

Jim Comstock-Galagan served thirteen years (2001-2014) as the Executive Director\Senior Attorney of the Southern Disability Law Center (SDLC) located in New Orleans, LA, with a second office in Austin, TX. Founded in 2001, SDLC is a non-profit legal services organization dedicated to protecting and advancing the legal rights of people with disabilities throughout the South. It partners with the Southern Poverty Law Center, Protection and Advocacy (P&A) programs, Legal Services Corporations (LSC) and disability organizations on major, systemic disability rights issues involving the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), and the federal Medicaid Act. Recently in November 2014, Jim retired.

Before founding SDLC, Jim was the Executive Director of Advocacy, Inc., the Texas Protection and Advocacy program from 1989-2001. During that period, he managed the growth of the program from 34 staff to a staff of 94 and from a centralized operation with one office to a regionalized operation with eleven offices spread across Texas.

From 1981-1989, Jim worked for the Advocacy Center for the Elderly and Disabled (Louisiana's Protection and Advocacy program) as its Legal Director. From 1979 to 1981 Jim worked as a staff attorney for the Louisiana Center for the Public Interest.

Jim graduated from Tulane University School of Law in 1977, and has a BA in Accounting & Economics from the University of Puget Sound.

Jim is the author of publications and training materials on the IDEA, the ADA, and Section 504, including: *Keeping Students with Disabilities in School: Legal Strategies and Effective Educational Practices for Preventing the Suspension of Students with Disabilities – A Resource Manual* (2014); *Stopping the Schoolhouse to Jailhouse Pipeline by Enforcing Federal Special Education Laws* (2006), co-authored with Rhonda Brownstein from the Southern Poverty Law Center.

Jim has served as lead or co-counsel in several major IDEA actions in Texas, Louisiana, and Mississippi on behalf of thousands of students with disabilities, including *Angel G. v. Texas Education Agency*; *Luke S. v. Louisiana Department of Education* and *Mattie T. v. Mississippi Department of Education*. The past decade, he also filed and favorably settled five systemic administrative complaints in Louisiana, Mississippi, and Florida. These systemic complaints were filed under IDEA's state complaint procedures.

Jim has also made over two hundred presentations at statewide, regional and national conferences on IDEA, Section 504, and ADA issues. The past four years he has also served as one of the faculty members at William and Mary Law School's week long Institute on Special Education Advocacy.