

Deborah Schneer

Deborah Schneer has been committed to ensuring high quality legal representation for the most vulnerable among us throughout her entire legal career. Deborah is a 1984 graduate of New York University School of Law where she was a Root-Tilden Scholar. Root-Tilden Scholarships are awarded to law students with a demonstrated commitment to public interest law who intend to pursue public service. Deborah began her legal career at Prisoners Legal Services, representing incarcerated people in conditions of confinement matters including brutality, medical care, free speech, religious practice, discrimination and due process. She litigated civil rights cases, both individual and class actions, in the state and federal courts and represented clients in the Court of Claims and Article 78 proceedings. She was managing attorney of the Poughkeepsie office for seven years, overseeing office litigation and casework, co-counseling major litigation and supervising the legal and support staff.

In 1999 Deborah joined the staff of Neighborhood Defender Service of Harlem as the supervising attorney of the civil legal team. NDS was a pioneer of community based holistic representation for indigent clients, providing criminal and civil representation for the community. Deborah and her staff represented NDS criminal clients in civil matters which arose from their arrest or conviction including family law, housing, civil forfeiture and civil rights litigation.

In 2003 Deborah left NDS to build a full time private practice in Ulster County, NY. She represented clients in both felony and misdemeanor cases in county and local courts and handled family law matters including custody, visitation and abuse and neglect. She served as assigned counsel for many criminal and family law clients. Deborah litigated civil rights and discrimination cases in federal and state court. Part of the practice included deportation defense, primarily for incarcerated clients subject to removal due to criminal convictions, as well as asylum and citizenship claims. Deborah also handled general practice cases such as civil litigation and transactional matters. One of her last private clients was a pagan religious order seeking real property tax exemption based on religious use of their property which she litigated successfully to the NYS Court of Appeals.

In 2013 Deborah was named as the Ulster County 18-B Program Administrator. Deborah drafted the assigned counsel plan for Ulster County, meeting and consulting with public defenders and assigned counsel administrators around the state, local judges and county officials as well as ILS staff. Deborah brings significant judicial experience to ILS. From 2006 through summer 2009 she served as a town justice in the town of Rochester (Ulster County). Deborah was the first attorney and the first woman justice in the Town's 300 year history. During her tenure she was appointed to serve as Kingston City Court Judge on several occasions. In 2009 Deborah was appointed by Governor David Patterson as Ulster County Court Judge. She presided over all felony prosecutions, conducted pre-trial proceedings, including suppression and other hearings, oversaw plea negotiations, instituted discovery practice, and conducted felony bench and jury trials. In October 2015, Deborah joined ILS as the Counsel at Arraignment Implementation Attorney for the Hurrell-Harring Settlement Team.

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