

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

Dear Mr. Ruben,

This summer I had the privilege of working for the Women's Bar Foundation's Family Law Project (FLP) in Boston, Massachusetts. After just ten short weeks spent at the FLP, I can say unequivocally that I have gained one of the most tremendous experiences in my life, and for that, I am greatly indebted to Equal Justice America.

I was grateful to be chosen as a summer intern at the FLP because I connected deeply with the FLP's mission to assist low-income survivors of domestic violence in their family law cases. Growing up in a public interest, blue collar family, I had always considered public interest work to be one of the most challenging yet meaningful ways to connect to others and work towards a positive good. The FLP fulfilled my expectations of what experience I hoped to gain at a public interest office this summer, and then exceeded them.

The FLP is unique in that its mission is to serve women and men who are experiencing three intersecting issues: low-income pay or income insecurity, domestic violence, and one or more family law cases. By serving this particular subset of the population, the FLP fills a very important legal gap in Massachusetts due to the fact that many legal services offices often do not have staff who are trained to respond to both domestic violence and family law cases.

My role at the FLP included screening potential clients who met this three-fold description. Over the course of the summer, I spoke to 68 clients, ultimately administering 37 intakes and 11 evaluations. Through this process I determined whether clients were eligible for our legal services. While simply speaking to people does not seem very challenging, listening and feeling the great weight of the stories that women and men carry with them proved to be a task that was often emotionally overwhelming. Attempting composure after a woman has just divulged years and years of abuse that she has suffered, whether financially, verbally, physically, sexually, or culturally, was nearly an impossible feat most days. After hearing call after call come through the line from clients who were afraid for their lives, afraid about losing their children, desperately wanting a divorce, or unsure of where their next meal would come from, my worldview started to darken.

While I could not provide answers or legal help to all those who contacted our office, I left the FLP this summer feeling like I had at least made a difference in the lives of some, and that made all the difference for me. This summer I helped four different clients secure legal representation at their 209A restraining order hearings. I also helped five clients secure legal representation to initiate divorces from abusive spouses, recover unpaid child support through Massachusetts' DOR service, receive alimony, recover stolen assets, or achieve supervised instead of unsupervised parenting time.

Equal Justice America made a vision of mine a reality this summer at the FLP. Thank you for your commitment to students and public interest work.

Kasie Durkit
Georgetown University Law Center, 2018