

August 28, 2014

Dear Mr. Ruben,

I spent my 1L summer working in the public benefits practice group at the Legal Assistance Foundation in Chicago, IL. From my very first day on the job I was engaged in meaningful projects. I particularly appreciated the wide variety of different projects I was able to work, and I have detailed these projects below.

My primary project at LAF was my work on an impact litigation suit challenging the constitutionality of a statute recently passed by the Illinois General Assembly. The Illinois Constitution specifies what nonprofit institutions must do to attain a property tax exemption. Traditionally, nonprofit hospitals have attained these tax exemptions by providing charity care for low-income patients. A recent Illinois statute modified the definition of charity care, and LAF filed suit challenging the constitutionality of this statute.

On my very first day, I was able to proofread a Motion for Summary Judgment that my supervising attorney, Carrie Chapman, was filing in Cook County Circuit Court. After proofing the document, I accompanied Carrie to the courthouse to file it. Those first few hours on the job provided me with more hands-on legal practice than I had experienced my entire first year of law school.

I remained engaged with the charity care suit throughout the summer, writing the first draft of the response to the opposing party's motion, drafting a reply brief, and helping prepare for oral argument. I came to understand the strategy and creativity involved in motion practice in a way I had not seen in the classroom. I developed an appreciation for manner in which the attorneys at LAF could juggle the many different considerations necessary to determine the best arguments to make and the best time to make them. I learned from my work on this suit that litigation is art that can only be mastered by watching experienced litigators, like the ones at LAF, do their job well.

In addition to assisting on this charity care suit, I had the experience of learning how to prepare evidence for a hearing. One large task for LAF's public benefits group is representing individuals who are appealing the denial of their public benefits. As part of this appeals process, the attorneys at LAF must review an individual's work history and medical history. I was able to take part in locating this evidence, reviewing it, and drawing the attorney's attention to particularly interesting findings. To review the evidence properly, I had to grow familiar with the standards for review that the Administrative Law Judge would use at the appeals hearing.

In the course of assisting with this discovery process, I contacted hospitals, administrative agencies, and former employers of LAF clients. I also made regular

contact with the clients to keep them updated on the timeline of their appeals process.

I particularly enjoyed attending one of these appeals hearings at the Social Security Administration's appeals office in downtown Chicago. I recognized how complex the appeals process can be and how necessary it is that those appealing the agency's determination get representation in the process. I worked primarily with Amy Marinacci on these Social Security cases, as she has a large number of them on her plate at any given time.

The final project that I devoted a substantial amount of time to is the Illinois Medicaid Redetermination Project. Illinois recently implemented a new process for redetermining the Medicaid eligibility of Illinois citizens. The implementation has not been completely transparent and has resulted in a large number of citizens learning their benefits have been denied without reason or warning.

Many of these individuals contact LAF to determine what steps to take to either avoid the cessation of benefits or to appeal the cessation. These cases are often given to law students at LAF because the issue can be resolved with some sound legal advice over the phone and some assistance navigating the appeals process. I was able to field numerous phone calls on which I informed the individual why the state was redetermining their eligibility for benefits and offered to call a state hotline with the client to shed light on why that determination was made. I would then advise these clients to file a pro se appeal and would follow up with them regularly to check on their status.

Working on this project allowed me to understand what flaws exist in state benefits programs and to see how smart, motivated attorneys can work to redress those flaws. At the end of the summer, I was able to work with other law students on recommending to LAF how they should best manage these redetermination calls in the future.

Apart from the projects I worked on, LAF gave me an insight into a wide variety of areas of public interest law. I was able to hear about the cases that my fellow law students worked on in the family law and housing law practice groups and even attended a planning meeting for the consumer law practice group. It provided me with an understanding of the day-to-day life of a public interest attorney. My summer will inform me as I pursue an career in public interest law of my own.

Sincerely,



Michael Tresnowski

University of Chicago Law - Class of 2016

September 4, 2014

Dan Ruben
Equal Justice America

Dear Mr. Ruben:

I supervised law student Michael Tresnowski at LAF this summer and I am writing to evaluate his fellowship for your program. Michael was an outstanding addition to the Public Benefits Practice Group at LAF this summer. He worked on a variety of matters and his work product was exceptional for a rising 2L. His legal analysis and his writing in particular were some of the most mature and well-developed of any student I have supervised. Michael was also a joy to work with. He fit in well with the team, completed assignments on time, took initiative, asked questions, always maintained a professional demeanor and was a pleasure to interact with.

Michael's main project was drafting motions for an impact litigation suit challenging the constitutionality of a statute recently passed by the Illinois General Assembly on the requirement for hospital charity care. Michael undertook all the background reading and research necessary to be able to assist us with this case and got up to speed on a very complex issue in a short time. He then drafted multiple substantive motions and memoranda of law on the issue. The entire litigation team was thrilled with Michael's work and we cannot imagine what the litigation would have been like if we had not had his help.

Michael assisted us with direct client work by participating in our response to the state's initiative to redetermine the Medicaid eligibility of scores of Medicaid recipients in Illinois. The initiative caused many eligible individuals to be terminated from the program and Michael helped clients regain their benefits by using the protocol we had prepared and applying it appropriately to each client's individual case. Michael handled client interactions, many of them difficult, warmly but professionally. In dealing with these cases, he also managed competing demands on his time with great skill.

Michael also assisted us in preparing an individual's Social Security benefits case, delving deep into both facts and the copious rules and regulations associated with these cases. Again, his work was high quality, timely and professional. The time he was able to put to this case, enabled us not only to maximize the benefit for this client but to free attorney time to work on other aspects of the case that would never have been possible without him,

It was a joy for us to work with Michael this summer. We benefitted tremendously from his efforts and we believe he gained valuable experience to help him in future endeavors.

If you have any additional questions for me, please feel free to contact me at 312-347-8388.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Caroline Chapman', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Caroline Chapman
Director, Public Benefits Practice Group