

August 22, 2015

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

Dear Mr. Ruben,

I am writing to evaluate my Equal Justice America Summer 2015 Fellowship experience. I interned with the Atlanta Legal Aid Society's Health Law Unit, which provides free legal assistance to low income and vulnerable groups, including the elderly and people with serious illnesses, such as cancer and HIV/AIDS. My fellowship experience was outstanding, and I am so grateful to have had the opportunity to intern there this summer.

Some of the rewards of my fellowship opportunity include the legal and practical knowledge and experience that I gained as a result of the diversity of the work that I did in the Health Law Unit. Our clients often came to us with issues relating to debt collection, bankruptcy, housing conditions, evictions, mortgages, foreclosures, employment discrimination, unemployment compensation, estate planning documents, Social Security applications and hearings, adoptions, divorce, child custody, deceptive sales practices, etc.

As a legal intern, I interviewed clients by completing client intakes and screenings, sometimes spending hours communicating with them about their issues. I communicated legal advice to clients under attorney supervision, pursuant to the Third Year Practice Act. I conducted legal research; reviewed, analyzed, and edited documents; drafted letters, motions, orders, legal memoranda, and briefs; and prepared estate planning documents, including Last Will and Testaments, Advance Directives for Healthcare, and Powers of Attorney. I also assisted attorneys in the unit in going to court to submit petitions and to speak with the clerks of court about cases. By the end of the summer, I had contributed to over one hundred client cases in our office in some way.

The biggest reward of this fellowship for me, however, was the personal fulfillment of truly helping people in need. Some of my most memorable experiences are of helping clients who were very sick and needed immediate assistance. For example, the first week of my internship, I was able to help a very sick client successfully petition a court for a name change. This was a very moving experience, as the client was unable to receive needed services until the name change was completed. The client was so sick that she had difficulty speaking as we presented her case, and she cried as she explained to the judge why she needed her request to be granted. The client was so grateful and relieved after the court granted the petition, and even though this was a simple matter, I felt that I had truly made a positive difference in this client's life.

Another memorable experience was an opportunity that I had to advocate for a sick cancer patient after her utilities had been shut off. The adverse party had wrongfully terminated our client's utilities, an action that greatly threatened a deterioration of her health, as it was imperative that she have continued access to water and electricity. I quickly assisted the attorneys in this case to obtain a retainer agreement and release forms from the client, contacted the utilities companies and spoke with representatives on the client's behalf, and drafted an emergency rule nisi. We were eventually

able to have the client's utilities turned back on, and assisted the client in taking the adverse party to court.

Perhaps the most meaningful experience occurred the final week of my summer internship. I had the opportunity to assist an attorney in conducting a home visit to a very sick cancer patient in order to review and finalize her final estate planning documents. This was a highly time-sensitive case, as the client had a very low remaining life expectancy, and needed her documents to be completed as quickly as possible. We were able to visit the client and help her to complete her documents within that week, and the relief in her eyes at having this concern resolved was palpable. Her family members were so grateful for our assistance that, despite coming from a low-income background, they wanted to treat us all to dinner to show their appreciation. We politely refused this offer, but all of us felt personally rewarded by our ability to provide much-needed assistance to this client at such a difficult and emotional time.

My experiences interning with Atlanta Legal Aid were so rewarding that I am seriously considering a public interest career when I graduate, so that I may continue to provide assistance to people in need. I also plan to continue interning with Atlanta Legal Aid this semester, and I hope to be able to intern with them full-time next spring as part of my law school's "Semester in Atlanta" externship program.

The knowledge, experience, personal satisfaction, connections, and continuing opportunities that I gained from my fellowship are invaluable. I am grateful to have had the opportunity to intern with Atlanta Legal Aid, and I am excited for the future opportunities that have arisen from this fellowship experience.

Sincerely,

Kristi Oakes  
J.D. Candidate 2016  
Walter F. George School of Law  
Mercer University



Atlanta  
Legal Aid  
Society

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August 31, 2015

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

**Re: Ms. Kristi Oakes, Legal Intern**

Dear Mr. Ruben:

I am submitting my evaluation on behalf our summer legal intern, Ms. Kristi Oakes. Ms. Oakes was selected to intern in the Health Law Unit of Atlanta Legal Aid Society this summer. The Health Law Unit consists of the AIDS Legal Project, Breast Cancer Legal Project, and Cancer and ALS Legal Initiative. We provide free legal services in civil matters to persons living with HIV/AIDS breast cancer, cancer-related, or ALS-related problems who meet our income guidelines and case priorities. We handle a variety of cases such as discrimination, family law, insurance, veterans benefits, employment, wills, Social Security, powers of attorney, SSI, living wills, Medicare, guardianships, Medicaid, debt relief, housing and food stamps.

Ms. Oakes began interning with us on May 18, 2015. On her first day of her internship, she sat in on two client meetings and naturally had the rapport necessary in working with low income clients with compromised immune systems. It was clear from the very beginning that Ms. Oakes is dedicated to serving clients through public interest work. In her first week of the internship, Ms. Oakes drafted her own pleadings required in order to be able to practice under the Third Year Practice Act, and at the end of her first week, on May 22, 2015, Ms. Oakes was sworn in and handled her first hearing under the supervision of an attorney in the Health Law Unit. She was successful in representing a client who was seeking a name change.

Ms. Oakes was placed on a regular rotation for screening in our Unit. The Health Law Unit screens clients seeking services Monday-Thursday, 9am-12pm, and Ms. Oakes' regular screening day was Thursday. She was responsible for contacting clients or meeting with walk-in clients on that day, every week, to assess the legal issue the client was seeking to resolve. Ms. Oakes would then present each case at our weekly Case Acceptance Meeting where the Health Law Unit staff discusses each case that comes in during the week to determine what level of service we are provide.

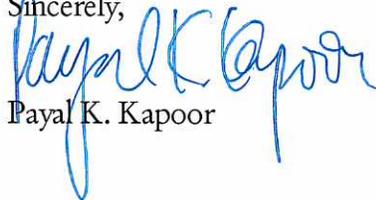
Ms. Oakes, under the supervision of an attorney in the unit, handled her own caseload. This involved contacting clients, drafting letters, contacting opposing parties, obtaining releases, drafting demand letters, attending court hearings, prepping for court, drafting pleadings, serving as a witness in estate planning executions, sending closing letters and closing the case. Ms. Oakes also completed several legal research and writing memoranda for the attorneys in the Health Law Unit. Her writing was always on point, and she was always able to quickly research and provide an answer to the requesting attorney. Ms. Oakes, without the request of a supervising attorney, kept a spreadsheet of each case she worked on, the status of each case, and which attorneys she worked with as a way to maintain organization. As the managing attorney of the Health Law Unit, I appreciated her dedication and responsibility to not let any of her work fall through the cracks.

Ms. Oakes was instrumental in drafting a Memorandum of Understanding with a healthcare provider this summer. This relationship will allow the Health Law Unit to expand its outreach in a county we currently do not provide outreach. We will be able to serve a large population of cancer patients through this new project. Ms. Oakes also assisted attorneys in outreach at the Grady Infectious Disease Program, where we provide in-person intake to our HIV client population and also at the VA Memorial Hospital, where we provide in-person intake to veterans in the Palliative Care Unit.

Because of Ms. Oakes' dedication to her clients, her professional nature, her ability to complete tasks on time and do them well, and her natural demeanor of being a team player, we invited her back to intern with us during her fall semester. We are delighted that she will continue to serve our clients.

Should you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact me directly at 404.614.3954 or at [pk Kapoor@atlantalegalaid.org](mailto:pk Kapoor@atlantalegalaid.org).

Sincerely,



Payal K. Kapoor