

Massachusetts Lawyers Weekly 2016 Top Women of Law October 27, 2016



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Deirdre knew from a young age that she wanted to be a lawyer with a concentration in human rights. Solidifying her intent was the opportunity to study under Elie Wiesel during her final year at Boston University, as part of a seminar on the “Literature of Memory.”

That experience helped form the basis of Deirdre’s focus on the intersection of mental health and trauma survivor treatment in her work with highly vulnerable asylum seekers. CLSACC is unique in its combination of legal services and counseling.

“I approach my work holistically, and I can’t see it without counseling,” she says. “We have to ask our clients to go back into their traumatic memory, and help them to testify credibly about their experience and somehow cope with that trauma.”

Even knowing that the stakes in her cases couldn’t be much higher, Deirdre can’t imagine any other practice. “It’s almost a sacred space, sitting with a client and having them share what happened, being that person who can take their story and fit it into a legal framework and make sure they can get safety,” she says. “Every asylum grant we get feels tremendous. It doesn’t get old.”

Deirdre’s efforts on behalf of immigrants extend into her pro bono work—as chair of the Pro Bono Committee of the American Immigration Lawyers Association, and serving as a mentor for two national programs for pro bono representation of immigrant youth and unaccompanied minors, with the National Center for Immigrant and Refugee Children and Kids in Need of Defense—as well as her legislative advocacy for victims of female genital mutilation and acid attacks.

She also is active in the community, volunteering with the Greater Boston Food Bank, St. Francis House and Rosie’s Place, and as a troop leader for the Brownies and Girl Scouts.

Taken from the Massachusetts Lawyers Weekly—Correy Stephenson

