorneys, advocates, etc.

Child abuse reporting and  
confidentiality

Client's confusion between  
the two partner agencies



**CLASI MLP Data**

# **DMLP Survivor Cases**

**By Category (January 1, 2021 – August 31, 2021)**

**98 cases, 72 clients**

Income Supports & Insurance: 10

Housing & Utilities: 9

Education & Employment: 1

Legal Status: 6

Personal & Family Stability: 72

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Spotting systemic issues leading to impact cases

**In 2018, 46% of PFA petitioners in Delaware were successfully granted a PFA order.**

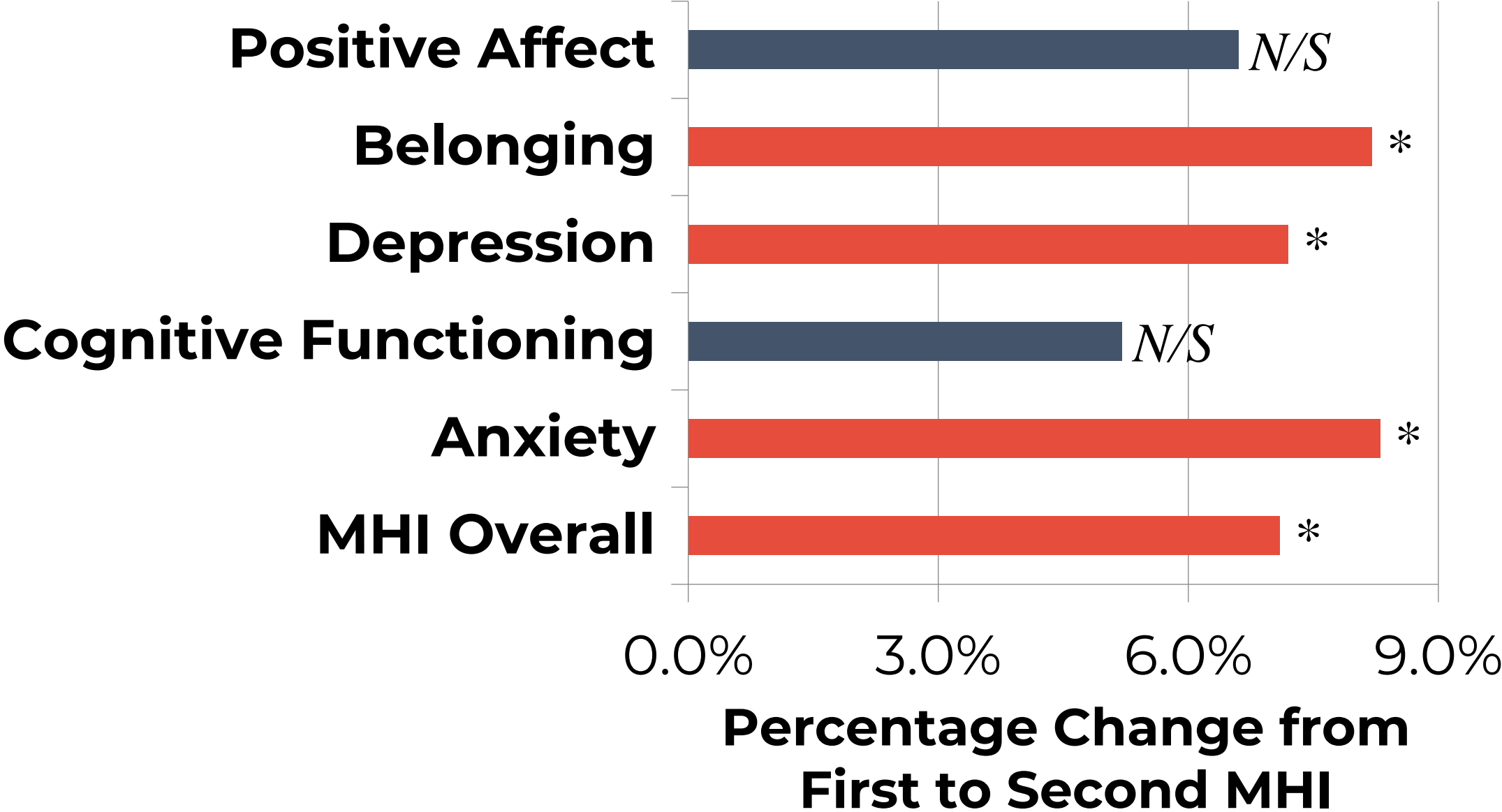
**CLASI clients were successfully granted a PFA order 61% of the time.**



# Perceived Stress Scale

Statistically  
**significant  
improvement**  
for 8 out of 10  
PSS questions

# Mental Health Inventory



## Pre Survey

“Due to inability to find work and the financial stress because of it, my stress level has been very high and my health has not been good...migraines have been more frequent and severe.”

## Post Survey

“[CLASI] made me feel at ease at court and told me not to worry. I knew [they] could and would help me.”



# CHILD Inc.

A private, non-profit organization that offers prevention, treatment, emergency shelter and advocacy services that strengthen families



# Domestic Violence Services

Family Visitation Centers

Domestic Violence  
Advocacy Program

Domestic Violence Hotline

Shelter for Male Victims of  
Domestic Violence

Domestic Violence Shelters  
for Women and Children

Offender Intervention  
Services

DV Liaisons

Counseling

# **Domestic Violence & Sexual Assault Medical-Legal Partnership (MLP)**

The **Domestic Violence & Sexual Assault MLP** is a special project of Community Legal Aid Society, Inc. (CLASI), funded by the Criminal Justice Council (CJC) and a Victims of Crime Act (VOCA) grant.

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# Interagency Partnership

**CLASI**

Community  
Legal Aid  
Society

**CHILD, Inc**

**YWCA SARC**

Sexual Assault  
Response  
Center

# Free Civil Legal Services

Public benefits

Food and Nutrition

Social Security

Subsidized and public  
housing

Medicaid/Medicare

Immigration assistance

Family safety and security

Disabilities and special  
health care needs



# Common Needs of Survivors

Legal representation for Protection from Abuse trials

Immigration status

Custody matters

Evictions due to domestic violence

# Common Hurdles



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Lack of advocacy on the survivors behalf




# Impacts of COVID-19

Number and frequency of referrals increased compared to previous quarters.

Hearings and trials continued virtually in a seamless transition.





"Without the partnership with CLASI, I would have never been able to receive representation for my trial against my offender."

"I tried for so long to get help obtaining custody of my 2 young children. My abuser made it nearly impossible. Once I was referred to CLASI through the MLP, they were able to give me the help and confidence I needed to get my kids back."



# Thank you!

## For further questions:



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