

Elizabeth Casey Dobbins  
Equal Justice America Fellowship Recipient, Summer 2012

Dan Ruben  
Executive Director  
Equal Justice America

**RE: Equal Justice America Summer Fellowship Experience**

Dear Mr. Ruben,

This summer, I had the pleasure of working at the Legal Aid Justice Center in Richmond, Virginia, for ten weeks. I had worked with the Legal Aid Justice Center in Charlottesville, Virginia, previously, so I expected my experience in Richmond to be similarly rich with true public service opportunities. The summer started with two weeks of introductory training for all LAJC summer interns in the Charlottesville office, where the attorneys went over the various areas of service that LAJC lawyers work in. After that, I reported to the Charlottesville office. Since I've done previous legal aid work in housing law and landlord-tenant disputes, that's what I wanted to do at LAJC. Boy, did I get that opportunity! The first morning, one of my supervising attorneys handed me a brand new case and said we were going to court in two hours. Since I had my Third Year Practice Certificate, I was able to take my own cases under the supervision of an attorney and represent clients in court. I got to do that a lot of times this summer, and by the end of the summer, I would do the initial client intake, keep the client for my own case, work with them to develop evidence and submit legal paperwork and motions and pleadings, and finally go to trial to argue my case in front of the judge.

Not only did I get a wealth of experience in housing law matters, I had the opportunity to work with another supervising attorney on consumer and employment law. I attended a Virginia Employment Commission appeals hearing and prepared a separate case for appeal. I helped draft letters to clients who had consumer legal issues, and we even settled with an opposing party to give our client the outcome she wanted. When I told her the good news on the phone, she was totally ecstatic. It was incredible to be able to help people who are being oppressed and simply don't know how to go about enforcing their legal rights. When they came into our office, they were out of hope; when they left our office, they were empowered! It was a pleasure to work with these attorneys, and an honor to serve our clients. Sometimes, all it took was showing them what papers they needed to file in court. One day, a homeless client's bike was stolen right out front of the office, and I chased the thief around the block. We didn't recover the bike, and we were all heartbroken, but we helped our client with his legal needs. I know that the work LAJC is doing is materially bettering the community.

Sincerely,  
Elizabeth Casey Dobbins, UVa School of Law, 2013