

## Illinois Special Education Due Process Hearing Officers

<p><b>Beatriz A. Diaz-Pollack</b></p>	<p>Beatriz A. Diaz-Pollack is a licensed attorney in the states of Illinois and Wisconsin. She began her legal career in civil legal services, providing representation primarily in family, landlord-tenant, and consumer law matters to individuals living below the poverty line. Subsequent to this practice of law, Ms. Diaz-Pollack entered an alternative teaching certification program and taught elementary school in the Chicago Public Schools while also pursuing a Master of Science in Education. Following attainment of her Masters, she served as a teaching assistant and research coach for courses in Northwestern University's School of Education and Social Policy.</p> <p>Ms. Diaz-Pollack previously worked as an Assistant General Counsel for the Illinois State Board of Education, concentrating primarily on state funding and special education issues. Currently, Ms. Diaz-Pollack primarily serves as a Special Education Due Process Hearing Officer in Illinois and as a Special Education State Review Officer for the state of Nevada.</p> <p>Ms. Diaz-Pollack holds a Bachelor of Arts in Journalism from the University of Wisconsin-Madison, a Juris Doctor from the University of Wisconsin Law School and a Master of Science in Education and Social Policy from Northwestern University. As a law student, she was proud, along with her participation in a number of student organizations and clinical programs, to be named the Latino/a Law Students' Association Student of the Year and receive the Brown v. Board of Education Award for outstanding commitment to Public Education and Poverty Law in 2001.</p> <p>Ms. Diaz-Pollack became a hearing officer in April, 2013 and reappointed in July, 2019, following a requested leave of absence, and is excluded from taking cases in Elgin School District #U-46.</p>
<p><b>Kathleen Fuhrmann</b></p>	<p>Ms. Fuhrmann is a practicing attorney licensed by the State of Illinois. She received her Bachelor's Degree in Elementary Education in from Governors State University in 1986 and her Juris Doctorate from Illinois Institute of Technology Chicago Kent College of Law in 2002.</p> <p>Ms. Fuhrmann is a former teacher with experience as a general and special education teacher. As an attorney, she was an Assistant State's Attorney prosecuting in juvenile court in the areas of truancy, abuse/neglect and dependency and delinquency. Ms. Fuhrmann also served as a court monitor of the Chicago Public Schools under the Corey H. consent decree for the Illinois State Board of Education. Prior to going into private practice, Ms. Fuhrmann served as a civil legal services attorney serving families at or below the poverty line in the areas of disability, family, consumer and landlord tenant law.</p>

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	<p>Ms. Fuhrmann is currently a private practitioner in Kankakee County. She restricts her practice to the areas of family law, probate (primarily guardianship of disabled adults and minors), and social security disability. She is an active member of the Kankakee County Bar Association and a member of the Illinois State Bar Association. Ms. Fuhrmann also serves as a child custody mediator and guardian ad litem for children and disabled adults in the Twenty-First Judicial Circuit Court. In addition, Ms. Fuhrmann is an adjunct professor for Concordia University who periodical teaches school law and special education law.</p> <p>Ms. Fuhrmann became an active hearing officer in March of 2015 and is excluded from taking cases in Kankakee School District 111, and Manteno School District 5.</p>
<b>Janet Maxwell-Wickett</b>	<p>Janet Maxwell-Wickett is in private law practice with her primary office in Rolling Meadows, Illinois. She is licensed to practice law in Illinois and is also admitted to practice before the United States District Court for the Northern District of Illinois. She received her Bachelor's Degree in Business Administration from the University of Michigan in 1991 and her Juris Doctorate from DePaul University College of Law in 1997. She practices primarily in the area of family law litigating divorce, parentage, and child custody and support issues. She has also represented families with children with special education needs. She is an active member of the Chicago Bar Association, Northwest Suburban Bar Association, and Illinois State Bar Association.</p> <p>Ms. Maxwell-Wickett began her legal career as an Assistant State's Attorney in McHenry County where she prosecuted traffic, misdemeanor criminal, and domestic violence offenses. She served as a staff attorney to the Hon. Joseph J. Urso and the Hon. Colleen McSweeney Moore in the Circuit Court of Cook County's Criminal Division and as an Assistant Corporation Counsel in the City of Chicago's Municipal Prosecutions Unit. She previously served as an impartial hearing officer for the State of Illinois, Department of Human Services, Home Services Program.</p> <p>Ms. Maxwell-Wickett works as a pro bono attorney with Chicago Volunteer Legal Services and Legal Assistance Foundation of Chicago. As a volunteer attorney with Chicago Volunteer Legal Services, she served as counsel in divorce cases and as a child's representative, representing children in disputed custody cases. She has also served as counsel in guardianship cases for disabled children and adults. As a volunteer attorney with Legal Assistance Foundation, she has represented families of children with special education needs. Ms. Maxwell-Wickett is an active volunteer in Park Ridge/Niles School District 64 where she served on the Executive Board of the Franklin Elementary PTA and served as a Trustee on the Board of District 64's Elementary Learning Foundation.</p> <p>Ms. Maxwell-Wickett became a hearing officer in July 2014 and is excluded from taking cases in Park Ridge/Niles School Districts 64 &amp; 207.</p>

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<b>Mary Schwartz</b>	<p>Mary Schwartz has worked with children with disabilities and their families throughout her career as an attorney and a licensed clinical professional counselor. She received her master's degree from the University of Chicago in educational psychology and her juris doctorate from Valparaiso University School of Law.</p> <p>As Legal Director for the Center for Disabilities and Elder Law in Chicago, she worked extensively on programs to address the needs of children with disabilities, including the programs on special education and Social Security. She also has represented children and families in adoption, mental health, guardianship and family law matters. Additionally, she is a trained divorce mediator, concentrating in mediating child custody and parenting agreements.</p> <p>Ms. Schwartz's work in mental health includes experiences across the mental health continuum, including hospital based outpatient treatment, residential treatment, community-based mental health agency, and private practice. She also has worked as a consultant and in-service training provider for private schools in the metropolitan Chicago area and has presented at local, state and national conferences on many mental health, disability, and legal issues. She has served on community boards, including the Disability Ethics Board at the Rehabilitation Institute of Chicago, the Association of Child Psychotherapists, and the Geriatric Advisory Council to the Illinois Department of Human Services.</p> <p>Mary Schwartz became a hearing officer in July 2005 and resides in the City of Chicago.</p>

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<b>Mary Jo Strusz</b>	<p>Mary Jo Strusz received her Juris Doctorate from Loyola University College of Law in 1982. Prior to that she obtained a Bachelor Degree from Loyola University majoring in History/Political Science/Archeology. She is licensed to practice law in Illinois and is admitted to practice before the United States District Court for the Northern District of Illinois.</p> <p>In 1983, she began a private practice in Chicago, concentrating in the areas of financial law (bankruptcy, probate, corporate and real estate) and family law (representing divorcing parties and children). She has litigated in the Federal courts and Circuit Court of Cook County. Currently her private practice is solely in the area of real estate. In 2006, she was appointed by the City of Chicago as an Independent Administrative Law Judge. In that capacity, she has conducted hundreds of contested hearings in all areas of administrative practice (except taxation).</p> <p>She is married and is the mother of three adult children. Two of her children needed educational assistance during their grade school and high school years. During her children’s school years, she was a Girl Scout Leader, community organizer and President of the School Board. Currently, she is a volunteer Catechist and Leader of the RCIA program at her Church. She enjoys volunteering with high school and college students in Mock Trial competitions.</p> <p>Ms. Strusz became a hearing officer in May of 2016 and she resides in the City of Chicago.</p>
<b>Leah Trinkala</b>	<p>Leah Trinkala is a licensed attorney in Illinois. She has been an independent Administrative Law Judge with the City of Chicago, Department of Administrative Hearings since 1996. Ms. Trinkala, also, conducts formal hearings involving grievances the tenants have filed against the Chicago Housing Authority. Previously, Ms. Trinkala was employed as a Hearing Officer with the City of Chicago, Department of Consumer Services from 1991 to 1996.</p> <p>Ms. Trinkala has an MBA from DePaul University Kellstadt School of Business and has a law degree from DePaul University College of Law. She received her B.A. from the University of Pittsburgh and graduated Cum Laude.</p> <p>Ms. Trinkala is very concerned about the welfare of animals and has been actively involved with the Anti-Cruelty Society for over 14 years. She was recently appointed as the Secretary of the Development Council Committee of the Anti-Cruelty Society. She, also, has Persian cats of her own.</p> <p>Ms. Trinkala became a hearing officer in May of 2016 and resides in the City of Chicago.</p>