HUSCH BLACKWELL

Jessica M. McDowell

SENIOR ASSOCIATE

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OVERVIEW

Jessica uses her experience formerly representing plaintiffs in employment cases to defend clients in complex employment litigation, resolve conflicts outside of court, and advise on preventing disputes.

Jessica represents companies in a wide range of employment matters, working most often on cases involving discrimination, harassment, or retaliation claims under Title VII, the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), and similar state laws. She also routinely handles cases involving claims under the Family Medical Leave Act (FMLA). She has extensive experience with motion practice, oral argument, depositions, discovery, mediation, settlement negotiation, and trial preparation, and she has second chaired three jury trials. In addition to her litigation work, Jessica provides day-to-day employment advice and counsel designed to help clients comply with the law and avoid future allegations. She also oversees and advises on internal workplace investigations when complaints have occurred.

Jessica began her litigation career at an employment-focused plaintiff's law firm, where she brought the sort of cases against companies that she now defends. Even as plaintiff's counsel, it was clear to her that most employers truly wanted to do the right thing but didn't always understand the law. Her experience representing employees allowed her to transition seamlessly into defending and advising employers. Before joining Husch Blackwell, Jessica worked at a national boutique employment defense firm. Jessica finds it deeply rewarding today to help companies troubleshoot, prevent problems, and resolve issues that do occur.

Industries

Education
Healthcare
Life Sciences

Services

Employment Litigation Defense
Labor & Employment

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Her background on the plaintiff's side uniquely informs Jessica's litigation strategies and helps her anticipate where a case is likely to go (or prevent litigation altogether). It also puts her in an ideal position to talk clients through the litigation process and its potential outcomes: she knows when a plaintiff's demands are reasonable and when they're not, and she offers clients valuable insight into the arguments opposing counsel is likely to make. As a former plaintiff's side attorney, Jessica also builds good working relationships with opposing counsel, which often helps resolve matters faster and ultimately save costs for the client. In addition to her employment litigation practice, Jessica served as a judicial law clerk for the Circuit Court of Jackson County, Missouri, with a frequent focus on employment cases—an experience that taught her which approaches were most likely to succeed and how judges tend to think.

Known as a detail-oriented professional with a strong focus on fact gathering, Jessica takes the time to ensure she understands every piece of a case, its history, and the client's concerns. She also takes the time to ensure that the client understands the process: Jessica prioritizes walking clients through their litigation in detail so that they're fully informed on every step and strategy.

Experience

- Defended companies in employment all types of employment litigation matters, including claims under Title VII, ADA, FMLA, FLSA, and state law counterparts.
- Provided preventative advice and counsel to employers.
- Represented employers in agency charges of discrimination.
- Represented employers at mediations in both insured and uninsured matters.
- Prepared case assessments and budgets to carriers.
- Reviewed non-solicitation and non-compete agreements to ensure compliance with Kansas and Missouri law.
- Conducted workplace investigations and prepare reports to clients.
- Acted as collective action/class counsel in FLSA collective and Rule 23 class action matters.

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Recognition

- *Best Lawyers: Ones to Watch® in America*
  - Labor and Employment Law - Management, 2026 and 2027
  - Litigation - Labor and Employment, 2026 and 2027

Education

- J.D., University of Missouri-Kansas City School of Law
  - *cum laude*
  - *UMKC Law Review*, De Jure Managing Editor
- B.A., University of Missouri

Admissions

- Missouri
- U.S. District Court, Western District of Missouri
- U.S. District Court, District of Kansas

Clerkships

- Hon. Jack R. Grate, 16th Judicial Circuit Court of Jackson County, Missouri

Community Leadership

- LevelUp Kids, Board Member, 2023-present

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