



AUSTIN OFFICE

DENISE HAYS

OF COUNSEL

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“Building solid relationships with the client is critical to effective representation. This includes ensuring the client understands legal strategies each step of the way. I’ve prioritized this approach in my practice, and in particular when dealing with students with significant mental health challenges. This approach has turned seemingly unsolvable problems into solutions that benefit the students, school and the community.”



Denise Hays has a background in special education, a master’s degree in school counseling, and taught special education prior to attending law school. She comes from a family of West Texas educators as her father was an elementary principal. Prior to joining Walsh Gallegos, Denise was a staff attorney with the Texas Association of School Boards (TASB). She also served as a hearing officer for school boards across the state assisting them in conducting local termination, nonrenewal, and grievance hearings. She began her legal career as a briefing, then research, attorney for the Honorable Austin O. McCloud, former Chief Justice of the 11th Court of Appeals.

Her experience at TASB gave her direct insight into the inner workings of school district Boards of Trustees, how to effectively assist these governmental entities, and navigate current challenges that school boards confront on a daily basis. She focuses her legal practice in the areas of student safety issues, and special education, including litigation and other student-related issues, and has been instrumental in the development of special education cooperatives, formerly shared services arrangements, and interlocal agreements.

A popular and frequent speaker, Denise has trained hundreds of board members, special education directors, administrators, and teachers. She frequently lectures at universities and has presented at numerous conferences for the Texas School Administrators’ Legal Digest (now ED311), the University of Texas School of Law, LRP, and the National Employment Law Institute (NELI). She is a former chair of the School Law Section of the State Bar of Texas and served on the board for several years.

She is the principal architect of the School Safety Blueprint, a comprehensive guide and training for school districts, for use when encountering students with significant mental health challenges and those who have the propensity to commit acts of targeted school violence.

PRACTICE AREAS

Students
Special Education

LICENSING & COURT ADMISSIONS

Licensed in the State of Texas

EDUCATION

St. Mary’s University School of Law (1989)
Hardin Simmons University
Master of Education in School Counseling
Abilene Christian University
Bachelor of Science in Education, Special Education

MEMBERSHIP

Texas Council of School Attorneys
State Bar of Texas

PUBLICATIONS

Various articles for the *Texas School Administrator’s Legal Digest*