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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Innovative UIC Department of Pediatrics Program Invests In Medical-Legal Partnership to Improve Health and Well-Being of Children with Chronic Illness

Chicago, IL – The University of Illinois at Chicago’s CHECK (Coordination of Healthcare for Complex Kids) program announces a novel partnership with the Chicago Medical-Legal Partnership for Children, a program of Legal Council for Health Justice, to use the power of the law to improve the health and well-being of Cook County children with serious chronic illnesses.

CHECK is an initiative housed within the UIC Department of Pediatrics and coordinated with the University of Illinois Hospitals and Health Sciences System (UI Health) that is working to decrease health care costs and school absenteeism for more than 6,000 children and young adults enrolled in Medicaid who have been diagnosed with a chronic disease, particularly diabetes, asthma, sickle cell, and prematurity. The CHECK program is rooted in the understanding that in order to improve health outcomes and decrease costs, a holistic approach that recognizes the broad range of interrelated factors – including medical, behavioral, and social circumstances – must be integrated into the current health delivery system.

Coordinated and comprehensive care is vital to increase the chance of a healthier future for chronically ill children and to lessen the overall impact of disease on the child and family. The CHECK initiative recognizes that civil legal aid is one of the best strategies to address health inequity and poverty. The addition of a medical-legal partnership to CHECK’s care coordination team of specialized health professionals, community health workers, and mental health promotion staff is part of its overall strategy to keep individuals healthy and lower health care costs of pediatric and young adult populations.

Chicago Medical-Legal Partnership for Children program trains clinical staff to identify health-harming legal needs, then provides free, onsite legal assistance to CHECK patients and their families. The legal team supports patient health and also lowers medical costs by addressing education, income, housing, and family stability issues. Attorney Sarah Hess, and paralegal advocates Megan Borneman and Rebecca Cabezas, were hired by Legal Council for Health Justice to join the CHECK team. “CHECK’s expansion to include civil legal aid with care coordination and mental health support will be a game changer in setting vulnerable children and youth on the path to a healthier, more stable future,” says

CHECK Medical Director Dr. Mark Minier, “we are thrilled to partner with the Chicago Medical-Legal Partnership for Children, especially given their deep knowledge and experience working with medical teams.”

For more information on the CHECK initiative please visit www.mycheck.uic.edu or email uiccheckprogram@uic.edu .

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Legal Council for Health Justice uses the power of the law to secure dignity, opportunity, and well-being for people facing barriers due to illness and disability. All programs partner with health and hospital systems to train and support the care provider network, provide direct representation to referred patients, and conduct systemic advocacy to promote health equity among populations facing chronic, disabling, and stigmatizing health and social conditions. www.legalcouncil.org