

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

August 15, 2011

Re: Summer 2011 Internship

Dear Mr. Ruben,

First, I would like to thank you and Equal Justice America for your financial support this summer. My summer experience absolutely would not have been possible without the assistance I received from EJA.

I am pleased to report that I had a truly wonderful work experience this summer as a legal intern for Advocates for Children of New York. I knew I was in for a summer rich in learning and hands-on action when, after several hours of training, I met with my mentor and received assignments on my very first day of work. My summer work was a blend of direct services and intensive legal research and writing – a combination that I was hoping for.

On the direct services front, I spent most of my time fighting for adequate services and appropriate school placements for two young siblings with autism. This work involved reviewing each child's record of evaluations, assessments, and school meetings in order to write strong hearing requests to the New York Department of Education. These hearing requests demanded services like speech and occupational therapy and in one case, a placement in a school specially designed to serve autistic children. Because of the strength of these hearing requests, both children I worked with received ten weekly hours of home-based therapy services in addition to in-school services. Home-based therapy has been shown to be a crucial factor in improving long-term development in autistic services. Getting the New York Department of Education to pay for these services felt like a huge accomplishment, and the children's mother cried with joy when she got the news. For me, to know that I might have helped two children grow up to be literate and independent means my summer was a huge success.

My research and writing focused on an area of education advocacy that is quickly developing, and it is an area that I am passionate about. My research explored the obligations of K-12 schools to accommodate children with severe food-related allergies and disorders. I saw the practical value of this research while working with a young girl who has a severe metabolic disorder. This disorder requires that the child limit the amount of fat she eats at each meal. The girl's family is low-income and qualifies for free lunch. But because preschools and summer meal programs have refused to adjust lunches to accommodate her disability, the child's mother pays for her meals out of pocket. With my research in hand, I have urged Advocates for Children to challenge the New York Department of Education to adjust school lunches for children with disabilities, as federal law requires. This change could save thousands of low-income families money that they desperately need. Because of my research and experience with affected families, I am considering developing a public interest fellowship to target districts in other states that discriminate against children with eating-related disabilities.

Thank you again for the support you have offered me and other public interest law students, and I hope to stay in touch in the future.

Thanks,

Audrey Barron
UC Berkeley School of Law



ADVOCATES FOR CHILDREN

Helping children succeed in school

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September 26, 2011

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Re: Summer 2011 Fellowship for Audrey Barron

Dear Dan:

Thank you for awarding a fellowship to Audrey Barron to intern at Advocates for Children of New York ("AFC") for the summer of 2011. We enjoyed having Audrey with us and appreciate all of the work that she contributed. Per your request, this letter describes Audrey's internship and an evaluation of the summer.

By way of background, for forty years, AFC has worked to promote access to the best education New York can provide for all students, especially students of color and students from low-income backgrounds. The organization uses uniquely integrated strategies to advance systemic reform, empower families and communities, and advocate for the educational rights of individual students.

AFC's ten-week internship program is based on a clinical model. All interns work closely with clients throughout all stages of representation from intake to investigation to settlement negotiations and possibly to preparation and execution of administrative hearings regarding the provision of special education services and placement. The administrative hearings in special education cases, called impartial hearings, involve legal research, opening statements, direct and cross examination, and closing statements. Interns also assist attorneys with pending class action lawsuits and policy reform initiatives. AFC's policy reforms focus on the needs of students most at risk of academic failure including: students in the juvenile justice and foster care systems; immigrant and homeless students; and students with special education needs.

AFC prides itself on both the training and direct advocacy experiences that we provide to interns. Interns meet weekly for training sessions to learn about relevant law, regulations, cases and practices, as well as to review transcripts and case examples. Additionally, we arrange for interns to visit a variety of schools and other educational programs. Each intern is supervised by an AFC attorney.

Audrey's experiences at AFC ranged from direct services work for clients to litigation and policy work. She worked with attorneys in connection with our representation of four parents seeking impartial hearings to obtain appropriate special education



services for New York City students. Audrey also contributed to our work in connection with discrimination under Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act, including research for two potential cases and preparation of a guide on the rights of students under Section 504. Finally, Audrey assisted our Immigrant Students Rights Project in connection with an advocacy project and conducted research relating to charter schools.

In addition to the trainings described above, I met with Audrey on a weekly basis to discuss her cases, supervision, and overall internship experience. Based upon our discussions, it sounds like the internship was positive for everyone.

Thank you again for awarding the fellowship to Audrey. Please call me at 212-822-9574 if you need any further information about the internship program or about Audrey's summer.

Very Truly Yours,

Rebecca Shore

Rebecca C. Shore
Director of Litigation
Advocates for Children of New York