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Led by founder
Gabrielle Sereni,
Sereni Law Group
takes a collaborative
approach to making
an impact in special
education law and
other practice
areas.

pg. 28

+ **Also
Inside:**

Power women,
back to school,
and more



Sereni Law Group's legal team includes (left to right) Samantha Newell, Linell Lukesh, Julie Derby, Tashell Jenkins, Gabrielle Sereni, and Kylee Clark.

Team Mentality

From its passionate attorneys to its dedicated consultants, **Sereni Law Group** takes a collaborative approach to making an impact in special education law and other practice areas.



Gabrielle C. Sereni has a lot to be proud of: advancing the field of special education law; starting her own firm, which recently expanded in exciting new directions; and giving back to her community. Her passion for her career comes across easily during conversation, but she lights up even more when the discussion turns to her three sons.

"The real definition of success is not a law firm," she says. "Nothing else I do really matters compared to being their mom and watching them find their way in life."

Of all that she has accomplished in her life so far, Sereni remains most proud of her three sons. Her oldest is currently majoring in psychology at Immaculata University. Her middle child is preparing to study pre-law at Washington and Lee University. Her youngest is a high school student and volunteer firefighter considering making that his future profession.

In their mother, they have a shining example to emulate.

The daughter of two university professors, Sereni became a teacher herself before switching gears and enrolling in law school. Upon

graduation, she began a federal clerkship and then discovered the relatively new practice area of special education law, which arose when Congress reauthorized previous policy and established the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) mandating that schools meet the needs of children with disabilities.

In the nearly 30 years since she started her legal career, Sereni has emerged as a respected litigator, an authority in her field, and an in-demand guest speaker. In November 2023 she founded Sereni Law Group, a defense firm representing school districts, including public and private institutions, to resolve conflicts with students and their families. Her ultimate goal: to provide the best path forward for each child.

Sereni remembers a colleague early in her career saying with disparagement that special education law is “not rocket science.” The statement stuck with her because it undermines the tremendous responsibility she bears on a daily basis.

“It is very challenging, the stakes are very high, and the margins for error are none, because we’re dealing with children,” she says. “We’re also dealing with our infrastructure; schools are the hub of our communities, our systems, and we’re dealing with taxpayer money. ... There are a lot of compelling and competing interests across a lot of stakeholders involved in this practice, and every single one matters.”

Sereni recognizes that parents are facing emotional issues when trying to advocate for their children, and she likes nothing more than when strong communication and a willingness to compromise from both sides can result in mediated solutions. When disputes cannot be resolved, her team is prepared to step in.

“It could be about the evaluation of the child: whether it adequately identifies the disability category and whether all suspected disabilities have been evaluated,” she says. “It could be about the program and placement that emanates from that evaluation. Sometimes parents want a less restrictive placement that involves being included with typical peers more often than the district might think is academically appropriate. It could involve a situation where the family wants the school district, at public cost, to pay for private school tuition for the child. We also have a lot of discipline issues, and sometimes they’re very serious.

“We’re dealing with so many different

areas of the law at all times under this umbrella of special education,” she continues. “It comprises constitutional law, criminal law, contract law, tort law, civil rights law, municipal law, administrative law. It requires a lot of skills that go far beyond just understanding the federal statute that gave rise to the field.”

Fortunately, she is surrounded by a trusted group of five other attorneys, each with their own strengths, and a talented support staff.

“We have a very strong team, and we also have a very strong team mentality,” Sereni says. “Every attorney brings a particular skill set to the equation. I don’t think we’ve had a situation yet—and I’m knocking wood—where one of us didn’t have the answer or know where to go to find the answer. There’s a lot of synergy between our teammates.”

Similarly, Sereni has cultivated a panel of non-legal consultants from all walks of life. They have allowed the firm to develop a unique auditing service in which school districts rely on Sereni Law Group to provide in-depth consulting before a dispute even arises, thoroughly assessing the systems in place and identifying any cracks.

That aspect of the practice has blossomed and shows no sign of slowing down. The firm specializes in providing systemic assessments of strengths and weaknesses across an institution, according to Sereni.

“We have staff that are capable of looking at everything from the top down: the administration, the organizational chart, the roles of administrators, programming, curriculum, special education systems, community involvement,” she adds. “They ask us to review all of those things and their policies, and then we come up with a plan. After we’ve assessed the things that need improvement, we help them implement that improvement. That is a very exciting area for us because we feel that’s where we can make the most difference.”

In addition, Sereni Law Group continues to have a robust solicitor practice in which the firm represents municipalities and handles contracts, relationships with other entities, ordinances, township meetings, Right to Know requests, and internal investigations. The firm also does both plaintiff and defense work in employment law and all matters of discrimination. In addition, the firm recently branched off into nonprofit law. In this capacity the firm’s attorneys provide board governance, 501(c)3 IRS determinations, drafting and reviewing of board bylaws, board and

executive training on fiduciary and operational responsibilities, contract drafting and review, risk management counseling, fundraising compliance, mission statement development, donor communications, and dissolution.

Sereni Law Group has come a long way in less than three years. In addition to its legal work, the firm continues to support philanthropic causes rooted in education. Recent efforts include purchasing every item on a local teacher’s Amazon classroom wish list; contributing supplies and donations to Drexel Neumann Academy, a parochial school where Sereni sits on the board; supporting youth athletic programs and teams; and sponsoring scholarships for high school students.

“Every person on our team recognizes that we owe our livelihood to education, one way or the other, and it’s a blessing that we’ve gotten to the point where we are able to give back in all kinds of special ways,” Sereni says. “We love supporting kids. All of those things are really meaningful to us, and we celebrate the fact that we’re able to do it.” ■

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