

August 31, 2011

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

Dear Mr. Ruben,

I would like to thank you for the opportunity, given in the form of an Equal Justice America Fellowship, to serve and represent low-income clients in the Boston area this past summer. I spent my fellowship working for Medical-Legal Partnership | Boston based out of Boston Medical Center, providing legal services for low-income children and families receiving medical care at Boston Medical Center and Children's Hospital, Boston. I worked as a member of the Income Supports Team advocating for clients in regards to SSI denials, SSI overpayments and food stamp benefits appeals. I also attended Team meetings and Clinic Reviews, conducted client intakes, participated in community-based projects and trained medical residents about the impact of poverty on health and social well-being.

Medical-legal partnerships are a critical part of family-centered care. Legal determinants of health are among the most serious and solvable social barriers to patient health and well-being. By providing appropriate legal remedies complementary to traditional medical remedies, patients often benefit from longer lasting beneficial outcomes.

During my fellowship I handled a caseload of 6-8 cases at a time often taking the lead on legal strategizing. I assisted children and families with appeals of SSI denials, appeals of SSI overpayments, and food stamp benefits. I also had the opportunity to assist with the preparation of an SSI denial hearing before an administrative law judge. I interviewed medical providers and drafted provider letters, interviewed our client for relevant information, drafted a memo arguing that our client meets the SSA listings and function level for childhood disability and submitted evidence to the clerk's office for admission at the hearing.

Many of our clients faced significant barriers to adequate healthcare, nutrition and housing and securing a positive SSI determination can directly impact a child's health, by providing families the means to afford adequate and appropriate care for the child. For example, one of our clients was so severely disabled he could only eat baby food. For a family already living below the federal poverty line, affording special meals for a disabled child is often impossible.

I had the opportunity to attend a TPS clinic for Haitian refugees and assist with intake during a TPS clinic as well. I helped refugees and asylees from Haiti, often children, apply for Temporary Protected Status. I also participated in a poverty simulation training of medical residents at Boston Medical Center. I helped train first year residents about the impact of poverty on health and social well-being and the link between unmet legal needs and patient health. For example, a child who has asthma is likely to suffer numerous exacerbations if he is living in public housing with

mold. By remedying the child's legal needs and providing reasonable accommodations his asthma would improve as a result.

The opportunity to provide necessary legal services for low-income children and their families has been an incredible experience. My fellowship at Medical-Legal Partnership | Boston has further cemented my commitment to work in public interest law, with a focus on child advocacy. It is an amazing feeling to know that my work directly and positively influenced the lives of children. I extend my greatest and most sincere thank you for this opportunity. I am indebted to Equal Justice America and the donors who make this possible.

Sincerely,

Krista Selnau
Suffolk University Law School, Class of 2012

September 8, 2011

Dan Ruben
Executive Director
Equal Justice America

RE: Summer 2011 Fellowship Evaluation - Krista Selnau

Dear Mr. Ruben;

I am a staff attorney with Medical-Legal Partnership | Boston ("MLP | Boston"), a legal services organization based at Boston Medical Center. I had the pleasure of supervising Krista Selnau during her time with us this summer. Ms. Selnau did a wonderful job as a legal intern on our Income Supports team this summer.

During her time here, Ms. Selnau was in charge of a small public benefits caseload under my supervision. She started and maintained case files and logs, interviewed clients and medical providers, gathered medical records and other evidence, researched state benefits regulations and generally performed all responsibilities associated with representing a client on a public benefits case. In addition to maintaining her own cases, Ms. Selnau supported the rest of the public benefits team through legal research and discrete advocacy tasks.

Ms. Selnau was professional, hard-working, and consistent. She wrote several helpful and concise issue memos during her time at MLP | Boston. Her correspondence to clients and adverse parties was well-written and improved over the course of her time here. She expressed herself articulately and concisely. She was well organized and this helped her to maintain momentum while simultaneously learning new skills and substantive law. She communicated very effectively in supervision meetings as she always had her docket organized and ready to present with brief updates on each case.

Ms. Selnau communicated consistently with clients, conducted legal research where it was needed, drafted correspondence, requested records and generally seemed to have a good grasp of what is needed to move a case forward. I felt confident that she would complete her assignments in a timely and organized fashion without having to be reminded. She was persistent in communications with unresponsive adverse parties. She worked well independently but also reached out for help when it was appropriate. She was flexible and able to "go with the flow" when asked to switch gears and prioritize something new (a frequent occurrence in our work at MLP | Boston).

Ms. Selnau did a particularly great job assisting me to prepare for a Supplemental Security Income benefits hearing for an 11 year old client with pervasive development disorder, anxiety, attention deficit hyperactivity

disorder and learning disabilities. Ms. Selnau gathered a tremendous amount of medical evidence in a short time and wrote a draft Memorandum of Law and Fact laying out the theory of the case upon which I will rely heavily in drafting my own hearing memo to the Administrative Law Judge. In her last week at MLP she communicated with medical providers and was able to secure three strong letters of support which will prove invaluable in qualifying this young man for disability benefits.

Before she left I offered Ms. Selnau two items of feedback about what she could to further develop her advocacy and lawyering skills. In my view she is ready to move to the next level in her client advocacy by taking more initiative in strategizing next steps, even if it means proposing a different direction for a case than her supervisors. This is difficult to do after only ten weeks of learning a particular practice area, but given more time at MLP I believe she would have improved greatly in this area. I believe she is on her way to becoming a truly great advocate for clients who lack the ability or the circumstances in which to advocate for themselves.

Ms. Selnau was very professional, polite, friendly and well-liked by both our clients and staff. She demonstrated a true understanding of the gravity of responsibility involved in representing a client on such an important matter as ensuring that the client had enough food to feed her family, or the disability benefit needed to pay for the medications of a chronically ill child. She did a wonderful job and we thank Equal Justice America for giving us the opportunity and the privilege of working with Krista Selnau this summer.

I am happy to talk further about my evaluation and can be reached at (617) 414-3653.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Kristin M. Small". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Kristin" and last name "Small" clearly distinguishable.

Kristin M. Small
Attorney at Law