

KIMBERLY ROLLA

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

Mr. Ruben:

I am writing to thank Equal Justice America for the generous fellowship it awarded me this past summer. The award enabled me to work with the Public Benefits Unit of Community Legal Services (CLS) of Philadelphia. My work focused primarily on client's access to Supplemental Security Income (SSI) through the Social Security Administration (SSA).

It was a heart wrenching summer in the Public Benefits Unit because in late June the Pennsylvania legislature terminated a state cash assistance program of last resort known as "General Assistance." Recipients of General Assistance include the temporarily disabled, survivors of domestic violence, those in treatment for substance abuse, and other vulnerable populations. This was the sole source of income for a significant number of our clients.

Following the termination of General Assistance, the ability of clients to access SSI became even more critical. Many clients who were unable to work faced imminent eviction if they could not secure a source of income. Some clients were already experiencing homelessness due to their inability to work. I helped multiple homeless clients secure expedited hearings on their SSI claims. I also was successful in convincing multiple Administrative Law Judges to vacate orders of dismissal for failure to appear, by explaining how difficult it is for our homeless clients to receive communication from the SSA concerning dates and times of hearings. This type of work is absolutely critical to our clients, because the SSA appeals process typically takes over a year and during that year our client would still have no source of income.

My supervisor, Richard Weishaupt, has worked for CLS for over thirty years and quickly familiarized me with the substantive law and procedure concerning SSI benefits. Therefore I was also able to engage in stimulating substantive work through drafting Appeals Councils Briefs for CLS clients who has been denied benefits at an administrative hearing.

The summer internship with Community Legal Services was a wonderful balance of client interaction and research and writing. I truly appreciate Equal Justice America's financial support that facilitated this opportunity.

Sincerely,

Kimberly Rolla
University of Virginia School of Law
Class of 2013

August 23, 2012

Dan Ruben, Executive Director
Equal Justice America

Dear Mr. Ruben:

I am writing to provide an evaluation of Kim Rolla's summer fellowship at Community Legal Services in Philadelphia.

As you know, Community Legal Services is a civil legal services offices providing free legal representation to over 18,000 low-income Philadelphians each year. Kim worked with us in the public benefits unit. I was her direct supervisor for the summer.

During her time at CLS, Kim provided direct service to 10 to 20 clients, mostly concerning issues of SSI eligibility, but also including Medicaid, food stamps and cash assistance. She helped write several letter briefs appealing individual SSI cases to the Appeals Council, the last step in the administrative process. These briefs required careful research into the law as well as mastery of complex medical and vocational evidence. She did an excellent job and I was impressed with how well she writes.

In addition, Kim worked on several large-scale public policy matters, including drafting comments to the Department of Public Welfare opposing a new Medicaid policy and helping with research projects that involved major litigation that we are contemplating.

Kim excelled in this position. She was empathetic to clients. She was thorough in interviews. She was exceedingly responsive to assigned tasks. Her written work, as I have said, was excellent. She was also very easy to work with and fit right in with our team approach. I am convinced she will make a fine public interest lawyer.

On behalf of CLS and our clients, we thank you for providing her with the opportunity to work with us this summer.

Sincerely,

Richard Weishaupt
Senior Attorney