

August 31, 2012

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

Dear Mr. Ruben,

I received a fellowship this past summer to work at Community Legal Services of Philadelphia (“CLS”). My experience at CLS was amazing for many reasons, several of which I will discuss in this letter. I am so grateful to you, and EJA, for providing the resources that allowed me to take this position. It had a profound impact on me and the direction of my legal career.

This summer, CLS assigned me to intern in their Public Benefits Unit. I had a background in health policy. Before law school, I worked at a Washington, DC based non-profit advocacy organization central to the effort to pass reform. CLS assigned me to work with the two attorneys who, in addition to their client work, focused on Medicaid, the Affordable Care Act, and other health issues in whatever impact litigation or policy work they did.

My experience at CLS was phenomenal for a few reasons. First, I was able to spend most of my time working directly with clients. Second, I spent some time doing legal research and writing for the large litigation that my unit was taking on over the summer, providing. And, third, the organization and people at CLS were amazing role models from whom I learned much.

I worked with about 25 clients over the summer. For most of those clients, I was completely in charge of the case. The vast majority of my clients were having problems with the welfare office. Usually, their benefits would be terminated for some reason or another, usually a paperwork error. Often, by the time they came to us, they had been through a lot in their effort to get benefits, had been mistreated, and usually were extremely frustrated by the time they came to us. I won benefits (food stamps, medical, and cash) for many of my clients. Typically my work consisted of phone calls to the welfare office, submitting documents, and talking to various agencies, doctors, and other necessary persons on their behalf. I learned very quickly that when I called, people listened. In contrast, when my clients called, they were treated poorly, told incorrect information, or just never reached anyone. I could see very clearly the power that attorneys (and student interns!) brought to the table for my clients. My clients had very complicated lives and were usually dealing with a lot. Knowing that they had someone working actively to help them get the basic essentials to get by was a small comfort in a stressful life. My client work culminated in a hearing at the end of the summer. Usually my cases did not go to hearing, but one did over a complicated legal issue regarding the

authorization of retroactive benefits. I wrote the brief and we won.

It was an exciting time to be in the benefits unit at CLS, but also a very depressing time for our clients. Since the governor took office in Pennsylvania a few years ago, he has made many cuts to welfare programs. When I was in Philly over the summer, he eliminated the general assistance program which provided a meager \$205 a month to disabled people, victims of domestic violence, and people going through drug and alcohol treatment programs. This was a small program, but it provided essential safety net for many people in the city, and the state. Additionally, the governor introduced a new medical form that would make it significantly harder for people to get Medicaid in Pennsylvania while I was there over the summer. My unit was bringing class action litigation over these two issues as well as a few other bad state actions. I had the opportunity to do legal research and writing for these cases. In particular, I wrote a legal memo that formed the basis for CLS' decision whether to bring suit on one particularly egregious state action pertaining to the Medicaid program.

I really liked that I got to work on a variety of projects at CLS from my direct client representation to legal research to client interviewing for the class action litigation. I also wrote a Title VI complaint for a client and conducted interviews for an investigation over a recent welfare office action that we predicted would have negative impact on our clients.

In addition to the varied and interesting work I did this summer, my internship was made even better by the amazing group of attorneys, paralegals, and administrative staff I worked with at CLS. In my unit alone, I worked with a range of attorneys who had been at CLS from 40 years to one year. They were friendly and always willing to give advice and chat. I learned a lot from watching them work and our conversations.

My work at CLS has definitely led me down a path toward direct service work. I loved working with clients and felt I was really at the grassroots of many important issues for low-income people. At the same time, I saw CLS taking steps to fix the systems as well.

Thank you again for making this summer position a reality for me. I enjoyed my work and learned a huge amount this summer. The next question is... how can I possibly top this experience with something next summer?

Sincerely,

Lydia Gottesfeld
American University



COMMUNITY LEGAL SERVICES
OF PHILADELPHIA

August 16, 2012

RE: Summer 2012 Internship Evaluation for Lydia Gottesfeld

To Whom It May Concern:

I am writing to evaluate Lydia Gottesfeld following her internship with Community Legal Services' Public Benefits Unit this summer.

We were delighted to have Lydia join us for the summer. From the beginning, she dived into individual client representation. She represented approximately twenty clients over the course of the summer with complex Medicaid, SNAP (formerly food stamp) and cash assistance problems. Lydia was empathic and respectful of the clients with whom she interacted. She was able to juggle several cases at once, and to move toward positive outcomes in each. Most important, she was able to identify the next steps for each case and move forward with minimal supervision. While Lydia expressed a lack of comfort with individual client work, as she had no prior experience with it, she has a gift for individual client representation.

Lydia also took on systemic projects. Relying on her pre-law school background in the health policy arena, she helped Community Legal Services to prepare for the Supreme Court's decision on the constitutionality of the Affordable Care Act by drafting talking points and a press statement. She also prepared a sophisticated legal memorandum on the legal issues with a proposed change to state Medicaid policy. She then turned her memorandum to a clear, succinct section of an "intent to sue" letter. Finally, she screened potential plaintiffs in a Medical Assistance Transportation Program case. Lydia has a sophisticated understanding of health policy, and she was able to adapt that understanding to the needs of our organization.

Finally, Lydia was a pleasure to work with. She was personable and communicative, while being respectful of her fellow interns' and her supervisors' time. We would strongly recommend her for other public interest law positions.

Please let me know if I can provide additional information about Lydia's time at Community Legal Services. I may be reached at (215) 981-3782.

Sincerely yours,

Kristen M. Dama
Staff Attorney