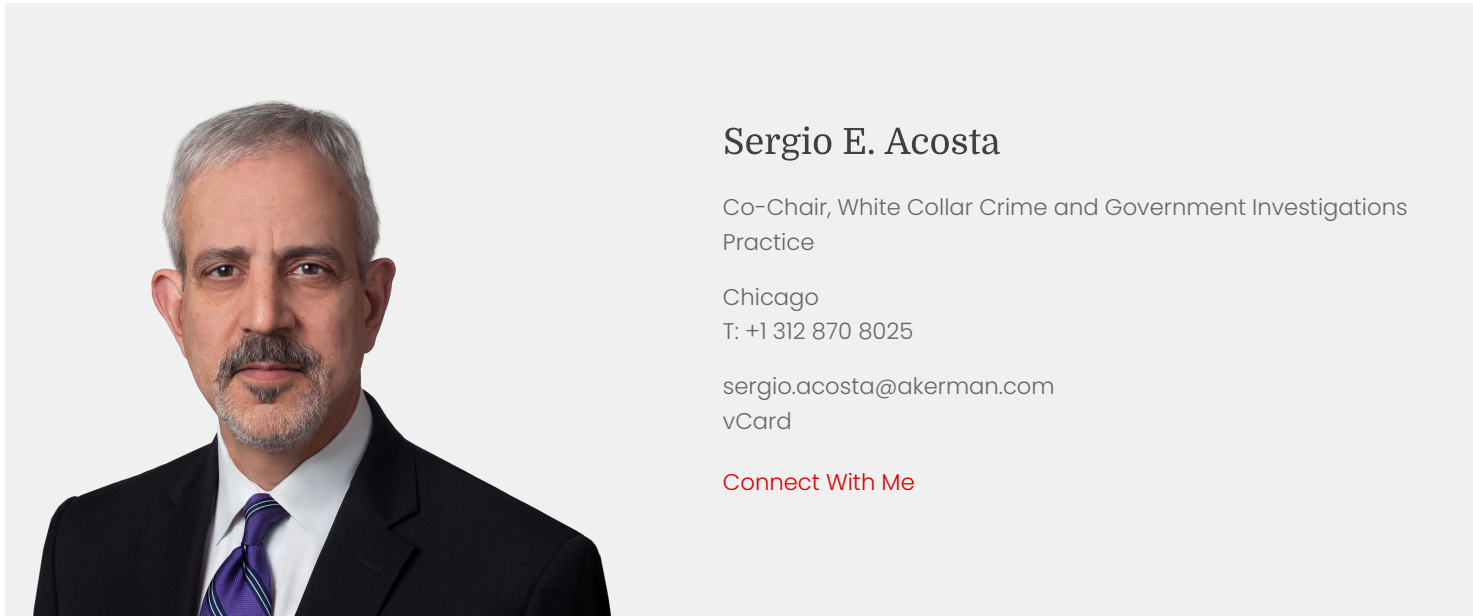


People



Sergio E. Acosta

Co-Chair, White Collar Crime and Government Investigations Practice

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” Sergio is even-keeled, persistent, and clients love him.

- *Chambers USA*

Sergio Acosta is Co-Chair of Akerman’s White Collar Crime and Government Investigations Practice. A *Chambers*-ranked White Collar litigator and Fellow of the American College of Trial Lawyers with over 70 jury trials to his credit, he has extensive experience defending companies and individuals in criminal and regulatory proceedings, conducting internal investigations, and counseling clients on compliance programs and related issues.

Sergio has achieved great success in his representation of companies and individuals in regulatory, civil, and criminal proceedings initiated by government agencies for alleged wrongdoing. He also proactively counsels clients on enforcement and other litigation matters, including allegations of bribery, alleged violations of the Foreign Corrupt Practices Act (FCPA) and the Anti-Kickback Statute; financial and regulatory fraud (e.g., False Claims Act, securities, tax, bankruptcy, and federal programs fraud); violations of export / import laws and regulations; and violations of internal corporate policy. He has conducted numerous internal investigations for various private sector and governmental entities.

A fluent Spanish speaker, Sergio has served as lead counsel in corporate internal investigations and represented individual corporate executives in Latin America. He also counsels and represents companies involved in the gaming industry in Illinois and elsewhere.

Areas of Experience

Litigation
White Collar Crime and Government Investigations
Economic Sanctions and Export Controls
Gaming Law

Education

J.D., George Washington University Law School, 1985
B.A., DePaul University, French, 1982

Admissions

Bars

District of Columbia
Florida
Illinois

Courts

U.S. Court of Appeals, Seventh Circuit
U.S. District Court, Northern District of Illinois

Languages

French
Spanish

Related Content

- Sergio Acosta to Speak at the ABF Illinois Fellows Lunch on “Operation Greylord”
May 28, 2025
- Akerman Partners Sergio Acosta and Julia Lissner Named by *Crain’s Chicago Business* as Notable Litigators & Trial Attorneys of 2025
April 21, 2025
- Sergio Acosta and Michael Kelly to Speak on Federal Criminal Law
April 10, 2025

Sergio served as an Assistant U.S. Attorney for approximately eighteen years, including seven years as Chief of the General Crimes Section for the U.S. Attorney's Office for the Northern District of Illinois. During his tenure as an Assistant U.S. Attorney, Sergio supervised and handled hundreds of investigations and prosecutions of complex federal criminal cases involving bank fraud, health care fraud, tax fraud, racketeering, violent crime, embezzlement, weapons violations, political corruption, money laundering, obstruction of justice, and terrorism. He also served as the Office's Criminal Civil Rights Coordinator, leading the team of prosecutors and FBI agents that indicted notorious former Chicago Police Commander Jon Burge.

From 1999-2001, Sergio served as Administrator of the Illinois Gaming Board, the agency responsible for regulating all aspects of the Illinois casino gambling industry. Sergio started his career as an Assistant State Attorney in Miami – Dade County, Florida, where he held several supervisory positions under then-State's Attorney Janet Reno.

Notable Work

Securities Fraud: Successfully defended the former Chief Financial Officer of a national, publicly-traded trucking company in a securities and accounting fraud prosecution in the U.S. District Court for the Southern District of Indiana. The indictment was dismissed with prejudice.

PPE Fraud: Persuaded the Government to vacate client's conviction for price gouging and negotiated a pretrial diversion agreement for the owner of a medical supply company. The charges were dismissed with prejudice after completion of the 6-month diversion term.

Federal Bribery Charges: Persuaded the government to vacate client's bribery conviction and dismiss charges with prejudice based on 2024 Supreme Court decision in *Snyder v. United States*.

Federal Criminal False Claims Investigation: Represented health care system regarding investigation of alleged widespread false claims activities. The prosecution was declined by the DOJ.

Federal False Claims Criminal Investigation: Representation of a senior executive of a Fortune 500 company in federal false claims criminal investigation.

Foreign Agents Registration Act: Represented business owner in DOJ investigation of possible FARA violation. DOJ finding of no violation.

Internal Investigation: Led several internal investigations on behalf of U.S. corporation into allegations of fraud and embezzlement involving Latin America-based affiliate.

Governmental Investigations: Representation of major financial services firm employees in ongoing DOJ, SEC, and FINRA investigations.

Foreign Corrupt Practices Act: Led an internal investigation on behalf of a U.S.-based multinational company into allegations of violations of the FCPA and export control laws involving a Chinese affiliate.

Foreign Corrupt Practices Act: Representation of a senior executive of a Latin American subsidiary of a Fortune 100 company in ongoing DOJ and SEC FCPA investigation.

Foreign Corrupt Practices Act: Representation of a senior employee of a Latin American subsidiary of an American corporation in ongoing DOJ and SEC FCPA investigation.

Anti-Bribery Compliance: Drafted Code of Conduct and Anti-Bribery Compliance Program for U.S.-based manufacturer and exporter.

Compliance Counseling: Assisted an international law firm in developing a compliance program regarding U.S. sanction laws.

Anti-Kickback Statute: Served as lead trial counsel representing a hospital executive accused of criminal violations of the Anti-Kickback Statute.

Anti-Kickback Statute: Representation of physician affiliated with a national health services provider in connection with a federal criminal investigation.

Foreign Corrupt Practices Act: Representation of employees of a Fortune 100 company in an ongoing federal criminal investigation involving the FCPA.

Consumer Fraud Investigation: Representation of independent distributors of a publicly traded company with respect to a state attorney general consumer fraud investigation.

Internal Investigation: Led the internal investigation for a governmental entity involving procurement fraud allegations related to a multi-million dollar contract award.

Internal Investigation: Led the internal investigation for a governmental entity involving allegations of extortion by a public employee.

Internal Investigation: Led an internal investigation on behalf of a school district regarding allegations of embezzlement of millions of dollars by former school districts officials.

Bribery Allegations: Representation of a U.S.-based manufacturer regarding civil commercial bribery allegations.

Compliance Counselling: Advised an elected official and designed internal controls for his business to ensure compliance with applicable conflict of interest laws.

Gaming Regulation: Serve as regulatory counsel for an Illinois-based gaming company.

Related Professional Experience

- Northwestern University School of Law, Adjunct Professor of Law, 1998-Present
- City of Chicago Task Force on Police Accountability, 2015-2016
- Illinois Concealed Carry Licensing Review Board, Board Member
- Mayor's Ethics Reform Task Force, Member, 2011-2012

Affiliations

- Federal Bar Association, Chicago Chapter, Board Member, 2019-2022
- Elmhurst College, Member of Board of Trustees, 2015-Present
- Hispanic National Bar Association, Member
- Hispanic Lawyers Association of Illinois, Board Member, 2010-2013; 2014-2016
- Leading Lawyers Network, Member
- Leadership Greater Chicago, Fellow, 1999-Present; Member of the Board of Directors, 2002-2011
- Public Action to Deliver Shelter (PADS) DuPage, Inc., Volunteer, 1998-Present
- National Hispanic Prosecutors Association, Founding Member, 1997; Past President, 2001

Honors and Distinctions

- American College of Trial Lawyers, Fellow
- *Chambers USA*, 2022-2024, Ranked in Illinois for Litigation: White-Collar Crime & Government Investigations
- *Super Lawyers Magazine*, 2019-2025, Listed in Illinois for Criminal Defense: White Collar
- *Best Lawyers*, 2018-2025, Listed in Illinois for Commercial Litigation and Criminal Defense: White-Collar
- *Leading Lawyers*, 2011-Present, Listed for Criminal Defense Law: White Collar, and Gaming & Casino Law
- *Crain's Chicago Business*, 2025, Listed as one of Chicago's "Notable Litigators & Trial Attorneys"
- *Crain's Chicago Business*, 2024, Listed as one of Chicago's "Notable Leaders in Accounting, Consulting & Law"
- *Crain's Chicago Business*, 2019, Listed as one of Chicago's "Notable Minorities in Accounting, Consulting & Law"
- Lincoln Juarez Honor Society, Hispanic Lawyers Association of Illinois, Inaugural Member 2018
- *Negocios Now's* Most Influential Latinos in the Chicago Area, 2017
- Hispanic Lawyers Association of Illinois, Aguila Award, 2016
- *National Law Journal* 2015, Recognized in "White Collar Crime Trailblazers"
- Chicago Appleseed Fund for Justice, Social Justice Advocate Award
- U.S. Department of Justice, Director's Award, 2011
- Chicago Bar Foundation, Richard J. Phelan Public Service Award, 2008

Published Work and Lectures

- Federal Bar Association Chicago Chapter, Speaker, "Hot Topics, Practice Tips & Current Developments in Federal Criminal Law," April 10, 2025
- *Bloomberg Law*, Co-Author, "DOJ Expects Companies to Minimize Risk of AI Blunders, Misconduct," October 24, 2024
- Federal Bar Association, Chicago Chapter, Hot Topics and Current Trends in Federal Criminal Law, Interviewer of Acting U.S. Attorney Morris O. Pasqual, Jr., May 16, 2024
- ABA 2024 Business Law Spring Meeting, Moderator, "Regulation Station: The Role of the Regulator and Government Affairs in Gaming Law," April 4, 2024

- Federal Bar Association, Chicago Chapter, Panel Moderator, “Internal Investigations,” April 6, 2021
- Federal Bar Association, Chicago Chapter, Panel Moderator, “Criminal Law Practice Before U.S. Magistrate Judges,” October 2020
- FTI Consulting, Sao Paulo, Brazil, Panel Participant, “FCPA Enforcement in the Trump Era: What Brazilian Companies Should Know,” May 2019
- The State of Latinos in the Law Symposium, Panel Moderator, October 2018
- Lex Mundi: Cross Border Investigations Practice Group, Panel Moderator, October 2018
- Katten Muchin Rosenman LLP, Moderator, “Insider Trading: Valuable Tips from the Bar and Bench,” March 2018
- Leadership Greater Chicago Fellows Program Leadership Breakfast Series, Moderator, “Changing the System - Criminal Justice in Cook County,” March 15, 2018
- The 2017 Joint Annual Conference of the Illinois Association of School Boards, Illinois Association of School Administrators, and Illinois Association of School Business Officials, Speaker, “School Safety: Crisis Management and Outside Investigations,” November 2017
- Legal Malpractice & Risk Management Conference, Speaker, “Beware Criminal Liability Traps when Defending a Lawyer in Civil Litigation,” March 2017
- Southeast Asia Bar Association, Panelist, “Foreign Corrupt Practices Act: A Panel Discussion,” June 2016
- Northwestern School of Law, Speaker, “Prosecution of a Defense Attorney for His Vigorous Defense Acceptable? Questionable? Deplorable?” November 2015
- Stateline World Trade Association, Speaker, “The Impact of the U.S. Foreign Corrupt Practices Act on Your Small or Medium Sized Business,” March 2015
- Illinois Association of Healthcare Attorneys’ 32nd Annual Health Law Symposium, Speaker, “Federal False Claims and Managing Civil and Criminal Investigations,” October 2014
- Rockford Area Economic Development Council, Speaker, “Foreign Corrupt Practices Act Compliance: A Must For International Trade,” March 2013
- Hispanic National Bar Association, Speaker, “Corporate Governance in a Post-Dodd Frank World,” March 2013
- American Bar Association Fifth Annual National Institute on the Foreign Corrupt Practices Act, Speaker, “FCPA Fundamentals,” October 2012
- Hispanic National Bar Association’s 37th Annual Convention, Speaker, “Best Practices in Fraud Investigations and SEC Enforcement Trends,” August 2012
- Minority Corporate Counsel Association 9th Annual General Counsel Invitational & Diversity Leadership Summit, Speaker, “Corporate Internal Investigations,” April 2012
- Hispanic National Bar Association Corporate Counsel Conference, Speaker, “White Collar Crime and Corporate Internal Investigations,” March 2012