



## Gerald M. Zelin Attorney

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### Bio

For over 40 years, Jerry Zelin has devoted his practice to representing New Hampshire school districts in a wide array of student-related matters including special education, inter-district residency disputes, juvenile court cases, pupil discipline, civil rights, the federal Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA), and limits on the state and federal governments' authority to regulate local school districts.

Jerry has successfully represented school districts in some of New Hampshire's leading court cases, including cases before the New Hampshire Supreme Court, the U.S. Court of Appeals for the First Circuit, and the U.S. District Court for the District of New Hampshire. Jerry also represents school districts in administrative hearings conducted by the New Hampshire Department of Education and investigations by state and federal agencies. He is on the panels of approved special education defense attorneys for Primex and the Liberty Mutual Insurance Group.

Jerry is a nationally-recognized speaker and writer on special education law and has won numerous awards for his professionalism and expertise. He helped write many of New Hampshire's statutes and State Board of Education rules governing students, and serves on the National School Boards Association Council of School Attorneys committee that will advise Congress in rewriting the federal special education statute. In 2020, Best Lawyers named Jerry the New Hampshire Lawyer of the Year in education law. He has the highest possible rating in Martindale-Hubbell and is listed in Marquis' Who's Who in American Law. In 2013, Jerry received a Lifetime Achievement Award from the New Hampshire Association of Special Education Administrators in recognition of his successful representation of school districts and his

### Practice Areas

School & Education  
Disability Law  
School Policy Analysis  
Special Education

### Admissions

New Hampshire  
U.S. Supreme Court  
U.S. Court of Appeals for the  
First Circuit  
U.S. District Court for the  
District of New Hampshire

pro bono work on behalf of public schools. In 2011, he received the New Hampshire Council of School Attorneys' Bradley F. Kidder Award "for his outstanding contributions in the field of education law."

Jerry enjoys spending his free time with his family, kayaking, landscape photography, and reading historical fiction. He is deeply committed to using his legal training to improve his community, and has done pro bono work in support of maintaining Portsmouth's historic downtown, preserving the Portsmouth Music Hall building, and leading referenda campaigns to improve Portsmouth's governance.

## **Education**

Harvard Law School, J.D., 1975

Yale University, B.A., *magna cum laude*, 1971

## **Recognition**

Best Lawyers, Education Law 2009-2025

New England Super Lawyers, Schools & Education 2011-2019

Education Law, Lawyer of the Year (Awarded by Best Lawyers) 2013, 2020

"Lifetime Achievement Award" from the New Hampshire Association of Special Education Administrators, 2013

New Hampshire Council of School Attorneys "Bradley F. Kidder Award" for outstanding public service to public education

## **Publications**

Two chapters in "Special Education Law and Practice" (LRP Publications, 2000).

"Special Education and the Juvenile Justice System," 34 N.H. Bar Journal 21 (March 1993).

Monograph, "The Constitutional Foundations of Special Education Law" (LRP Publications, 1993).

## **Memberships**

New Hampshire Council of School Attorneys

American Bar Association

New Hampshire Association of Special Education Administrators

National School Boards Association Council of School Attorneys

New Hampshire Bar Association

## **Community/Public Service**

Led a citizens group that successfully amended Portsmouth's City Charter via referendum in 2017 to require that political action committees report receipts and expenditures for local elections.

Member of the New Hampshire Association of Special Education Administrators Legislative Committee

State of New Hampshire, Legislative Commission to Study Special Education at New Hampshire Charter Schools (2015-2016)

New Hampshire District Court Administrative Office's Court Improvement Project, Educational Protocols Subcommittee (2008-2011)

Portsmouth Advocates  
*Board of Directors and Vice President (1985-1998)*

Unitarian-Universalist Church of Portsmouth  
*Board of Governors and Corporate Secretary (1985-1987)*

Zoning Board of Adjustment, Town of Windham, New Hampshire  
*Member (1977-1979)*