

How To Include Your Children In A Legal Career

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Who says you can't do it all? Being an attorney and a mother can be challenging, but winning the support of your children can be the key to success. Your kids will cheer you on if they understand the demands and significance of your job. Sharing your career with your children will make them feel valued and will create more time to spend together. Several attorneys at Schiff Hardin have done just that – enlisted the support of their children and found creative ways to integrate their children in their careers.

Kim Kamin, a partner in Schiff Hardin's Private Clients, Trusts and Estates Group, makes it a point to integrate her five-year-old son into her work activities whenever possible. As a child, Ms. Kamin felt she had to compete against her mother's large law firm for maternal attention so she vowed to do her best to avoid her own future children feeling that way. Ms. Kamin explained, "I was proud of my mom for working at such an impressive office. But unlike when my mom was in law school and studying with me at home, I felt very disconnected from her new job. It seemed like the firm and clients demanded most of her attention."

To include her son, Ms. Kamin occasionally brings him to the office over the weekend and incorporates him into entertaining clients, such as a recent group trip with four clients and their kids to see "Disney on Ice" using a block of firm tickets. She also tries to speak to him in the "royal we." For instance, "Let's check our voicemail now and see if anyone is looking for us." "He gets excited that I am including him in the game, and it really seems to work," Ms. Kamin added.

Ms. Kamin was particularly proud recently when her son defended her blackberry usage at a family gathering. "He said: 'Mommy has to use the blackberry because she is a lawyer and her clients need her.' He gave me a hug while I was typing and I cheered silently that this kid gets it and is able to share me without feeling like he's getting the raw end of the deal."

Schiff Hardin partner and executive committee member, Marci Eisenstein, also involved her children when they were younger. "They did spend some (actually many) weekends doing homework with me while I worked at the office, back in the days before telecommuting was possible."

Schiff Hardin partner and White Collar Crime and Corporate Compliance Group leader, Patricia Brown Holmes, took her daughter to Washington, D.C. for Just the Beginning Foundation's 2008 Biennial Conference. The conference brought together a diverse group of federal and state judges, lawyers, law professors, and students of all ages. Ms. Holmes enjoyed spending time with her daughter, who also volunteered and participated in the activities geared toward high school kids. "She had the opportunity to meet highly respected and historical members of the legal profession, find new mentors, and put a face on some of the constitutional issues she is studying in school. She told me she was proud to see me in action because it gave her a better appreciation for what I do when I'm away from home," said Ms. Holmes.

"Conferences are an excellent venue to incorporate children," agreed Regina Y. Speed-Bost, a partner in Schiff Hardin's Energy and Public Utility Group. She described how the down time provides a great opportunity for social interaction. Her children have had the chance to meet people from other parts of the country and to get to know other kids whose parents also have challenging careers.

Ms. Speed-Bost brought her daughter to The HistoryMakers Program in Atlanta, which honored the life and career of Chief Justice Leah Ward Sears. "This event proved to my daughter that the sky is the limit. She had the opportunity to see me in a work setting, to hear Chief Justice Sears' story, and to meet other successful women and minorities," Ms. Speed-Bost said.

Linda Stevens, a partner in Schiff Hardin's Intellectual Property Group, believes that including kids in business development efforts is becoming increasingly common. One of the large annual ABA conferences she attends held its meeting in Orlando a few years ago. The big networking dinner was at Sea World and families were included. She found that the inclusion of the children had an interesting impact on networking. She said, "My three-year-old turned out to be a natural – easily breaking the ice with kids and grown-ups he didn't know. He ended up determining who I met and spoke with, as he ran from one new playmate to the next, throwing me together with their parents. It was a fun way to connect with people I might not otherwise have met." Ms. Stevens thinks kids give you something to chat about with people you have just met, and those conversations often allow you to bond on a more meaningful level than talking only about work.

You can see that including your children in your legal career is easier than it seems. It may take a little creativity but it is worth the effort. Seize any opportunity to take your children to a conference, a networking event, or to your office so they can get a better idea of what your job as an attorney is like.