

LINDSAY VANGILDER

May 24, 2007

Dan Ruben
Founder and Executive Director
Equal Justice America
Building II, Suite 204
13540 E. Boundary Road
Midlothian, VA 23112

Dear Mr. Ruben:

First, I would like to thank you for the wonderful opportunity to work as a Spring EJA Fellow. My work at Boulder County Legal Services was an incredibly rewarding experience, and EJA helped make it possible.

I studied abroad to Valparaíso, Chile in the fall of 2004, and ever since, I have been looking for opportunities to utilize my Spanish. When I heard that Boulder County Legal Services was looking for a Spanish-speaker to help conduct client intakes and translate for pro bono attorneys with Spanish-speaking clients, I was thrilled to be able to help. When I found out I could receive funding through EJA, the opportunity became even more appealing.

I worked on a variety of cases throughout the spring, but most of my time was spent conducting intake with Spanish-speaking clients. My work at Boulder Legal Services exposed me to a wide array of legal issues that frequently affect the Latino community: consumer issues, including debt, garnishment, and bankruptcy; family law issues, including divorce, domestic violence, and child custody; employment issues; and immigration and citizenship concerns. My routine tasks included conducting the initial client interview, discussing the case with the managing attorney, and then reporting back to the client about what their options were and if there was anything Boulder Legal Services could do to help. I also translated letters to clients into Spanish to follow up with their initial consultations. My fellowship allowed Boulder Legal Services to help low-income Spanish-speaking clients that they would not otherwise have been able to serve.

For me, the most memorable part of my experience as an EJA Fellow was working with a number of domestic violence victims. While this was probably the most difficult part of the job emotionally, it was also the most rewarding. I was able to help a number of women obtain temporary and permanent protection orders against physically, emotionally, and verbally abusive spouses and boyfriends. I was also able to refer women to the pro se family law clinic at Boulder County Legal Services, so that they could learn how navigate the legal system to obtain a divorce and leave their abusive partners. Although I had always thought I wanted to practice criminal law, my work with domestic violence victims has inspired me to take a Spanish for Family Law course this summer at the University of Colorado Law School. I am hoping that this class will improve my ability to serve Spanish-speaking clients who are seeking divorces, legal protection from abuse, and financial support for themselves and their children.

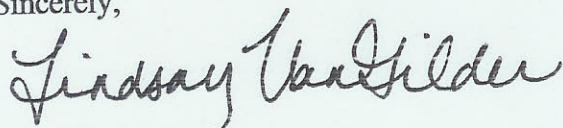
Along with domestic violence and family issues, I was able to help a number of clients who were in financial trouble. I spent a number of afternoons working with a Spanish-speaking woman filing for bankruptcy. Boulder Legal Services found a pro bono attorney to help with her case, but without my help, she would not have been able to communicate with the attorney. This case was my first exposure to bankruptcy law. While I never would have thought that I would like it, it was nevertheless satisfying to help a woman get rid of tens of thousands of dollars in debt so she could start fresh. I also was able to explain the bankruptcy process to another family. We eventually determined that they were financially ineligible for Legal Aid, but even providing some basic information to help them seek help on their own was rewarding. Garnishment of wages was another common consumer issue. I was able to help one woman stop a garnishment on her paycheck and start making monthly payments to her creditor. And finally, I was able to explain the process of bringing a claim in small claims court to another Spanish-speaking woman. My experience as an EJA Fellow exposed me to a number of Consumer Law issues that I would not have otherwise encountered.

Along with my experiences conducting intake for Spanish-speaking clients, I was also able to help a young woman reduce an overpayment of Section 8 public housing. I helped investigate and explain her complex financial history at an informal Public Housing hearing to reduce her overpayment to a manageable amount.

Overall, my experience as an EJA Fellow has broadened my areas of legal interest. I am still very interested in practicing criminal law, but I have also been exposed to other exciting legal areas that frequently affect low-income populations. Next fall I will be taking classes in Family and Immigration Law. My opportunity to work as an EJA Fellow this spring has also confirmed my interest in continuing to work with Spanish-speaking clients and has highlighted the importance of finding Spanish-speakers to serve this important minority population.

Thank you again for the EJA Fellowship. It was an incredibly valuable experience, and I hope that other law students will have the same opportunity to serve low-income and minority populations seeking access to the legal system. I learned a tremendous amount and I know that Boulder County Legal Services was grateful for my help.

Sincerely,



Lindsay VanGilder

J.D. Candidate, Class of 2009

University of Colorado Law School