

# **LAET and East TN's Children Hospital form Children's Health Law Partnership**

KNOXVILLE (January 26, 2018) – Lawyers as healers and doctors as advocates... that's the idea behind a new program at East Tennessee Children's Hospital. Legal Aid of East Tennessee and the hospital have partnered to create the Children's Health Law Partnership (CHLP), the first program of its kind in the Knoxville area.

The new program places a civil legal aid attorney on the care team with the doctors, nurses, and social workers at Children's Hospital. The attorney works to address non-medical issues that impact positive medical outcomes. Patients and their families are usually referred to the attorney by the hospital's social workers, but nurses and doctors aware of the need for legal assistance may also make referrals.

"Families often have a variety of needs that can impact their child's health; such as the need for safe, secure housing; the need for appropriate, legal guardianship and custody arrangements; and the need for help securing and maintaining public benefits for medically fragile children," explains Cathy Shuck, vice president of Legal Services at Children's Hospital. "We are very excited about this new program and the positive impact it will have on many of our families."

Alex Brinson with Legal Aid of East Tennessee works full time as the CHLP attorney. "By providing free legal services to the patients and families at Children's Hospital, we can work to address the societal and legal needs of the most vulnerable members of our community," said Brinson. "Through this work, we aim to strengthen families, improve children's health outcomes, and give kids better lives."

Kathy Fowler, director of Social Work at the hospital, works closely with Brinson. She says he has already helped several families in the first few weeks of the partnership. "Alex has quickly addressed and assisted families with housing and custody issues. He even accompanied a family member to court to assist a child who had no current, legal caregiver." Fowler added, "It's easy to see that this partnership is already

benefiting the children and families we serve.”

The Children’s Health Law Partnership is funded through a 2017 grant from Trinity Health Foundation of East Tennessee. For more information on this program, contact the Knoxville office of Legal Aid at (865) 637-0484.

Legal Aid of East Tennessee’s mission is to ensure justice for elderly, abused, and low-income people by providing a broad scope of civil legal assistance and advocacy. LAET serves eligible persons in 26 counties through offices in Chattanooga, Cleveland, Knoxville, Johnson City, Maryville, and Morristown.

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