

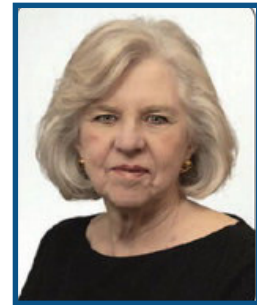
GO TO LAWYERS

Professional Malpractice—2025

BARBARA H. BUELL

PARTNER

Smith Duggan Cornell & Gollub LLP Lincoln



Years in practice: 50

Best known for: Medical malpractice defense. I represent doctors, nurses, hospitals, dentists and healthcare providers on credentialing, contracting, licensing, HIPAA, professional negligence, residency programs, and other legal matters. I also advise hospitals on matters involving patients with serious mental health concerns.

Why I chose my practice area: I have long had a strong interest in health law, earning a Master of Public Health degree at Boston University in 1994. My studies exposed me to global healthcare challenges — from setting up outposts in Papua New Guinea to managing inner-city clinics and supporting rural midwives in Nepal. These experiences reinforced my commitment to civil rights and social justice, with health as an essential component.

Most memorable case: Several years ago, Harvard Law Today documented the establishment of The Community Legal Assistance Office (CLAO), which played a pivotal role in transforming the lives of many future lawyers and judges. As a law student at Northeastern Law, I became involved with CLAO some years later. My first case involved representing a woman seeking a divorce, which was quite daunting. However, my supervisor quickly guided me through the process, and the following week, I found myself in court advocating for her.

By the time I concluded my association with CLAO, I had managed over 200 criminal cases at the Third District Court in Cambridge, including two six-person jury trials. I also had the opportunity to assist in training other law students. It was thanks to CLAO that I felt well prepared to practice law.

In that first week when I went into the office to interview another waiting client he said, “I could never take advice from a woman.”

Early on, I found significant success by championing the underdog’s perspective. I represented clients from the LGBTQ+ community, mixed-race couples facing discrimination, and fathers seeking child custody during a time when courts generally favored mothers.

Since then, my practice grew and gradually evolved whereby I have tried hundreds of cases, primarily in the field of medical malpractice.

What makes me a leader in my field: I pursue continuous learning and teaching, sharing knowledge between healthcare professionals and legal practitioners. Having defended over 200 jury cases, I’ve taught at college, law school, and community levels. Despite neither parent graduating high school, I’ve persevered through life’s opportunities, delivering addresses to 1,200+ graduates and mentoring others.

Outlook for 2025: I worry whether juries will remain interested in truth. With current assaults on truth and science, will the “alternate facts” mentality creep into jury deliberations? As Moynihan said, “You are entitled to your opinion, but not your own facts.”

Bar involvement/leadership roles: Past treasurer, Massachusetts Chapter of American Board of Trial Advocates; past president, Massachusetts Defense Lawyers Association and Northeastern University School of Law Alumni Association; past board member, Massachusetts Society for Healthcare Risk Management; frequent speaker and MCLE chapter author.