

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

Dear Mr. Ruben,

I spent my summer working as a law clerk for the Children's Law Center of Los Angeles (CLC), a law firm that represents abused and neglected children in the largest foster care system in the country. Most of the children in the dependency system grow up in a chaotic environment. Their parents are unable, unwilling, or unfit to care for them, because of poverty, drug addiction, or abuse, and as a result they are placed in foster homes or in the care of a relative until their parents have resolved their problems and are able to reunify with them.

Because dependent children's lives are under scrutiny from the Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS), simple things like who should sign a field trip permission slip for a child in a group home often become complicated (the answer, my attorney and I discovered after some research was the social worker, because foster children are under the care and supervision of DCFS). Thus one of the main jobs of the children's attorneys is to ensure their clients have as normal a life as possible and to help ensure that they receive the services they need.

One of my most rewarding moments at CLC was working with a grandmother who was the legal guardian of her granddaughter, C.G., to write a 317(e). C.G. is a 19-year-old girl who is severely mentally delayed because her mother abused illegal drugs while she was pregnant. C.G. had been receiving speech therapy provided by DCFS; however, once she turned 18 these services were cut off. As a result, C.G.'s speech ability regressed and soon she was back to communicating by pointing. I wrote a 317(e) to petition the court to assign C.G. an education attorney who could advocate on her behalf. A week after filing the 317(e) we were notified that the petition had been accepted. C.G. is now on her way to getting her speech therapy classes back.

Another rewarding experience was when I helped my supervising attorney draft a trial brief to advocate the return of a child, C.R., to the care of his grandmother. C.R. and his two sisters came under the jurisdiction of the dependency court as a result of neglect by their mother, who voluntarily terminated her parental rights. For a while C.R., along with his two sisters, lived with his grandmother; however, because of his severe behavior problems, social workers convinced C.R.'s grandmother to temporarily move him to a group home. His "temporary" group home stay turned into years and even though his therapist at the group home said he was ready to go back home, DCFS voiced concerns about the grandmother's ability to care for C.R. This was despite the fact that the grandmother had already adopted C.R.'s two siblings and every weekend, overnight visit C.R. had with his grandmother passed without any incident.

After submitting our trial brief to the court, the judge indicated that she too wanted C.R. to return to his grandmother and urged the Department to find some way to return C.R. to his grandmother's care. The trial to determine whether C.R. will stay in the group home, or will

return to his grandmother, takes place next week, and I believe we have made a very strong argument in our brief.

Overall, my experience at CLC was very rewarding. I especially enjoyed the contact I had with clients and the opportunity I had to make a positive change in the lives of dependent children who are used to constant disappointment.

Sincerely,

Faiza Sayed
Columbia Law School
J.D. Candidate 2012

August 3, 2010

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

Re: Faiza W. Sayed, Equal Justice America Fellowship

Dear Mr. Ruben:

I am one of the attorneys who had the privilege of supervising Law Clerk Faiza Sayed during summer 2010 at Children's Law Center (CLC) in Monterey Park, California. Our office represents children in Dependency Court, thus our clients are often victims of abuse, exploitation and neglect.

Knowing that Ms. Sayed had completed only one year of law school before coming to CLC, I anticipated that she would require extensive training and repetition. However, Ms. Sayed absorbed the initial law clerk training in detail so she immediately was able to provide assistance.

Ms. Sayed assisted me with interviews of children from age 4 to age 20, in person or telephonically, for status checks and in preparation for court appearances. Ms. Sayed was kind and thoughtful during her interviews, gently obtaining the detailed information necessary for the court appearance. She took detailed notes and asked pertinent questions when discussing the information with me. Other tasks included preparing witness and document lists for trial, researching and drafting a trial brief, preparing requests for investigators to visit children unable to come to court, preparing motions to support our clients who also had a delinquency matter, and preparing motions to request appointment of special counsel to represent clients in matters outside the scope of Dependency Court.

Ms. Sayed went above and beyond what was asked of her, spending time outside the workplace to obtain information to help a client, i.e. researching availability and pricing of computers for a grant request. Her warm personality and professionalism was refreshing and invaluable in this area of legal work. Ms. Sayed was an outstanding law clerk, who exceeded all my expectations. As you can tell, I have nothing but high praise for Ms. Sayed. In fact, my only complaint is that she had to leave to return to law school! Thank you for the opportunity to work with such an outstanding law student.

Very truly yours,
Patsy Hopkins Moore