
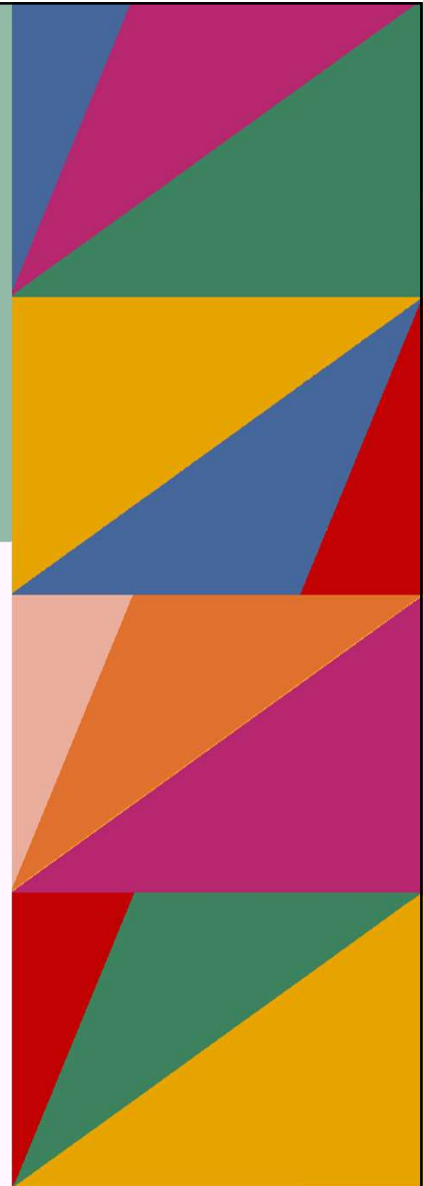
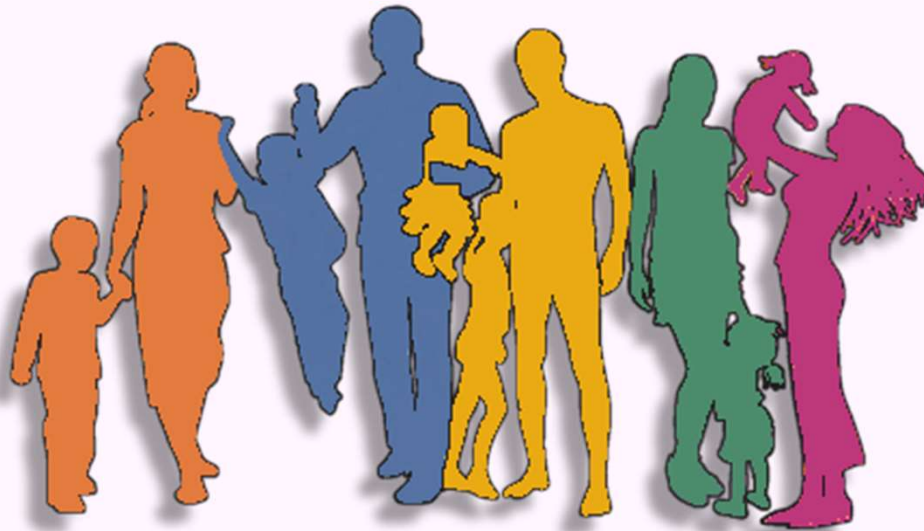


# Preventive Legal Advocacy & Pre-Petition Representation: where we are, where we're headed & what we're learning



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Minneapolis, MN





# Lunch & Learn Session Agenda

- »»» PLA Basics: what it is and why it matters
- »»» National Overview: where we are and where we're headed
- »»» Panel Discussion: program implementation & practice
  - Maria Griglio, Directing Attorney for Family Support and Advocacy Center (FSAC), Children's Law Center's (CLC)
  - Cary Bloodworth, Director, Family Legal Advocacy and Supports Clinic (FLASC), University of Wisconsin Law School
  - Kristen Foster, Dependency Prevention Attorney, Maricopa County Public Defense Services
- »»» Questions & Answers

# Preventive Legal Advocacy (PLA)



Services that support families and promote the social determinants of health by addressing upstream civil legal issues that, if left unresolved, can result in unnecessary child welfare system involvement

# Pre-Petition Representation

Legal services provided to families after they have come to the attention of CPS but before a petition has been filed in family court

The goal of pre-petition representation is to prevent the unnecessary and traumatic separation of children from their families, particularly when poverty-related issues are conflated with neglect.





**Both PLA & PPR are part of the continuum of high-quality legal advocacy**



# PLA & PPR Programs are a response to system harms.

**1 out of 3**

Children in neighborhoods with a poverty rate greater than 20% will experience an investigation



**50%**

of black children will be subjected to CPS investigation by age 18



**1/3**

of children will be subjected to a CPS investigation by age 18

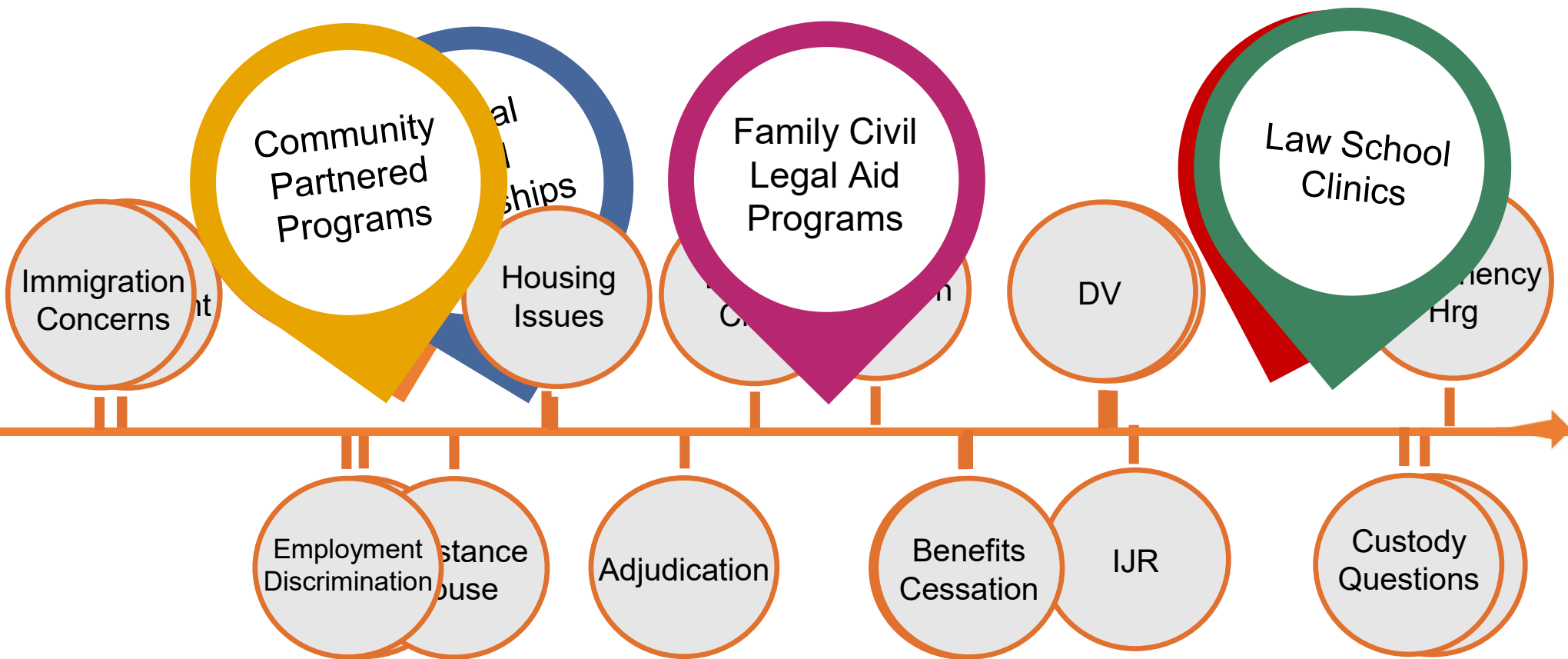


**83%**

of CPS investigations are **unsubstantiated**

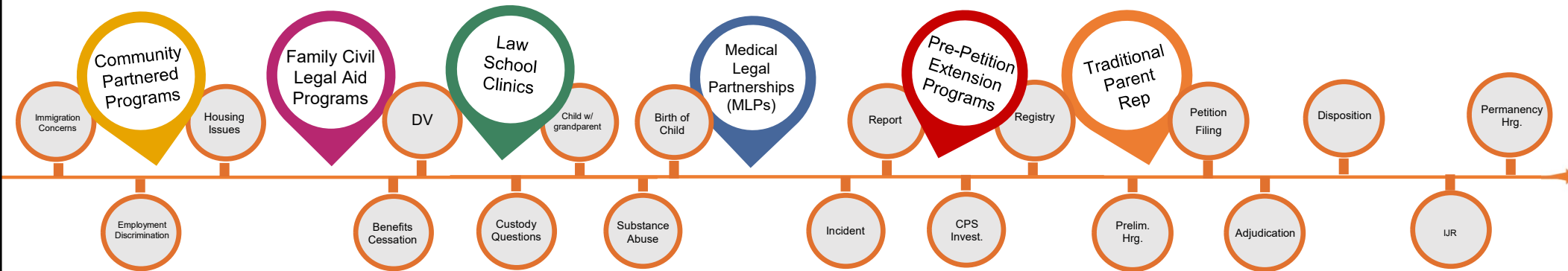


# Reimagining Effective Legal Advocacy in the Child Welfare Context



# If we want to effectively represent our clients' interests and ensure child safety, we must move upstream.

Job loss, homelessness, domestic violence, consumer abuse, addiction, CPS investigations: due to poverty, our clients rarely experience traumatic challenges one at a time—they experience many, all at once or in rapid succession. We need a system that seeks to address the causes of neglect, not just the effects.







## PLA & PPR programs are having a positive impact.

- Building on the great success of its initial PLA pilot, HELP MLP in Philadelphia recently received a grant to expand the Family Advocacy & Integrated Resources project, which will allow HELP to serve up to 2,100 families over the next 2 years.
- Since 2019, FIRST Clinic in Washington has tracked more than 300 of their cases and 84% have resulted in no petition filing.
- Family Defense Team at Bronx Defenders represents parents during the pendency of CPS investigations, and they report petitions have been avoided in 68% of those cases
- New preliminary reports show that the Parent Advocacy Program, a new PLA pilot launched in McLennan County, TX in the winter of 2022, successfully avoided petition filing in all 30 of its cases.
- Youth Rights & Justice in Oregon now has a Family Defense Project and they've seen a 40% reduction in the rate of removals even in those Pre-Petition cases that do actually make it to a shelter care hearing.

# Core Principals of Preventive Legal Advocacy

## Upstream Referrals

Families are referred for services before there is a removal

## Holistic Representation

Teams examine the full scope of family need with a prevention focus



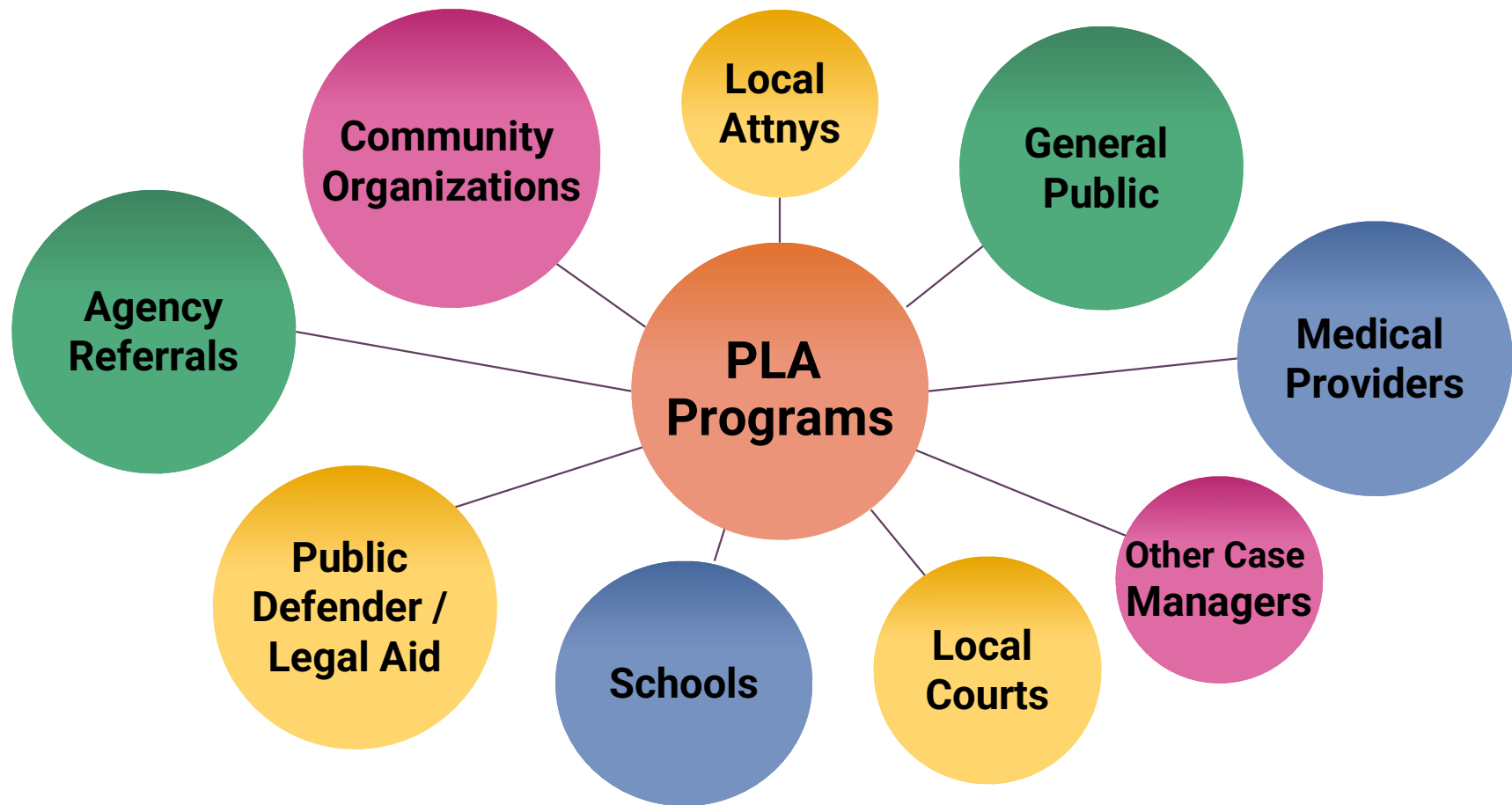
## Multidisciplinary Legal Teams

Attorney  
Social Worker  
Parent Partner (LE)

## Effective Community Partnerships

Rapid response & warm handoffs for any needed services

# Common Upstream Referral Sources



# Types of Legal Issues

## General Civil

- Housing
- Public Benefits
- Education Issues
- Immigration
- Record Expungment

## Domestic

- Divorce
- Custody
- Legitimation
- Protective Orders
- Guardianships

## Pre-Petition

- KYR Advocacy
- Warmlines
- CPS Investigations
- Pre-Petition Rep
- Registry Appeals

# Panel Discussion: PLA in Action

## Program Design & Implementation



Maria Griglio  
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Center (FSAC)  
Children's Law Center's (CLC)



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