

MICHELLE YVETTE SMITH

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

Dear Mr. Ruben,

I received a summer fellowship from Equal Justice America for my work at Colorado Legal Services in the Family and Children Unit. The Family and Children Unit helps low-income domestic violence victims with Allocation of Parental Responsibility and Dissolution of Marriage proceedings, as well as Civil Protection Orders.

Over the course of the summer I did a variety of work including drafted motions and initial pleadings. A big part of my work was to call the applicants to further investigate their situation so that the attorneys could decide if it was a case they could take on. This was often my most difficult task because all of the applicants were victims of domestic violence and often would become emotional answering my questions. This was my first experience working with victims. I also drafted advice letters to applicants who the attorney's were unable to take on as clients. Licensed under the Student Practice Act, I participated in a default Allocation of Parental Responsibilities hearing as well as a default Dissolution of Marriage hearing.

I found it emotionally challenging to work with domestic violence victims but also extremely rewarding. There was one client whose case I worked on who had an especially compelling story. She had a final custody hearing only a few weeks after she applied for help through Colorado Legal Services, but one of the attorneys in the office was moved by her story and decided to take her on as a client. She was seeking custody of her children as well as permission to move them out of state. Because the hearing was so soon, the attorney asked for my help drafting all of the pre-trial motions. This case was easily the most egregious domestic violence I heard or read about all summer. Trapped in an abusive relationship for years, this woman left as soon as she had the chance. While I didn't participate in the hearing, I attended the proceeding. It felt very rewarding to help a woman who tried so hard to do what was best for her children. It made me feel as though I could really help those in need if I continued in this line of work.

My time in the Family and Children Unit was very rewarding, albeit challenging. It confirmed that I want to practice in a public service area of law, and confirmed my interest in poverty law. More specifically, it confirmed my interest in providing indigent

people with civil legal assistance. I am very thankful that Equal Justice America played a part in making my summer experience possible.

Sincerely,
Michelle Smith
University of Colorado
Class of 2015 (anticipated)

Colorado Legal Services

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August 18, 2014

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

Re: Michelle Y. Smith

Dear Mr. Ruben,

I am writing this letter on behalf of Michelle Smith who completed a Summer internship in the Family and Children's Unit of Colorado Legal Services. Ms. Smith had completed her second year of law school at the University of Colorado before arriving at Colorado Legal Services in May, 2014.

Ms. Smith was a welcome addition to our team. She was enthusiastic and brought a fresh perspective to the work we do. She was assigned case investigation of family law intakes involving domestic violence. She conducted one-on-one direct client interviews of individuals seeking emergency and protective assistance with domestic relations cases. She was also given the task of assisting attorneys with initial drafts of letters and pleadings. In addition, Ms. Smith conducted research projects for a number of our attorneys.

Ms. Smith was extremely able, and accomplished the tasks asked of her easily and thoroughly. Her clear grasp of the issues facing our clients and her willingness to take the initiative, enabled her to excel. She became a valued member of the CLS team and was always interested in taking on additional work that came her way. She demonstrated a highly developed social concern for the welfare of others through her work here.

We feel fortunate that Ms. Smith chose to spend her summer with Colorado Legal Services and that you were able to provide funding. We appreciate your support and look forward to working with you again.

Sincerely,



Terry Lopez
Supervising Attorney



Mile High
United Way

