

August 23, 2013

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

Dear Mr. Ruben:

My fellowship with Equal Justice America this summer was absolutely an amazing and rewarding experience. I came into this summer, after completing a challenging first year of law school, hoping for an experience that would build on the things I learned at school, while giving me a chance to return to my native California and help my community. My fellowship with EJA helped me accomplish both, and more.

This summer I worked at East Bay Community Law Center (EBCLC), a legal clinic connected with Boalt Hall School of Law, which serves low-income and underrepresented people of Alameda County. EBCLC has several different clinics and practices, and I was lucky enough to serve with a great group of attorneys and fellow interns in the health practice. The health practice was both exciting and challenging, as we not only dealt with strictly health issues, like Social Security disability appeals, but also housing and education problems. From day one, our supervising attorneys threw us into the fire, giving us a crash course on public benefits, housing, and education law, while also assigning us clients.

Over the course of the summer, I had over a dozen clients. For a few of my clients, I worked with other interns on their issues. For most of my clients, however, I was responsible, with some guidance from my supervising attorneys, for dealing with their legal issues. Because Social Security disability appeals can last many months, and sometimes even years, for some of my clients, my work consisted mainly of gathering medical records and related evidence, and summarizing it for future interns or staff attorneys. For other clients, I was able to give them brief services, such as drafting letters to their landlords, or getting them connected with private attorneys who could devote more time on their cases. I was also able to volunteer at Highland Hospital, the largest public hospital in Alameda County, where I worked with other interns and attorneys to conduct client intakes.

Perhaps the most rewarding part of the summer, however, was working on my two main cases. For one of them, I represented a client suffering from AIDS and other HIV-related manifestations on his Supplemental Security Income (SSI) appeal. He had applied for and had been denied SSI, mainly because his medical record documenting his medical conditions had not been updated. I was able to update his record, submit it into

evidence, wrote a brief on his behalf, and argued his case in front of an administrative law judge. Thankfully, we found out two weeks after his hearing that his SSI became approved!

My second main case had to do with a mother whose one-year-old son's SSI benefit was being reduced by hundreds of dollars, because of a provision in Social Security regulations which reduces benefits due to parents' income levels. While I was unable to prevent that benefit reduction from occurring, I found another provision in Social Security regulations that previous Social Security analysts overlooked in analyzing his case. I subsequently went with the mother and son to a Social Security office and had a meeting with an analyst, who corrected the mistake after I showed him the regulation. Because of that change, the mother's son was able to save hundreds of dollars from his benefit reduction!

Overall, I was very happy that I could help out my clients. While not every one of my clients had quite the success story that my two main clients had, I was pleased that I was able to dig deep into their cases and find the best possible options for them. I learned so much this summer from my experience as an EJA fellow, from enhancing my research and writing skills, to learning how to be a zealous advocate for my clients. I am grateful for Equal Justice America for helping me achieve my goals this summer and help me grow as an aspiring attorney!

Sincerely,

Jordan Grushkin



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EAST BAY
COMMUNITY
LAW CENTER

August 30, 2013

Dan Ruben
Executive Director
Equal Justice America
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13540 East Boundary Road
Midlothian, VA 23112

SENT VIA E-MAIL to Katie Toman at Katie@equaljusticeamerica.org

Re: Jordan Grushkin, Summer 2013 Intern

Mr. Ruben,

Thank you for funding Jordan Grushkin's work with the East Bay Community Law Center this summer. Jordan was a great asset to his clients and to our team, as he assisted clients in a variety of areas, including social security and housing.

Jordan worked in the Health Practice, which focuses on providing holistic services to HIV-positive individuals, and to families referred by medical providers at Children's Hospital Oakland. He completed dozens of in-person and phone intakes, including several while on-site at a county hospital. Jordan built strong rapport with a diverse group of low-income clients of different ages, races, cultures, and education levels. He developed valuable working relationships with doctors, social workers and individuals working in governmental agencies.

Jordan's first task of the summer was to prepare a case for an SSI hearing on behalf of a low-income client who suffers from HIV and several mental health disorders. Jordan reviewed his client's medical records, drafted a letter of diagnosis for a physician signature, and wrote a hearing brief. When his client was unable to appear at the hearing, Jordan led a Case Rounds discussion with Health Practice attorneys and student interns, during which he presented thoughtful and pointed questions to weigh the costs and benefits of asking for a continuance. Ultimately, Jordan decided to appear at the hearing to make a case for the judge to grant the appeal. Although the judge was initially reluctant and stated that he would not make a decision without the client, Jordan's arguments were so clear, concise, and on-point that the judge eventually agreed that the case should be granted. Because of Jordan's persistence and wise decisions, his client did not have to wait any longer for his SSI benefits.

In another case, Jordan's infant client's SSI amount was being wrongfully reduced. Through his research of Social Security regulations, Jordan realized that not only was Social Security's decision wrong, but that the client actually should have been receiving a higher benefit. Jordan quickly appealed the decision, wrote a memorandum, and met with the client's Social Security Claims Representative to convince him to reach a favorable decision.

Jordan also helped clients with an array of habitability and pre-eviction housing issues. In one case, he researched and notified the client of her rights as a tenant and educated her on the eviction process. Before Jordan left EBCLC, he put his client in touch with a housing attorney to assist her with eviction defense in case the need arose.

These are just a few examples of the many clients for whom Jordan advocated over the summer. Jordan obtained and read through multiple clients' medical records, summarized findings, and wrote memoranda for attorneys and future interns with his case assessment. He was very thoughtful in his presentation of his cases, and his work product needed almost no revision.

I appreciate your role in making it possible for Jordan to spend the summer at EBCLC. If you have any questions, please feel free to contact me at (510) 548-4040 ext. 312 or erinle@ebclc.org.

Sincerely,



Erin Le

Staff Attorney and Clinical Supervisor