

# Establishing effective HJPs

## Information-sharing in health justice partnership: insights from practice

The innovation of health justice partnership (HJP) is enabling health and legal practitioners to work together to find new ways of reaching and assisting people vulnerable to health-harming legal need.

This way of working requires partnering services to explore a range of topics, including how they will communicate and share information in a way that maintains their respective professional rules and obligations. Building a partnership based on values and principles is key when exploring how to effectively integrate the diverse perspectives and practices of health professionals and lawyers.

HJPs can do this by:

- understanding and valuing the diverse perspectives each partner brings to a partnership
- building an equitable way of working together, where each partner's contributions are valued
- building trust through openness and transparency, including about each partner's interests and obligations
- identifying what a mutually beneficial way of working together looks like, and reviewing this regularly
- having the courage to work together on new and different approaches, including letting go of approaches that don't meet the HJP's goals.

HJP practitioners are putting these principles into practice in a range of different ways when navigating information sharing and effective collaboration. This resource contains some of their practical insights.

### 1 Understand your professional obligations

Consult with your peak, industry or statutory body in relation to your obligations under relevant legislation and privacy laws; and identify these with your partner/s. Discuss with your partner/s how you will maintain confidentiality when working collaboratively. Have this discussion early and have it often.

### 2 Keep the client at the centre of your service

When your client/patient is informed about how the health justice partnership model works and how their information is collected, used and stored, they can then contribute to your decisions about when, how and with whom their information is shared. Keeping clients at the centre of your service will mean practicing in a way that respects the wishes of each client – some clients will want to provide informed consent each time you wish to share information, while others will be happy to provide their consent at the outset (i.e. recorded on

## About Health Justice Australia

Health Justice Australia is the national centre for health justice partnership. We support the effectiveness and expansion of health justice partnerships in Australia through:

- **Knowledge and its translation:** developing evidence and translating that evidence into knowledge that is valued by practitioners, researchers, policy-makers and funders
- **Building capability:** supporting practitioners to work collaboratively
- **Driving systems change:** connecting the experience of people coming through health justice partnerships, and their practitioners, with opportunities for lasting systems change through reforms to policy settings, service design and funding.

an authority form at the point of intake). Checking back with clients/patients regularly regarding their understanding of each partner's role is also key.

### 3 Agree on a process

Getting clear about what information sharing is possible in the partnership, and understanding why each partner might have their own process, is an important part of building a transparent and trusting relationship. Consider establishing processes for: conflicts of interest; how you will record and store client information; what care coordination and planning looks like in your HJP; what information is required for referral within and outside the partnership; communicating with clients; obtaining consent to share client information; and how you will communicate with each other about client information. You may wish to document these processes in a memorandum of understanding. Check in with your partner/s at regular intervals to ensure the partnership structure and previously agreed processes are still working, and adapt your practice as required.

### 4 Engage in training

Provide interdisciplinary training and learning opportunities in the partnership in relation to each partner's professional obligations and scope of practice. Consider establishing a regular learning schedule that covers topics relevant to working in partnership and understanding each partner's role in your specific partnership. Talk about any changes that partnership practitioners have observed in their practice as a result of knowing more about their partner's role and obligations, and use these insights to inform future learning opportunities.



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### 5 Be prepared for joint client meetings

When undertaking joint meetings, ensure the client/patient is clear on the obligations of each partner, including when and how certain disclosures would necessitate the sharing of their information (e.g. mandatory reports to relevant authorities required of health practitioners, service of subpoenas etc.). Consider the role of the lawyer in briefing the client/patient on joint meetings at the point of intake to the service. If the client would like to proceed with a joint meeting, agree upon a process for how the meeting will be structured (noting the client/patient may choose different meeting structures at different times, depending on what they're hoping to discuss).

### Further resources and information

The Federation of Community Legal Centres, in partnership with the Legal and Integrated Social Support Network has developed a comprehensive guide on how legal, health and social welfare practitioners can address information sharing and confidentiality when working in integrated settings. Whilst the resource was established for integrated services in Victoria, the key themes of the resource may provide valuable insights for practitioners and services across the national landscape. You can find the Integrated Practice Toolkit at [www.fclc.org.au/integrated\\_practice\\_toolkit](http://www.fclc.org.au/integrated_practice_toolkit)