

Alina Hoffman Equal Justice America End of Summer Letter

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

Dear Dan Ruben,

My summer fellowship experience was great. I spent the summer working with the National Center for Law and Economic Justice (NCLEJ) in New York City. The organization's work is focused on impact litigation related to public benefits programs. Over the course of the summer I was able to contribute to cases related to food stamp benefits, child care benefits, and Medicaid. The legal issues surrounding the programs included untimely delays in scheduling and processing fair hearing decisions, inadequate notice of termination of benefits, as well as several issues related to attorneys's fees.

My work involved much research and writing, though we were also given the opportunity to attend court appearances and negotiations. Though I did not work directly with any plaintiffs (most of NCLEJ's cases are class actions) I know from discussions with the supervising attorneys that the work NCLEJ does has a real impact in the ability of their clients to make ends meet on a day-to-day basis. For example, my work included legal research relating to a claim for a preliminary injunction halting the termination of child care benefits due to county-imposed changes in eligibility standards. Because recipients of these benefits received inadequate notice, NCLEJ's successful claim halted the termination of their benefits pending a re-issuance of clearer notices to affected parties. This meant that many people were able to continue to receive their benefits in the short term and would be better positioned to challenge their terminations in the long term.

In addition to honing my legal research and writing skills, I also learned a great deal from NCLEJ attorneys about work in the legal services and public benefits fields. Many of the attorneys at NCLEJ have been working in the area for years and were able to offer great insight into government programs as well as career advice. For example, we spent a lunch hour discussing the potential repercussions of the Supreme Court's recent health care ruling on state Medicaid programs. Additionally, the staff spent time with all of the interns every week to discuss their own career trajectories.

I enjoyed myself immensely and learned a lot. Thank you and Equal Justice America for making this summer internship possible.

Sincerely,
Alina Hoffman
Georgetown University Law Center