

NURSING-LEGAL PARTNERSHIP

Case Study

Spring 2018

Nursing-Legal Partnership wins appeal for a 5-year-old boy poisoned by lead

Natasha started receiving home visiting services through the Philadelphia Nurse-Family Partnership (NFP) when she was pregnant with her first child. Today, Natasha and her son are enrolled in the Mabel Morris Family Home Visit Program. Like many other mothers, she chose to join the Mabel Morris program after her son graduated from NFP because she wanted to continue receiving support and education as a parent.

Her son, Chester, was lead poisoned as an infant. A routine test, conducted when the family was enrolled in Philadelphia NFP, revealed that Chester had high levels of lead in his blood. The family moved out of substandard rental housing soon after discovering that Chester had been lead poisoned. Chester is now five and has experienced serious speech, language, and cognitive delays as he has grown.

SSI (Supplemental Security Income) is a program that can provide financial support for children with severe and enduring disabilities. It is often described as a “lifeline” for children with special needs. In 2015, Natasha applied on her own for SSI for her son when he was two years old, but her application was denied. Chester didn’t have a lawyer, so Natasha appealed her son’s case on her own too. Chester’s case was

sitting in limbo when the Nursing-Legal Partnership began accepting clients in 2016. Natasha’s home visitor referred her to the Nursing-Legal Partnership as soon as the new program began accepting clients.

Natasha and Chester’s SSI appeal finally came up for a hearing, more than a year later. Now that she was working with a Nursing-Legal Partnership attorney, Natasha was relieved that she wouldn’t have to go to court alone to represent her son. To prepare for the hearing, Staff Attorney Rachel Mark worked collaboratively with Natasha’s home visitor Stephanie Campos to collect records, conduct interviews, and develop testimony. Stephanie came to the hearing and testified in person. After Rachel represented the family at the hearing, Natasha and Chester were awarded SSI benefits going forward, as well as back benefits worth \$25,000.

As Rachel and Stephanie worked closely with the family, it became clear that Chester was not receiving appropriate intervention services for his disabilities. Rachel referred Natasha to a special education attorney, and the family is now receiving further legal support to ensure that Chester has access to the services he needs before he enters Kindergarten.

The Nursing-Legal Partnership is a collaboration between the **National Nurse-Led Care Consortium (NNCC)** and the **Health, Education & Legal assistance Project (HELP:MLP)**. For more information and to sign up for the Nursing-Legal Partnership newsletter, visit: <http://nurseledcare.org>