



Carol R. Ashley

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Practices

Advice and Counsel

Industries

Higher Education

Admitted to Practice

- Illinois - C.D. Ill., 2001
- Illinois - N.D. Ill., 1994
- Illinois, 1994

Carol has dedicated her career to fostering civil rights within educational institutions and across the legal spectrum. A former enforcement director with the U.S. Department of Education, Office for Civil Rights (OCR), she is of counsel in the firm's Washington, D.C. office.

As OCR enforcement director, Carol led and managed complex agency investigations under Title IX, including cases involving allegations of sexual harassment and some of the nation's largest educational institutions and cases addressing policies impacting transgender students and student athletes. She has also assisted in the investigation of hundreds of complaints against private and public postsecondary and K–12 schools involving discrimination and sexual harassment issues.

Leveraging her regulatory experience and insight, Carol proactively advises higher education clients on the enforcement of federal statutes pertaining to harassment and discrimination based on race, color, national origin and shared ancestry, gender, and disability. She guides institutions to tackle and shed light on diversity and equity issues, identifying potential red flags and devising workable solutions. She handles investigations involving Title IX, race discrimination, and other sensitive issues and, when necessary, represents higher education and other educational institutions facing agency investigations and complaints.

Prior to her work at OCR, Carol litigated federal class actions involving allegations of race, national origin, and disability discrimination in educational settings and can provide advice to school districts navigating complicated matters involving school closures, redistricting, student assignment, and admission to selective enrollment programs.

Carol has served as the vice president of Advocacy at a national nonprofit organization committed to achieving economic and racial justice through litigation, policy development, and training. In that role she also collaborated with regional and state advocacy organizations on diversity, equity, and inclusion issues.

Professional Associations and Activities

- American Bar Association

Published Works

- "Socio-Economic Student Assignment Plans: Opportunities for Low-Income

Families and Racial Diversity in K-12 Public Schools,” Clearinghouse Review (March 2014) [Author]

- “Prying the Bars from the Schoolhouse: The U.S. Department of Education Issues Critical Guidance on School Discipline Policies,” Shriver Center Brief (February 2014) [Author]

Speeches

- “Bringing a Modern Take to Anti-Poverty Efforts,” National Legal Aid & Defender Association’s Annual Litigation and Advocacy Directors Conference (Austin, TX, June 2014) (panelist)
- “Translating Attorney Skills to the Skills Necessary to Supervise Staff/Managing Across Generations,” National Legal Aid & Defender Association’s Annual Litigation and Advocacy Directors Conference (Austin, TX, June 2014) (co-lead presenter)
- “Legal Aid Committee Racial Justice and Implicit Bias Seminars,” Chicago Bar Association
(Chicago, IL, 2014) (moderator and co-presenter)
- “What Legal Services Advocates Need to Understand about the 2013 U.S. Supreme Court Rulings Fisher v. UT-Austin and Shelby County v. Holder,” National Legal Aid & Defender Association’s Annual Litigation and Advocacy Directors Conference (Los Angeles, CA, June 2013) (co-lead presenter)
- “Addressing School Closings: Assisting Communities Before and After School Closures are Announced,” National Legal Aid & Defender Association’s Annual Litigation and Advocacy Directors Conference (Los Angeles, CA, June 2013) (co-lead presenter)
- “2011 Joint U.S. Departments of Education and Justice Guidelines on Race-Neutral and Race-Conscious Student Assignment/Practical Implications of Socio-Economic Measures,” American Association of School Administrators National Conference (Houston, TX, February 2012) (lead presenter)
- “Termination of CPS Desegregation Consent Decree,” WTTW Chicago Tonight (Chicago, IL, September 2009) (panelist)