

# BMC to go national with legal aid program

## Lawyers, doctors team up for health

By Sacha Pfeiffer

GLOBE STAFF

Sometimes lawyers, not doctors, can be the key to good health.

That principle drives a Boston Medical Center program that relies on attorneys, in partnership with physicians and social workers, to help low-income children stay healthy. The lawyers ensure that houses are heated in the winter, help undernourished families apply for food stamps, work to eliminate rodent infestation, and prod landlords to clean up moldy apartments that can trigger asthma, among other tasks.

Now, in a national project

backed by \$2.7 million in grants, BMC today will launch an ambitious effort to replicate its program in every state. By using lawyers to solve legal problems that can cause illness — from fixing faulty furnaces to navigating immigration rules that may make patients afraid to apply for food or housing assistance — doctors believe they can prevent more serious health crises, such as malnutrition, job loss, and domestic violence.

“This is a way of changing pediatric care for low-income families,” said Dr. Barry S. Zuckerman, chief of pediatrics at BMC and founder of its Family Advocacy Program, which will be renamed the Medical-Legal Partnership for Chil-

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