



Michele L. Perreault

Attorney / Family Law Practice Group Chair

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Madison

While there are hundreds of family law attorneys in the state, there are few with the experience of representing over 1,000 clients with their family law matters. Michele understands full well the complexities involved in family law, and in fact, her approach is straight forward: identify the issues, and manage and obtain your goals using a customized approach. Whether you are looking for a family lawyer to assist you with a divorce, custody or placement dispute, adoption, issues related to domestic partnership, or any other family matter, Michele is able to assist.

She represents clients in a variety of areas and whether the matter is simple and straight forward, or complicated and complex, each of her clients receives the personal service they deserve. Michele has represented clients in trial and appellate courts throughout Wisconsin and has handled complex cases involving business entities or multiple properties and financial issues. Additionally, she handles cases with lesser financial matters at stake, but with very personal issues involving custody, placement, adoption, or similar matters. She knows that every family law matter is the highest priority for her clients, and responds accordingly. No case is too big, as DeWitt has the experience and resources and no case is too "small," because all family law cases are the most important matter in our clients' lives.

Michele's professional training and experience as a counselor adds an additional, personal dimension to her background which helps her assist clients in achieving positive results in an efficient and reasonable manner. In most cases, she is able to negotiate full resolution of disputes without the need for trial. However, if a matter can't be resolved through negotiation or alternative dispute resolution such as mediation or arbitration, she has the skill and litigation experience you need in the courtroom. In addition to her family law litigation experience, Michele has successfully litigated cases ranging from estate disputes to multi-million dollar property tax disputes.

In addition to representing parties to litigation, Michele is also an experienced mediator, helping

parties (whether represented by attorneys or not) resolve cases without the need for court intervention. This informal process is often an effective, efficient way for parties to resolve disputes and still obtain a final written settlement document that resolves all legal issues.

While in law school, she received numerous awards for academic achievement and leadership. Before joining DeWitt Ross & Stevens, Michele interned with Wisconsin Supreme Court Justice Ann Walsh Bradley.

Since becoming an attorney, Michel has won numerous awards for her work including being elected to the 2017 Pro Bono Honor Society, named one of the 2017 top Women in Law in Wisconsin by the Wisconsin Law Journal, being elected to the Fellows of Wisconsin Law from the Wisconsin Law Foundation, and more.

Clients

As co-counsel and as lead counsel, Michele has represented clients ranging from Fortune 500 companies to individuals struggling with administrative or regulatory issues. She has also represented clients in complex family law cases, including international, multi-state, or matters involving millions of dollars and family businesses.

Notable Representations

Michele has handled a variety of matters, including:

- Represented a spouse in a divorce involving assets in excess of a billion dollars, including assets located around the world.
- A client who—along with several family members—built a company from one dump truck to a multi-million dollar construction corporation employing well over 50 employees. The client's goal was to ensure that the family business stayed in the family to pass along to the next generation. That goal was met.
- An international case in which a child was improperly removed from his father, involving international law as well as legal proceedings in two states in the United States. Michele prevailed against the adverse parties, who seemingly had unlimited funds for litigation. She eventually secured the return of the child to his father.
- A mother who obtained a very poor result from a trial court while represented by another attorney. When no one else would take the case, Michele stepped in and by applying both her counseling background and litigation experience, eventually secured primary placement for her client.
- Michele has represented numerous clients in the Court of Appeals and in the Wisconsin Supreme Court, including matters such as reversing the trial court's order regarding maintenance payments to be paid from her client, securing a trial court's substantial award of property and assets to her client

in a cohabitation case, successfully defending against a claim of invasion of privacy, and numerous family law cases.

Articles / Presentations

In addition to her practice, Michele serves as an adjunct professor at the University of Wisconsin Law School, teaching classes related to family law as well as constitutional law.

Michele is frequently called on as a speaker for Continuing Legal Education courses for lawyers in areas including family law and also at an annual ethics seminar for lawyers. As a member of the Wisconsin State Bar Family Law Section Board of Directors, she testified before the Wisconsin Legislature regarding legislation that affects families.

Interests / Activities

When she is not practicing law, Michele likes to spend time with her family, especially hiking along the Ice Age Trail. She also wants everyone to know that her fantasy football team won the DeWitt championship in 2017/18.

Michele Perreault is a Shareholder in the firm's Madison office. Michele is a skilled and experienced trial attorney, representing business and individual clients in a wide range of civil litigation matters, administrative hearings, and employment matters. Michele has successfully represented clients in trial and appellate courts throughout Wisconsin, including cases to the Wisconsin Supreme Court. Additionally, Michele has helped guide clients through administrative enforcement and regulatory matters, ensuring that clients are able to continue to run their businesses or maintain their professional licensures.

Michele's professional training and experience as a counselor adds an additional, personal dimension to her background which helps her assist clients in achieving positive results in an efficient and reasonable manner. In most cases, she is able to negotiate full resolution of disputes without the need for trial. However, if a matter can't be resolved through negotiation or alternative dispute resolution such as mediation or arbitration, she has the skill and litigation experience you need in the courtroom or administrative hearings.

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Representative Examples

• **General Civil Litigation**

- Co-counsel representing a Fortune 500 company in complex multi-year challenge to excessive property tax assessments. The matter involved many weeks of trial, administrative hearings, and appellate work up to the Wisconsin Supreme Court. As a result of successful trial and appellate litigation, the client received several million dollars in immediate tax relief, along with future tax benefits.
- Lead counsel on matter related to maintaining ownership of family business that started with one truck and grew to a multi-million dollar business with 50 employees.

• **Employment Matters**

- Michele's employment work includes addressing issues related to independent contractor status, responding to EEOC complaints.
- Representing school administrators throughout the state for contract negotiations, investigations of formal complaints, and when appropriate, negotiating resolutions regarding separation from employment.
- Review employment contracts to advise businesses and individuals regarding enforceability of issues such as non-compete/non-disclosure clauses.

• **Administrative/Regulatory**

- Representing professionals with licensure/regulatory matters involving state agencies.
- Representing businesses to ensure maintenance of necessary municipal licenses after such licenses have been threatened.

Expertise

- Litigation
- Appeals
- Mediation and Arbitration
- Administrative Hearings
- Trials in State and Federal Courts
- Family Law
- Adoption
- Child Custody, Placement & Support
- Divorce
- Financial and Business Matters in Divorce
- Prenuptial and Postnuptial Agreements
- Labor & Employment Law

Education

- J.D., *magna cum laude*, the top 5 percent of her law school class, The University of Wisconsin Law School
- Master's, Counseling, UW-Oshkosh
- B.A., psychology, *magna cum laude* Lawrence University

Admissions

- State Bar of Wisconsin
- U.S. District Court for the Western District of Wisconsin

Affiliations

- Dane County Bar Association
- Executive Committee Member – DeWitt
- University of Wisconsin Law School Adjunct Professor

Honors

- Pro Bono Award
- 2017 Women in Law Award
- Elected as a Fellow of the Wisconsin Law Foundation
- “Top Lawyer” – *Madison Magazine*
- Rising Star – *Super Lawyers Magazine*, a status conferred on less than 5% of attorneys state-wide
- Up and Coming Lawyer – The Wisconsin State Bar
- State Bar’s Hotline Volunteer of the Year award for her service in providing free legal service to callers on the State Bar’s hotline