

Ashley Turner Harrington

Mr. Dan Ruben
Executive Director
Equal Justice America

I worked this summer at the Immigrant Legal Center of Boulder County. In this internship, I provided direct legal representation to low-income immigrants on various types of cases. The Immigrant Legal Center of Boulder County is a non-profit staffed by two attorneys, Ms. Laurel Herndon and Ms. Mary Jordan. I was supervised by both attorneys.

Under Ms. Herndon I worked on various types of family based immigration cases. I represented clients in both the affirmative application process with United States Citizenship and Immigration Services and in removal proceedings with the Executive Office for Immigration Review. Many clients had been separated from their spouses, parents and children, or they faced the prospect of separation if they were removed from the United States. This separation or fear of separation caused extreme hardship on everyone in the family. In these cases, our primary goal was family unification and relief from deportation. We were successful in achieving these goals in most of the cases I worked on. In the one case that we lost, we filed an appeal.

Under Ms. Jordan I represented battered immigrant women in the Violence Against Women Act (VAWA) self-petitioning process and the U-Visa application process. Clients who are eligible for VAWA have been subjected to domestic violence by a United States citizen or legal permanent resident spouse. VAWA offers a pathway to legal permanent residence and citizenship free from any reliance on an abusive spouse. Clients who are eligible for U-Visas are victims of violent crimes who have cooperated with law enforcement in the investigation or prosecution of the crime committed against them. In VAWA and U-Visa cases, our primary goal was to assist immigrant women who had been victimized to obtain legal status and work authorization in the United States. We were successful in achieving these goals in all of these cases I worked on.

In both the family-based immigration cases and the domestic violence immigration cases, I worked with one of Boulder County's most marginalized and underserved communities. The undocumented immigrants that I had the opportunity to serve live in fear of being deported, separated from their families and returned to countries where they would suffer terrible hardship. Remaining in undocumented status also makes these individuals extremely vulnerable to abuse and exploitation within the United States. Obtaining legal status is the only way for these individuals to escape a life of fear and abuse, and to vindicate their human and civil rights. None of the low-income immigrants we served could afford to pay for legal representation by private attorneys.

The Immigrant Legal Center of Boulder County offers free or low-cost legal services which help keep families together and create a hopeful future in the United States. I am proud to have worked at the Immigrant Legal Center this summer, and I am most grateful to Equal Justice America for making this opportunity possible.

Sincerely,

Ashley Turner Harrington
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