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JACOB S. FELDMAN received his Juris Doctor from Brooklyn Law School in 1976 and his B.A. (cum laude) from Brooklyn College, in 1972. He is admitted to practice law in the State Courts of New York, the United States Supreme Court, the Second Circuit and the Federal Circuit Courts of Appeals, the Court of Federal Claims, and the Southern and Eastern District Courts of New York. From September, 1977 until December 1987, he was an associate senior counsel in the office of the General Counsel to the New York State United Teachers, where he handled school-related litigation involving constitutional and education law rights, seniority disputes, tenure rights and tenure areas in federal and state courts. Since 1987 he has represented public school districts as general counsel. He has handled the defense of public school districts in major federal and state litigation involving civil rights, age, race, disability and sexual discrimination matters, sexual harassment complaints, special education matters, complaints alleging First, Fifth and Fourteenth Amendment violations as related to the collection of school district taxes, and appeals to the Appellate Division, First and Second Departments, the New York State Court of Appeals and to the Second Circuit Court of Appeals. He has handled the successful defense of dozens of impartial hearings and appeals to the SRO on behalf of school districts. He has represented clients in arbitrations administered by the American Arbitration Association, and administrative proceedings before PERB, the State Division of Human Rights and the EEOC.

He is a member of the Labor and Employment Law Sections of the New York State Bar Association; and the former Chairperson of the Education Law Committee of the Nassau County Bar Association. Mr. Feldman is a frequent speaker and participant in various special education law programs, speaking on topics including "Developing a Bulletproof IEP," student discipline, preparation for and defense of impartial hearings and Section 504, conducted by the Nassau County Bar Association, the Nassau-Suffolk Academies of Law, NYSSBA, the Long Island Association of School Personnel Administrators, the LIASEA, the Council of New York Special Education Administrators, Lorman Education Services, PESI, St. John's University, and many of our school district clients. He is the author of "Americans With Disabilities Act: Employer Obligations," Journal of Individual Employment Rights, Vol.2, #2 (1993) and "Discipline of Tenured Employees Pursuant to Education Law §3020-a, Journal of Collective Negotiations in the Public Sector, Vol.28, #2 (1999). He is the author of the "Read All About It" column, a monthly compilation of special education cases appearing in the "Attorney's Corner" of



the Centris Group's Directors' Website. He received LIASEA's 2010 Award of Distinction for his special education work on behalf of school districts. He has been recognized annually by Pulse magazine as one of Long Island's Top Legal Eagles in the field of Education Law for the period of 2010-2018 and as a "Legal Leader - New York Area's Top Rated Lawyers" of 2013-2018 in the fields of education and labor law.



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Michele Kule-Korgood has devoted more than twenty-three years in private practice to representing parents of children with disabilities in order to secure an effective education for their children. While studying psychology as an undergraduate, Michele became a personal care assistant for a classmate with cerebral palsy. Her classmate's refusal to be defined by his disability inspired Michele to pursue a career in teaching special education. Years later, as a special education teacher, Michele's efforts to help a student obtain assistive technology, so he could have a voice in the world, again changed the course of her life. In order to effect change for a greater number of people, she decided to attend law school and become a legal advocate on behalf of people with disabilities. Today, Michele is one of the most well-known, respected attorneys in the field and has successfully handled thousands of matters in special education, ensuring that every child receives equal access to the high quality education to which he or she is entitled.

Her experience working closely with other professionals in the field, as well as her extensive knowledge of educational programs, allow Michele to assist parents in finding and accessing appropriate placements and services. As a former special educator, Michele brings unique insight into the complex issues related to obtaining effective opportunities for children.

Nationally, Michele is highly sought after as a speaker on special education law and policy. She has chaired many conferences, and presented on various topics in special education law at numerous conferences, including those held by the Council of Parent Attorneys and Advocates (COPAA), the New York State Bar Association, the Practising Law Institute, and Lehigh University, and at various agencies which provide education and advocacy services. Michele has argued and presented cases involving novel issues in the U.S. Second Circuit Court of Appeals, Eastern and Southern District Courts, the Appellate Division and state Supreme Court (including as lead counsel, along with Greenberg, Traurig, in the landmark decision of *Mr. and Mrs. A v. N.Y. City Dep't of Educ.* (S.D.N.Y. 2011), holding that the exercise of rights under IDEA cannot be made to depend on the financial means of a disabled child's parents, and extending the right for direct tuition payment to schools for parents without economic means, pursuant to the *Burlington/Carter* analysis). She has a number of published decisions in various courts in special education and additional education-related areas of law.



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Carol A. Melnick is a partner in the Firm's Education and Municipal Law Practice Groups, where she handles a wide range of matters as general and labor counsel for public school districts, public libraries and other municipal entities. Ms. Melnick's general counsel background includes policy development, Freedom of Information Law and Open Meetings Law matters, election issues, fiscal management, administrative-level hearings regarding special education matters, student discipline, residency issues, and appeals to the Commissioner of Education and the State Review Officer. In addition, Ms. Melnick litigates special education matters in both State and Federal Courts. Her Labor Law experience includes collective bargaining, contract administration, grievance arbitration, administrative-level hearings regarding employee discipline, practice before the Public Employment Relations Board, practice before the State Division of Human Rights, and counseling on various employment-related matters under the New York State Labor Laws, Fair Labor Standards Act, Family Medical Leave Act, Americans with Disabilities Act, Executive/Human Rights Laws and Title VII. Ms. Melnick frequently lectures on issues relating to special education.

Ms. Melnick received her Juris Doctor degree in 1993 from Brooklyn Law School. She is admitted to practice law in the courts of the State of New York and New Jersey and in the United States District Court for the Eastern and Southern Districts of New York and the District of New Jersey. Ms. Melnick is an active member of the Nassau and New York State Bar Associations, and their respective Education, Labor and Employment and Municipal Law Sections. Ms. Melnick is also a Board Member of the Labor and Employment Relations Association (LERA).



**Ann Mergler**

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Ann Mergler is an educational advocate who started her own firm, Advocate For Success LLC, fifteen years ago. She assists parents by evaluating full educational records, conferencing with service providers, assisting families in strategizing and then attending the Committee for Special Education (CSE), meetings. Prior to that, she worked for North Shore Child and Family Guidance Center and Long Island Advocacy Center. She spent seven years volunteering for the Port Washington Public School System as a Parent Member of the CSE, which was a wonderful window into the world of Special Education.

She was a Fellow and graduate of the Leadership Education in Neurodevelopmental Disabilities (LEND) program at the New York Medical College, and holds an MBA from Adelphi University. She is an active member of COPAA (Council of Parent Attorneys and Advocates), CHADD, and attends conferences for the Council for Exceptional Children, Long Island Parents Council and has written articles for local papers helping parents with questions about children with special needs. She is the proud mother of 4 young adults who all attended Port Washington Public Schools.



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Alison is a special education attorney in the Firm's White Plains office. She is a graduate of Wheaton College (B.A., magna cum laude) Pace University Law School (J.D., summa cum laude), where she served as an editor of the Pace International Law Review and received the Extraordinary pro Bono Justice Award. As an undergraduate, she studied in Mexico where she volunteered in an orphanage for children with mental and physical disabilities. As a law student, Alison worked in the Disability Rights Clinic on behalf of children with special needs and externed for Hon. Kenneth M. Karas in the United States District Court for the Southern District of New York. Prior to joining the Cuddy Law Firm, Alison worked for Legal Services of the Hudson Valley, representing clients with mental illness in civil matters. She lives in Westchester County. She is the sister of a special needs child.



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After graduating from St. John's Law cum laude and as a member of the American Bankruptcy Institute Law Review, Colleen Parker began her legal career as a commercial litigation associate with a large firm in New York City. After seven years as a litigator, Colleen transitioned from litigation to focus on special education law. She had her own firm where she represented parents of children with disabilities in disputes with school districts and counseled them on their child's right to a free and appropriate public education.

Colleen has also been certified as an impartial hearing officer for the New York City Department of Education where she hears disputes between the New York City Board of Education and parents. As an Assistant Director of Career Development, she assists students and alumni with resume and cover letter writing, interviewing techniques, identifying areas of potential practice, and job search strategies.





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A tireless advocate for clients challenged by age and disability-related issues, Ms. Robert offers skilled, compassionate representation to those dealing with elder care matters.

JOAN LENSKEY ROBERT is a member of KASSOFF, ROBERT & LERNER LLP, a law firm in Rockville Centre, New York practicing exclusively in the areas of elder law and disability law. Ms. Robert is a graduate of Skidmore College, where she was a member of Periclean, the Skidmore College Honor Society, the University of Pennsylvania, where she studied pursuant to a Ford Foundation Fellowship, and Touro College School of Law, summa cum laude, where she was the recipient of a Deans Fellowship and was valedictorian of the part time division. Prior to entering the practice of law, Ms. Robert taught French with the Valley Stream Central High School District.

Ms. Robert served as Chair of the New York State Bar Association Elder Law Section from 2003-2004 and served as Co-Chair of its Special Needs Planning Committee from 2006-2009. She is now Co-Chair of the Section's Mentoring program. She is a past member of the Committee of Persons with a Disability and of the Committee on Committees of the New York State Bar Association. She is an attorney member of the Guardianship Advisory Committee formed by the Office of Court Administration. She received a Lifetime Achievement Award from the Elder Law Section in January, 2014. She has been named a Super Lawyer for 2014.

A past Director of the Nassau County Bar Association and a past chair of its Elder Law/Social Services/Health Advocacy Committee, Ms. Robert served as Dean of the Nassau Academy of Law. She served as a member of the Board of Directors of the Nassau County Bar Association and as a member of its nominating committee.

Ms. Robert is Past President of the New York Chapter of NAELA, the National Academy of Elder Law Attorneys and was a Co-Chair of the Special Needs Planning Summit sponsored by NAELA. She is a member of the Publications and Programs Task Force and is Co-Chair of the State Chapters Committee of NAELA. She received the NAELA award as outstanding member of the New York Chapter in 2012 and also received the Theresa Foundation Award for outstanding service and advocacy to persons with special needs, sponsored by NAELA.



Ms. Robert has been honored for outstanding service by the Long Island Alzheimer's Foundation, Project Real and the National Multiple Sclerosis Society.. She served on the Board of Editors of the Bill of Particulars, the publication of the New York State Trial Lawyers Association, which honored her as outstanding downstate speaker. She is a past Editor in Chief of the New York Elder Law and Guardianship Newsletter. She co-wrote the chapter on Special Needs Planning in the book Guardianship Practice in New York State and wrote the chapters on Medicaid liens and planning in Personal Injury Actions in New York published by the New York State Bar Association. The author of numerous articles for community groups and professional groups concerning elder law and disability law, Ms. Robert has been a faculty member at various Bar Association programs concerning Elder Law, Supplemental Needs Trusts and asset preservation, and has been an instructor at certified training programs for Guardians, Supplemental Needs Trust Trustees and Court Evaluators.

Ms. Robert and her husband, Charles, are the proud parents of Heather Robert Coffman, Esq. and Jay Robert, Esq., an associate at Kassoff, Robert & Lerner, LLP. They are the doting grandparents of Naomi Coffman and Leo Coffman, residents of San Francisco, and Edie Robert, of Brooklyn.