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Former deputy prosecutor makes smooth shift to family law sector

By Tom Kirvan

Chosen by Super Lawyers Magazine as a Rising Star in 2024 and 2025, Kelsey Affronte serves on the board of Dawson Place, a nonprofit child advocacy center where “professionals come together to respond to the issue of child abuse.” She also serves on the Snohomish County Judicial Evaluations Committee for the Washington Women Lawyers and was recognized as Chapter Member of the Year in 2023.



Kelsey L. Affronte
Associate
Beresford Booth Lawyers

As a child, Kelsey Affronte was a witness to – and then a victim of – repeated acts of domestic violence, the emotional scars of which she would experience from a different perspective in her first job in the legal profession.

Her first taste of life as a lawyer was as a deputy prosecuting attorney in Snohomish County, located north of Seattle, where she worked in the Felony Domestic Violence Unit. It seemed like she was destined for such an assignment after serving in various intern roles in college and law school that focused on assisting victims of domestic and sexual abuse.

“The cases, invariably, are disturbing and, at times, can be emotionally taxing, but the work is so important in bringing a sense of justice to victims,” said Affronte, a trial attorney for the law firm of Beresford Booth Lawyers in Edmonds, Wash., a Seattle suburb.

A 2017 graduate of Seattle University School of Law, Affronte spent more than four years as an assistant prosecuting attorney, managing significant caseloads in a variety of units that involved violent and non-violent crimes.

“Working in a prosecutor’s office is the best way to gain trial experience, which is what I most enjoy about being an attorney,” said Affronte, who has more than 30 jury trials to her credit. “I love being in court. I think that jury trials and jury selection are particularly fascinating, especially in developing a legal strategy and examining witnesses.”

Affronte, who earned a bachelor’s degree from the University of Washington in 2014, has viewed trial work from a different angle in recent years after joining Beresford Booth as an associate in the firm’s Litigation and Family Law Groups where she has focused most of her

attention handling cases involving family law, as well as trust and estates.

The shift from criminal to civil law initially proved to be a somewhat bumpy transition for Affronte, who joined the firm on Valentine’s Day in 2022.

“There definitely was a learning curve where I felt like I was floundering around for a few months before I found my footing,” Affronte admitted. “Coming from a job where I was totally familiar with the legal landscape to one where I was learning something new, virtually every day, was quite an adjustment. Fortunately, everyone here was very helpful and patient, and it didn’t take long to get a handle on what needed to be done for the benefit of our clients.”

The change in focus was aided by her unexpected involvement in a case arising from familiar turf for the former deputy prosecutor.

“I made the move here because I wanted a break from domestic violence work and within the first year, I became involved in a case that came out of Dawson Place, the nonprofit child advocacy center in Snohomish County, where the Sexual Assault Unit is for the Prosecutor’s Office,” Affronte related.

The case stemmed from a divorce action brought by a woman whose oldest daughter alleged that she had been sexually abused by her stepfather.

“When those allegations are made, it just blows up the marriage,” Affronte indicated. “So, the woman and her children pack bags, report the abuse, and go to Dawson Place for various services – including counseling. Eventually, the divorce case comes to us and one of the family law partners asked me to get on board so that I could cross-examine the abusive stepdad at trial.”

Suddenly, Affronte was in her legal element once again, even if it brought back unpleasant memories of the abuse that she (and her mother) had suffered at the hands of her former stepfather.

“It was great to be able to help out, as I love being in trial and it gave me an opportunity to work on an important domestic violence case without it being my entire caseload,” she said. “Ever since, I’ve been handling more and more family law cases, some in which custody issues are the primary focus and others where money is the central issue. I just had a ‘gray divorce’ – no children – just two days of battling over assets and who gets what.”

According to Affronte, the experience she gained at the Prosecutor’s Office in conducting victim interviews has translated well in divorce cases where the financial stakes can be high.

“For instance, my client might be a wife who has made all these sacrifices to raise a family and to make sure that her husband feels supported at home,” Affronte noted. “She, typically, has been in and out of the workforce during the marriage, so she has no retirement, no savings, and no benefits to call her own. The couple may have been married for 30-plus years, and he wants to keep everything. He doesn’t want to give her anything.”

“So, in a sense, she is a victim of circumstances,” Affronte noted. “There’s no physical violence, in that case, but the emotional and financial toll that she is experiencing is considerable. I’ve come to understand why, for many women, it is such a hard decision to file for divorce when you risk being financially strapped. A lot of people don’t leave an unhealthy marriage principally because of economic reasons. So, I would say a lot of those 300-victim interviews I did at the



Bearing a striking resemblance to one another, Kelsey, and her mother, Michele, at the matriarch's 50th birthday party.

Prosecutor's Office definitely transferred to client work very well, enabling me to feel very connected to my clients very quickly."

Affronte grew up in Monroe, Wash., a community located 30 miles northeast of Seattle.

"It's a former farm town," Affronte said of the city boasting a population of more than 19,000 residents. "It was the

kind of place that on the last day of school, people would drive their tractors to school."

Affronte's parents divorced when she was 5 years old, leaving her and a younger sister to be raised by their mother, Michele. The family matriarch, who is a project manager, has been "that angel on my shoulder," Affronte said.

"She's a lot of fun and she has always listened to me, bringing me back to earth when things need calming down," Affronte indicated. "She has been incredibly supportive and watches a lot of my trials on Zoom and came to a lot of my mock trials in law school."

The first person in her family to earn a graduate degree, Affronte said she knew from an early age that she would pursue a career in law.



Beresford Booth colleague Mackenzie Bretz (left) joined Kelsey for the 2025 Young Lawyers Section Conference in Fort Worth, Texas last March. Also attending the event from the law firm were Dexter Bradford and Caleb Tingstad.

"Some of the messages in my senior yearbook were like, 'Can't wait to see what type of attorney you turn out to be.' I've known that I wanted to be an attorney for a really long time. It was just a matter of what kind," Affronte noted.

During law school, where she was a member of the Moot Court Board and excelled in moot court competitions, Affronte performed a clerkship with King County Superior Court Judge Barbara Mack, whose community service work revolved around efforts to combat child sex trafficking.

Affronte's clerkship experience led to an opportunity during her 2L summer to work on a civil case brought against Backpage.com, alleging the website played a role in facilitating sex trafficking by allowing the posting of ads that exploited minors.

"I learned a lot about the discovery process and how important it is in the eventual outcome of a case," Affronte said, noting that the legal efforts ultimately led to the website's demise in 2018.

When Affronte joined Beresford Booth Lawyers in 2022, she was the firm's 12th attorney, which has since grown to 25 in the span of three years. Founded in 1946, the full-service firm is the largest in Snohomish County.

The law firm, which has been a member of Primerus for more than 15 years, sent four of its attorneys in March to the 2025 Young Lawyers Section Conference in Fort Worth, Texas.

"It was an incredible experience and an absolute blast," said Affronte, who was joined at the conference by her Beresford Booth colleagues Dexter Bradford, Mackenzie Bretz, and Caleb Tingstad.




At Beresford Booth's annual holiday party, Kelsey is pictured front and center with her colleagues from the Family Law Group.

"We all met so many interesting and talented young lawyers. It was just great to hear from other attorneys who were getting started with new firms and how they found their way into certain practice areas. It was a great opportunity for all of us to gain legal insights and to build professional relationships."

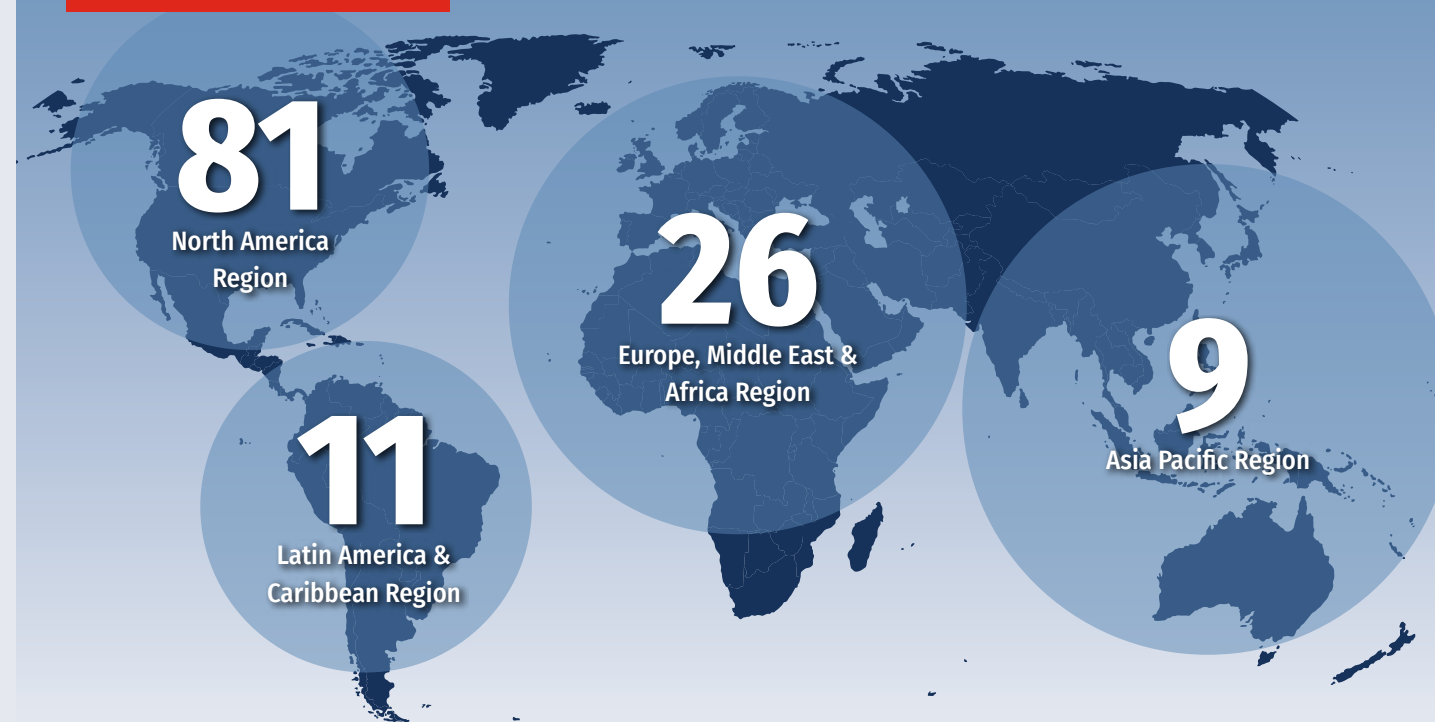
The feature session at the conference, according to Affronte, was titled "From 'Likes' to Leadership: Mastering Relationship Building Online and In-Person." The program was led by

Amber Vincent of Alyn-Weiss & Associates, a marketing consultant who shared details of how to build authentic relationships that can help bolster one's reputation and career success.

"Amber Vincent is a force to be reckoned with," Affronte exclaimed. "I would love to have her on my speed dial to talk with anytime about marketing and related career matters. She had so many great ideas to share." 



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