



Member Spotlight



MEET KAITLYN KEATING, ESQ.

Kaitlyn Keating, Esq., believes in recognizing hard realities—like the frustrations and disappointments of working with the disability system and the lessons we learn when we fail. Her past included watching Disney films, and she hopes her future will include raising chickens! Learn more below about Kaitlyn, an attorney at Caffry Law, PLLC, Waterbury, Vt.

Q: What drew you to the practice of law regarding people with disabilities? What keeps you excited about this field?

A: I knew that I wanted a career serving a vulnerable population. After working for a local designated agency providing intervention and support for children with behavioral and developmental disabilities, I decided that a career in law would provide the best opportunities for supporting and advocating for individuals with special needs. A special needs law practice provides opportunities for personal growth and professional development that many other careers would not.

This field can be difficult at times, given the nature of some of our clients' disabilities and the challenges they and their families face—not only by the disability itself, but by discriminatory practices and systems and limited supportive resources. But helping families never gets old, whether it is helping parents make plans for their

child's life after the parents are gone or helping an individual access funds or services of which they were not previously aware.

Q: What advice would you give a young person who aspires to practice special needs law?

A: Allow yourself to be frustrated and disappointed by the system and to get upset that something is wrong. Nothing will change if we don't acknowledge it.

Also, allow yourself to be frustrated with your clients sometimes. But then, as with anyone in our lives, never lose empathy for their struggles and their situation. A little patience and empathy go a long way with anyone, but particularly members of a special needs community.

Q: What's your favorite movie and why?

A: I honestly cannot say that I have a favorite movie, but I have always enjoyed (and watched about 1,000 times on my childhood VHS recording) *The Gods Must Be Crazy*, because it makes me laugh from beginning to end. While I am not oblivious to the cultural insensitivities, I love the deadpan, dry-wit humor used to juxtapose two very different cultures on screen, hilariously colliding in the middle of the Kalahari Desert.

I also recently watched Disney's *Raya and the Last Dragon* with my niece and absolutely fell in love with it, particularly its message that we must demonstrate trust and faith in others before others will trust and have faith in us. Disney has improved its messaging since I was a kid watching *The Little Mermaid*!

Q: Name something that you learned in school that still influences you today.

A: I learned to allow myself to fail. Unfortunately, I learned this lesson very late in my academic career. But truly, failing and learning from my failure has offered more for me than acing any test or achieving any grade ever did.

Q: What's on your bucket list?

A: Someday, I would like to raise chickens!