

## Joan B. Killgore

*Polsinelli Shughart*



**As a lawyer,** registered nurse and adjunct professor, Joan Killgore brings a unique perspective to her firm, her clients and her students.

Killgore's experience as a nurse prepared her well for her career as a health care lawyer and teacher. Today she has a busy practice and is a shareholder at the St. Louis office of law firm Polsinelli Shughart.

A pediatric nurse for seven years, Killgore worked at Cardinal Glennon Hospital and in general pediatric practice. About 10 years ago she decided to go to law school for several reasons.

"I knew I wanted to get an advanced degree and becoming a health care lawyer dovetailed nicely with my background as a nurse," Killgore says.

"I knew that for a lifetime career, being a nurse was very grueling. The law presented an opportunity that I could see myself doing when I was 80. You don't see many 80-year-old nurses," she adds.

Killgore received her law degree, magna cum laude, from Saint Louis University in 2000. She graduated from the University of

Virginia in 1986 with a bachelor of arts and received a nursing diploma from Missouri Baptist Medical Center School of Nursing.

At Polsinelli, Killgore maintains a general transactional and regulatory health law practice focusing on the representation of academic medical centers, hospitals, physicians, long-term care facilities, ancillary medical service providers and other health care clients. With her background as an RN and an adjunct professor for the Center for Health Care Studies at SLU School of Law, Killgore brings specialized clinical and technical experience to her health law practice.

She laughs when she compares being a pediatric nurse to being a lawyer.

"I like to joke and say I'm used to the kicking and screaming I see in both professions."

On a more serious note, Killgore says being a nurse was great training for becoming a lawyer by teaching her how to think on her feet and handle emergencies.

Killgore represents physicians to help them negotiate contracts with hospitals and other professional contracts.

Traveling to large hospital systems and clients throughout the country is part of her work. Killgore helps them set up policies and procedures; she also drafts and reviews contracts and works with physicians to set up businesses such as surgery or imaging centers, and assists in corporate transactions to review compliance.

Her nursing background certainly comes in handy when she makes presentations to hospitals and physicians to explain what the law is, why they have to comply and how.

"Because I have been in a hospital setting as a nurse, getting up in front of a group of

doctors and medical staff gives me a little bit more credibility. I can understand a lot of the situations and medical terminology because I have been there."

Killgore teaches a health care fraud and abuse class and enjoys working with students. It also helps her stay abreast of health care law changes.

She is proud of the accomplishments of her pupils. Several former students work with her at Polsinelli and others work at law firms and government positions around the country. She recalls a time when she was negotiating with a law firm in Arizona and the firm's representative turned out to be a former student.

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Killgore is one of five nurses turned lawyers at Polsinelli.

"We are seeing more and more of this," she says. "I think that's great."

In April, Killgore was honored with a Justice Award from the Missouri Lawyers Weekly, the state's largest legal publication, for her dedication to health law and her commitment to her students.

She gives much credit to Polsinelli Shughart.

"Over the past five years, the firm has really put forth the resources and effort to build our health care practice, and we are now in the top five health care practices in the country. I am really proud to be a part of it." ■