



Health justice partnership:

a flexible, place-based model

Health justice partnerships place legal help in healthcare settings and teams to support people with intersecting legal and social problems. These intersecting needs often create barriers to health and wellbeing and hold people in cycles of disadvantage and struggle. By working together, health and legal practitioners can address the health-harming legal problems many people face, and redesign how services are delivered to those who need them most.

These place-based initiatives put the needs of their communities at their centre, so the strategies and processes adopted by individual partnerships, how they're implemented and reviewed, and how they change over time can look different in response to local context. This context includes community need, local infrastructure and services, resources and funding, tools and capabilities, community voice and leadership, collaborative appetite of partners, and the readiness of partners to see and respond to complex problems differently in order to achieve health equity and justice.

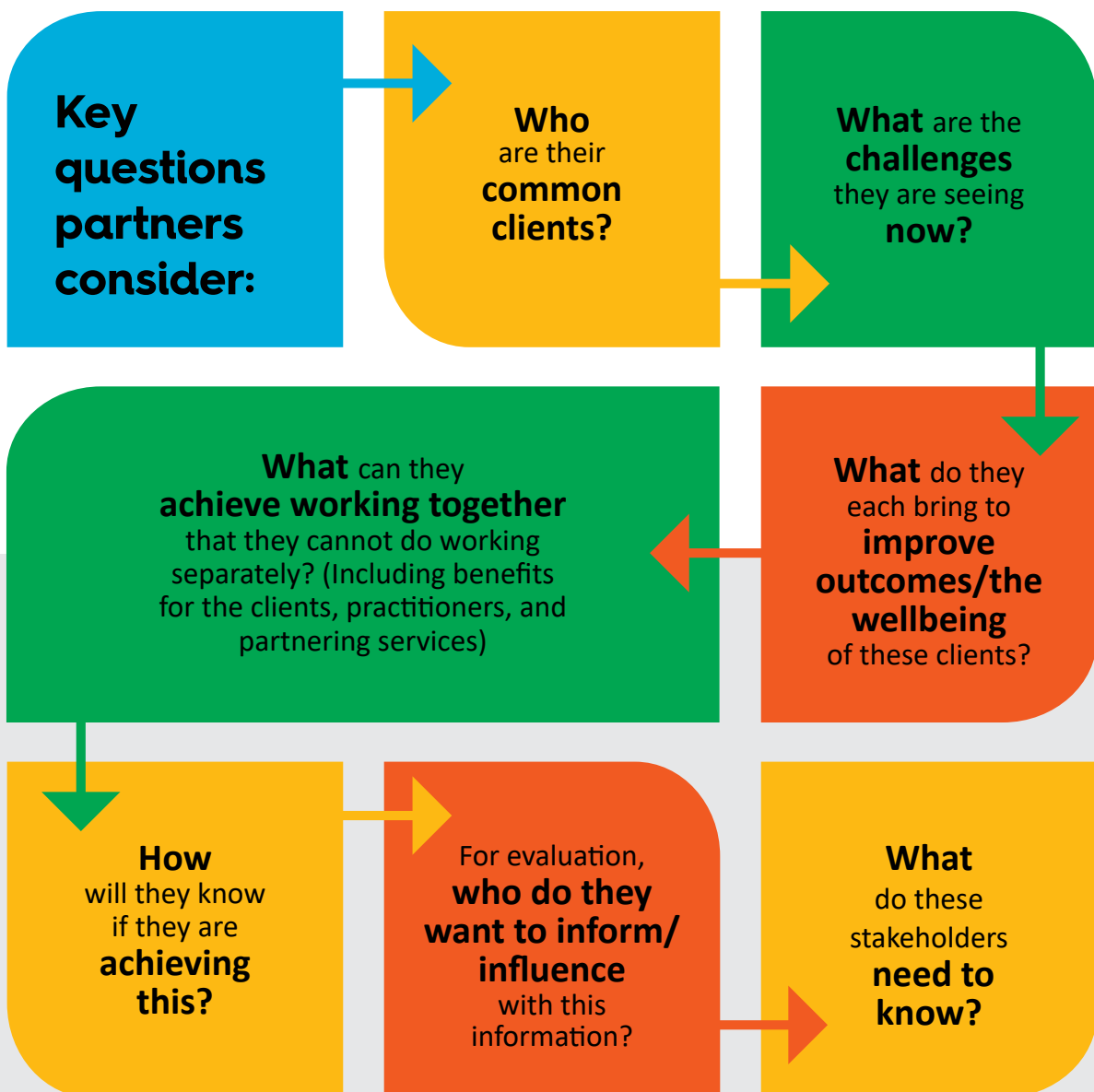
In this resource, we outline the most common characteristics we see in health justice partnership across Australia.

Partnership processes

The development and application of ongoing planning, evaluation and partnership processes are important investments in ensuring services can work together towards their shared goals.

Planning and evaluation

Planning and evaluation processes allow partners to ask and answer questions about what they are doing together and why.



Evaluation is an important tool to provide clarity about what is working and what is not. It will help a partnership:

- Assess if a program made a difference
- Inform decisions about continuing, expanding, scaling back, or trying something new
- Learn about and improve:
 - how the health justice partnership works and the difference made
 - barriers and constraints to inform change
 - value/worth
- Share knowledge and build the evidence base
- Satisfy the health justice partnership funding body/obtain funding.

Partnership development and maintenance

Effective partnerships require partners to invest in and revisit how they work together as well as what they do together. This may include:

- Agreement on principles and values that underpin their working relationship and help build trust, equity and buy-in across a partnership; and lead to outcomes that are beneficial and valued by all partners
- Investment in the right relationships, infrastructure, and governance and communication processes that will enable agreed outputs and activities to thrive.



Partnership activities



Embedding legal help into the healthcare team

Why this activity?

- One in five of the most disadvantaged people in our community take no action in response to their legal problems. When people do seek help, they are more likely to consult a non-legal advisor, such as a health professional, than a lawyer.
- To better reach and assist those disproportionately burdened with legal need, but less likely to seek help directly from lawyers at all or in a timely way.
- To reach people at a time and place that legal help is beneficial.

If this activity, partners consider...

- What legal issues the partnership will be able to address, i.e. if the legal service only works on civil law matters, it is helpful for them to explain what this means and why.
- What type of legal help will be available for different issues (e.g. advice, legal tasks, representation).
- Whether legal help will be provided onsite or by referral.
- What external referral pathways and networks might be needed to address legal problems not covered by the health justice partnership, i.e. when a legal problem requires expertise beyond that of the existing legal staff.



Referral pathways

Why this activity?

- To create streamlined, accessible service pathways.
- To reduce 'missed opportunities' for appropriate client/patient support and assistance.
- To reduce the risk of a 'referral roundabout' by supporting timely appropriate referrals to legal help.

If this activity, partners consider...

- Who the lawyers and legal care team will be working directly with (e.g. specific teams within the health service or the health service as a whole).
- How legal problems will be identified in the health justice partnership, e.g. through the use of agreed upon 'issue spotting' questions by certain teams in the health setting.
- What training might be required to identify and respond to unmet legal need (knowledge, skills and relationships).
- Building a fit-for-purpose process for referral (some health justice partnerships have a dedicated email account or phone number, while others make use of referral forms).
- What is required of referrals back into the health service or team.



Interdisciplinary training

Why this activity?

- To build the capability (skills, knowledge, confidence, enthusiasm) of practitioners to identify health-harming legal needs and link patients/clients with appropriate help.
- To build relationships and trust between partnering practitioners.
- Induction and orientation to a new service environment.

If this activity, partners consider...

- The range of ways in which 'training' can occur, from dedicated workshops, to team meetings, to opportunistic discussions with colleagues in lunchrooms (i.e. informal secondary consultation).
- How training activity will be recorded, including observed changes to practitioner behavior as a result of training.
- How existing learning management and communication systems within the host service might be utilised, including integrating training content into those systems.



Secondary consultation¹

Why this activity?

- To increase the ability of health practitioners to more efficiently identify and respond to legal issues affecting patient/client health.
- To increase the ability of lawyers and the legal workforce to understand and consider the implications of health problems on their clients.
- To reach and provide appropriate information to people not yet ready to speak directly with a lawyer.

If this activity, partners consider...

- The value-add the health justice partnership might see as a result of secondary consultation (as an activity that sets it apart from more transactional ways of working).
- How the health justice partnership will document and report on its secondary consultation activity.
- The scope of secondary consultation each partner is able to provide (e.g. a legal service might limit the scope of secondary consultation to provision of 'information' about mutual clients' legal issues rather than 'legal advice', which is provided directly to a client).
- What information/training is required to do this well.

¹ In the context of health justice services, secondary consultation is when a lawyer provides information to a health professional about a legal issue facing a patient/client, or when a health professional provides information to a lawyer about a health issue facing a person they are assisting.



Care coordination²

Why this activity?

- To provide wrap-around, timely and appropriate care and support to people experiencing multiple, intersecting and compounding health, social and legal issues.
- To diversify the tools with which health services assess, support and treat people accessing healthcare who are experiencing underlying legal or social problems.

If this activity, partners consider...

- The value-add the partnership might see as a result of the collaborative activity of care coordination (as another activity that sets it apart from more transactional ways of working).
- The scope of team-based, coordinated care in the partnership, including deciding which clients or in what circumstances care coordination is desired (different partnerships will have different appetites for risk when it comes to care coordination and the sharing of client/patient information).
- What training, information and support might be needed to enable care coordination activity.
- Health Justice Australia's [Information Sharing Toolkit for HJPs](#) can support conversations about information sharing in a health justice partnership.

² The capacity to coordinate legal assistance with the healthcare provided to a patient/client.



Policy, advocacy and systemic change

Why this activity?

- To advocate for and make changes to the policies and systems that are holding health inequity and injustice in place for the clients and patients of health justice partnerships.

If this activity, partners consider...

- How to make decisions about and learn from any changes to organisational processes, policies and procedures that are required to enable the collaborative efforts of the health justice partnership to occur (given health justice partnership is a great example of local systems change).
- Keeping a record of and discussing as a partnership the system and policy issues that are acting as a barrier to health equity and justice for the people the partnership is here to help.
- How to share any system or policy change agenda with Health Justice Australia to identify opportunities for collaboration within the national policy agenda.

About Health Justice Australia

Health Justice Australia is a national charity and centre of excellence for health justice partnership. Health Justice Australia supports the expansion and effectiveness of health justice partnerships and works to change service systems to improve health and justice outcomes 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, including through brokering, mentoring and facilitating partnerships.

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.

Health Justice Australia can provide bespoke coaching, workshops and technical assistance to health justice partnerships at all stages of their development, including advice on where to begin when scoping needs and options, how to build the foundations for a healthy partnership, activity planning and troubleshooting, checking the health of your partnership, or evaluating your partnership.

To find out more about how Health Justice Australia can help you through tailored support and coaching, contact healthjustice@healthjustice.org.au.

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