



Karen E. Samman

Partner

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What can I solve for you?

Drawing on my years of legal experience and my commitment to public education, I assist our public school clients in matters related to disability laws, student concerns, such as discipline and first amendment issues, school board governance, and privacy issues, as well as advise and train school administrators regarding the ever-evolving use of AI in the educational setting. I also conduct investigations under a school district uniform complaint procedures, and complaints against school district employees, and have acted as a decision-maker in Title IX matters. I regularly represent school districts before the California Office of Administrative Hearings, the California Department of Education, and before the United States Department of Education, Office for Civil Rights.

What's it like to work with me?

My commitment to public education makes working with our school district clients professionally rewarding. Forming strong relationships with our clients, I assist them solving every day issues they may encounter, but I also help them to identify potential legal liabilities they may encounter, providing advice and options of how to avoid prospective legal claims. I also collaborate with my clients to help them identify and remedy system weaknesses and staff practices to prevent recurrence of the same or similar legal issues. Also, and importantly, each of our school district clients have unique strategic goals, and I keep those goals in mind when providing legal counsel to them.

Overview

As a respected and experienced leader in education law, Karen Samman advises California school districts, county offices of education and special education local plan areas (SELPA) in multiple areas of practice. In particular, she provides legal advice to our clients in matters related to disability laws, students, board governance and privacy issues, and issues related to use of AI in the educational setting. She has conducted many investigations over her years of practice.

In her multifaceted practice, Karen draws on her deep familiarity with many topics. Bringing a long history of advocating for districts in a variety of forums, she represents clients before the California Office of Administrative Hearings, the California Department of Education (“CDE”), and before the United States Department of Education, Office for Civil Rights (“OCR”). Karen’s clients benefit from her decades of experience, including her tenure as a school district general counsel, where she provided legal advice and counsel to the governing board, the superintendent and school administrators on matters ranging from student and personnel issues, board governance, the Brown Act and the Public Records Act, charter school procedures, as well as questions related to disability laws such as the Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act and Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973.

Whether she’s advocating for clients in a case bound for a hearing or responding on behalf of a school district to OCR or CDE complaints, Karen enjoys the intellectual challenge of developing the theory of a case and then putting together the factual puzzle pieces and applying those facts to the law to make coherent and legally sound arguments in support of a school district’s position. She also is keenly aware that a school district’s actions must be aligned with its overall strategic goals, and with that knowledge, she counsels clients keeping those goals in mind. Karen understands that questions posed by our clients may have broader legal implications and impacts, and she readily identifies for the client these broader implications, and will reach out to others in our firm who may have an expertise that will benefit the client in solving a current legal issue. Clients, colleagues and other counsel find Karen’s steady, reassuring and level-headed approach calming.

Karen is a public servant at heart. Prior to focusing her practice in education law, Karen worked in multiple government agencies. She held a position as research attorney for the Oakland County Circuit Court, and thereafter as an Assistant Attorney General for the Michigan Attorney General’s Office, Children and Youth Services Division, where her legal practice focused on child protection laws. Additionally, as an Assistant District Counsel for the U.S. Department of Justice, Immigration and Naturalization Service, Karen litigated many cases at the administrative level and before the Board of Immigration Appeals. All these government agency experiences gave Karen not only legal research, analytical and litigation skills she translates into her education law practice today, but also an appreciation of the diligent work done each day by public servants.



Karen began her career as a teacher in a school with a high ratio of English language-learners and economically disadvantaged students. She also served as a founding board member of a charter school in Michigan. This intimate familiarity with the school environment, coupled with her personal commitment to public school education, affords Karen a unique understanding of issues districts face in educating students from a diverse array of backgrounds.

After School

I love doing anything that is related to sports and nature. A particular passion of mine is playing and watching basketball. Of course being in the Bay Area, the Golden State Warriors are my number one team. Hiking in nature always recharges my soul so whether after work, on the weekends, or on vacation, I am always on the lookout for hiking trails to explore the great outdoors. In addition, I enjoy reading just about anything, writing poetry, and studying languages.

Education

- Michigan State University College of Law (J.D.)
- The Ohio State University (B.A., Economics)

Admissions

Bar Admissions

- California
- Michigan

Related Services

- Special Education
- Student Rights & Discipline
- Virtual Learning

Related Clients

- Public Education K-12