

PILC Establishes Third Clinic



Wendi Adelson

This fall, the Public Interest Law Center will add a third clinic that will provide students an opportunity to work on real-life immigration and disability rights cases. The Medical-Legal Partnership (MLP), a collaboration between the Colleges of Law and Medicine, is an innovation in interdisciplinary education. It will pair law students with medical students, social work students, lawyers and physicians.

“The idea is for them to partner and to examine the social determinants of health in order to figure out the best way to solve complex problems for people who need health care and legal help. It has an educational component as well as a practical component,” said Visiting Clinical Professor Wendi Adelson, who will direct the MLP.

Students will help clients at Neighborhood Health Services (NHS) – a Tallahassee clinic that provides health and mental care for the medically un-

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derserved, uninsured and homeless. According to Dr. Jose Rodriguez, associate professor of family medicine and rural health at the College of Medicine and medical director at NHS, there are a significant number of NHS patients whose health is impacted by disability rights, immigration and housing issues.

An example, Adelson said, would be a patient lacking documents required for legal immigration who has persistent bruising as a result of an abusive relationship. “For a patient of this sort, if we are able to help them self-petition for their immigration status through an application for VAWA or a U visa – two types of legal relief – then perhaps their physical symptoms of abuse will end as well.”

The Medical-Legal Partnership at Florida State will be unique among MLPs nationally. “Generally there are not many that involve direct contact between both law students and medical students,” said Marshall Kapp, director of the Center for Innovative Collaboration in Medicine & Law at Florida State. “It will give both sets of students a chance to see the patient/client as more than a conglomeration of medical problems or legal problems.

Hopefully, they’ll get a more holistic view of the person and they’ll see how medical problems can affect one’s legal well-being and how legal problems can affect one’s medical well-being.”

Additionally, students will be exposed to a wide variety of skills they will use in practice. “This is a great opportunity for students to work on administrative hearings, data collection, fact finding, intakes with patients, learning how to draft documents and motions and how to do oral advocacy in court,” said Adelson. “It is going to provide a really rich educational environment.”

For more information about the Public Interest Law Center, visit http://www.law.fsu.edu/academic_programs/jd_program/cac/index.html. To learn more about the Center for Innovative Collaboration in Medicine & Law, visit <http://med.fsu.edu/index.cfm?page=innovativeCollaboration.home>.