



CAREERS IN FOOD AND DRUG LAW: AN EXPANDING AND EXCITING FIELD

Within the broad sweep of “FDA lawyer,” there are many options. Some are not available until later in one’s career (like law school FDA professor or General Counsel in a company or at the FDA). Some are much more likely to be available right out of law school (law firm, government agency). The rest may be enticing at various stages on one’s career. Below are some of the opportunities available for someone interested in a career in food and drug law.

Law Firms

There are a variety of different types and sizes of law firms with FDA practices (see <http://sydney.stuarttenhoor.com/create/wp-content/uploads/2016/07/FDA-law-practice-overview-for-Update-Magazine.pdf>).

Corporate Legal Departments

Working in a corporate legal department specializing in FDA legal issues is usually not attainable for junior (less than 4 years of experience practicing law) lawyers. By practicing in a law firm or the government, FDA lawyers can enhance their credibility in seeking in house legal positions. Pharmaceutical companies like AstraZeneca, Amgen, and Genentech have sizeable legal staffs in house. Food companies like Kraft Foods, Cargill, or Coca-Cola have large in-house staffs as well.



Government

Government employment, such as with FDA, HHS, USDA, DEA, FTC, or DOJ, can help build a valued expertise for those advancing in their FDA legal careers. All these agencies interface up to 100% of the time on FDA legal issues. Some, like the FTC or DEA, have parts of their mission in such areas as the advertising and promotion of medical products or how drugs enter interstate commerce. There are also state agencies that regulate foods, drugs, and devices. Explore employment in the government agencies named as their mission evolves around food and drugs.

Consulting Firms

In the past decade, consulting firms like Greenleaf Health or Leavitt Partners have grown their practices with both lawyers and non-lawyers alike. They work collaboratively to assist clients in bringing foods, drugs, or medical devices to the market and in health care policy and strategy.

Risk Management

The risks associated with bringing food, drugs, or medical devices to the market are high. Lawyers with experience and with an interest in identifying and managing those risks from a legal and business standpoint will become increasingly valuable as the costs of producing and promoting new products increases.



Trade Associations

There are numerous trade associations, 501(c)(6) organizations, such as the Advanced Medical Technology Association (AdvaMed) or the Pharmaceutical Research and Manufacturers of America (PhRMA), that employ FDA lawyers mostly interested in government relations or nuts and bolts business operations issues.

Compliance Offices

Healthcare entities, including manufacturers, almost always have in-house compliance offices—often comprised of dozens of people. These offices help develop company policies and procedures related to FDA and health care legal obligations and also monitor the company's compliance with these requirements. The compliance office also is charged with staying abreast of recent developments in relevant areas. Members of the compliance team interact with company management and help address any compliance issues. These roles give broad exposure to company business strategy, operations, and management. This is a growing area and can offer significant career opportunities.

Teaching

A number of practicing attorneys start teaching, either on an ad hoc or full-time basis. While there are perhaps fewer than 25 full time FDA law professors teaching in law schools, it is an option for those that seek this type of work environment.



Non-Profits

Non-profits such as The Pew Charitable Trusts have both legal and non-legal staff devoted to public health issues.

Entrepreneurs

Finally, some lawyers, as they gain experience in this field, are drawn to the business aspects and become entrepreneurs themselves. Frequently, start up drug or device companies look for legal talent with business acumen, and they offer equity positions in the company, which hopefully flourishes in the market.

Background/Experience

While no particular undergraduate degree or specialized training is needed for recent law graduates to succeed in the field of food and drug law, many do find it helpful to have had a science background. In particular, those with a BS, MD, PhD, or nurses training can find that their earlier education is useful in representing clients in a regulatory environment. For law students who love science, the field can be a way to stay involved with the science world, whether the area is food, medical products, tobacco products, dietary supplements, or cosmetics.

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