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Special Needs Advocates

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Attorneys at Hansen & Cleary bring a deep knowledge of the law regarding special needs education to advocate for clients and their families.
PHOTOGRAPHY BY ROBIN SUBAR

There may be no more frustrating experience for parents than being unable to successfully advocate for their children. Whether it's not getting the right services at school or dealing with the legal system, parents of children with special needs have few places to turn for support.

Attorneys at Northbrook-based Hansen & Cleary bring decades of experience working with children with special needs to help families facing important educational, health, or legal challenges.

“We advocate for children who need special education services or who need to have their educational services improved,” says Lara Cleary, a partner at the firm.

Cleary and her partner at Hansen & Cleary, Jennifer Hansen, pride themselves on a personal approach to their practice. Many of the firm's clients live on the North Shore and the attorneys have a deep knowledge of the schools, health, and legal systems in the region. It's likely they'll already have a relationship with officials who might be involved in their clients' cases.

Cleary always wanted to work with individuals with special needs and started her professional career as a special education teacher in the Chicago Public Schools before attending law school. Both of Hansen's parents worked in the education field and aided people with disabilities, so she grew up around people with special needs. Hansen and Cleary started practicing law together in 2005 and launched their current firm in Northbrook in 2017.

Because of their backgrounds, the two attorneys bring a unique perspective to their work with clients. As an educator, Cleary learned firsthand of the challenges faced by those with special needs and their families.

"We are extremely responsive to our clients," Cleary says. "We definitely have a level of empathy and understanding and are very accessible. We really want to help get clients where they need to be."

The approach to their practice was well-designed from the outset.

"We thought really hard about what we wanted our firm to be," Hansen says. "We recognize that who we're dealing with are children. Parents already have so much stress and we're trying to alleviate that so they can work collaboratively with their school districts in the future."

In addition to providing legal services to children and their families, Hansen and Cleary also represent mental health practitioners who may be facing legal issues or issues related to professional licensing. Their knowledge of the law and licensing requirements is a major asset for those clients. They also have extensive litigation experience.

"We're not afraid to litigate," Hansen says. "Clients want to hire professionals with a lot of litigation experience."

While unmatched knowledge and experience are keys to Hansen and Cleary's success, it's bringing both head and heart to their practice that most benefits clients.

"We like to problem solve and offer a solution," Hansen says. "It's not fun to hire an attorney and we want to make the process as painless as possible. We just want to help and make it better for our clients."

Hansen & Cleary, LLC is located at 555 Skokie Boulevard, Suite 250, in Northbrook, 847-715-2801, hansencleary.com (<http://hansencleary.com>).

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