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MVP: Sheppard's Eric Newsom

By **Dan McKay**

Law360 (November 2, 2026, 4:00 PM EST) -- Eric Newsom of Sheppard advised University of California, San Diego Health as it worked with California's largest public healthcare district to establish a new regional health system that will expand access to clinical care in San Diego County, earning him a spot as one of the 2026 Law360 Healthcare MVPs.

His biggest challenge over the past year:

Newsom served as lead transaction and structuring counsel to the Regents of the University of California and UC San Diego Health this year as they negotiated with Palomar Health to create a new public entity to jointly run hospitals and clinics in the northern part of the county.

Palomar Health is a public hospital district covering 800 square miles, including the cities of Escondido and Poway.

The deal established a joint powers authority allowing UC San Diego Health to help lead the management and growth at two Palomar hospital complexes facing financial challenges.

The structure provides UC San Diego Health with a platform for growth while stabilizing the hospitals' finances, Newsom said. The new entity's plans include the creation of a comprehensive cancer center and other projects designed to bring specialized care closer to patients in the area.

"We created this new governmental entity, which was an enormous effort to undertake," Newsom said.

Negotiating with another public agency — a healthcare district with its own elected board — added an unusual element to the deal, he said.

"When you're just across from another law firm and another counterparty that's a for-profit hospital system, for example, that does transactions every day — that's one thing," Newsom said.

But a public institution typically flexes its "transactional muscles much less frequently," he added.

California's public healthcare districts are designed to provide care in underserved areas. The new agreement is designed to combine the strengths of an academic health center with a community-based health system, all under one governance structure.

"Helping them to create this entity that really helps stabilize the market for hospital services in Poway, Escondido and greater San Diego County was certainly our most time-consuming, challenging and rewarding project this year," Newsom said.

Another notable deal he's worked on:

Newsom is the lead transactional and regulatory counsel to the city of El Centro, California, in a deal that transfers the largest hospital in Imperial County to a public healthcare district that already operates in the region, allowing "them to leverage a little bit more scale to survive," he said.

Hospitals of all kinds are facing financial pressure while also "looking down the barrel" at severe Medicaid cuts next year, he said.

"A lot of the transactions we're seeing are driven by financial distress and the opportunities that presents for some systems to come in and acquire a hospital," Newsom said.

The transactions, he said, can help "avoid situations like have happened in parts of the country, where a smaller hospital closes and leaves a healthcare desert in its wake, which is, in our healthcare system today, a real risk."

What he's proud of:

Newsom said he was proud of his work this year to help Sheppard restructure its healthcare team and the firm's role in guiding mission-driven hospitals and payers through tough financial times.

Sheppard has grown its healthcare team to about 270 attorneys, he said. The restructuring included developing a series of strategic working groups that focus on particular industries, among other changes aimed at helping attorneys across the country operate as — and feel like — a team.

"It's a great place to work, and we're trying to make it better every single year," Newsom said.

Newsom serves as the transactions lead within the healthcare team, managing about 150 attorneys, and he is proud of the group's work.

Rather than one specific moment, Newsom said, he is broadly proud of his role in helping "deliver transformational change that allows mission-driven hospital systems and payers to survive in a world with increasing financial pressure."

Why he's a healthcare lawyer:

Newsom said he grew to love mergers and acquisitions early in his career. He likes working with a counterparty with the same goal, even during difficult negotiations, he said.

"It's not always a zero-sum game like litigation is, [though] it often can be," Newsom said of M&A work.

"Every transaction is different, and every personality involved in a transaction is different."

Healthcare is a particularly fertile field where collaboration between different companies is often essential, he said. Newsom said he also enjoys the chance to work with nonprofit health organizations focused on a charitable mission, not just dollars and cents.

"I think every actor in healthcare needs to be ready to play nicely in the sandbox with other actors if they're going to survive in this world," Newsom said.

He also likes that healthcare transactions require teamwork within a firm, under deadline pressure.

Healthcare is "one-sixth of the American economy, so most of us are always very busy, and there's a lot of money involved," Newsom said.

His advice for junior attorneys:

Newsom encourages early-career attorneys to find a mentor and a law firm that supports partners eager to help younger lawyers.

"Find what you want to do as early as you can," he said. "Find a mentor that you think shares your view of the world."

Seek out a mentor who "will guide you, not just tell you what to do, and find a firm that supports that kind of partner, which is hard," Newsom said.

Working at a large firm can be good for a young lawyer, he said, because it's usually easier to move to smaller firms than it is to move up to bigger ones.

Newsom also encourages junior attorneys to "be all in" and "take the job seriously, but not yourself too seriously."

--As told to Dan McKay. Editing by Bruce Goldman.

Law360's MVPs are attorneys who have distinguished themselves from their peers over the past year through high-stakes litigation, record-breaking deals and complex global matters. A team of Law360 editors selected the 2026 MVP winners after reviewing nearly 1,000 submissions.

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