

Advocating for Your Child During Covid

By Hansen & Cleary, LLC

Imagine being a parent and feeling unable to successfully advocate for your child's needs in school. Many parents struggle to obtain the right educational services for their child. This is especially true for parents of children with disabilities.

When parents are unable to navigate the process at their child's school or within their District, they often look for legal help. Parents frequently reach out to Hansen & Cleary, LLC for assistance, even throughout the COVID-19 pandemic. In this disrupted educational environment, many children have needed additional or different special education services than in the past, and schools may be unwilling to accommodate those needs. This is where Hansen & Cleary, LLC becomes involved to support families in need.

Attorneys and partners, Jennifer Hansen and Lara Cleary, have devoted their careers to working with families struggling to navigate their schools on behalf of their children. "Four years ago, we opened our Northbrook office to expressly advocate for children who need special education services or who need additional services, including a possible change of placement," says Lara Cleary.

Jennifer Hansen's parents were educators and worked in schools with children with disabilities. She grew up around people with special needs and pursued a law degree

focused on helping people. Cleary began her career as a special education teacher in the Chicago Public Schools. She then attended law school to practice education law and assist individuals with special needs. In 2005, Hansen and Cleary began practicing law together. They launched Hansen & Cleary, LLC in 2017. Their practice has been busy ever since.

Hansen & Cleary, LLC's clients come from all around the Chicagoland area and the North Shore; many live in Northbrook. "The decision to open our practice in Northbrook was one that took into consideration the community, access to high-quality, office space and a location that was ideal for busy parents. We've been so pleased to be in Northbrook," says Jennifer Hansen. No matter the school district, "our clients are often already well-acquainted with the schools, health and legal systems in the area and need even more focused attention on the needs of their child. This is where we can be very helpful and the personal service we offer is one of the hallmarks of our practice," says Hansen.

"When we designed our practice," according to Cleary, "we knew we wanted to offer calm, organized, best-practices to our clients." Parents are already so stressed by their particular circumstances. "We work as collaboratively as possible with school districts to support our clients and advocate for their children's needs," says Hansen.

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The "AHAH" moment occurred to me as a high school senior in the 70's. I observed my future behind the counter of a new build, a coffee shop, Lord Byron's, (more recently China Chef). Becoming a Realtor was what I was going to do! At the time, becoming a Realtor, meant either being 21, or having an undergraduate degree. Off to New College in Sarasota, Florida I went! New College had been the winter home of the Barnem & Baily Circus, close to the Sarasota airport. After catching my breath, Dad said I came to my senses, I finished my undergraduate work at Roosevelt University in Social Work. Not a bad fit for real estate? The graduate degree in Marketing was at the same time I was at 1400 N. Lake Shore Drive working for Balcor Property Management in the early 80's, raising my first son William.

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While Hansen & Cleary, LLC offers legal services to children and their families, they also represent other types of clients including working with mental health professionals facing legal issues or professional licensing issues. "Our knowledge of mental health laws and licensure issues has been of great value to our professional clients, and we are not afraid to litigate when needed," says Hansen.

According to Hansen, "More than anything we want to help people in any way we can. We are compassionate but we are tough and willing to advocate for our clients in ways in which they take comfort." Hansen & Cleary, LLC welcomes inquiries from Northbrook neighbors seeking counsel.

"We're literally in the neighborhood and we want people to think of us when they need help and feel stressed. We can help and that's a good feeling when people look to us for expertise," says Cleary. Even after the pandemic and all the upheavals recede, Hansen & Cleary, LLC will be here for families as a legal resource that is close to home and in the neighborhood.

Hansen & Cleary, LLC is located at: 555 Skokie Boulevard, Suite 250, in Northbrook, Phone: 847-715-2801, hansenclery.com.



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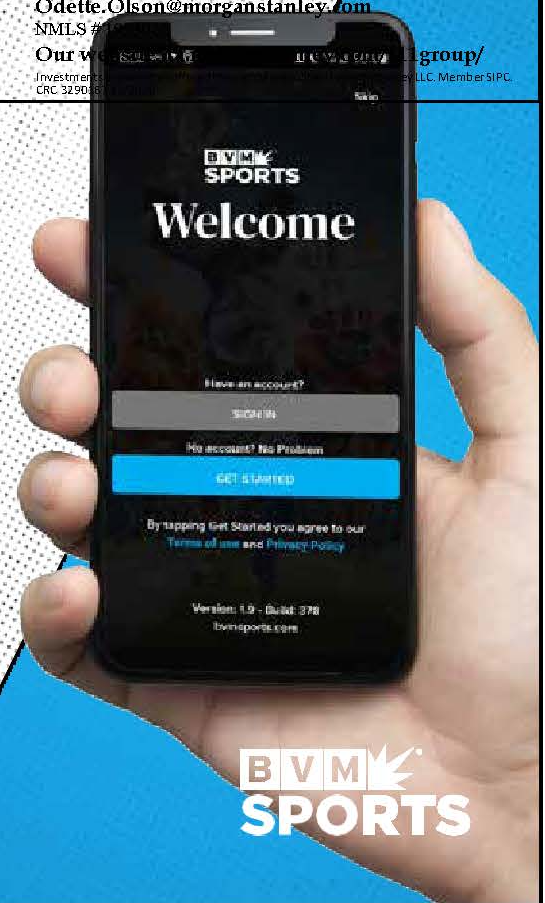
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