

# Pre-Law E-Newsletter

Vol 1, No. 13

Monday, February 4, 2008 Sunday, February 10, 2008

- 
1. Message from the Advisor
  2. Practice Area Focus: Child Advocacy & Special Education Law
  3. Practitioner Interview: Fatema E. Dariani, Esq., Special Education Attorney
  4. Upcoming Pre-Law Meetings and Program Announcements
- 

## 1. MESSAGE FROM THE ADVISOR

Welcome back! I hope that everyone had a great winter break and holiday season and that Spring semester has kicked off well.

Current Applicants: Let me reiterate that it is great to hear updates on the status of your law school applications. Congratulations to those of you who have received some truly wonderful acceptances. And for those of you who are still waiting to hear from some schools and/or have been waitlisted, hang in there! As always, if you have any questions, be sure to meet with me or send an email.

Fall 2008 Applicants: If you intend to apply to law school this upcoming fall, for matriculation in Fall 2009, be sure to schedule an appointment with me this Spring if I have not met with you. At this time, you should be concentrating on letters of recommendation. If currently you do not have a relationship with a few faculty members, make an effort this semester to get to know your professors better. Visit them frequently during office hours. Remember you want to generate good letters of recommendation. The best letters of recommendation are generated by those with whom you have interacted on a regular basis. That way they can properly contextualize and promote you.

To everyone else: Explore options for gaining some internship/work experience in a legal setting this summer. It is important to gain some exposure to the legal field so that your decision to attend law school is an educated one. Now is not too early to begin your search. Be sure to visit the Career Center for assistance. Cast the net wide, and do your best to concretize a plan. Summer will be upon us in no time!

Ana L. Droskoski, Esq.

## 2. PRACTICE AREA FOCUS: CHILD ADVOCACY LAW

Child Advocacy Law involves advocating for the best interests of minors, in a myriad of areas including educational interests, safety and child welfare, and emotional and developmental needs. Initiatives can include proper foster care, school, and parental placement.

Special Education Law falls under the umbrella of Child Advocacy Law, and involves navigational efforts and steps made to ensure that individualized and intensive provisions are made to effectively educate special need children.

## 3. PRACTITIONER INTERVIEW: FATEMA E. DARIANI, ESQ., SPECIAL EDUCATION ATTORNEY

### Background & Bio

Fatema E. Dariani, Esq. is a Solo Practitioner with law offices in Rockville, Maryland and Washington, D.C. In her capacity as a Special Education Attorney, Ms. Dariani litigates administrative hearings against District of Columbia Public Schools, writes motions, and attends Individualized Education Program (IEP) meetings on behalf of children with special needs. Ms. Dariani also appears in D.C. Superior Court as a Court Appointed Special Education Advocate where she provides the Court with reports pertaining to the

education of neglected and abused children. In addition, Ms. Dariani acts a consultant in the field, conducting formal and informal training sessions for other education attorneys, paralegals, educational consultants, and school staff, presenting at national education law conferences, and publishing advisement articles on the matter.

### Questions

Describe a day in the life of a Special Education Attorney:

A typical day can involve attending a District of Columbia Public School administrative hearing to advocate for appropriate school placements and evaluations of children with physical and/or mental disabilities who have been placed in the DC Neglect System. This can include telephone and email exchanges, speaking and coordinating with Guardian ad Litem,\* social workers, law clerks, judges, foster parents, and my clients who are minors. Additionally, I may mitigate crisis situations with my clients, through telephone or in-person counsel. Other duties include observing my clients in school to ensure they are correctly placed, which may include speaking with school administrators, staff and teachers, and attending IEP meetings regarding the child's education to ensure that their educational goals are appropriate. Finally, my day may include drafting reports for judges regarding the child's current educational status, based on client visits and record review.

\*Court appointed, legal guardians of incapacitated persons, i.e., a minor, someone who is mentally ill, etc.

What initially attracted you to this field? What are some of the rewards of this area of law?

I enjoy working with the kids, as they seem to relate to me well. My clients range from age 4 to 20. This is because the D.C. Neglect System can maintain someone until age 21, and the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) and D.C. regulations state that those placed in the system are entitled to special education until age 22. Also, I genuinely enjoy working with people, and this is not a job where you push paper. It is a peoplecentered field where you deal with different people in many different roles and at various levels. I am able to litigate as an attorney, but I am also able to do a lot of "social work" with the kids. I am rarely in my office; instead, I am usually in court, litigating at an administrative hearing, visiting a child, visiting a school, etc. No one day is the same, so I rarely get bored. It is really great when you see a child improve or a child who did not speak much become a conversation starter because they are now in the right placement. The older kids actually thank you, and you feel like you made a difference to that one person.

What are some of the downsides of this area of law?

The negatives are that it does not pay much, and you are constantly on the move. My role is always preceded by a problem, but that is similar to any lawyer position. If there wasn't a problem, then I would not be needed. But with a problem, comes the opportunity to help solve it which is a positive. Another downside is learning to accept that you cannot please everyone. There are a lot of players - foster parents, biological parents, judges, social workers, guardian ad litem, and child/student - so you have to just focus on what is right for the child.

Do you have any advice for an undergraduate interested in pursuing this body of law?

Yes, if interested, take some psychology and/or child development courses to gain insight into how adolescent minds work. Also, do some volunteer work mentoring or tutoring kids for practical knowledge on how they interact.

### Contact Information

If you would like to learn more about the special education and child advocacy law, or have additional questions, you may contact Ms. Dariani directly via email at [tdariani@aol.com](mailto:tdariani@aol.com). More information can also be found posted on the following blogs:

[http://specialedlaw.blogs.com/home/special\\_education\\_news/index.html](http://specialedlaw.blogs.com/home/special_education_news/index.html) or <http://www.wrightslaw.com/>

## 4. UPCOMING PRE-LAW MEETINGS AND PROGRAM ANNOUNCEMENTS

Spring Programming ☺ coming soon!

LSAT Administration for 2008

Location: On campus, Hodson 110 - check with LSDAS for additional testing locations

Dates: Monday, June 16, 2008

Time: Registration begins at 12:30pm - consult with LSDAS for all controlling details

~~~~~  
STAFF IN THE OFFICE OF PRE-PROFESSIONAL PROGRAMS AND ADVISING

Ana L. Droskoski, Esq., Assistant Director, who advises Pre-Law students:

Walkins: Mondays 10:00am to 11:30am

Appts: Mondays/Thursdays 2:00pm to 4:00pm

Wednesdays 10:00am to 11:30am & 2pm to 3pm

David Verrier, Ph.D., Director, who advises Pre-Health students:

Walkins: Friday 10:00 am to 12:00 pm

Appts: Mondays/Tuesdays/Wednesdays/Thursdays 1:00 pm to 4:30 pm

The Administrative Coordinators are available to answer questions and schedule appointments:

Lena Harding, Administrative Secretary, lhardin7@jhu.edu 410-516-6743

For students whose last name begins with A-G, contact Ms. Harding.

Carolyn Mae Krause, Administrative Coordinator, ckrause@jhu.edu 410-516-6744

For students whose your last name begins with H-O, contact Mrs. Krause.

LaTonia Sanders, Administrative Coordinator, ladytee@jhu.edu 410-516-4140

For students whose last name begins with P-Z, contact Mrs. Sanders.

Angie Decker, Office Manager and Staff Supervisor, decker@jhu.edu

Please feel free to use the resource library between 8:30 a.m. and 4:30 p.m. everyday or visit our website <http://web.jhu.edu/prepro/> for additional information.