



Pairing health records with patient advocacy: letter to the editor

By [Other Voices](#)

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The [March 29 article on electronic health records](#) outlines many ways these medical records improve health without compromising privacy or changing how decisions about care are made. However, the technology of electronic health records has even greater potential to improve the health of patients by encouraging further collaboration between providers and partners.

Legal Aid attorneys, in partnership with MetroHealth System providers, developed several advocacy letters that are integrated with MetroHealth's electronic records system. These letters -- focused on education, housing and public benefits -- enable medical providers to assist patients with nonmedical issues that affect health. The advocacy letters auto-populate with patient information for quick use, allowing providers with limited time to utilize the letters. There are letters that can be used to report poor housing conditions that directly affect a patient's health or to request a special-education evaluation for a child. Access to advocacy letters are especially important for low-literacy and limited-English-proficient patients who are unlikely to advocate for themselves, especially in writing.

These letters serve as advocacy tools as well as legal-rights education for providers and patients. Electronic health records not only help measure and improve patients' health; they can also empower patients and their families.

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