

K&K NEWSLETTER

Issue 5 – April 2026

**** Celebrating 93 Years of Service ****

Mental Injury Claims in Rhode Island Workers' Compensation A High Legal Bar

Subsequent cases have reinforced just how demanding this burden can be. Courts routinely scrutinize whether the alleged stress exceeds what others in the same position experience and whether the mental condition is directly caused by that stress not merely contributed to it. Even where a claimant has a legitimate diagnosis, such as PTSD, they must still establish a clear causal connection to a qualifying workplace event.

At the same time, Rhode Island law recognizes that employers take employees "as they find them." This means that even workers with pre-existing psychological conditions may still recover if a workplace incident aggravates or triggers their condition, as seen in cases like *Mello v. City of Providence* and *Artecia Price v. Bess Eaton*.

Despite this, mental injury claims are often heavily contested. These cases frequently involve:

- Competing medical opinions
- Extensive review of prior mental health history
- Detailed analysis of workplace conditions compared to industry norms

For injured workers, navigating these legal and evidentiary hurdles alone can be overwhelming. Proper documentation, expert medical support, and strategic legal advocacy are often critical to meeting Rhode Island's strict standard.

If you or someone you know is suffering from a work-related mental injury, it is essential to understand your rights and the challenges involved. Our firm has extensive experience handling complex workers' compensation claims and is here to help guide you through the process. Contact us today for a confidential consultation at (401) 946-3200.

Arianna N. Stubbs, Esq.



What is Autism?

Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) is a lifelong neurological and developmental condition that affects how people interact, communicate, learn, and behave. It is characterized by persistent challenges in social communication, along with restricted, repetitive behaviors and, often, unique sensory sensitivities. Symptoms usually appear in the first two years of life, and it is a “spectrum” because the type of severity of symptoms vary widely among individuals.

While some individuals with ASD have high intelligence and skills, others may have intellectual challenges. There is no cure, but therapies and support services help individuals manage challenges.

Core Types of Treatment & Therapy

Behavioral - (ABA) building positive behaviors, Cognitive Behavior Therapy (CBT): Managing emotions and anxiety, **Pivotal Response Training (PRT):** Boost motivation

Speech and Language - Helps improve communication, both verbal and nonverbal

Occupational – Focuses on daily living skills like eating, dressing and fine motor tasks

Sensory Integration Therapy – Addresses sensory sensitivities and processing challenges

Early Intervention – Programs for children 12-48 months use play-based, natural techniques

***** APRIL & MAY EVENTS *****

- **World Autism Day (Thursday, April 2, 2026):** Generally marked by worldwide awareness, including wearing blue, to support autism acceptance.
- **Autism 101 Online Event (Friday, April 3, 2026):** A virtual workshop providing introductory information on autism, aimed at caregivers and professionals.
- **24th Annual Imagine Walk & Family Fun Day (Sunday, April 26)** held at Goddard Memorial State Park in Warwick at 10 am.
- **Autism Flies at RI T.F. Green Airport:** A practice boarding event for families to experience the airport, often held in April in partnership with Breeze Airways and sponsored by Autism Double-Checked. The event is free, but advance registration is required; and space is limited.
<https://autismchecked.com>
- **Bailey’s Animal Adventure:** Family event at Roger Williams Park Zoo (held in May)

MEET STEVE MARTINEZ

PARALEGAL TO ATTORNEY CHRISTOPHER RUSSO



If you've ever connected with our team at Kirshenbaum & Kirshenbaum, chances are you've already experienced the incredible impact of Steve Martinez—our Senior Paralegal and all-around powerhouse.

Steve has been part of our family for six years, bringing with him a wealth of experience in personal injury law. But his role goes far beyond the traditional—he's also our resident tech wizard. From streamlining processes to finding creative ways to use technology, Steve is constantly helping us become a more efficient and effective firm for our clients.

What truly sets Steve apart, though, is his heart. He is one of the most empathetic people you'll ever meet. He takes the time to understand what our clients are going through and meets them with compassion, patience, and genuine care—something that makes a world of difference during difficult times.

And just when you think you've figured Steve out... he surprises you. He's our go-to for movie quotes (seriously, he has one for every situation), and once he gets to know you, he might even reveal your celebrity doppelgänger - his unique and fun way of seeing people.

Client Success Spotlight: Deborah Barnes



At Kirshenbaum & Kirshenbaum, every client's story matters—and Deborah Barnes' journey is a powerful reminder of why personalized, attentive representation makes all the difference.

When Deborah first came to us, she was feeling frustrated and overlooked. Despite having legal representation, her case simply wasn't receiving the attention and momentum it deserved. She knew she needed a team that would truly advocate for her—and that's exactly what she found with us.

From day one, we took a hands-on, thorough approach -

digging into the details, developing a clear strategy, and relentlessly pushing her case forward. Deborah quickly saw the difference that dedicated, proactive representation can make.

The result? A successful settlement that exceeded her expectations.

Stories like Deborah's are why we do what we do. We're proud to step in when clients need us most, take on the challenge, and deliver results that not only meet—but surpass—what they thought was possible.

I'm getting divorced: How should I file my taxes?

Filing taxes during a divorce can be complex, as your marital status on December 31 typically determines whether you file jointly or separately for that tax year. In Rhode Island it's especially tricky as there is a three-month waiting period from the date of your nominal hearing until your divorce becomes final. For example, you may go to Court and hear the Judge grant your divorce in October, yet if the final decree is not entered until after the New Year, you will not be able to file as "single" for that year.

Couples who are still legally married may choose between "married filing jointly" and "married filing separately," each with different implications for tax liability, credits, and deductions. It's important to consider how income, dependents, and shared assets—such as a home or investments—are reported, as well as who claims certain tax benefits. If your divorce will not become final prior to December 31, how your taxes are filed, as well as who is to claim what credits, receive any refunds or be responsible for any tax liability, are items that should be included in a carefully crafted Marital Settlement Agreement.



Daisy is the birth flower for April: Symbolizes innocence, purity and new beginnings!

Congratulations!

Dale Sroka won the Valentine's Day Raffle held on February 13th. He won a \$100 gift certificate to the Tree House Tavern and two exclusive K&K coffee mugs.



Amazing Chocolate Quinoa Cake

Ingredients

2 cups cold cooked quinoa
¾ cup melted butter
4 eggs
1/3 cup milk
1 ½ teaspoons vanilla extract
1 ¼ cups white sugar
1 cup cocoa powder
1 ½ teaspoons baking powder
1 teaspoon baking soda
½ teaspoon salt
½ cup chocolate chips
½ cup chopped pecans (optional)



Directions

1. Preheat oven to 350 degrees. Grease a rectangular cake pan.
2. Blend together quinoa, melted butter, eggs, milk, and vanilla in a blender until smooth.
3. Combine sugar, cocoa powder, baking powder, baking soda, and salt in a large bowl. Stir quinoa mixture into sugar mixture until batter is well combined. Fold in chocolate chips and pecans until incorporated. Pour into the prepared pan.
4. Bake in preheated oven until toothpick inserted into the center of cake comes out clean, 40-45 min. Place on a wire rack to cool completely.