

August 25, 2013

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

Dear Mr. Ruben,

I received an Equal Justice America Fellowship this summer to work at the Legal Clinic for the Disabled (LCD) in Philadelphia. LCD provides direct legal representation to low-income people with disabilities in Philadelphia and the surrounding counties. Last summer, I received an EJA fellowship to work at Community Legal Services of Philadelphia (CLS). At LCD, I built on my experience last summer and was exposed to a new type of legal service delivery, a Medical Legal Partnership.

I worked in a Medical Legal Partnership based in a nurse managed primary care center in North Philadelphia. At the health clinic, I assisted the staff attorney in being a part of a health care team to meet the needs of the low-income patient population. I conducted many legal intakes on worked on about 12 individual cases, including one representation in front of an Administrative Law Judge at a food stamps appeal hearing.

Because of the nature of the Medical Legal Partnership, I was assigned to many Medicaid cases. There were two cases, in particular, that provide excellent examples of my work from the summer. The first client, Ms. D, was referred to us by her social worker at the health clinic. When I met with Ms. D, she had been without health insurance for weeks and had a critical eye surgery only two weeks away. Without the surgery, which had already been delayed twice, Ms. D could have lost her vision completely. As a recent immigrant from Guinea, she did not speak English and was not sure why she was cut off of her health insurance. After discovering that Ms. D had been receiving Emergency Medical Assistance—a category only available for treatment on specifically identified urgent medical conditions—I advocated on behalf of Ms. D with the Welfare Department, arguing that she qualified for a more stable category of Medical Assistance. I also urged them to expedite Ms. D's case because of her upcoming surgery. Due to these efforts, Ms. D's Medical Assistance was turned back on just in time to confirm that she would have health coverage for her surgery. Now Ms. D has medical assistance moving forward not just for her eye problems, but for all of her health care.

In another notable case, I represented Ms. L in her negotiations with a former property manager to facilitate the payment of a judgment for owed rent. Ms. L wanted to eliminate the debt from her record so that she could secure more stable housing. I contacted the property manager on her behalf and negotiated a lower payment. Due to my advocacy, Ms. L saved \$2,000, lowering her payment by almost half.

At LCD, I represented numerous clients, was exposed to innovative models of care delivery, and learned about the issues facing the disability community. It was a truly wonderful learning experience and I really enjoyed my time there. The staff at LCD is extremely committed and great and what they do. I am grateful for the opportunity to have worked at LCD this summer and look forward to maintaining connections with the organization as I move forward in my public interest career.

Sincerely,

Lydia Gottesfeld
American University, Washington College of Law