

August 11, 2009

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

Dear Mr. Ruben,

This summer I was a legal intern at the Children's Law Center in Lynn, Massachusetts. My primary responsibilities were answering intake calls for the organization and assisting my supervising attorney with her caseload. For my supervisor, I scheduled appointments with clients, sent out letters and took notes during meetings.

In addition to those duties, I also did a considerable amount of legal research and writing. This research and writing centered on school exclusions pursuant to Mass. Gen. Laws ch. 71 § 37H and 37H ½. Among other things, 37H allows a principal to expel any student who has brought a weapon or drugs onto school property. Similarly, 37H ½ allows a principal to indefinitely suspend any student who has a felony or felony delinquency complaint filed against him or her and to expel any student who is convicted of the same. Both laws include provisions stating that once a student is expelled from one school, no other school in the state has to admit the student. The Children's Law Center helps students who have been suspended or expelled under either statute to gain readmission into school or to secure educational services in another environment. My research was designed to help attorneys in their efforts.

I wrote three memoranda this summer concerning school exclusions under the above laws. The first involved students whose felony cases have been continued without a finding and whether a school may continue to refuse admission during the continuance period. The second memo concerned the information-sharing process that gives schools the information that a student has a felony complaint pending. These roundtable discussions bring together prosecutors, probation officers and schools to share information about "at risk" and court-involved youth and may violate students' and families' right to confidentiality. Lastly, I researched the conflict between Mass. Gen. Laws ch. 94C, § 32L, which decriminalized

possession of one ounce or less of marijuana, and zero-tolerance school exclusions pursuant to 37H.

In addition to my research and writing, I also applied for services from the Department of Developmental Services (formerly the Department of Mental Retardation) on behalf of one of my supervisor's clients. Despite severe budgetary shortages and despite a previous denial of services, the client received the services we requested on her behalf. I also applied for services from the Department of Health for another client. At the end of the summer, that application was still pending.

The Children's Law Center was my first choice placement for this summer and I was extremely fortunate that Equal Justice America chose to fund this placement. My experience provided me with a window into children's rights advocacy and juvenile justice work in Massachusetts as well as a host of transferable skills that I will carry with me throughout my career. Thank you so much for your confidence in my abilities to make a difference for the children of Massachusetts!

Sincerely,

Melanie Riccobene Jarboe

Boston College Law School Class of 2011