Mary Frances Palisano

Partner

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One Gateway Center
Newark, NJ 07102

Practice Areas

White Collar & Investigations

Bar Memberships

New York

New Jersey

A tenacious advocate and trusted legal advisor, Mary Fran understands how stressful it is for a client to be accused of a crime or for a family whose child has a legal issue. Mary Fran is an experienced litigator who focuses her practice on criminal defense, juvenile proceedings, school discipline matters, and special education. Mary Fran appreciates what is at stake not only for her clients, but for their families, too, and she has a deep-rooted commitment to working diligently to determine the most effective strategies and appropriate goals in each client's unique situation.

Mary Fran began her legal career handling criminal cases in the trial division of the Legal Aid Society and has been practicing in the area of criminal defense for nearly 20 years. She is a vigorous protector of her clients' rights, and her clients benefit from her unique, out-of-the-box thinking that comes only from experience. Mary Fran's criminal defense practice includes counseling clients in all phases of criminal proceedings and quasi-criminal matters, including state charges, federal crimes, juvenile proceedings, internal investigations, and municipal court matters.

Other Info About Mary Frances

Experience

Criminal Defense

- - ***State v. Client***: Representation of an individual accused of burglary for allegedly assaulting a taxi cab driver and not paying his fare. Mary Fran successfully obtained Pretrial Intervention for the client (which results in a

dismissal of the matter upon completion of the program), despite adamant opposition from the State.

- ***State v. Client***: Representation of an individual falsely accused of assault relating to his employment. After extensive discussions with the prosecution, Mary Fran secured the dismissal of the case.

- ***People v. Client***: Representation of an individual charged with using a fake identification and resisting arrest in New York. Due to the arrest, the client could have lost a job opportunity at a bank. Mary Fran successfully persuaded the prosecution to dismiss the case, and thereby relieved our client of the inability to work in the financial services industry. As a result, the case has now been sealed. She also represented the client in the related FDIC investigation in order to clear his name to ensure that he is eligible for future employment at FDIC insured banks.

- ***In re Subpoena***: Representation of a real estate developer whose employee was accused of wrongdoing related to alleged illegal business activities and fraud being investigated by a New Jersey county prosecutor's office. Mary Fran assisted the client with responding to the State's numerous subpoenas relating to the criminal investigation of the employee and worked with the attorneys defending the employee's criminal and related bankruptcy matters to work out a civil settlement, because her client did not want his employee to be criminally charged; such allegations would not only reflect poorly on the employee, but would likely have a significant negative impact on her client's business. Ultimately, the employee was not criminally charged, and there was a civil resolution between the parties.

- ***State v. Client***: Representation of an individual charged with assaulting two police officers, among other offenses. The client was an Ivy League graduate student, and a conviction would have likely resulted in his removal from the graduate program at his school. The charges were downgraded from indictable offenses to disorderly persons charges. After negotiating with the prosecutor and convincing the injured police officers as well, Mary Fran successfully obtained a plea to a single local ordinance (a non-criminal charge), which will not affect the client's standing at school.

- ***State v. Client***: Representation of an individual charged with possession of a controlled dangerous substance after she called 911 to assist a friend who was overdosing on drugs. Mary Fran successfully convinced the prosecution that the charges against her client should be dismissed based on legislation then pending the approval of the governor, which would have given immunity to those who assist others in overdose situations. After Mary Fran convinced the State to dismiss the charges against her client (with some community service) and also persuaded the court to accept the plea, the case was dismissed.

- ***State v. Client***: Representation of an individual seeking to be removed from Megan's Law. After Mary Fran filed a motion based on a legal issue, the client was removed from Megan's Law.

White Collar Criminal Defense

- ***United States v. Client***: Representation of an individual in a highly publicized multi-defendant price-fixing/bid-rigging case in the automotive industry brought by the United States Department of Justice (DOJ). Numerous and extensive presentations were made to the DOJ, and

the Gibbons team negotiated the most favorable agreement of any charged defendant, despite hundreds of millions of dollars of commerce affected by his undisputed collusive activities in connection with the undisputed sales of the company's product.

- - ***In re Clients***: Representation of two individuals who were being investigated by the DOJ relating to alleged involvement in price-fixing in the tax certificate market. After Mary Fran engaged in several discussions with the DOJ, her clients were ultimately not prosecuted.

- ***In re Client***: Representation of an individual being investigated for conspiring to defraud bond investors and the United States government through an alleged bid-rigging scheme along with numerous other individuals from various financial institutions. Almost 20 individuals have pleaded guilty relating to the government's investigation, but Mary Fran's client ultimately received a non-prosecution agreement and was not charged.

Juvenile Matters

- - ***In re Juvenile***: Representation of a juvenile charged with various sex crimes. Obtained a not guilty verdict after a trial.

- - ***In re Juvenile***: Representation of a juvenile in connection with an investigation by a New Jersey county prosecutor's office for alleged unauthorized computer activities. After Mary Fran's involvement in the case and communication with the prosecutor's office, the case was not prosecuted by the State.

- - ***In re Juvenile***: Representation of a juvenile who was charged with possession of marijuana. The charges were downgraded to the Municipal Court and dismissed after

the juvenile completed a community service program.

- ***In re Juvenile***: Representation of a juvenile charged with various sex crimes. Mary Fran successfully negotiated a plea of probation for the juvenile.

Education

Pace University School of Law, J.D.

University of Hartford, B.A.

Courts

United States District Court for the District of New Jersey

United States District Court for the Eastern District of New York

United States District Court for the Southern District of New York

Recognition

Recognized by Volunteer Lawyers for Justice as a VLJ 2025 Defender of Justice

Recognized by Best Lawyers®, 2026-2027 Editions: Criminal Defense: General Practice; Criminal Defense: White-Collar

Recipient, *Profiles in Leadership Journal* Women Worth Watching® in Leadership Award, 2025

Included on the *New Jersey Law Journal* list, Women Attorneys of the Year, 2024

Included on the *New Jersey Super Lawyers* list, Criminal Defense

Included on the *National Law Journal* "Family/Elder Law Trailblazers" list, 2022

Recipient, Essex County Bar Association Bernard A. Kuttner Pro Bono Service Award, 2020

Recipient, New Jersey State Bar Association Pro Bono Award, 2015

Included on the *New Jersey Super Lawyers Rising Stars* lists, 2007-2009

Professional Affiliations

Supreme Court (NJ) Committee on Model Criminal Jury Charges, 2011-2013, 2013-2015, 2015-2017 terms

Association of Criminal Defense Lawyers of New Jersey
Trustee (2017, 2018)
Co-Chair, Legislative Committee (2015, 2016)

New Jersey State Bar Association
Criminal Law Section (Member and Past Chair)
Continuing Legal Education Advisory Committee
Pro Bono Committee
School Law Committee
Editorial Board, *New Jersey Lawyer Magazine*

Volunteer Lawyers for Justice
Trustee

New Jersey Women Lawyers Association

Association of the Federal Bar of New Jersey

National Association of Women Lawyers
Planning Committee member and Co-Chair, Annual Meeting
Program Book Committee (2012, 2013)

Council of Parent Attorneys and Advocates, Inc.

New Jersey Special Education Practitioners (NJSEP)

Civic Activities

Ms. Palisano handles numerous pro bono cases throughout the year, including cases involving victims of domestic violence, children with special needs, and expungement matters. Ms. Palisano also participates in internship programs where she speaks to high school students about the legal profession, pro bono work, and her practice areas.

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