

**Laura A. Athens**  
**Attorney and Mediator, PLC**  
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## **EDUCATION**

### **Washington University School of Law**

St. Louis, Missouri

*Juris Doctor* 1987

#### **Academic Honors and Activities**

Class Standing: Top 5 percent  
Order of the Coif  
Washington University Law Quarterly  
American Jurisprudence Awards: Contracts, Remedies  
Philip Gallop Award: Real Estate Transactions

### **University of Wisconsin**

Madison, Wisconsin

*Masters of Science in Social Work* 1980

### **University of Michigan**

Ann Arbor, Michigan

*Bachelors in Psychology* 1978

**Academic Honors:** Magna Cum Laude

Honors in Psychology

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## **LEGAL EXPERIENCE**

### **Attorney and Mediator, Farmington Hills, Michigan**

1994-present

- Mediate and facilitate university workplace conflict and culture issues
- Mediate guardianship disputes for aged and developmentally disabled individuals
- Arbitrate automotive warranty and Lemon Law cases
- Mediate special education, Title IX and bullying cases
- Mediate suspension and expulsion at disciplinary cases
- Mediate preschool, private school and college accommodation cases
- Mediate vocational rehabilitation disputes
- Advocate for policy, regulation and legislative reform
- Provide presentations on alternative dispute resolution and education law
- Publish articles on education, workplace, mediation, facilitation and arbitration

### **Special Education Hearing Officer**

1995-2006

- Managed pre-hearing conferences
- Ruled on pre-hearing motions
- Conducted mediation sessions

- Presided over special education due process hearings
- Issued Decisions with Findings of Fact and Conclusions of Law

### **Michigan Rehabilitation Services Hearing Officer and Mediator**

2002-2011

- Conducted pre-hearing conferences
- Facilitated mediation sessions
- Presided over vocational rehabilitation hearings
- Issued Decisions with Findings of Fact and Conclusions of Law

### **Adjunct Professor, Wayne State University School of Law**

1993-2003

- Taught Education Law course focusing on the legal rights of teachers and students, including discipline, academic freedom, freedom of speech and religion, separation of church and state, due process, equal protection, collective bargaining, teacher tenure and special education
- Taught Health law course and Bioethics seminar focusing on health care regulation, insurance, managed care, hospital and physician liability, tort reform, organ transplantation, termination of life support, genetic engineering and human reproductive technology
- Obtained grant for interdisciplinary research project on legal and policy implications of employment of individuals with disabilities
- Conducted research with a Professor of Engineering and published article in connection with the interdisciplinary project

### **Visiting Assistant Professor, Washington University School of Law – Full-time position**

1989-1992

- Taught Legal Research and Writing courses focusing on analysis and interpretation of statutes and regulations, synthesis of case law, legal research, preparation of memoranda, trial and appellate briefs, oral argument, negotiation, advocacy and professional ethics

### **Judicial Clerk to Chief Judge John F. Nangle, United States District Court of Eastern Missouri**

1987-1989

- Managed hundreds of cases involving civil rights, labor union, employment, odometer fraud, corporate, product liability, patents, social security, environmental and criminal matters
- Conducted legal research
- Prepared memoranda on legal issues
- Drafted decisions on motions and opinions in non-jury trials

### **Adjunct Professor, Washington University School of Law – Part-time position**

1987-1989

- Taught Legal Research and Writing course

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## **PUBLICATIONS**

*The Blame-Shame Game in Mediation*, Detroit Legal News (November 2021)

*Top Ten Biases and Distortions in Mediation*, Legal Daily News (January 2021)

*The Role of Restorative Practices in Effectively Addressing Gender Discrimination and Harassment in the Workplace*, Mediate.com (Sept. 2020)

*Facilitating Positive Change in the Workplace*, Oakland County News: ADR Spotlight (November 25, 2017).

*The New Michigan Emergency Seclusion and Restraint Law and the Role of the Mediator*,

Oakland County News: ADR Spotlight (August 25, 2017).  
*Bullying and Harassment in the Schools: The Prevalence, Parameters and Proactive Solutions*, Laches (Jan. 2016).  
*Overcoming Reluctance to Engage in Mediation*, Oakland County Legal News (March 2014).  
*Confidentiality Does not Automatically Extend to Pre-Mediation Resolution Sessions*, Laches (May 2010).  
*Creating Parameters for Arbitration*, Laches 23 (May 2009).  
*ADR in Special Education Matters Benefits Parents and School Districts*, Michigan Lawyers Weekly, (October 20, 2008).  
*Arbitration: Have It Your Way: Customizing the Dispute Resolution Process To Your Unique Needs*, PREM<sub>i</sub> Newsletter, (September 2008).  
*Alternative Dispute Resolution in Special Education*, Laches 11 (May 2005).  
*Maintaining Balance in the World of Law Practice*, Laches 13 (May 2003).  
*Is the Wall Between Church and State Crumbling? United States Supreme Court Upholds School Vouchers Primarily Benefiting Religious Schools in Zelman v. Simmons-Harris*, Michigan Bar Journal (Sept. 2002).  
*Special Protections for Students with Disabilities*, Laches 13 (March 2001).  
*A Victory for Employees with Disabilities: SSDI Benefits Do Not Preclude Employment Discrimination Claims under the ADA*, 79 Mich. Bar. J. 830 (July 2000).  
*Come to the "Inn"*, Laches 30 (March 2000).  
*Mediation of Special Education Disputes*, Laches 17 (February 1999).  
*Solo Networking*, Laches 26 (August 1998).  
*Mediation: An Option to Consider*, Laches 18 (October 1997).  
*The Case for Specialization*, Laches 26 (October 1996).  
*Adapting the Judicial Approach to Medical Malpractice Claims Against Physicians to Reflect Medicare Cost Containment Measures*, 62 U. Colo. L. Rev. 287 (1991).  
*Recent Development, The Urgent Need for Surrogate Motherhood Legislation*, 65 Wash. U. L. Q. 488 (1987).  
*Comment, Constitutionality of Limitations on Attorneys' Fees in Medical Malpractice Actions*, 64 Wash. U. L. Q. 635 (1986).

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## PROFESSIONAL AFFILIATIONS

State Bar of Michigan  
The Missouri Bar  
Board of Social Work, Master's Social Worker, Clinical and Macro License  
Professional Resolution Experts of Michigan (PREM<sub>i</sub>) 2007-present  
National Academy of Distinguished Neutrals – Michigan Chapter inducted 2021  
State Bar of Michigan, ADR Council 2007-2013  
Oakland County Bar Association: Solo and Small Firm Committee, Chairperson 1998-99  
Oakland County Bar Association: Alternative Dispute Resolution Committee, Chairperson 2004-05  
Autism Alliance of Michigan Board of Trustees 2012-present  
Inn of Court 1997-2003  
Association for Conflict Resolution, Michigan Southeast Chapter 2007- 2013  
State Bar of Michigan, Character & Fitness, District I Committee, 2007-2009  
Office of Special Education & Early Intervention Services Magistrate Referent Group 2003  
Divorce Mediation 40 hour training: Mediation Training and Consultant Institute 1995  
Teachers, Lawyers and Children Program 1996-97  
Conflict Resolution in the Schools Project 1997-98

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## **ADR TRAINING**

National Center for Dispute Settlement (NCDS) Automotive Warranty Arbitration Training Oct. 2021; Arbitration Fundamentals and Best Practices for AAA Consumer Arbitrators, American Arbitration Association, June 2021; DeMars and Associates, Ltd., Consumer Arbitration Program Resolution Training (CAP-Motors) Refresher Training 2021; SBM Alternative Dispute Section, Mediating High Conflict Disputes, 2021; DeMars and Associates, Ltd., Recreational Vehicle Mediator Refresher Training, 2021; DeMars and Associates, Ltd., Construction Arbitration Program for Home, Warranty and Construction Program 2020; DeMars and Associates, Ltd., Recreational Vehicle Mediator Training, 2020; DeMars and Associates, Ltd., Consumer Arbitration Program (CAP-Motors) Refresher Training 2020; DeMars and Associates, Ltd., Ford Powershift Transmission Class Action Arbitration Training Program 2017; SBM Alternative Dispute Resolution Section Annual Meetings and Conferences, 2008-2021; Advanced Negotiation & Dispute Resolution Institute (ANDRI), sponsored by Institute for Continuing Legal Education (ICLE) March 2008-2015, Professional Resolution Experts of Michigan ADR trainings 2012, 2013, 2014; Advanced Mediator Training: Understanding and Managing Difficult Conflicts 2003 Restorative Justice, sponsored by Association for Conflict Resolution March 2008; 40-hour Mediation Training, Advanced Mediation Training and Consultant Institute 1995

**REFERENCES AVAILABLE UPON REQUEST**