

Brittany Clement

August 30, 2010

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

Dear Mr. Ruben:

I would like to share with you my experience as an Equal Justice America Fellowship recipient. I spent my summer at Community Action Program Legal Services, Inc. (CAPLAW). CAPLAW provides legal advice to mainly nonprofit community action agencies (CAAs) across the country. CAAs provide a variety of services to low-income clients. During my internship, I provided legal assistance to CAAs on a variety of topics, including health care reform and immigrant eligibility for public benefits. I believe I gained valuable experience dealing with clients, but also served the public interest by making sure CAAs were prepared to comply with provisions of health care reform and were not denying certain public benefits to certain classes of immigrants.

I spent much of my summer researching federal health care reform. That research served as the basis for an article I wrote in CAPLAW's newsletter, a presentation used by senior staff and a webpage on CAPLAW's website devoted to health care reform resources and updates. I became the point-person for health care reform questions that came into the office, and assisted a few CAAs with specific questions related to the legislation.

I also spent significant time researching federal law pertaining to immigrant eligibility for public benefits. This work was most rewarding to me, because it sometimes involved clients of CAAs who may not have received benefits without my research. Federal immigration law is quite messy, and it is very complicated as to whether undocumented — and even some documented — immigrants are eligible for certain public benefits. I sifted through statutes and regulatory material to find which programs had restrictions and which ones did not. My research found that federal law was not as restrictive as some CAAs believed it was, meaning those CAAs did not have to deny certain benefits to undocumented immigrants and in some cases could not deny benefits to undocumented individuals. This research was especially helpful to a CAA that was unsure whether it could provide security deposit assistance to an undocumented man and his two children who had been homeless. The man had recently gotten a job and found an apartment, but could not afford the security deposit without help. I was thrilled to be able to tell the CAA that it could provide assistance without running afoul of federal law. I feel like so much of law school is made up of abstract theories and hypothetical situations, so to be part of legal research that truly helped real people was an unforgettable and moving experience for me.

I researched a variety of other topics during the rest of my summer, including the Fair Labor

Standards Act, the Low-Income Home Energy Assistance Program, the Privacy Act and photography policies. I really enjoyed researching all of the topics and felt my research was vital to ensuring that CAAs treat their employees well and serve their clients well.

My summer internship with CAPLAW was a great experience, and I have to thank Equal Justice America for making it possible. I could not have afforded an unpaid internship, and I feel like I would have lost a valuable and fulfilling experience without EJA's help. Thanks again.

Sincerely,

Brittany Clement

Boston University, transferred to Georgetown University Law Center 2012



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Dan Ruben
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Midlothian, VA 23112

Dear Mr. Ruben:

I am writing to let you know how much Community Action Program Legal Services, Inc. (CAPLAW) enjoyed and benefited from our summer with Equal Justice America fellow Brittany Clement.

CAPLAW is a nonprofit organization that offers legal assistance and training to the nationwide network of Community Action Agencies (CAAs), nonprofit organizations and local government entities that work to reduce poverty, revitalize low-income communities, and empower low-income individuals and families to become fully self-sufficient through advocacy and services.

Brittany researched and analyzed complex, cutting-edge issues for our organization, the CAAs we work with and the low-income clients they serve. For example, she quickly familiarized herself with the new health care reform law and guidance from federal agencies on the law and distilled that information into an article for our newsletter, a presentation for CAPLAW attorneys to give at training events across the country, and a summary of the law and timeline of its implementation for our website and e-News Bulletin. Brittany's in-depth work and clear writing enabled CAPLAW attorneys to get up to speed quickly and confidently on this complicated new law and to ensure that CAAs understand what the law means for them and their low-income clients.

Brittany also tackled two other thorny issues of great importance to CAAs and their clients: (1) the impact of a state's stringent new immigration law on CAAs' provision of benefits and services to immigrant clients; and (2) whether CAA clients can be required to provide Social Security Numbers in order to receive CAA-provided benefits or services. Brittany's thorough research and keen analysis of these issues enabled CAPLAW to advise CAAs on their rights and responsibilities in these areas, as well as those of their clients.

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These issues were just some of the many that Brittany worked on during her short but extremely productive tenure with CAPLAW.

CAPLAW is deeply grateful for the support we received from Equal Justice America. This support enabled CAPLAW to address critical legal issues facing CAAs and their clients and to provide Brittany with an opportunity to hone her legal research, writing and consultation skills while learning about cutting edge issues in public interest law.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read "Eleanor A. Evans". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Eleanor" being more prominent than the last name "Evans".

Eleanor A. Evans
Deputy Director/Senior Counsel