



SCHOOL & COLLEGE LEGAL SERVICES
OF CALIFORNIA

**TITLE IX PART II –
CONDUCTING TITLE IX
INVESTIGATIONS**

October 14, 2021

Presented by:

Kaitlyn Schwendeman, Assistant General Counsel
and
Leah M. Smith, Associate General Counsel

Kaitlyn A. Schwendeman

Assistant General Counsel

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Areas of Expertise

Collective Bargaining

Personnel and Student Issues

Special Education



Experience

Ms. Schwendeman's practice is concentrated collective bargaining and personnel matters. She also provides assistance to clients in special education and Section 504 law, and student matters. She regularly counsels school districts and county offices of education on a wide range of day-to-day legal issues. Ms. Schwendeman has appeared before the California Department of Fair Employment and Housing, California Department of Labor Standards and Enforcement and the U.S. Department of Education's Office for Civil Rights, as well as other administrative agencies tasked with investigating and enforcing civil rights and labor laws.

Prior to joining SCLS, Ms. Schwendeman practiced special and general education law in New York State for three years at a law firm in Albany, New York. She then joined a boutique law firm in San Francisco, practicing private-sector labor and employment law. During law school, Ms. Schwendeman served as a law clerk to the late Justice Melvin P. Schweitzer, New York State Supreme Court, Commercial Division, in New York County. Before becoming an attorney, Ms. Schwendeman taught music in the New York City public schools.

Ms. Schwendeman is a member of the State Bars of California and New York.

Education

B.Mus, University of Hartford, Hartt School of Music, *summa cum laude* (2010)

J.D., Fordham University School of Law (2015)

Year joined SCLS: 2019

School and College Legal Services (SCLS) is a joint powers authority serving school districts, county offices of education, SELPAs, and community colleges in over fifteen counties in Northern California. Our primary focus, as a *preventative law firm*, is helping clients avoid future costly legal problems. We are a collaborative office, working to ensure our clients receive the most legally defensible advice in the most efficient manner possible.



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Leah M. Smith

Associate General Counsel

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Areas of Expertise

Special Education; Section 504 Issues; Student and Parent Issues including Student Discipline; Personnel; Investigations; Compliance and Discrimination Complaints



Experience

Ms. Smith's practice focuses on advising public school district and county offices of education clients on special education, Section 504, and student discipline/student services. Ms. Smith also advises clients on personnel investigations and discipline, HR matters, sexual harassment and Title IX compliance, FERPA, EEOC and OCR complaints and investigations, and Public Records Act requests.

Prior to joining SCLS, Ms. Smith practiced education law representing public school districts/LEAs as a partner with a private law firm for 8 1/2 years, where she developed expertise in all stages of special education litigation and represented public school districts extensively on matters pending before the Office of Administrative Hearings.

While in law school, Ms. Smith served as the president of the Alternative Dispute Resolution competition team and gained practical experience representing students and parents through the William & Mary special education clinic. Ms. Smith also interned at a non-profit organization advocating for the civil and legal rights of children with intersex traits, as well as for the Sonoma County District Attorney's office as a certified law clerk.

Ms. Smith is a member of the State Bar of California.

Education

B.A., University of California at Berkeley (2009)
J.D., William & Mary Law School, cum laude (2012)

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