



Sheryl Jaffee Halpern

Principal

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Chair of the firm's Labor & Employment group, Sheryl helps employers make important decisions in a way that is designed to minimize risk. She counsels business owners and senior leaders on a wide range of business and employment matters, providing clear and direct guidance that promotes legal compliance, while remaining cognizant of practical workplace realities her clients face.

Sheryl prides herself on being responsive and detail-oriented. She often serves as a legal quarterback, supported by Much's full-service team to help clients address complicated day-to-day legal issues as well as big picture business objectives.

"Employers don't want their lawyer to tell them what they can't do. They want to know what they can do to achieve their goals. I advise clients on what the law provides and what their 'best practices' would be, while helping them make practical business decisions that work for them."

At Much, Sheryl is a member of the Management Committee where she helps chart the firm's long-term direction and strategic growth. She also co-leads Much University, the firm's continued education and professional development initiative, and serves as chair emeritus of the Much Women's Initiative.

In her practice, Sheryl listens to – and truly hears – her clients so that she can develop an understanding of the unique legal and business challenges they face. She recognizes that building a relationship involves more than just attending to the project at hand, and she works hard to get to know her clients – the businesses and the people – so they can count her among their trusted advisors. Sheryl's primary area of emphasis is employment law, but she often functions as outside in-house counsel to her clients.

Employers can benefit from Sheryl's advice in many respects. She and her team help employers avoid risky workplace situations by implementing sound best practices, such as:

- Adopting a proactive, rather than reactive, approach to discrimination, harassment, wage-and-hour, and other employment-related issues in an effort to prevent claims
- Developing non-compete, non-solicitation, confidentiality, and other agreements that are designed to protect an employer's business interests and updated to comply with evolving laws
- Implementing measures for protecting confidential information and relationships with customers and employees
- Carrying out hiring, firing, or "rightsizing" decisions in a manner that minimizes risk
- Operating with an employee manual that is legally compliant and customized for the employer's size, industry, and actual practices

Sheryl provides guidance on virtually every employment-based decision employers face. She also provides a variety of other services, including:

- Conducting employment practices audits to ferret out problems before they become liabilities
- Overseeing personnel management, including hiring, firing, and reductions in force
- Conducting compliance training regarding a wide range of topics, including sexual and discriminatory harassment
- Drafting personnel documents that serve as valuable business tools, including employment agreements, restrictive covenants, and separation agreements
- Implementing performance management, discipline, and discharge protocols
- Developing incentive compensation plans
- Conducting due diligence pertaining to employment matters in mergers and acquisitions
- Responding to government audits regarding classification of workers and other employment-based compliance issues
- Providing guidance designed to defuse employee complaints

Sheryl has successfully represented employers at state and local human rights agencies, the U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission, state unemployment agencies, the U.S. Department of Labor and state departments of labor, as well as in state and federal court.

Prior to joining Much, Sheryl was a partner in a small Chicago firm where she established and grew the labor and employment practice. Sheryl speaks at legal and industry conferences and seminars on a broad range of labor and employment topics.

Education

Chicago-Kent College of Law
J.D., 1993

University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign
B.A., 1990

Bar Admissions

Illinois

Court Admissions

U.S. District Court for the Northern District of Illinois

U.S. District Court for the Central District of Illinois

U.S. Court of Appeals for the Seventh Circuit

U.S. Supreme Court

Community

Sheryl serves as her synagogue's pro bono legal counsel and previously served on its Personnel Committee. She was honored by the Junior League of Evanston-North Shore with the Outstanding Community Volunteer Award in 2010.

Accolades

- Leading Lawyers Network, Employment Law: Management, 2013-2022
- Chicago's Notable Women Lawyers, Crain's Chicago Business, 2018
- Go-To Thought Leadership Award, Employment & Human Resources Law, *National Law Review*, 2018

Leading Lawyers

NLR: Thought Leadership Award

Services

Labor & Employment

Areas of Focus

Employment Compliance & Dispute Prevention

Employment Counseling

Harassment Prevention & Compliance

Employment Relationships & Agreements
Employment Litigation
Cannabis Law
Biometric Privacy Compliance and Litigation
COVID-19 and the Workplace