

August 14, 2012

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

Dear Dan Ruben,

I had an amazing summer at The Family Center and I am so thankful that Equal Justice America is around to support these opportunities in the non-profit sector. The Family Center is a full service non-profit organization. It provides health, social, and legal services for families that have been impacted by HIV/AIDS and cancer. It also provides services for non-biological caregivers. It is a direct service agency that primarily works with low income individuals. A lot of the legal assistance revolves around correcting benefit allocations, housing matters, advanced directives, and family law (guardianship and divorce).

I never thought that I would find my place within the legal profession at an organization that dealt with people who are impacted by serious illnesses. When applying to legal jobs, I did not imagine myself asking people about their health, how they came into contact with diseases, and how they were providing for their family. As the internship went on, I found myself more comfortable with clients and better able to ask the questions that would allow the attorneys to render the best advice possible to the clients. Even though interactions with clients posed potentially emotional situations, it was great to know that I had a part in our agency making a positive difference in what turned out to be very difficult times in the lives of some of our clients.

My day to day tasks varied. I would talk to clients, help the lawyers find information or draft documents, and go to various courts to file documents. It's a small office, so the lawyers depended on the work that the interns did for the organization. Sometimes the attorneys would give me independence and I would be the one directly working with the client. Often times, I would be the one asking for information, meeting with the clients, and following up with them if they had any questions. It was great being in an environment where I was entrusted with taking care of clients' needs while knowing that I had the support of the attorneys if I took a misstep or didn't know exactly what I was doing.

The projects were definitely challenging and satisfying. The staff attorneys were passionate about helping their clients and often that desire turned into research projects that took me from the Connecticut Surrogate's Court to the Chinese Consulate. Whether a potential client was able to receive

services from our agency, or needed to look elsewhere, The Family Center worked to guide him into making decisions that were in his best interests given the circumstances. Although I may not have always found an answer to every quandary, these exercises showed me how important it was to take into consideration the needs and desires of the clients. I not only became more familiar with the law, I also became aware of what it means to efficiently serve a client.

The Family Center provided me with a variety of legal and personal learning experiences. It was exciting to learn about the areas of the law that clients who were served by The Family Center had to deal with and how it impacted their everyday experiences. In addition, it was a humbling experience. Not only did I see people coming to terms with their circumstances, I also observed how clients volunteered to care for family members who had been impacted by tragedy. This summer, I not only learned what it meant to be a Lawyer with integrity, but also what it meant to be an honorable person.

In closing, my summer at The Family Center has not only prepared me to talk to potential clients about sensitive information, it has also encouraged me to be a more compassionate, patient, and caring person. I am so thankful that I had the opportunity to work with this organization. It is great that Equal Justice America encourages law students to pursue these avenues of interest and I hope other law students take advantage of this opportunity.

Thank You,

Jennifer Anderson
Columbia Law School
Class 2014