

FUNDING A HEALTH JUSTICE PARTNERSHIP:

YOUR QUESTIONS ANSWERED

Health justice partnerships have been operating in Australia since 2013. This FAQ answers the most common questions asked by first-time funders of these innovative services and is a key tool to help develop your understanding of health justice partnership.



What are health justice partnerships?



Health justice partnerships are collaborations that embed legal help into healthcare services and teams to improve health and wellbeing for:

- individuals, through direct service provision in places they access
- people and communities vulnerable to complex need, by integrating service responses around client needs and capability
- vulnerable populations through advocacy for systemic change to policies and practices that affect the social determinants of health.

From the legal side, health justice partnership allows lawyers to reach and assist clients known to have unmet legal problems, but who do not seek out legal help. From the health side, it provides more tools to address factors that drive poor health, beyond those traditionally offered by the health sector.



Who do health justice partnerships assist?



Health justice partnerships aim to assist people and communities disproportionately affected by health inequity and injustice; people who often face barriers to accessing timely and appropriate services. Most health justice partnerships direct their services to specific populations such as Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, women experiencing domestic and family violence, people living with mental health conditions, older people at risk of elder abuse or young people.

Health justice partnerships assist people to address the interconnected health and legal issues that can lead to or entrench disadvantage. These problems may include credit and debt, housing, employment, family breakdown and domestic and family violence.



Who are the partners?



Most often, health justice partnerships involve health and legal services working together towards better health and justice outcomes. However, partnerships may also include services from other sectors such as family and community services or education.



What evidence supports the health justice partnership model?



Health justice partnership is supported by evidence about the social determinants of health. This evidence highlights that poor health is about more than the absence of disease: it is driven by social and environmental factors including poverty, poor-quality housing, unstable or insecure work and family breakdown.¹ Legal help is a tool that can be useful in addressing how these problems effect people's lives.

More than one-fifth of people in Australia experience three or more legal problems in a given year. Vulnerability to legal need increases with deepening disadvantage. These legal issues may occur in clusters and many of them lead to illness. Yet people often seek no advice for these problems; and when they do seek help, they are more likely to do so from a non-legal advisor such as a health professional, than a lawyer.²

Together, this evidence on the social determinants of health and access to justice points to a group of people with intersecting health and legal issues. Informed by this evidence, health justice partnership enables services to work together in response to the multiple, intersecting problems in their patients' and clients' lives.

¹ Commission on Social Determinants of Health (CSDH), 2008. 'Closing the gap in a generation: Health equity through action on the social determinants of health.' Geneva

² Coumarelos, C., Macourt, D., People, J., MacDonald, H.M., Wei, Z., Iriana, R. & Ramsey, S. 2012, Legal AustraliaWide Survey: legal need in Australia, Law and Justice Foundation of NSW, Sydney

Q

Is there a single model of health justice partnership?

A

Health justice partnerships may share common elements. Similarities across the health justice landscape include the provision of legal help in a healthcare team or setting; and the ability to move beyond transactional approaches and colocation, towards collaborative responses to shared problems, activity and goals.

Health justice partnerships may also differ from each other. While some provide services to the general community others target specific populations and/or legal issues. Service settings also vary across the health justice landscape with services provided in hospitals, primary health services, community support settings or Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisations. There are also differences in the range of activities undertaken within the partnership (explored more below).

Funders are looking for a true partnership rather than just a colocation in order to realise the full benefits of a health justice partnership

Sue Ball, Grants Program Manager, Victorian Legal Services Board Grants Program

Q

What processes should be funded in health justice partnership?

A

There are a range of processes that a health justice partnership may need to undertake to establish strong foundations for the outcomes they seek. These include:

- undertaking a local needs and service gap analysis
- building new relationships and networks (for instance with partner organisations, or others in the referral pathway)
- co-creating a fit-for-purpose service model between partners and the community they serve
- identifying and evaluating the outcomes of the partnership
- capturing and sharing what the partnership learns about meeting community needs.

The extent and flexibility of funding will be a key determinant in the partnership's capability to work effectively in these ways.

Working in partnership is a new process for many legal and health practitioners. Funding needs to allow time for trust to be built across previously siloed sectors and services, and for the practitioners to develop their approaches to working differently. Time is also needed to build trust between practitioners and the client groups whose outcomes they are aiming to improve. While these processes may not always fall neatly into definitions of funded activities, they are critical elements of working successfully in health justice partnership.

Q A

What activities should be funded in a health justice partnership?

A range of outputs and activities are involved in health justice partnership. These include:

- establishment of legal health checks and referral pathways between the services
- delivery of legal information and advice
- legal tasks such as phone calls and drafting letters, casework, representation in court, contacting another service on a client's behalf, providing a client report or case history
- planning for, and implementing, coordinated care such as case conferencing and client meetings that allow the lawyer and a health practitioner to be present in partnership
- secondary consultation where the lawyer responds to a request from a health practitioner for information about a patient's legal issue, or where they ask a health practitioner about the client's health issue
- cross-disciplinary training to build the capacity of partner staff to work together to identify, refer and support their common patients/clients
- changes to partnering service processes, policies and procedures to make them more accessible and appropriate for the people they are aiming to reach
- advocacy, whether for individual patients/clients, or where systemic issues are identified requiring reform to law, policy or practice.

Taking time to build a solid foundation is crucial

Steven Portelli, Director Family Safety Hub, ACT Government

Q A

Who should fund health justice partnership?

Health justice partnership is a great approach for any funder working to tackle complex problems among people who are vulnerable to the experience of disadvantage; or to support healthy and resilient communities. Health justice partnership funders include those supporting legal assistance; health; agencies involved with welfare and social policy, families and community; education; domestic violence; homelessness; local government and philanthropy.

About this resource

These Q&As were developed with input from existing funders and practitioners working in health justice partnerships. They will be updated intermittently, so so get in touch with any questions you have.

If you need more information about the background to health justice partnerships, or want to find examples of a partnership in operation, please visit Health Justice Australia at www.healthjustice.org.au or contact us at healthjustice@healthjustice.org.au

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.



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