

ASSOCIATE

Chelsie A. Vokes

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OVERVIEW

Chelsie Vokes is an employment, labor and higher education attorney. She represents clients in the full spectrum of employment litigation matters, including wage and hour claims, discrimination actions, non-competition and trade secret disputes, Title IX matters, and contract claims, in state and federal courts, in arbitration and mediation, and before state and federal agencies.

Employers rely on Chelsie for day-to-day counseling in all areas of employment law, including hiring, termination, personnel policies and handbooks, leaves of absence, internal investigations, employee discipline and DEI initiatives. She drafts policies, as well as all manner of employment-related agreements, including employment, compensation, commission, confidentiality, non-competition, and separation agreements. She has conducted investigations into alleged harassment, discrimination, retaliation, bullying and other workplace misconduct.

Chelsie provides higher education clients with advice and counsel in matters specific to colleges and universities, such as Title IX compliance and sexual misconduct matters, student and faculty issues, risk management, and governance matters.

Chelsie co-leads the firm's sexual misconduct and discrimination practice, which includes Title IX counseling, training, compliance, policy making, investigations, and service on hearing panels. She has conducted dozens of investigations, including witness interviews, for both sexual harassment and Title IX investigations, drafted reports regarding those investigations and, where needed, advised clients on appropriate next steps. She helps colleges and universities understand, implement and carry out their obligation to provide a prompt, thorough and fair process. She has worked on numerous cases involving sexual misconduct in the role of a litigator, investigator, advisor and trainer to various constituencies on campus.

Before Bowditch

Prior to joining the firm, Chelsie was a Student Advocate for Harvard Legal Services Center, where she drafted motions, amended agreements and created requests for reasonable accommodation. She also conducted in-person and telephone conferences for clients facing eviction and counseled tenants in the Boston Housing Court. During law school, she was Summer Associate at Bowditch.

Besides work

Chelsie grew up on Lake Quinsigamond in Shrewsbury, Mass., where she enjoys winter pond hockey and kayaking,

waterskiing and wake surfing each summer.

EXPERIENCE

Dismissal of Title IX federal case against a Massachusetts college by a student

We successfully obtained summary judgment in favor of a Massachusetts college that was sued by a former student for violation of Title IX and negligence. The student had reported sexual assault by another student on campus and sued the college after a hearing board was unable to conclude, by a preponderance of the evidence, that a sexual assault occurred. In dismissing the student-plaintiff's claims, the court adopted the factual and legal arguments detailed in our briefs and at oral argument, and held that the college could not be liable under any theory since it quickly responded to plaintiff's report, issued a no contact order, gathered statements from plaintiff and multiple witnesses, notified her of her rights, provided her with resources and accommodations, afforded her the opportunity to present evidence and ask questions during the hearing, and otherwise took action to swiftly remedy the situation.

AFFILIATIONS

- Vice Chair, Board of Directors, [MetroWest Visitors Bureau](#)
- Vice President, [Lake Quinsigamond Watershed Association](#)
- Member, [National Association of College and University Attorneys](#)
- Member, Women's Bar Association

HONORS

- *Best Lawyers in America: Ones to Watch*, Labor and Employment Law – Management (2024) and Litigation – Labor and Employment (2024)
- Named to *Super Lawyers* Rising Stars list, 2022 and 2023

ARTICLES & TALKS

ARTICLES

- [“EEOC Publishes Final Pregnant Workers Fairness Act Regulations,”](#) Bowditch, 2024
- [“EEOC Releases Proposed Guidance on Workplace Harassment,”](#) Bowditch, 2023
- [“U.S. Department of Labor Seeks to Expand Overtime Protections,”](#) Bowditch, 2023
- [“NLRB Narrows Independent Contractor Definition,”](#) Bowditch, 2023
- [“Department of Labor Issues Guidance Relative to Remote Employees,”](#) Bowditch, 2023
- [“NLRB Expands Unfair Labor Practice Penalties in All Workplaces,”](#) Bowditch, 2022
- [“EEOC Releases Updated ‘Know Your Rights’ Poster,”](#) Bowditch, 2022
- [“Connecticut Private Employer Law Update,”](#) Bowditch, 2022
- [“If SCOTUS Bans Affirmative Action, How Will We Achieve Diversity?,”](#) New England Board of Higher Education, 2022
- [“Congress Approves Limits on Arbitration Agreements and Joint-Action Waivers for Sexual Harassment and Sexual Assault Claims,”](#) Bowditch, 2022

- [“How to counter the Shecession,”](#) *Worcester Business Journal*, 2021
- [“Family and Medical Leave Program Draft Regulations Released,”](#) HRMA Perspectives, 2019
- [“Paid family and medical leave comes to Massachusetts,”](#) *Worcester Business Journal*, 2018
- [“Paid Family and Medical Leave Comes to Massachusetts,”](#) Bowditch & Dewey, 2018
- [“New Employer Restrictions on Criminal History Requests,”](#) Bowditch & Dewey, 2018

TALKS

- [“The Supreme Court on Campus,”](#) Bowditch Higher Education Roundtable Series, Boston, MA, September 2023
- [“Human Resources Roundtable: Remote Work Issues,”](#) Worcester Regional Chamber of Commerce, Worcester, MA, April 11, 2023
- [“Where Are My Employees and How Are They Doing?,”](#) Bowditch Employment Law Update, February 14, 2023
- [“2022 Proposed Title IX Regulations: What You Need to Know,”](#) Bowditch, July 19, 2022
- [13th Annual Employment Law Update – Part 2,](#) Bowditch, February 2, 2022
- [“COVID and Beyond: An HR Handbook for the New Normal,”](#) *Worcester Business Journal*, July 29, 2021
- [“Returning to the Office: How to Keep Your Workplace Healthy,”](#) Marlborough Regional Chamber of Commerce, June 24, 2021
- [“COVID-19 + Working Women: How to Reverse the Shecession,”](#) *Worcester Business Journal*, April 20, 2021
- [“12th Annual Employment Law Update Part 1,”](#) Bowditch, January 19, 2021
- [“Title IX Final Regulations Explained,”](#) Bowditch, May 21, 2020
- [“11th Annual Employment Law Update,”](#) Bowditch, Worcester/Framingham/South Hadley, Massachusetts, January 2020
- [“Environmental & Employment Law,”](#) Environmental Science Career Event, UMass Amherst, Amherst, Massachusetts, April 5, 2018
- [“Addressing the #MeToo Movement in Higher Education,”](#) Bowditch, South Hadley/Framingham/Worcester, March 2018

MEDIA MENTIONS

- [“The end of affirmative action will have impacts beyond higher ed”](#) (*Boston Business Journal*)

BAR ADMISSIONS

- Massachusetts

EDUCATION

- J.D., *cum laude*, Boston University School of Law
- B.S., Environmental Science, *summa cum laude*, University of Massachusetts Amherst