



2021

**VIRTUAL**  
**PUBLIC HEALTH LAW**  
**CONFERENCE**

**Building and Supporting  
Healthy Communities  
for All**

**September 21-23**

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Sep. 21-23, 2021  
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#PHLC2021

# Optimizing Newborn Health through Legal Partnering: Lessons from Orange County



**DULCE**  
An initiative  
of CSSP



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# Agenda

- Introductions
- What is DULCE?
- Legal Levers for Newborn Health: Spotlight on the Early Childhood System Perspective
- Legal Levers for Newborn Health: Spotlight on the Civil Legal Aid Perspective
- Q&A





# DULCE

- Developmental Understanding- Supporting the relational health of infants and their families – in collaboration with the Brazelton Touchpoints Center.
- Legal Collaboration- Helping families access the concrete supports they want and are legally entitled to.
- For Everyone- reaching families where they already bring their babies – universal access in primary care clinics.



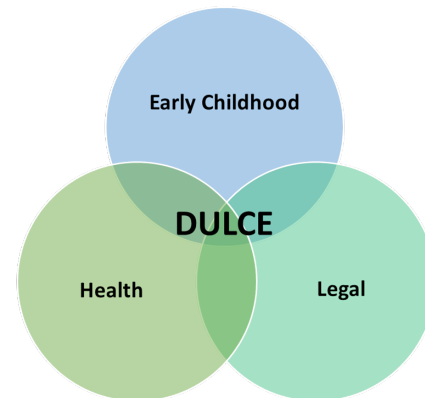
# About DULCE

## DULCE Mission Statement

Through the collaborative efforts of early childhood, health, and legal systems, **DULCE transforms the way that families with infants experience the delivery of support and services.** To do this, we employ a cross-sector, team-based model that proactively supports the health of families with infants in communities that are under-resourced and have been marginalized by racist systems.

## DULCE Vision Statement

When DULCE is fully implemented nationwide, all families with infants will experience holistic, connected care and receive the support they need to provide newborns with a healthy start in life.





## Why families and Infants?

### Challenge

- Families with infants face unique physical, social, emotional and financial stressors
- The risk for child abuse and neglect is highest during the first six months of a child's life

### Opportunity

- Families often seek support from their child's health care provider during this time
- Pediatricians recognize and want to address the full range of family stressors, i.e. the social determinants of health (SDOH).
- Pediatricians cannot take on the system-building work necessary to ensure that families will be well-served



# Why the three sectors?

- **Accountable** for building a local system for young children and their families
- **Immersed** in the community's supports to address SDOH
- Able to drive **evidence-informed** practices and programs
- **Organized** to influence policy and practice

**Early  
Childhood**



- **Universal reach**
- **Longitudinal relationships** with families
- Well-versed in the use of standard protocols to improve **quality of care**

**Health**



- Well-versed in **family rights and system responsibilities**
- Professional orientation toward **problem-solving and advocacy**
- **Policy lens and expertise**

**Legal**







# The Intervention

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- **First 4 well-child visits:** screening for maternal depression and barriers to concrete supports, touchpoints-informed focus on the baby's developing temperament, personality, anticipatory guidance and related parent coaching.
- **6-month visit:** wrap-up to the intervention, transition plan implementation to assure ongoing support within the family-centered medical home.
- **Weekly interdisciplinary case review:** assures all positive screens are addressed on ongoing basis.
- **Leveraging of legal partnerships throughout:** to help families overcome barriers to concrete supports (including rapid response representation).
- **Continuous Quality Improvement:** to monitor implementation and allow data-based adaptation to local environments.



## DULCE's Commitment to Equity

DULCE is informed by Center for the Study of Social Policy's (CSSP) commitment to equity and journey toward becoming an anti-racist organization.

CSSP works toward a just society in which all children and families thrive, and to recognize the social effects of race. Omitting a racial analysis from any work allows racist systems, laws, and policies to continue operating with the status quo.





# DULCE's Anti-Racist Strategies

- **Families at the Center**
- Building Trust Through Family Specialists
- Access to Justice
- Cross-sector Collaboration
- Reducing Stigma through Targeted Universalism
- Upstream Approach to Creating Healthy Outcomes





## What is DULCE?

Developmental  
Understanding and  
Legal  
Collaboration for  
Everyone



# Impact & Evidence

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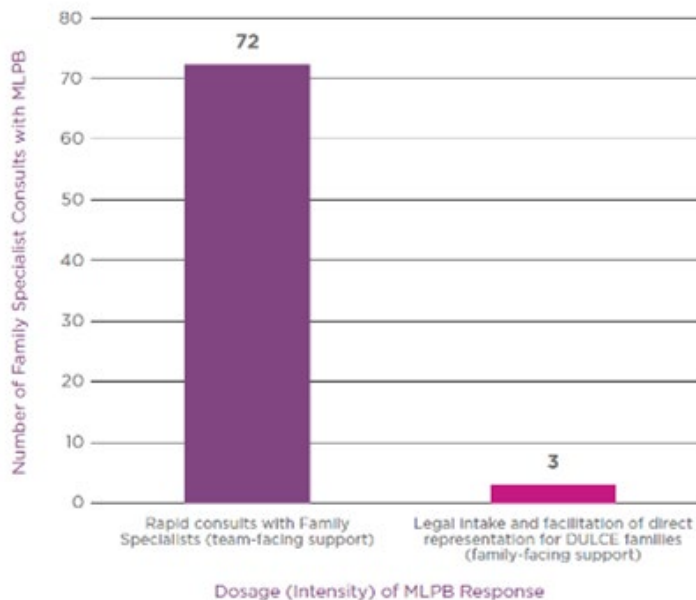
# DULCE RCT (2010-2012)

- Reduced ED utilization
- Better adherence with well-child visits and immunization
- Greater access to concrete supports (SNAP benefits, continuous utility services, etc.)
- Accelerated access to concrete supports
  - DULCE families secured access to supports at roughly twice the pace of control families (6 months v. 12 months)



## Legal Partner Data

**Figure C: Dosage (Intensity) of MLPB Response  
(in Original DULCE Trial)**

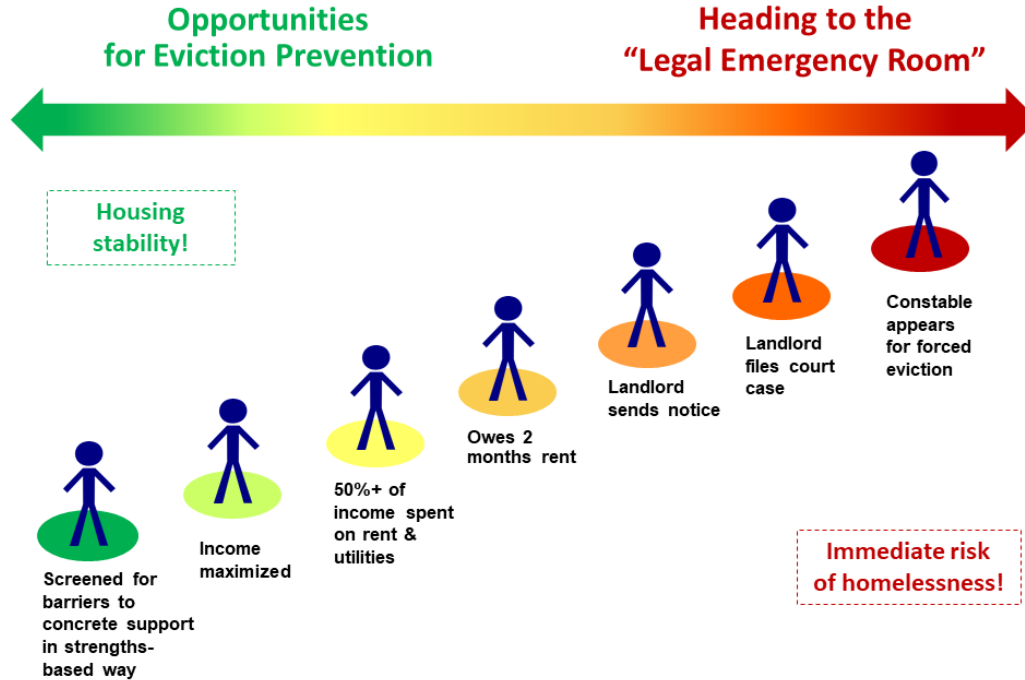


Morton, Samantha J. (2019). "Legal Partnering for Child and Family Health: An Opportunity and Call to Action for Early Childhood Systems." Washington, DC: Center for the Study of Social Policy.  
Available at: <https://cssp.org/resource/legal-partnering/>



# Legal Partnering and Prevention in DULCE

Escalation from a Social Need to a Legal Need: *Housing Instability*





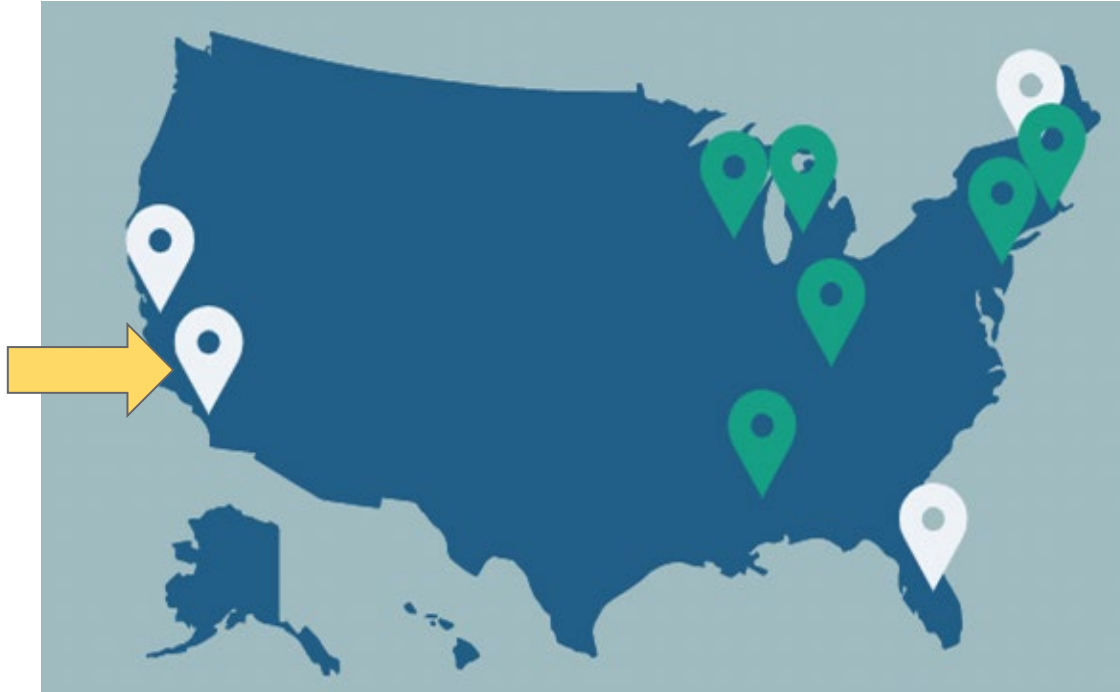


# The DULCE Impact

- To date, nearly **5000** families served.
- **95%** of families choose to enroll.
- **75%** of families complete DULCE.
- **65%** of families receive all well-child visits on time. Improvements from previous clinic averages.
- **92%** of families receiving screening for all seven HRSN.
- **95%** of DULCE families with concrete support needs received resource referrals at time of positive screening results.
- Successful implementation of the Bright Futures guidelines and the Bright Futures health-related social needs requirements.
- DULCE clinics report having lower “no show” rates than non-DULCE clinics.
- Physicians and staff credit DULCE with improving the work environment and reducing burn-out.



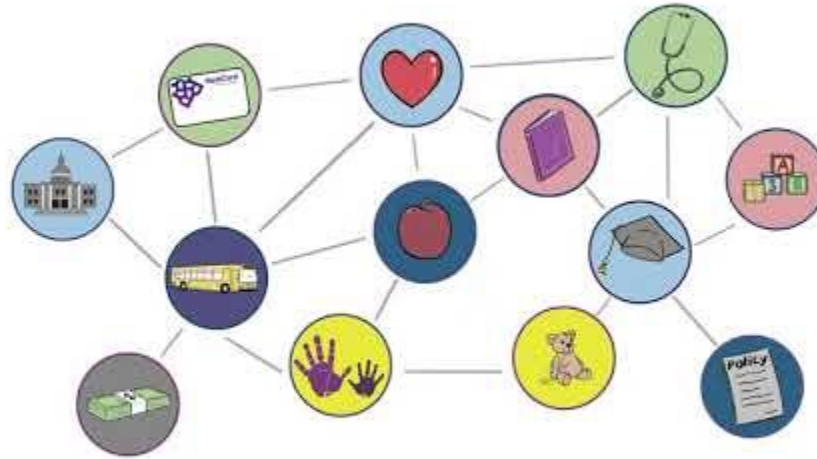
# Our Growing Footprint



- **California**—Oakland, Santa Ana, Garden Grove
- **Vermont**—Lamoille Valley, Milton, South Burlington, Windsor, Woodstock
- **Florida**—West Palm Beach
- **New Jersey**—Freehold Borough
- **Mississippi**—Jackson
- **Kentucky**—Louisville
- **Michigan**—Grand Rapids
- **Wisconsin**—Madison
- **Rhode Island**—Providence



# Legal Levers for Newborn Health: Spotlight on the Early Childhood System Perspective





## Early Childhood Systems Lead In Partnership with Federally Qualified Health Centers



What makes the Early childhood system lead so unique?



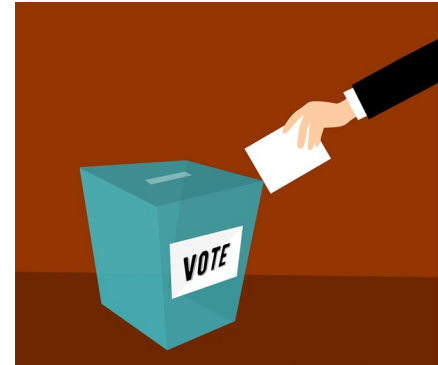
Leticia Casillas-Sanchez  
*Vice President of Programs*  
*First 5 Orange County*



## About First 5 Orange County



- 1998 Voter approved Proposition 10
  - State Commission and 58 counties
  - Distribution of resources
  - Funding driven by county births





## DULCE Early Implementation in Orange County

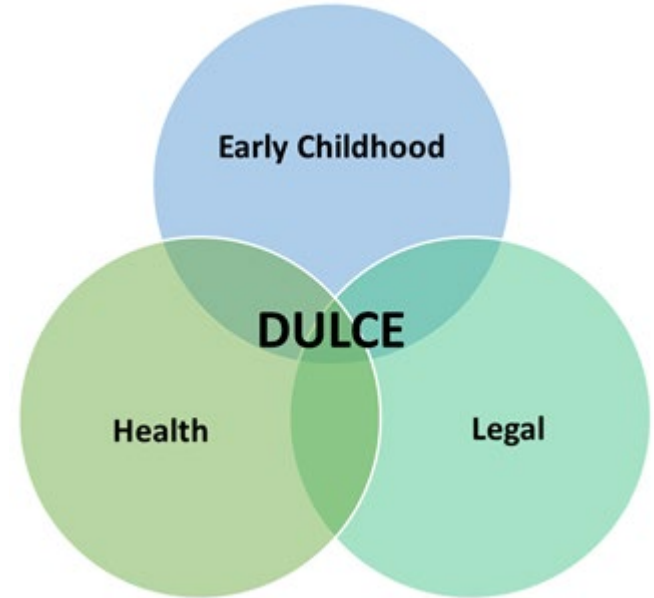
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- Partnership between Children's Hospital Orange County and First 5 OC supported the early implementation of DULCE at a CHOC clinic in Orange, California.
  - The early childhood system branches to many systems with layers of influence
  - The early childhood perspective on Legal Partnering
  - Significant focus on parent engagement



## Unique interdisciplinary approach

- DULCE is offered in a safe space.
- Families are already there.
- Strengthens the connection of the medical home and families.
- Support from a legal partner in the clinic space is welcomed





## Story from the field: A journey to legal immigration status



Public Law Center (PLC) Staff Attorney Michelle is almost done with DACA renewal for a DULCE referral. The client is on maternity leave and living paycheck to paycheck and has two children. She could not afford to pay to have someone complete her DACA renewal and pay the filing fee. PLC covered everything.







# Legal Levers for Newborn Health: Spotlight on the Civil Legal Aid Perspective





## Public Law Center

- Nonprofit law firm
- Servicing low-income OC residents
- Providing free legal services
- Case work and impact work

## MLP Work:

- ALAP with the County
- MLP with Providence/St. Joseph
- MLP with HOAG
- DULCE with CHOC



- LP (public interest legal partner) part of the team providing support to family specialists and broader team, facilitating process to secure direct legal representation when needed.
- Very different type of partnership from our traditional MLPs.
  - Team-facing upstream approach.
  - LP is not center stage – other members of the team may have good solutions as well.
  - Team members learn from each other and are not working in a vacuum.
  - DULCE can address a variety of social needs because have the subject matter experts, including a social worker on our team.



## LP Capacity Building work



- Individual impact is a component, but capacity building for team members (especially family specialists) is important.
- Training and education important so that team is better able to identify legal issues affecting patients—we see actual improvement in the way team members articulate legal issues and potential solutions.
- Capacity building important because it allowed team to more easily pivot during pandemic.



Source: Morton, Samantha J. (2019). "Legal Partnering for Child and Family Health: An Opportunity and Call to Action for Early Childhood Systems." Washington, DC: Center for the Study of Social Policy.  
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- ◎ Key metrics are completely different in this type of legal work.
  - Not seeking to fulfill a certain number of billable hours or represent a large number of clients.
  - Seeking to address social determinants of health and improve health of patients, and ultimately have an impact on community health (for example, identifying trends that could be better addressed by legislative action - Omnibus SB 65 bill could be an example, or bills addressing Medi-Cal for the undocumented such as AB 4 and SB 56).
  - Seeking data that shows impact on health of patients and community.



## Case Stories and Technical Assistance during Pandemic

- PLC was able to provide guidance to the DULCE team on housing matters for several families. For example, in June 2020, PLC provided the DULCE team with guidance about the rent moratorium because a family was having trouble paying rent.
- PLC was also able to discuss the possibility of alternate sources of income (such as SSI) for another family dealing with employment issues.



- In September 2020, PLC provided training on Navigating Legal Rights during COVID-19, which included training related to the eviction moratorium, pandemic unemployment assistance, workplace protections related to COVID-19, and the latest updates on Public Charge, which continued to be a major source of confusion for families on public benefits or seeking to enroll in public benefits.
- In September 2020, PLC also provided technical assistance related to several questions that came up in Case Review, including the latest on Public Charge and Unemployment Benefits.
  - For example, PLC was also able to provide guidance to the DULCE team on employment-related issues, including whether an UBER driver would be able to obtain unemployment benefits
  - Several self-employed individuals and independent contractors were facing difficulties with reduced business, so Pandemic Unemployment Assistance under CARES Act was one viable solution.



## Case Stories and Technical Assistance during Pandemic

- In October 2020, PLC was able to provide guidance to the team on Caregiver's Authorization Affidavits as a solution while seeking adoption. These affidavits are a good temporary solution for being able to make decisions related to school and medical care, and are helpful for families that lost parents in the pandemic or whose parents were not in the picture for other reasons.



# Q & A



*Every time you give a parent a sense of success or of empowerment, you're offering it to the baby indirectly. Because every time a parent looks at that baby and says 'Oh, you're so wonderful,' that baby just bursts with feeling good about themselves.*

~T. Berry Brazelton, MD





## Resources

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- ◎ DULCE - <https://cssp.org/our-work/project/dulce/>
- ◎ PLC - <https://www.publiclawcenter.org/>
- ◎ First Five OC - <https://first5oc.org/>
- ◎ MLPB - <https://mlpb.health/>



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