

August 28, 2014

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

Dear Mr. Ruben:

I hope this letter finds you well. My name is Caitlin Tompkins and I had the honor of serving as an Equal Justice America Fellow during the Summer of 2014. I spent my summer working as a legal intern for Shelter Legal Services d/b/a Veterans Legal Services in Newton, Massachusetts. Shelter Legal Services provides pro bono legal assistance to veterans and other indigent populations in the greater Boston area.

As an intern, I was able to conduct client intake and interviews, suggest course of action with the assistance of supervising attorneys, research substantive and procedural areas of the law and draft court documents. I was also able to prepare and conduct trainings for the other interns on different legal topics, such as landlord/tenant law.

While at Shelter Legal Services, I had the opportunity to meet and work with over 50 clients, 10 of whom obtained positive legal outcomes within my time of service. I was able to work with these clients on a number of legal issues, including child support, visitation, evictions, criminal record sealing, and benefits approval. The goal when working with most clients who come to Shelter Legal Services is to help that client resolve any legal issues and to assist them in attaining stability. This stability can include financial stability, stability in a living situation or stability in employment.

I had the privilege this summer of working with a homeless, disabled veteran on a number of legal issues, the culmination of which was a reduced child support order, an approval for Social Security benefits and the potential for permanent housing. When the client first completed an intake with an attorney at Shelter Legal Services in May of 2014, he owed approximately \$100,000 in past due child support, including penalties and interest. We were able to work with the client and his Department of Revenue ("DOR") caseworker to eliminate discrepancies on his DOR payment record and to make equitable adjustments to his order. Simultaneously, we encouraged the client to apply for Social Security to increase his monthly income. When his Social Security application was approved, his entire retroactive benefits check was applied to his child support order. At the end of my summer at Shelter Legal Services, the client's child support order had been reduced to almost \$45,000. The child support order will continue to decrease as the client makes monthly payments with the help of his Social Security benefits. Additionally, because the client's now has a stable income, he was able to begin the process of applying for permanent housing. Working with this client was a very rewarding experience and I look forward to seeing how his case progresses throughout the fall.

The Equal Justice America Summer 2014 Fellowship allowed me to devote a summer to pro bono work and I am very grateful for my experience. My summer at Shelter Legal Services not only increased my knowledge of the law, it also increased my desire to continue volunteering and using my legal education to give back to the Boston community. I plan to continue to volunteer with Shelter Legal Services throughout my second and third year of law school in addition to continuing my other volunteer work in Boston, such as being a certified tax preparation volunteer through EITC/VITA during tax season.

Please feel free to contact me for further information regarding my summer experience at Shelter Legal Services.

Thank you again,

Caitlin Tompkins
J.D. Candidate, Class of 2016
Boston University School of Law