

Service Dog Allowed to Accompany Autistic Boy in School

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A litigation partner in the firm's Los Angeles office was featured on KABC TV-Los Angeles regarding the matter, saying: "This family, by standing up for their son, has also stood up for all autistic children in the United states and made it clear that these children have the right under the law to bring their service dogs with them to school."

Winston & Strawn was referenced in various media outlets, including the *Los Angeles Times* and the *Orange County Register News*, regarding the representation of Caleb Ciriaks, a seven-year-old child with autism, and his family. On June 14, 2011, a federal judge in Santa Ana ruled that Frank Vessels Elementary School must let Caleb take his service dog to school, noting that the boy was probably a victim of discrimination. The ruling is believed to be the first time that a federal judge in the United States has ordered a school district to accommodate the service dog of a student with autism.

Eddy, the service dog, prevents Caleb from running off into crowds or darting into traffic, and intervenes when the boy starts to feel anxious. In May 2010, school administrators denied the dog entry.

As reported by the OC Register, litigation associate Drew Robertson, based in the firm's Los Angeles office, stated in her argument: "I don't think (the district) should be able to interfere in any way with the plaintiff's ability to bring the dog to school." The Americans with Disabilities Act, she said, requires the district to accommodate Caleb's needs.

Attorneys for the Disability Rights Legal Center represent the Ciriaks family along with Winston & Strawn. A trial to determine whether the boy can permanently be accompanied by the dog at school is expected next year.

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