

August 25, 2014

Mr. Dan Ruben
Executive Director
Equal Justice America
13540 East Boundary Road Building II, Suite 204
Midlothian, VA 23112

Dear Mr. Ruben:

This past summer, I had the pleasure of interning at Legal Aid of North Carolina. I was placed at the Centralized Intake Unit (CIU), where the cases of nearly all clients seeking Legal Aid assistance are first assessed. Cases Legal Aid can potentially represent are transferred to clients' local offices throughout the state. Due to Legal Aid's limited resources, the majority of cases presented cannot be transferred for representation. In these instances, CIU attorneys assist clients as much as possible by providing advice and counsel.

As an intern, I was given job tasks similar to all other CIU attorneys. I was assigned three cases a day and worked under the close supervision of a licensed attorney. In truth, every attorney at the office was readily available to assist and train me, and I feel I benefitted from being able to learn from many different approaches. Even the managing attorney made special efforts to provide me with guidance and direction.

One particularly memorable client was a tenant who received notice that the home her family rented was in foreclosure. She had received letters from the foreclosing bank stating that her family would be evicted once the sale was final. The bank was telling her to vacate. A family member had advised her to stay, but to stop paying rent to her landlord. The client was unsure whether to leave or stay. She was also unsure whether to pay rent, and if so, to whom. Her fear for what would happen to her family had risen to the level of panic.

In this case, I was able to educate the client on a federal law - the Protecting Tenants at Foreclosure Act. This law requires the purchaser of a rented home in a foreclosure sale to honor the lease terms in place, even if the purchaser is a bank.

After assessing the facts of this client's situation, I advised her that her family would most likely be able to stay in their home for the term of their lease. I also advised her that if she kept the terms of her lease, even in the worst-case scenario, she would have to be given 90-day notice to vacate. I cautioned her that this law only applies to "bona fide tenants." Thus in order to take advantage of the law, and also to avoid eviction under North Carolina law, she must continue paying full and timely rent directly to her landlord. When our discussion ended, this client was confident in her legal rights and clear on her legal obligations.

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It was enjoyable to advise this client that the law was on her side, but in my placement at Legal Aid, that was often not the case. Advising clients in cases where they were legally vulnerable was less pleasant, but often even more vital. For example, many clients facing eviction had the false impression that if they appeared at an eviction hearing with the back-rent demanded by their landlords, they would be able to continue in their leases. In most cases, it was essential to advise these clients that their landlords had not only alleged back-rent owed, but also breach of lease, based on the nonpayment of rent. Providing the rent owed would not cure the breach - clients could tender it and still be evicted. For many clients' immediate future, advising on this fact made the difference between homelessness and putting down a deposit on a new residence.

I cannot imagine having spent my summer in a more productive or rewarding way. I have the satisfaction of knowing that the work I did made a difference in many people's lives. What's more, I enjoyed the camaraderie of working with a group of people who were committed to a common cause. I was able to confirm that the nonprofit world is where I feel at home, and where I belong. My summer experience reaffirmed my commitment to public interest work. Thank you for your generous fellowship, which made this possible.

Gratefully,

Caroline Sorensen
Duke Law, 2016

Legal Aid of North Carolina, Inc.

Centralized Intake Unit

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August 26, 2014

Mr. Dan Ruben
Executive Director
Equal Justice America
13540 East Boundary Road Building II, Suite 204
Midlothian, VA 23112

RE: Caroline Sorensen's fellowship, summer 2014

Dear Mr. Ruben:

This letter is to evaluate Caroline Sorensen's fellowship with our office this summer. Caroline is a student at Duke Law and worked with us for 10 weeks. Legal Aid of North Carolina has many offices statewide; Caroline worked at the Centralized Intake Unit (CIU), also known as the Helpline. I had the pleasure of working with her and served as her immediate supervisor.

At the Centralized Intake Unit, we accept incoming applications from prospective clients from across North Carolina's 100 counties. CIU attorneys provide advice to eligible applicants. Under my direct supervision, Caroline served as any one of CIU's attorneys does—interviewing the client, spotting legal issues, doing research and investigation if needed, consulting attorneys in the office, and advising the client. She would then provide pro se materials to the client, if needed, and explain options. Finally, she assessed the case for merit and available resources, and if able, transferred the file to the local field office that serves the client's county for possible additional help, such as negotiation or representation.

In all areas, I can say with confidence that Caroline excelled and exceeded expectations. The first week at our office she went through routine training, which included learning a new file management computer system (Legal Files), rules and regulations specific to Legal Aid, substantive legal training in relevant areas of law including family, education, benefits, consumer, housing, and employment law, and shadowing CIU attorneys handling files. Even at that early stage, Caroline showed herself as exemplary. She soaked up information given, asked good, thoughtful questions, and showed an interest that is often lost after watching hours of training videos such as the ins and outs of Medicaid and disability regulations.

Caroline then began to take cases on her own. She hit the ground running, so to say. From the get go she was able to establish rapport with clients and exude a confidence that made clients



feel at ease, while maintaining an approachable and friendly demeanor. Her interviews were always thorough. Often, she would research the client's issue before calling to interview the client so that she could be better prepared to spot issues and ask pertinent legal questions. By the end of the summer, Caroline was doing such a fantastic job that she really did not need much supervision.

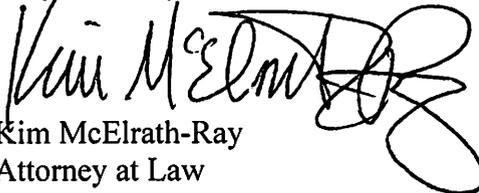
Caroline is well regarded by all of our staff. She is prompt, reliable, and performs her work in a timely manner. During her client interviews, she demonstrated patience and empathy towards the clients. I am particularly impressed by her genuine commitment to public service law and the needs of our clients.

All of the staff at the Centralized Intake Unit (CIU) appreciates the help Caroline gave. The Centralized Intake Unit has 16 staff attorneys. We receive hundreds of new files each week. With such limited staff taking calls from across the state, having interns and fellows is vital to our being able to serve more of our client base. Bear in mind that these are people who are often in desperate situations; people who are losing their homes, jobs, or means of support. Caroline handled over 60 files in the few weeks she was here, and she made it look easy. Those 60 people may not have been served this summer without her help. That is an enormous impact to people in need.

Additionally, Caroline was able to represent one client at an unemployment benefits hearing (with attorney supervision) and obtained a favorable result. This client's case was one that it was unlikely the local office, due to limited staff, could have accepted for representation. The benefit to the client was great: \$6384 in maximum benefit. We have received very positive feedback from the client about Caroline's performance and interactions with her.

My hope is that we were able to benefit Caroline as much as she benefitted us. I really cannot say enough nice things about her and I am grateful for the chance to build the relationship we have with her and thank you for helping that to happen. Please do not hesitate to contact me (kimm@legalaidnc.org) if you need any additional information.

Very sincerely,


Kim McElrath-Ray
Attorney at Law