

Chicago Daily Law Bulletin®

Volume 159, No. 226

Litigation defense firm wades into family law

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Known as a civil defense litigation firm, the leaders of Cassidy, Schade LLP decided they wanted to provide more services to clients.

So the firm hired Donato "Don" Pesce to start a new family law practice — the first time it had employed a family law attorney since it opened in 1979.

Cassiday, Schade's 107 lawyers typically work on medical-malpractice, product-liability, construction and insurance coverage matters.

"We have a large amount of physicians that we represent and we would like to target and market our family law practice to physicians and other professionals that are familiar with our expertise as litigators," said Brian J. Hickey, a partner who oversees the firm's Naperville office.

Those "other professionals" could include construction company executives and small business owners who are going

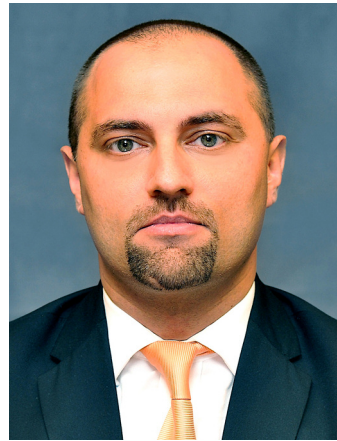
through a divorce, dealing with child custody issues or seeking asset protection.

Cassiday, Schade, a Chicago-based firm with six offices total, was seeking to diversify its practice areas. And family law matters often involve litigation, Hickey said, so the new practice area does have something in common with the firm's existing area of focus.

"There seems to be a natural fit for family law with our litigation practice," he said. "As a litigation firm, whether you're litigating a medical-malpractice case, a motor vehicle accident, product liability or marriage dissolution, the rules of evidence are the same for all areas of litigation."

Pesce, 35, is among seven lawyers working at the firm's Naperville office. He was hired as a senior attorney in August.

Pesce graduated from IIT Chicago-Kent College of Law in 2005. After becoming a licensed Illinois lawyer in November 2005, he joined Wakenight & Associates P.C., which has offices



Don Pesce

in Chicago, Oak Park and other suburban locations. Pesce remained there until joining Cassidy, Schade.

He said the larger firm is well-known and is becoming more of a full-service operation.

"I thought it was a very good opportunity," Pesce said. "I'm looking forward to, in essence, spearheading this practice group."

Hickey said the firm has so far received positive responses to the move.

"I think it's still early and we will market this practice more aggressively to our clientele and the public in general," he said.

When he moved to Cassidy, Schade, Pesce took about 30 cases with him. He's spent his time at the new firm working on pending cases and has signed up about 10 new clients.

Pesce said he appreciates working with support staff, which he didn't have at his previous firm.

Cassiday, Schade's family law practice group could grow to three to five lawyers within the next few years, Pesce said. He sees such an arrangement potentially featuring a lawyer in downtown Chicago to cover Cook County, one in Libertyville for Lake County and perhaps another one in Rockford.

Pesce said he wants to expand the new practice "to the point where it will be one of the elite firms that handles family law in the Chicago area."