



Lauren A. Leikam, PLLC Addresses How Criminal Attorneys Are Putting Healthcare Licenses at Risk

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Lauren A. Leikam, PLLC, a Tampa-based healthcare licensing defense firm, is highlighting a critical gap in criminal defense representation that threatens the careers of healthcare professionals across Florida. The firm reports receiving multiple calls weekly from healthcare workers who discovered their criminal attorneys failed to understand how plea agreements impact professional licensing.

The issue centers on a widespread misconception among criminal defense attorneys regarding withheld adjudication. Many criminal lawyers advise clients that having adjudication withheld means no conviction on their record, suggesting this protects their professional licenses. However, Florida licensing boards operate under different standards that criminal attorneys often overlook.

"Healthcare professionals are being blindsided by licensing board actions months after their criminal cases conclude," said Lauren A. Leikam, founder of Lauren A. Leikam, PLLC and former prosecutor for the Florida Department of Health. "Criminal defense attorneys routinely tell clients that withheld adjudication protects them, but licensing boards don't recognize this distinction. If someone entered a guilty or no-contest plea, the board considers it reportable regardless of the court's adjudication status."

The consequences extend beyond simple reporting requirements. Healthcare licensing boards maintain lists of enumerated crimes that trigger automatic review, including offenses like battery and domestic battery for nursing licenses. Additionally, boards invoke broad "crime related to the practice" language that allows them to pursue disciplinary action for virtually any offense they determine affects professional fitness.

A recent case illustrates the severity of this issue. A registered nurse faces potential license revocation for a felony perjury conviction, with the nursing board citing dishonesty as incompatible with the profession. The nurse's criminal defense attorney had assured her the conviction would not put her professional license at risk, advice that proved dangerously incorrect.

The disconnect between criminal law and professional licensing law affects hundreds of licensed professions in Florida, from physicians and pharmacists to mental health counselors and physical therapists. Each profession operates under specific statutory and regulatory frameworks that criminal attorneys may not fully understand.

As a medical license defense attorney with over a decade of experience, Lauren A. Leikam has observed this pattern repeatedly. The firm now dedicates significant resources to educating both healthcare professionals and criminal defense attorneys about the intersection of criminal proceedings and professional licensing requirements.

The situation underscores the importance of specialized legal counsel when healthcare professionals face criminal charges. While criminal defense attorneys focus on avoiding jail time and minimizing criminal penalties, they may inadvertently sacrifice professional licenses in the process. A plea agreement that seems favorable from a criminal law perspective can trigger mandatory reporting requirements and disciplinary proceedings that end careers.

Lauren A. Leikam, PLLC specializes exclusively in healthcare licensing defense throughout Florida. The firm represents physicians, nurses, pharmacists, and other licensed healthcare professionals facing Department of Health investigations and disciplinary proceedings. With experience as a former Department of Health prosecutor, the firm provides strategic defense planning grounded in comprehensive understanding of the investigative and disciplinary process.

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Former DOH prosecutor Lauren A. Leikam, Esq. exclusively defends Florida healthcare professionals facing licensure issues. Trusted experience. Schedule your free consultation today.

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