

Health Law:

Professor Jennifer Wriggins leads Maine Law's expansion into this dynamic field, while alumni blaze the trail



Associate Dean for Academic Affairs and Sumner T. Bernstein Professor of Law Jennifer Wriggins

By Trevor Maxwell

As senior VP, General Counsel, and Risk & Compliance Officer for a health-care provider serving much of central and northern Maine, Lori Dwyer doesn't have too many boring days.

Dwyer, a 2005 Maine Law graduate, must carefully guide Penobscot Community Health Care through a constantly changing maze of state and federal laws and regulations. She must be able to see the "big picture" of healthcare regulation, while never losing sight of the individual Mainers who rely on care from the organization.

It's a lot to manage, but the former teacher and labor and employment lawyer has discovered she thrives in the interdisciplinary field of health law.

"I love the complexity of the work, the variety of issues that come at you from all corners, the 'Wild West' nature of healthcare law as payers try to move from volume to value based care," Dwyer said. "It's rewarding to be able to distill

Health law offerings at Maine Law

Courses

Health Care Law & Ethics
Bioethics, Medicine & Law
Federal Health Law and Its Reform
Health Care Privacy & Security

Accelerated Dual Degree J.D./M.P.H. Program: Students accepted for the Accelerated Dual Degree J.D./M.P.H. Program – a joint offering of Maine Law and the University of Southern Maine's Muskie School of Public Service – can complete both degrees in four years with summer study. Those students can take courses within the M.P.H. program at the Muskie School, such as American Health System, Social and Behavioral Health, Introduction to Epidemiological Research, and Environmental Health.

Externships

Mercy Hospital
InterMed, P.A.
Maine Medical Association
Consumers for Affordable Health Care
Penobscot Community Health Care
Create your own externship

Please note: Not all courses and externships are available during any given semester, and they are subject to change as Maine Law continuously updates and improves upon its offerings. Prospective students should contact the Office of Admissions with questions about specific course offerings, externships, and career tracks.



complex regulatory schemes down to usable, practical advice that helps the people on the ground delivering the care.”

Dwyer is among many Maine Law alums who are forging successful careers in health law. At the same time, Maine Law students and prospective students are increasingly interested in the field, prompting the Law School to add courses, expand externship options, and offer a J.D./M.P.H. dual degree program with the Muskie School of Public Service at the University of Southern Maine.

It’s clear that health law, as a priority teaching area for Maine Law and as a career path for its graduates, has built some serious momentum.

“We’ve definitely seen an increased interest in health law among our prospective and incoming students, especially over the past five years. We’ve bolstered the curriculum and are focusing on it much more than we have in the past,” said Associate Dean Jennifer Wriggins, who has led Maine Law’s recent emphasis on health law. “It is an incredibly dynamic, growing field, both in Maine and nationally.”

Health law deals with any law that affects the health of individuals and the public, including regulation of the health industry at the local, state, and federal levels. The field is incredibly diverse, offering career paths in private practice, business, government, lobbying and public policy, the nonprofit sector, and more, said Wriggins, who is nationally known for her scholarship in insurance and torts, with a focus on race and gender. Wriggins also has expertise in insurance law and policy, and has written about the federal Affordable Care Act.

Maine Law now offers a Certificate in Information Privacy Law (see page 7), which is expected to be a popular choice for students who are also interested in health law.

“The intersections of health law and information privacy law are important and fascinating, and the Law School’s new Certificate in Information Privacy Law gives students opportunities to really focus on these cutting edge fields,” Wriggins said.

Maine Law Grads in Health Law Careers

Kenneth Albert, '03

President and CEO, Androscoggin Home Care and Hospice



How long have you been working in the field of health law, and what jobs have you held in this field?

I have focused on health law for over 10 years, working in a firm and

holding positions in the public and private sectors. I served as Director of Compliance and Program Integrity for a healthcare provider/insurer. I was the State’s health regulator as Director for the Division of Licensing and Regulatory Services, and ultimately appointed the State Health Officer serving as Director and COO for the Maine Center for Disease Control & Prevention. I am now President and CEO for Androscoggin Home Care & Hospice.

What do you like best about health law as an area of practice?

Being both a registered nurse and an attorney, I can help clients navigate a highly regulated environment while also focusing on cost, quality, and the patient experience.

How did Maine Law help you prepare for a career in health law?

Maine Law prepared me to think like an advocate and to explore all remedies to present to my clients.

Why should Maine Law students consider careers in health law?

Health spending in 2015 accounted for 17.5% of the GDP. Projections for 2024 suggest healthcare will account for 19.6% of GDP. Healthcare in the U.S. is experiencing unprecedented change, and attorneys are an important profession at the table.

Lori Dwyer, '05

Sr. VP, General Counsel, Risk & Compliance Officer, Penobscot Community Health Care



How long have you been working in the field of health law, and what jobs have you held in this field?

I’ve been at Penobscot Community Health Care for just over four years. I

formerly worked in private practice for Bernstein Shur as a labor & employment lawyer for approximately seven years, and spent some of that time providing L&E advice to clients in the healthcare industry.

What do you like best about health law as an area of practice?

I love the complexity of the work, the “Wild West” nature of healthcare law as payers try to move from volume to value based care, the interdisciplinary nature of the practice, and the importance of this work in the lives of everyday people.

How did Maine Law help you prepare for a career in health law?

I use the analytical skills and substantive knowledge I gained in torts, contracts, family law, business law and probate law on a weekly, if not daily, basis. I learned how to see the many angles of an issue, ask the right questions, chase down the different possibilities, and refuse to settle for superficial answers.

Why should Maine Law students consider careers in health law?

First, job security (I don’t see the laws and rules being simplified anytime soon); second, the subject itself is fascinating and dynamic; and third, it tends to attract nice people who want to do good in the world.

Maine Law graduates have forged successful careers in the area of health law, including positions in government, business, the non-profit sector, and in private practice. We recently caught up with some of these graduates and asked them questions about their work and their time at Maine Law.

Holly Lusk, '05

Of Counsel, Preti Flaherty



How long have you been working in the field of health law, and what jobs have you held in this field?

After law school, I practiced litigation at Preti Flaherty for about eight

years, in the field of medical malpractice defense, and also in administrative law representing health care practitioners before licensing boards. I then served for about three years as Governor LePage's health policy advisor. After leaving that post late last year, I rejoined Preti, and I currently do a combination of lobbying (focusing on healthcare clients), and health-related administrative law, especially in the areas of healthcare licensing, health insurance, and Medicaid.

What do you like best about health law as an area of practice?

Healthcare touches everything – employment law, government relations, litigation, administrative law – and it's a pleasure to collaborate with lawyers in related fields on issues that matter to healthcare clients.

How did Maine Law help you prepare for a career in health law?

One of the great things about Maine Law is the presence of students who start later in life. There were students in my class who had other professions before law school. Some practiced in various healthcare fields, and they brought great depth to classes about bioethics and medicine.

Why should Maine Law students consider careers in health law?

Job security! With increasing government regulation of healthcare and health insurance, the need for legal assistance never goes away.

Andrew MacLean, '91

Deputy Executive VP, General Counsel, Maine Medical Association



How long have you been working in the field of health law, and what jobs have you held in this field?

More than 23 years. Two stints in private practice; principal health policy

advisor to Governor John R. McKernan, Jr.; attorney with Blue Cross Blue Shield of Maine; Deputy Executive Vice President & General Counsel with the Maine Medical Association.

What do you like best about health law as an area of practice?

Healthcare in the U.S. is very dynamic and presents challenging business, legal, policy, and political issues for practitioners. Healthcare issues are important enough to all of us that they often are covered in the media and that's exciting!

How did Maine Law help you prepare for a career in health law?

Maine Law gave me a solid grounding in the basics of legal training – legal analysis, reasoning, and argument, and that's been the most important preparation. I followed a pretty traditional curriculum in my choice of courses. I did not take healthcare law, but administrative law certainly has been helpful.

Why should Maine Law students consider careers in health law?

Our country remains in substantial conflict about the values and goals of its healthcare system, so individuals with training in law and ethics will be critical to resolving the important issues future generations will face.

Tom Marczak, '08

Corporate Counsel, MaineHealth



How long have you been working in the field of health law, and what jobs have you held in this field?

I've been corporate counsel at MaineHealth for about two years. Previously, I was in private practice for six years as a litigator, defending healthcare professionals and companies in a variety of matters.

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What do you like best about health law as an area of practice?

It's a broad and constantly changing field. I deal with a wide array of matters and areas of law on a daily basis, so I'm always working on novel issues and learning new things.

How did Maine Law help you prepare for a career in health law?

A huge part of being an attorney, especially in-house, is being able to provide useful, timely advice to your clients. Aside from the general legal knowledge I acquired, Maine Law helped me build the skills to get the best information, use it to craft advice and then understand how to communicate it effectively to clients.

Why should Maine Law students consider careers in health law?

It's a dynamic field for a lawyer to work in, partially due to its reliance on science and technology. But it's also directly affected by government, which tends to make work for attorneys. There's job security in that.