HEAL at Community Legal Aid

Elena Barone, JD/MPH
Case Western Reserve University

Link to presentation: https://youtu.be/fH6ctvyNGdc

Practicum Background

Where: Community Legal Aid Services of Akron
Address: 50 S Main St # 800, Akron, OH 44308
What: Project HEAL: A Community Legal Aid's project that seeks to find solutions to non-medical barriers that keep people from being healthy. To do so, project staff, and myself, provide holistic legal services to address the social determinants of health in each client's life.

Population

HEAL clients are adults with underlying health needs— behavioral and otherwise. Each MLP connected with the HEAL works with specific population. I worked mainly with Pathways HUB which works with pregnant women with Medicaid coverage. All MLP clients are 200% below the poverty line and are at least 18 years old (or the guardian of a child under 18 years old).

Clients most often need legal services to address: 1. Housing and eviction issues; 2. Unsafe housing conditions such as mold, pests, etc; 3. Unemployment, worker's compensation, or supplemental security income; 4. family concerns such as domestic violence or divorce; and 5. criminal record expulsion.

Learning Objectives

1. Analyze current state and federal health-law regulations which requires analyzing and conducting legal and policy research.
2. Create and develop resources and materials for parents and non-legal advocates to use to navigate MLP policies.
3. Conduct factual investigations including interviewing clients; requesting and reviewing medical, school, and other records; searching public records, etc.

Deliverables

Policy Proposal Paper(s)	MLP Policy and Processes	Legal Memos
Research Papers addressing an assigned public health issue facing HEAL clients..	As assigned, made resources for MLP partners to use when referring clients to CLA for legal services	I wrote legal memos for cases in which I was assigned. Utilized legal and policy research.
see figure 4	*See figure 3*	

Activities

1. Attended weekly meetings
2. Attended many trainings and public health discussions
3. Reviewed and checked cases for community meetings with Pathways HUB medical-legal partnership.
4. Reported training lessons to my supervisor
5. Worked on assignments
6. Interviewed Clients
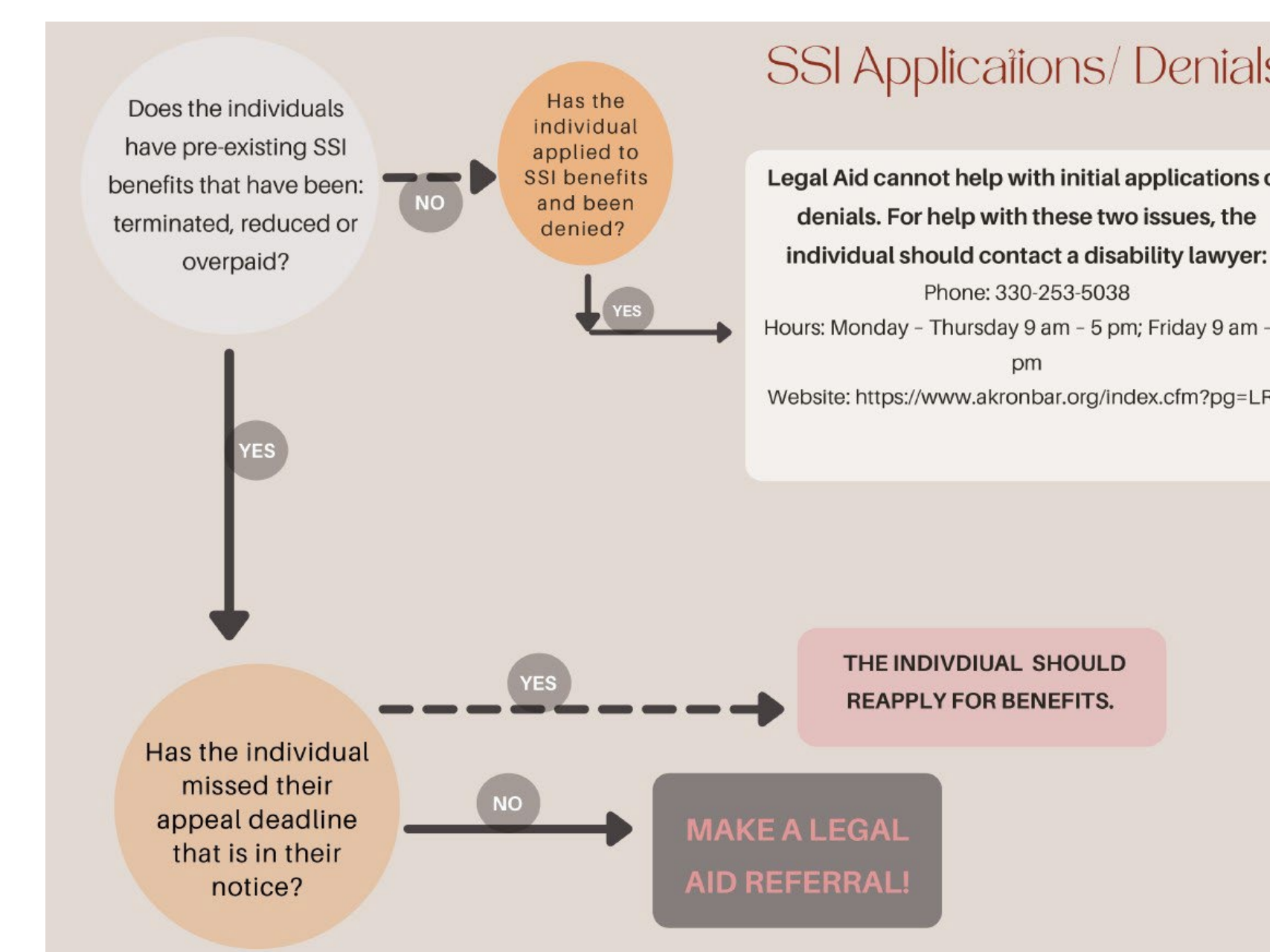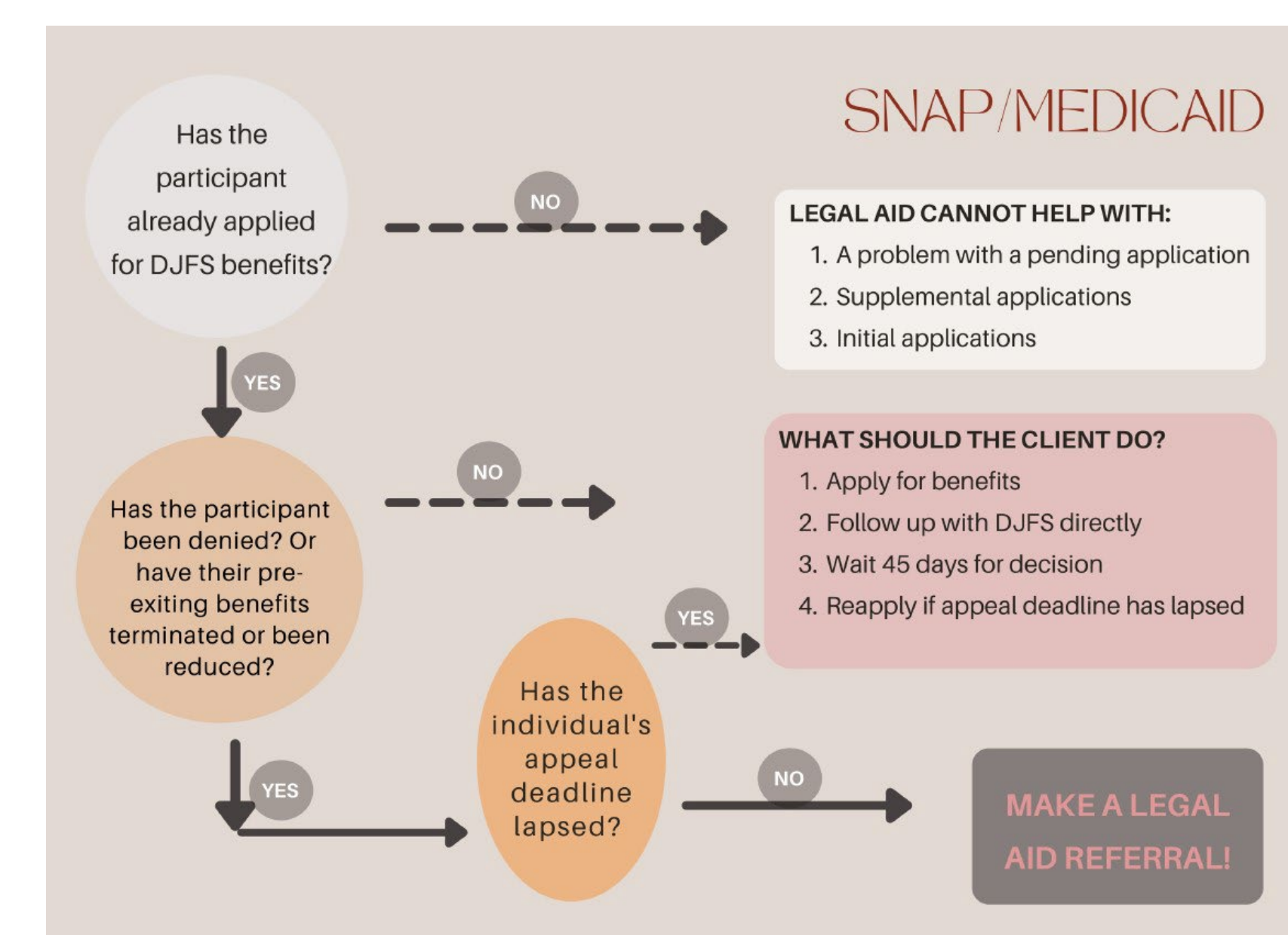7. Conducted daily legal and policy research

Figure 1—Logos: These three figures are the logos of the three organizations that are affiliated with my Practicum – Case Western Reserve University School of Medicine; Department of Population and Quantitative Health Sciences; and Community Legal Aid.

Figure 2— MLP Logos: Community Legal Aid's HEAL project oversees three Medical Legal Partnerships, listed within these three logos. All of HEAL's cases come through referrals from one of these Medical-Legal Partnerships. I worked on cases within all three MLPs but conducted monthly reviews for the Pathways HUB MLP.

Pathways HUB

"The HUB **reduces barriers that can prevent women in the Mahoning Valley who are at risk of poor birth outcomes from having healthy pregnancies and healthy babies.** It partners with local care coordination agencies to connect women to resources and services that can benefit them and their baby throughout pregnancy.
The HUB coordinates and monitors services through a community-wide strategy. This team approach uses a web-based data entry and reporting system to reach those at greatest need while reducing duplication of services. Through the implementation of Pathways and its Network of Care, the HUB confirms that clients are connected to evidence-based care and best practices and it measures the results."

Figure 3—MLP flow charts: These three flow charts are examples of charts that I created to help MLP partners and Community Health Workers understand if the client is a good candidate for Legal Aid Services.

I. **Executive Summary and Question Presented**

Federal Medicaid funding requires that states provide Medicaid coverage to new mothers through 3 months postpartum. Research verifies that expanding Medicaid coverage to new mothers through one year postpartum can have lifesaving benefits. Therefore, states are asking how they can extend Medicaid coverage, what is the best way to do so, and what programming to implement if they do so.

II. **Short answer**

States may choose to expand Medicaid coverage through one of three options, each with various pros and cons. Of the three options, I recommend that states adopt a state plan amendment because it extends full Medicaid coverage through one-year postpartum and therefore does not require any additional programming.

Figure 3—Postpartum Policy Memo: Example of the brief summary and short answer to the proposed policy question. Memo was written for my Site Preceptor.

Lessons Learned

1. The legal needs and commons barriers to positive health outcomes for our specific population.
2. Legal causes of action in Summit County, and how housing court works.
3. I learned a lot about the specific population I worked with, which will be useful for my Capstone. The clients are of low socio-economic status and often are hard to reach in traditional ways.
4. The barriers that stand in the way of Pro Bono and non-profit legal aid services from being effective 100% of the time (mostly resources and governmental restrictions due to grants).

Public Health Implications

Medical-Legal Partnerships are a critical service in the public health space. Although they are not perfect and still face policy barriers, they provide a path for healthcare providers to address social determinants of health greatly affecting their patient's stress levels and other health concerns.

Acknowledgements

Marie Curry, Clinton Household, Kimberly Adams and my co-intern, Christine DiSabato.

References

http://www.mahoninghealth.org/mahoning-county-pathways-hub/#connect.
https://www.communitylegalaid.org/HEAL#:~:text=The%20HEAL%20Project%20supports%20Community,keep%20people%20from%20being%20healthy.