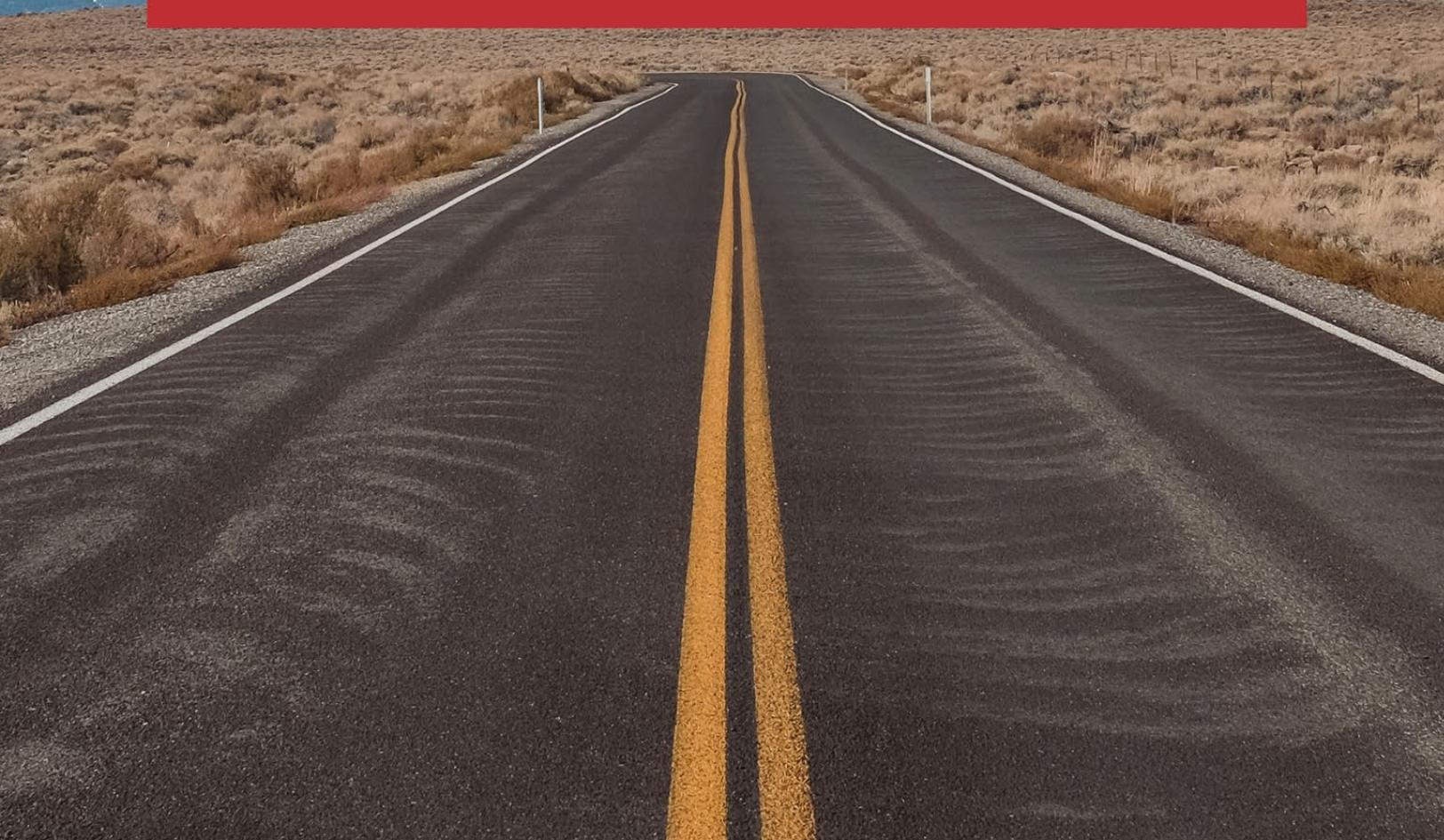


# *Plan Your Own Path*

**HEALTH LAW**



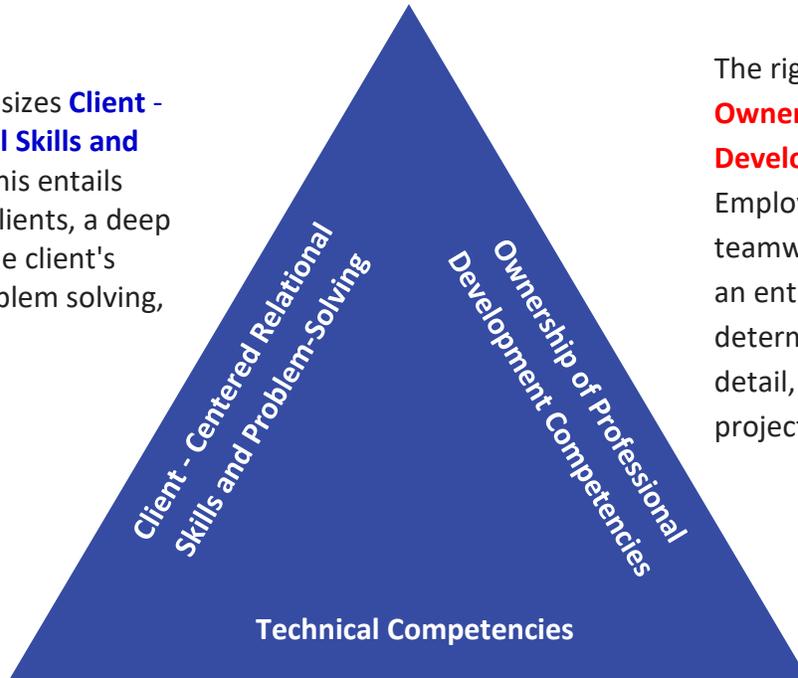
## **OVERVIEW**

Health care lawyers represent participants in the health care system: physicians and other professionals, hospitals and other institutions (e.g., nursing homes, home health care agencies, etc), payors (public and private insurers), regulators and policymakers (federal, state, and local), insurance and pharmaceutical and biotechnology companies, and patients (including patient advocacy groups). The work can be quite varied, including both civil and criminal work, and involving litigation, transactional work, and regulatory counseling. Many health care lawyers specialize to some extent (for example, white collar defense or tax-exempt organizations), although it is common for associates to work across a broad spectrum of the health care field. That spectrum includes the laws that shape the organization, financing, and delivery of health care goods and services and the life sciences (drugs and medical devices, medical research, biotechnology, etc). Most health lawyers are not medical malpractice lawyers; that specialty is usually considered a species of tort/personal injury law. However, there are exceptions. A solid grounding in health law is increasingly valuable to medical-malpractice practitioners, just as health lawyers need to understand the liability landscape for their clients. In particular, a good working knowledge of the regulatory process is essential.

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*This handout helps you plan your path to a health law career, covering essential competencies for clients and legal employers. As you plan, ensure you incorporate all three sides of this triangle.<sup>1</sup>*

The left side emphasizes **Client - Centered Relational Skills and Problem-Solving**. This entails responsiveness to clients, a deep understanding of the client's needs, creative problem solving, and client-centered communication.



The right side centers on **Ownership of Professional Development Competencies**. Employers and clients require teamwork, a strong work ethic, an entrepreneurial mindset, determination, attention to detail, integrity, and effective project management skills.

The base comprises fundamental **Technical Competencies**, including knowledge of the law, legal analysis, legal research, communication in the legal context, and legal judgment.

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<sup>1</sup> See Neil W. Hamilton, *The Gap Between the Foundational Competencies Clients and Legal Employers Need and the Learning Outcomes Law Schools Are Adopting*, 89 UMKC L. Rev. 559 (2021).

*This guide is arranged by the three crucial sides of the triangle.*

### **TRADITIONAL TECHNICAL COMPETENCIES**

Enroll in foundational courses during your first and second year, such as:

- Law & Medicine: Health Care
- Law & Medicine: Bioethics
- Law & Medicine: Medical Malpractice
- Food & Drug Law
- International & Comparative Health Law
- Law, Literature & Medicine
- Public Health Law & Ethics

**Related Courses:** Health lawyers work within a highly varied legal environment that places a premium on a broad knowledge base beyond substantive health law. Of particular relevance to a health care practitioner are the courses listed below:

- Administrative Law
- Antitrust Law
- Business Enterprise
- Constitutional Law II (required)
- Employee Benefits Law & ERISA Litigation
- Intellectual Property
- Nonprofit Organizations
- Patent Law
- Products Liability
- Science & the Law
- Trademark & Business Torts
- White Collar Crime

**Upper-Level Writing Requirements:** In your third year, choose a health law-related Edited Writing course or Directed Research paper topic (with Faculty pre-approval) to improve and showcase your research, writing, and analytical competencies.

### **CLIENT-CENTERED RELATIONAL SKILLS AND PROBLEM SOLVING**

Thoughtfully evaluate experiential opportunities. These are excellent ways for you to cultivate superior client focus, innovative problem-solving, and effective communication skills.

- **Externships:** The following externships are offered through the Corporate Counsel Externship Program and/or the Government and Public Interest Externship Program (both programs include classroom component)
  - Alcon
  - American Heart Association
  - Baylor Scott and White Health
  - CCS Medical

- Children’s Health
- CHRISTUS Health
- Disability Rights Texas
- Enhabit Home Health and Hospice
- Legal Hospice of Texas
- McKesson Pharmaceutical Solutions and Services
- Methodist Health System
- Parkland Health and Hospital System
- Scottish Rite Hospital for Children, Dallas
- Susan G. Komen
- Tenet Health
- Texas Health Resources
- U.S. Department of Health and Human Services
- U.S. Department of Justice, Drug Enforcement Administration
- U.S. Food and Drug Administration
- UT Southwestern Medical Center

- **Clinics:**

Be sure to work closely with your Office of Career Services advisors to obtain additional experiences (internships, judicial clerkships, public service opportunities) to grow your knowledge and skills in this area.

### **OWNERSHIP OF PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT COMPETENCIES**

Experiences beyond the formal curriculum are vital to your professional growth. Aim to acquire experiences that closely replicate as much as possible the work lawyers engage in within the health law space.

- **Student Organizations:** Commit yourself to relevant, on-campus organizations and actively pursue leadership, project management, and teamwork opportunities within the organization.
  - Health Law Association
- **Public Service Opportunities:** These pre-approved placements at 501(c)(3) organizations and government offices may provide you additional perspectives that are valuable to your career development
  - AIDS Legal Referral Panel
  - American Heart Association
  - American Red Cross
  - Attorney General of Texas – Consumer Protection and Public Health
  - Children’s Health System of Texas
  - Disability Rights Texas
  - Legal Hospice of Texas
  - Methodist Health System

- Parkland Health and Hospital System
  - Scottish Rite Hospital for Children
  - Texas Medical Board
  - Texas Scottish Rite Hospital for Children
  - U.S. Department of Health and Human Services
  - U.S. Department of Justice, Drug Enforcement Administration
  - U.S. Food and Drug Administration
  - UT Southwestern Medical Center
- **Board of Advocates:**
    - Mack Kidd Administrative Law Moot Court Competition
  - **Law Journals:**
    - Author a note or comment on a health law topic and seek to have it published in one of our journals or elsewhere
  - **Dallas Bar Association Sections:** Explore your interests and immerse yourself in the legal profession by becoming part of these Dallas Bar Association sections.
    - Health Law

**Faculty:** Start building a connection with a professor who is familiar with your work and can write you a letter of recommendation or serve as a reference. Here are some of the full-time faculty members who teach in this field.

Nathan Cortez  
Tom Mayo

Seema Mohapatra

**Cultivate Your Personal Network:** Reach out to corporate attorneys to arrange informational interviews through the Mustang Exchange or connections you establish during your law school journey. You should also ask your Career Services advisor to help you identify graduates and law firms in this space in the location(s) where you want to work.

Full-time and adjunct professor who teach health law courses may have strong networks. Ask them for assistance making these connections.

Attend programs featuring health law attorneys sponsored by the Office of Career Services or student organizations. These kinds of programs are great opportunities to learn more about entry-level careers and to connect with speakers who are often alumni and more willing to assist you.