



Laura E. Morris

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Laura Morris is a trial attorney and mediator who specializes in probate court disputes involving trusts, estates, wills, powers of attorney, guardianships and conservatorships (adults and minors). Laura is also passionate about problem solving. Her penchant for dispute resolution drew her to probate litigation and mediation, where she regularly finds herself in the middle of emotional family disagreements. “When representing a client, I try to put myself in my client’s shoes and move forward in a way that will result in the best outcome as efficiently as possible, while keeping in mind that family and emotions are involved. Maybe that’s a day in court or maybe that’s a settlement,” she says.

Representative Experience

Approved Civil Mediator:

- ▶ 2014: 40-hour training approved by State Court Administration Office
- ▶ 2016: 8-hour Advanced Mediator Training (ADR Section of State Bar of Michigan)

Probate Litigation: Laura has successfully represented clients on a broad array of disputes involving the elderly and inheritances, including:

- ▶ Trust disputes
- ▶ Will disputes
- ▶ Power of attorney disputes
- ▶ Life insurance disputes
- ▶ Joint account disputes
- ▶ Sibling disputes
- ▶ Blended family disputes
- ▶ Guardianship disputes
- ▶ Conservatorship disputes
- ▶ Trust/estate creditor issues
- ▶ Seeking to remove a trustee or executor
- ▶ Getting more information from a trustee or executor
- ▶ Defending a trustee or executor
- ▶ Protecting an elderly person from financial abuse
- ▶ Obtaining judgments against a person who took advantage of elderly person

Industries

- ▶ Financial Services

Practices

- ▶ Probate Litigation
- ▶ Litigation and Dispute Resolution
- ▶ Trusts and Estates Law
- ▶ Family Business and Succession Planning
- ▶ Fiduciary Representation
- ▶ Fundamental Estate Planning
- ▶ Tax Planning
- ▶ Elder Law

Education

- ▶ Wayne State University Law School J.D. 2006 cum laude
- ▶ Michigan State University B.A. 2003

Admitted

- ▶ 2006, Michigan

- ▶ Challenges to a will or trust's validity
- ▶ Challenges to a property transfer's validity
- ▶ Forgery issues
- ▶ Claims of mental incapacity (see video)
- ▶ Claims of undue influence (see video)
- ▶ Appointment of guardians (adult and children)
- ▶ Appointment of conservator (adult and children)
- ▶ Seeking to remove a guardian or conservator
- ▶ Modifying an existing guardianship or conservatorship
- ▶ Modifying a trust
- ▶ Obtaining court clarification of a trust's terms
- ▶ Memorializing a family agreement

Honors and Awards

- ▶ Named the *Best Lawyers'* 2019 Grand Rapids Trusts and Estates Litigation Lawyer of the Year
- ▶ *Best Lawyers in America*, Litigation - Trusts and Estates, 2018
- ▶ Named as a "Rising Star" for Estate & Trust Litigation by *Michigan Super Lawyers Magazine*, 2013-Present
- ▶ Graduated with Honors—Michigan State University (member, Varsity Women's Soccer team)
- ▶ Graduated with Honors—Wayne State University Law School
- ▶ Co-Editor-in-Chief, Moot Court—Wayne State University Law School
- ▶ Legal Intern for the Honorable Avern Cohn, U.S. District Court for the Eastern District of Michigan

Publications

- ▶ Undue Influence Claims— Getting Harder to Win, 2/18/2019
- ▶ Surviving Spouse: Till Death Do Us Part — Or Not, 2/18/2019
- ▶ Cell Phone Wills?!, 2/18/2019
- ▶ Assisted Living Care Costs, 11/14/2017
- ▶ Community Involvement, 11/14/2017
- ▶ Family Caregiver Disputes, 11/14/2017
- ▶ What We Do, 11/14/2017
- ▶ Sibling Agreements Without Counsel, 11/14/2017
- ▶ Author, "Litigating Mental Capacity" (Chapter), *Michigan Probate Litigation* (Third Edition), 2017

- ▶ Avoiding Probate Does Not Equal Avoiding Inheritance Disputes, 12/22/2016
- ▶ Not All Mental Capacity is Created Equal, 11/16/2016
- ▶ Agents Beware: Risks of Serving as a Power of Attorney, 11/16/2016
- ▶ Halting Elder Abuse: Know Your Options, 11/16/2016
- ▶ What You Need to Know About Adding a Child to Your Bank Account, 7/21/2016
- ▶ Inheritance Disputes: How to Nip Them in the Bud Now, 10/22/2014
- ▶ "Insane Delusions: The Crazy Lesser-Known Claim for Invalidating an Estate-Planning Document," *Michigan Probate & Estate Planning Journal* (Vol. 33, No. 3), Summer 2014
- ▶ Probate Litigation - Frequently Asked Questions, 6/26/2013
- ▶ "Show Me the Money! The Intricacies of Joint Bank Account Litigation in Michigan," (co-authored with David L.J.M. Skidmore), *The Litigation Newsletter*, Summer 2013
- ▶ Court of Appeals Sends Reminder on Importance of Complete Accountings, 5/10/2013
- ▶ "Before the Party's Over—The Arguments For and Against Pre-Death Will Contests," (co-authored with David L.J.M. Skidmore), *Probate & Property* (Vol. 27, No. 2), March/April 2013
- ▶ Wills & Trusts Litigation: 3 New Cases in a Nutshell, 4/20/2011

Community Involvement

- ▶ Leadership Grand Rapids, Class of 2018
- ▶ Family Promise of Grand Rapids Board Member
- ▶ Inforum, West Michigan Regional Council Member, 2017-Present Member (2015-Present) Executive Leadership, Class of 2015
- ▶ Council on Aging of Kent County, Member
- ▶ Kent County Elder Abuse Coalition, Member
- ▶ West Michigan Spartans Board Member 2015 Operations Lead, Steve Smith Charity Golf Challenge at Egypt Valley Country Club 2013-2014, Co-Operations Lead, Steve Smith Charity Golf Challenge at Egypt Valley Country Club

- ▶ West Michigan Estate Planning Council, Member
- ▶ Grand Rapids Area Chamber of Commerce, Emerging Leaders Series (Class of 2014)
- ▶ Grand Rapids Area Chamber of Commerce, Inside Grand Rapids (Spring 2012)
- ▶ West Michigan Healthcare Network, Member

Bar Associations

- ▶ American Bar Association
Section of Real Property, Trust and Estate Law
- ▶ State Bar of Michigan
Probate & Estate Planning Section
Alternative Dispute Resolution Section
- ▶ Grand Rapids Bar Association

Speaking Engagements

- ▶ Speaker, "Amendments to Court Rules," Grand Rapids Bar Association Probate Section (12/11/19)
- ▶ Speaker, "Will and Trust Litigation," ICLE Handling Contested Probate Proceedings (10/26/17)
- ▶ Speaker, "Not All Mental Capacity is Created Equal: The Various Civil Legal Standards," Kent County Elder Abuse Coalition (3/21/17)
- ▶ Speaker, "Drafting After In re Jajuga Estate," ICLE Drafting Estate Planning Documents Seminar (1/19/17)
- ▶ Speaker, "Drafting to Avoid Probate Litigation and Administration Challenges," ICLE On-Demand Seminar (4/20/16)
- ▶ Speaker, "Fiduciary Litigation Update 2015," ICLE On-Demand Seminar (12/23/15)
- ▶ Co-Presenter at Midwest Trust & Wealth Management Conference, Trust and Estate Case Law Update (10/6/15)
- ▶ Presentation to Allegan County Council on Aging (Building Ties) regarding elder financial abuse (7/30/15)
- ▶ Co-presenter at Grand Rapids Community Foundation on impact of U.S. Supreme Court *Obergefell v. Hodges* decision on LGBT issues (7/28/15)
- ▶ "Fiduciary Representation: Are the Beneficiaries Your Client?," co-presented with Tina Babel, Strafford Webinar (5/26/15)
- ▶ "Financial Elder Abuse," Aging Well Conference, May 21, 2015, Grand Rapids, Michigan

- ▶ Presented 2014 to the West Michigan Estate Planning Council (3/26/15) and Greenleaf Trust (4/1/15)
- ▶ Presented 2013 Trust & Estate Case Law Update to Chemical Bank, Comerica Bank, Fifth Third Bank, Waterway, Wilhelm, Worfel & Bronsink, Legacy Trust, and Huntington National Bank
- ▶ Presented 2012 Trust & Estate Case Law Update to Chemical Bank and Legacy Trust
- ▶ Presented 2011 Trust & Estate Case Law Update to Fifth Third Bank and Waterway, Wilhelm, Worfel & Bronsink
- ▶ Presented 2010 Trust & Estate Case Law Update to Chemical Bank, Fifth Third Bank, Huntington National Bank, Northeastern Michigan Estate Planning Council and Macatawa Bank
- ▶ Presented 2009 Trust & Estate Case Law Update to Chemical Bank, Fifth Third Bank, Founders Bank & Trust and Plante & Moran

Courts

- ▶ U.S. District Court, Western District of Michigan in 2006
- ▶ U.S. District Court, Eastern District of Michigan in 2011