

Erik Orvik

August 27, 2013

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

Dear Mr. Ruben:

I write to thank Equal Justice America for the generous fellowship it awarded me this summer. The award allowed me to intern with the Housing Unit of Community Legal Services, Inc. (CLS), a public interest law firm in Philadelphia. Mike Carroll, my supervisor on the landlord tenant side of the Housing Unit, has worked for public interest organizations for over twenty-five years and offered a breadth of experience. The attorneys, paralegals and support staff, created a supportive, even inspiring working environment. From my first day, I was given challenging work and treated me as a valued, contributing member of the Housing Unit, where I divided my time between managing client contacts and helping my supervising attorney prepare for litigation.

Two days a week, I helped paralegals perform intake. Intake involved determining client's financial eligibility, isolating their legal issue, providing legal advice or referrals, followed by consulting with supervising attorneys and client follow-up. As well, I carried a caseload of approximately fifteen clients from those intake days whose cases I was actively involved in pursuing.

Client interaction was especially meaningful to my experience at CLS. During my second week a mother of three came into the office with an emergency. She had just learned that her landlord was taking her to court the following Monday for unpaid rent and did not know how she could proceed. She left the office with knowledge of her basic rights as a tenant, but her defenses looked grim. After discussing her case with Mr. Carroll brought to my attention that the client had a legal defense to a judgment due to past payments, a "pay and stay" situation. We represented the following Monday in court and I

spent the next six weeks first assuaging her concerns, then working with her, Mr. Carroll, and her landlord's attorney to argue for a payment plan. At the end of our involvement, the client evaded eviction, which would have most likely rendered the client and her three children homeless, and reached an agreement to pay her debt in less than six months.

I am very glad that CLS has asked me to return in the fall. I look forward to continue work with continued cases, new clients, and the opportunity to serving Philadelphia's low-income population. Again, thank you to Equal Justice America for making my summer 2013 internship possible.

Kind regards,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Erik Orvik".

Erik Orvik
JD Candidate 2015
Villanova University School of Law



COMMUNITY LEGAL SERVICES
OF PHILADELPHIA

August 22, 2013

Katie Toman
Office Manager
Equal Justice America

KATIE@EQUALJUSTICEAMERICA.ORG

RE: Erik Orvik

I am writing to comment on the excellent work that Erik Orvik performed this summer in the Community Legal Services (CLS) Housing Unit. I have worked closely with Erik and have seen him display a range of legal and personal skills needed to serve our low income clients well.

Erik has the legal skills necessary to do the job very well. His research and writing are excellent, as is his "on your feet" advocacy displayed at administrative hearings.

Erik sorted out the essential facts quickly and efficiently, analyzed the problem and then took appropriate action. That action involved consulting with other staff, dealing with landlords, landlord lawyers, with city agencies, and with the court system and administrative agencies.

In addition to the essential legal skills that Erik possesses, he has the personal skills needed to serve our clients. Most of our clients are under stress for the same reasons they come into our office. They lack sufficient finances and other resources and are almost always threatened with the loss of shelter----threatened with homelessness-----either in the very near or the not too distant future. They have eviction notices or eviction court papers in hand and/or they have been locked out or have had utilities shut off by law breaking landlords.

Often Erik's first job is help the client feel sufficiently at ease to tell the story. Erik is kind, patient, organized, respectful, and firm, in his interaction with our clients. He establishes a good rapport with them quickly. He gives the impression that he cares because he does care. This enables him to elicit the information necessary to assist, advocate for, and represent.

Erik's calmness and sensitivity coupled with efficient and intelligent advocacy has more than once prevented vulnerable people from becoming homeless. One example that comes to mind is when he briefed me on a case in which a default judgment had entered against a young single parent with two small young children and another due. She was facing eviction within 48 hours. Erik drafted an emergency petition. We filed it, secured a stay of eviction, and later obtained relief from the judgment.

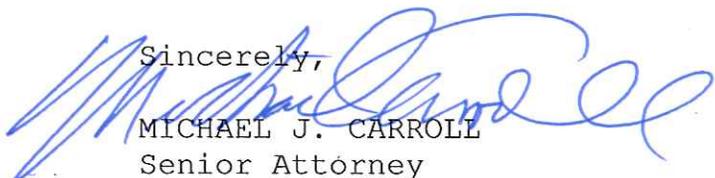
The same personal qualities----qualities which cannot be easily taught to a person who lacks them----that serve our clients enable Erik to work well with other staff. The ability to work well with others is important in most work places. It is essential in our office where we have a small staff that tries to meet a great, often overwhelming, need.

My only regret about Erik is that now that the summer is over he will be here only part time consistent with his school obligations. I fully expect that his contribution to our clients and to us will continue to be extremely valuable and of very high quality.

I recommend Erik Orvik highly. Please do not hesitate to contact me if you think I can supply any additional useful information.

Best wishes.

Sincerely,


MICHAEL J. CARROLL
Senior Attorney