



CAREER DEVELOPMENT OFFICE JOB GUIDE

EDUCATION LAW

Description

Education law encompasses a wide range of issues and constituents. It may involve representing children to ensure that they receive access to education, dealing with issues of student safety and discipline, student rights to privacy, and the provision of special education to those in need. Lawyers in this practice area may represent school districts and deal with issues such as school governance, student records, collective bargaining, and school finance. Lawyers at nonprofits and advocacy groups may also focus on broader policy issues relating to educational reform via legislative and advocacy work.

Qualifications

While a background in education (e.g., experience as a teacher or work in educational policy) can be an asset in seeking an education law position, the lack of this background can be offset by other variables such as a strong public interest background or strong legal skills. Education law practitioners often interact with a variety of constituents, including students, teachers, administrators, parents, and even members of the legislature. Thus, strong interpersonal skills and the ability to work well with others are particularly important traits in this field.

Types of Employers

Government:

Federal:

U.S. Department of Education (ED). The ED has lawyers in two primary divisions, the Office of the General Counsel (OGC) and the Office for Civil Rights

(OCR). At the OGC, attorneys provide guidance to agency employees, draft statutes and regulations, and consult with state departments of education and schools on education law issues. Attorneys in the OCR investigate allegations of discrimination based on race, gender, disability, etc. in schools. This office also provides information and resources to its constituents on laws relating to education and discrimination. There are opportunities for unpaid internships at the ED, outlined on its [website](#).

Department of Justice Civil Rights Division, Educational Opportunities Section. The attorneys in this Section litigate cases involving education law in the context of enforcing civil rights issues relating to discrimination, Title IX, or special education. Internships are available to first-year (second semester), second- and third-year law students; and law school graduates who are enrolled in graduate law programs (e.g., LL.M. programs) at least half-time. The [website](#) provides details.

State and Local:

State Departments of Education. Attorneys at the state level function similar to their federal counterparts, but often provide more technical assistance directly to school districts and district employees. The state lawyers may also serve as in-house counsel for agency staff, with a focus on education law issues, as well as matters relating to school district and department personnel, contracts, etc. State level education law issues may include education reform legislation, educational policy initiation and implementation, collective bargaining, teacher licensure, and special education.

Local School Board Attorneys. Attorneys may work in a school district's general counsel's office, where they provide guidance to district personnel on a variety of issues ranging from student and teacher rights to contract negotiations to constitutional law issues.

Law Firms:

Education law practiced by law firms typically means representing public school districts and education professionals in a wide range of matters including, for example, compliance, labor and employment, accreditation, legislation and policy, First Amendment rights, children's rights, discrimination, and other litigation. You will find education law practices in all sizes of law firms, with larger firms tending to represent clients like large universities and colleges, and public school boards in large cities. But many small firms and solo practitioners have robust practices representing local educational authorities.

Academic Institutions:

Private schools and institutions of higher education often have in-house counsel. It may be difficult to obtain these jobs as an entry-level lawyer, because many of these institutions prefer to hire lawyers with experience, who may have received relevant training at law firms.

Nonprofits:

Nonprofit organizations that provide civil legal services may represent individuals with grievances against school boards and other educational institutions. An example of a matter these lawyers might handle would be defending the rights of low-income children who have been denied access to educational services. There are also nonprofits dedicated to improving the quality of and access to education, whose lawyers work within the legislative system to facilitate change.

Job Search Strategy

As you plan your path to a career in education law, consider the following advice:

- Credential yourself in the field. Take the relevant law school courses, and choose a relevant topic for your law review or journal note or advanced writing requirement.
- Because much of education law involves working with issues arising in public schools, display a commitment to public interest work in general. You can do this through extracurricular activities and clinical opportunities (e.g., Public Interest Practicum, Working in the Public Interest Conference, and Public Interest Law Council).
- For your 1L and 2L summers, do your best to secure a position for at least part of the summer that will give you relevant experience.

- If you find it difficult to get a law firm job, which can be especially true for the 1L summer, look for options like civil legal service providers (e.g., Atlanta Legal Aid) and juvenile court clerkships.
- Nonprofits and courts likely will not pay you for an internship, but you may be able to find a stipend or fellowship (see the sample list below), or you may be able to get course credit. Check with Professor Alex Scherr about credit, but do so as soon as possible and definitely before you start the job.
- Look for summer internship positions in Symplicity or at external job posting sites listed below. You should also talk with 2Ls and 3Ls who had such internships in the past. You can get a list of 1L and 2L summer positions held by our students during the most recent summer from your CDO Counselor.
- Join relevant professional organizations and stay connected to national organizations that are working on educational reform. You can network with helpful people at meetings, and it helps to have these affiliations on your resume.

Experiential Learning Opportunities

Clinical programs at Georgia Law provide valuable experience and help bolster your resume. The Civil Externship Program may have placements in education law or the related area of family law, such as the Department of Family and Children Services (DFCS), Dekalb Child Advocate, and U.S. Department of Education—Civil Rights Division (Atlanta field office). Additionally, it might be useful to display a commitment to public interest work in general by participating in the school's Public Interest Practicum. For more information about how to enroll, see the Law School's website.

Relevant Courses

Current education law and related course offerings at Georgia Law include:

Education Law
Higher Education Law
Employment Law
Labor Law
Children in the Legal System
Lawyering for Children

Check the Law School's Course Offerings page for an updated list of courses offered and the applicable semester class schedule.

Also, the following video provides helpful guidance on public interest law from Georgia Law Professor Alex Scherr.

[Public Interest Law](#)
with Professor [Alex Scherr](#)



Relevant Law School Activities

[Education Law Association](#)

[Equal Justice Foundation](#)

[Public Interest Law Council](#)

[Working in the Public Interest](#)

Bar and Professional Organizations

[American Bar Association Center on Children and the Law](#)

[Education Law Association](#)

[National School Boards Association](#)

[National Association of College and University Attorneys](#)

Job Fairs

Georgia Public Sector Career Fair (Spring)

- Takes place in Atlanta
- Last year, it included over 75 employers from the Southeast
- Registration period is in mid-January, and the job fair is typically during the third week of February
- No website; see a CDO Counselor for more information

[Equal Justice Works \(Fall\)](#)

- Takes place in Washington, D.C.
- Last year, it included over 140 employers from across the country
- Registration period is August 11–September 14, 2015, and the job fair is October 23-24, 2015

External Job Posting Sites

[Center for Law and Education](#)

[Children’s Law Center](#) (non-profit organization in D.C. dedicated to children’s issues, including special education)

[Education Law Center](#) (non-profit dedicated to ensuring access to a quality public education for all students in Pennsylvania)

[Education Pioneers](#) (national human capital nonprofit that provides school districts, charter school organizations, education agencies and non-profits with talented people)

[Georgia Department of Education](#)

[Law Crossing](#)

[Legal Momentum-The Women’s Legal Defense and Education Fund](#)

[National Association of College and University Attorneys](#)

[National School Boards Association](#)

[PSJD](#) (Filter for Jobs & Employers by “Education”)

[Room to Read](#)

[Students First](#) (locations across the country, including Georgia)

[Texas Appleseed](#) (nonprofit organization that works for justice for underrepresented Texans on issues including the school-to-prison pipeline)

[U.S. Department of Education](#)

Fellowships and Funding

[Americorps JD](#) (summer)

[UGA Law Public Service Fellowships](#) for post-graduation (talk to your CDO Counselor)

[Equal Justice Works Fellowships](#) (post-grad)

[UGA Equal Justice Foundation Fellowships](#)

[PSJD Summer Funding](#)

[PSJD Postgraduate Fellowships](#)

[Skadden Fellowships](#)

[UGA Law Downs Loan Repayment Assistance Program](#)

Recent Jobs

The table below lists some of the employers who have hired UGA Law students in the education law practice area. For confidentiality reasons, we do not publish the names of specific students; however, CDO may have contacts at these employers who can help you.

Name	Location	Type of Job
Atlanta Public Schools, Office of General Counsel	Atlanta, GA	Summer
Bright from the Start: Georgia Dept. of Early Care and Learning	Atlanta, GA	Post-Grad
Disability Rights Texas	Houston, TX	Summer
Georgia Department of Education	Atlanta, GA	Public Service Fellowship
Georgia Regents University	Augusta, GA	Summer
Nelson Mullins Riley & Scarborough	Atlanta, GA	Post-Grad
U.S. Department of Education, Office for Civil Rights	Atlanta, GA	Summer

Other Resources

- [*Education Law: A Career Guide*](#), Harvard Law School